



# *Severnside Community Rail Partnership*

*Progress Report, Autumn 2006*



**Quality local rail services  
matched to community needs**

The Severnside Community Rail Partnership was formed in summer 2004, and constituted in October 2004 as a not-for-profit-company limited by guarantee. Our aim is to identify and implement measures to encourage the use of local train services on routes radiating from Bristol; to ensure that access to local stations is easy and that stations provide a safe and welcoming environment. The emphasis is to work with partners and local communities to deliver quick wins and small-scale practical initiatives that make local rail services more attractive and bring benefits to passengers.

The Partnership's area is bounded by Gloucester, Bristol, Bath/Freshford, Weston-super-Mare, Taunton and the Severn Estuary; it includes the branch line to Severn Beach.

The Partnership's principal sponsors are Bath and North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, Business West, First Great Western, Gloucestershire County Council, the Joint Strategic Planning and Transport Unit, North Somerset Council, Somerset County Council, and South Gloucestershire Council.

The Management Committee for the Partnership is drawn from these organisations, with six members also appointed as Directors. The Principal Sponsors make an annual financial contribution to the Partnership, which funds the post of Partnership Officer and the other running costs of the Partnership.

## Local Train services

One of the Partnership's initial achievements was to secure a better and more regular train service at local stations. Most local stations now have a clock-face hourly service throughout the day – half hourly on the Weston-super-mare line - with some additional peak period services. A 9% increase in the use of local stations over the previous twelve months was reported in the annual passenger survey carried out by the local authorities in November 2005.

During the year, the Partnership was one of the consultees on the proposed combination of Wessex Trains and First Great Western into the new Greater Western rail franchise. We had separate meetings with all the bidders, provided our Members with briefings and put together various notes on issues which the Partnership would like the new franchise to address.



Following the announcement of the decision to award the franchise to First Group, the Partnership had more detailed discussions with First Great Western, particularly over timetable issues. Although FGW has now been able to address some of the problems, members of the Partnership continue to have concerns over a number of aspects of the proposed new timetable which would result in a worse service than at present, in particular:-

- two-hour gaps in the daytime at Oldfield Park, Keynsham and Patchway
- reduced peak period services at Keynsham, Bedminster (am), Parson Street (am), and Weston Milton (pm)
- loss of late evening services at Yate, Cam and Dursley and Gloucester, and at Patchway
- later first morning train arrival at Gloucester
- irregular intervals between trains on services to Weston-super-Mare and Taunton plus the loss of connectivity at Temple Meads with trains from London

The Partnership is working with FGW on these issues for the May and December 2007 timetables

During the discussions it became clear that, as one consequence of the increased central Department for Transport prescription of the new franchise, there was the prospect of a reduction in the local train fleet allocated to the Greater Bristol area, albeit mitigated slightly by one additional High Speed Train in the morning and one in the evening on the Weston-super-Mare line. The Partnership produced briefing notes on the likely impact of both the timetable and the proposed reductions in rolling stock. The issues raised by the Partnership were featured in both the local and national media.

## Severnside Community Rail Partnership

**Partnership Officer :**

**Sarah Collins**

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**Chairman :**

**Keith Walton**

**07740 047812**

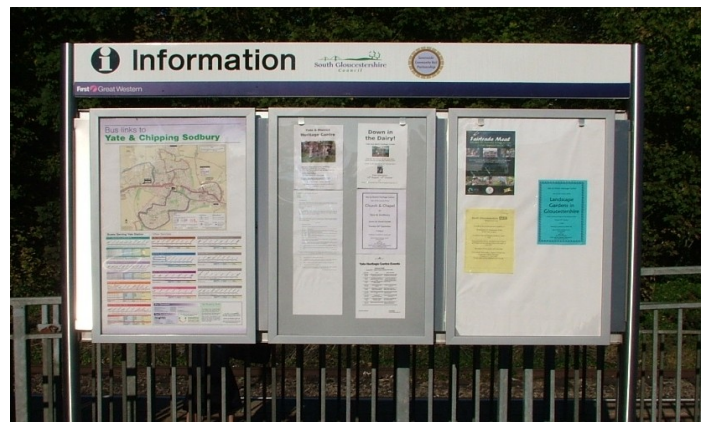
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All this highlights the dichotomy and lack of joined-up thinking between the local authorities' transport plans – of which an essential plank, supported by the DfT, is to encourage modal shift to public transport including local rail; and a tight rail franchise specification, also drawn up by the DfT, and implemented under a strong commercial remit by the train operator, where the outcome is a likely reduction of the peak period frequency and capacity of local services.

The Partnership also responded to a consultation on proposals from the Department for Transport on the new Cross Country franchise. Although proposals for an hourly service from Bristol to Manchester were very welcome, some of the other features of the Consultation would cause serious problems for travellers in the West of England :-

- the proposed reduction of services south of Bristol to hourly (a 25% cut) which would considerably increase overcrowding on peak commuter, business and holiday trains;
- the document is not clear on what rolling stock would be available to operate cross country services and, as many of the current 5 coach trains are to be transferred elsewhere, the risk is that trains to the West and South West will be formed of shorter 4 coach units thus exacerbating the existing overcrowding;
- there is no mention of future cross-country services to Weston-super-Mare.



*The new community notice board at Yate*

## Partnership Work

During the last twelve months the Partnership has been involved in a range of activities including:-

- a "Treasure Train", aimed at parents with young children, on the Severn Beach line as part of the national Community Rail Day;
- a Sunday bus link during the summer and autumn 2005, connecting with trains at Cam and Dursley station for Slimbridge Wildfowl and Wetlands Trust, Berkeley Castle and Westonbirt Arboretum.
- promotion of a train-bus link to the Medieval Joust at Berkeley Castle
- leaflets produced jointly with the Kennet and Avon Canal Partnership and the Heart of Wessex Rail Partnership aimed at promoting canal walks from local stations
- the provision of a community notice board at Bristol Temple Meads
- the production of a range of leaflets, aimed largely at families with young children, on short distance days out by train from local stations
- a highly successful "Santa special" on the Severn Beach line; this attracted over 300 passengers and we are very grateful that Wessex trains arranged at short notice for additional coaches on the train
- working with the local authorities to produce a new line guide to the Severn Beach line
- an initiative promoting rail-based tourism to Gloucester
- encouraging better integration between train and bus at Temple Meads, and highlighting the need for better information to passengers



*A new ramp will be provided at Keynsham*

Research showed that many passengers cannot understand railway timetables. So the Partnership developed simplified station timetable posters which were displayed on a trial basis at a number of local stations. These were very well received, but unfortunately the demise in July 2005 of the Rail Passengers Committee for Western England (which provided the back-up assistance to their production), plus restrictions on staffing in Wessex Trains in the re-franchising period, meant that it was not possible to produce the posters for the December 2005 or June 2006 timetable changes. Now that the new Greater Western franchise is in operation, we hope that resources can be found to resume production of these posters. To assist in better display of information at local stations, the Partnership is arranging, with the support of the train operator and local authorities, for the procurement of additional poster cases. Our aim is that there should also be space for local community organisations to display notices at stations, thus emphasising the role of the station as a community focal point. With funding from South Gloucestershire, new community notice boards have been installed at Yate, Patchway and Severn Beach.

The Partnership also worked closely with Brunel 200 and other local organisations to develop proposals for a large-scale mural at Temple Meads, as part of the Brunel 200 celebrations. Initially this was sponsored by Severnside but, in view of our limited resources and skills, the Management Committee decided it would be more appropriate for the project management of the production and erection of the mural to be transferred to another local organisation.

In addition to the projects, we have also maintained close contacts with other voluntary and community organisations, and regularly attended their meetings. We have also actively participated in the transport forums run by the local authorities, and contributed at a number of meetings on the Greater Bristol Strategic Transport Study and on the 2006 Joint Local Transport Plan.

## Looking ahead

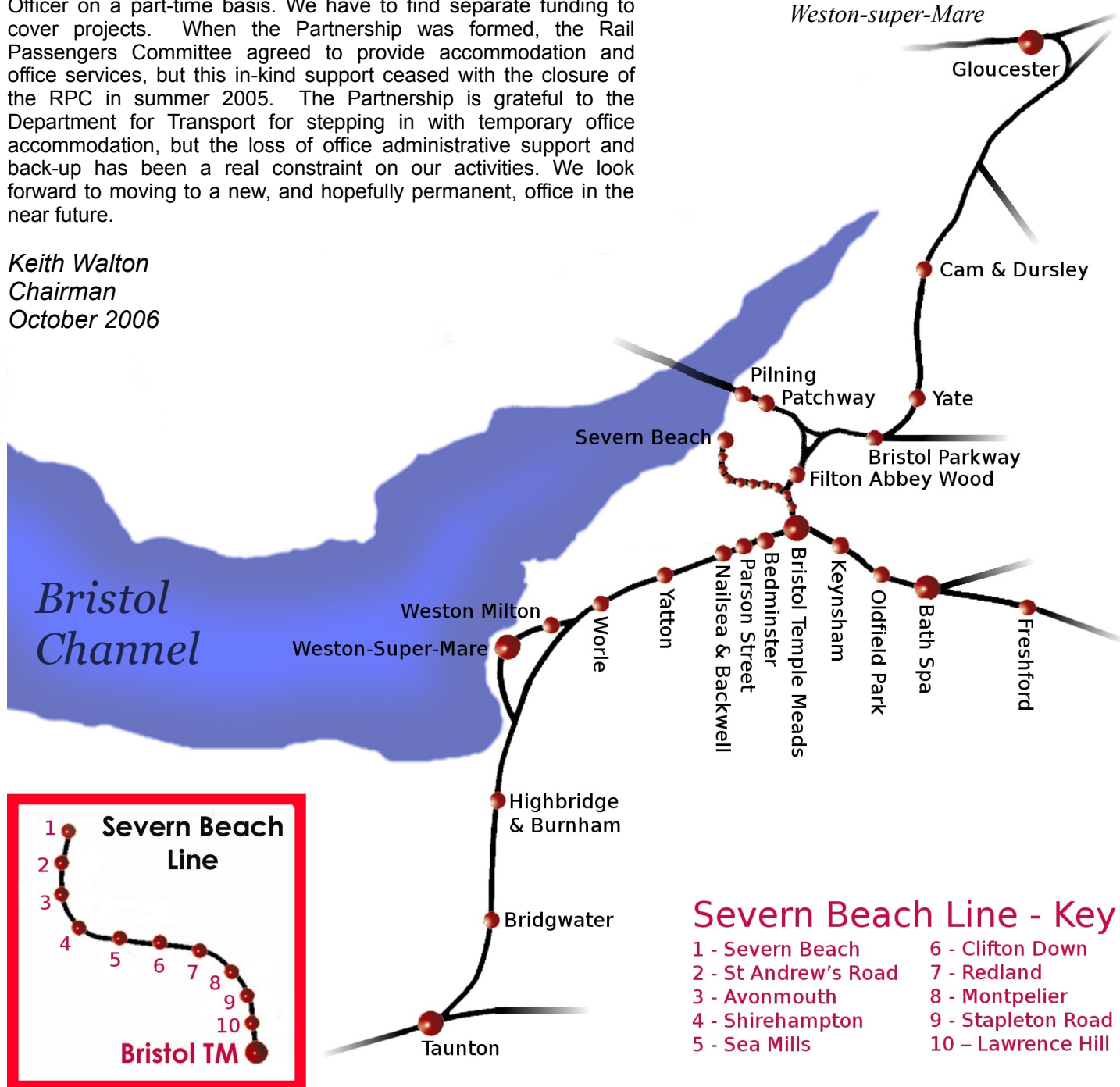
The work in the Partnership connected with the new Greater Western franchise has been very time consuming, but essential; this inevitably stretched our limited resources. We are very conscious that the need to focus on the franchise, coupled with the shortage of resources, has meant that the community aspects of our work have not received priority recently. So the emphasis in our work over the next year will be to concentrate on involving communities, particularly on local station issues. During the coming Autumn and Winter we will be meeting local councils and community organisations to explain our role, to discuss local station problems, and to agree how these can be tackled.

The Partnership's core income is only sufficient to cover its main running costs; currently we are only able to fund a Partnership Officer on a part-time basis. We have to find separate funding to cover projects. When the Partnership was formed, the Rail Passengers Committee agreed to provide accommodation and office services, but this in-kind support ceased with the closure of the RPC in summer 2005. The Partnership is grateful to the Department for Transport for stepping in with temporary office accommodation, but the loss of office administrative support and back-up has been a real constraint on our activities. We look forward to moving to a new, and hopefully permanent, office in the near future.

*Keith Walton*  
Chairman  
October 2006



*Bay platform likely to be returned to use at Weston-super-Mare*



## Severn Beach Line - Key

- |                      |                    |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1 - Severn Beach     | 6 - Clifton Down   |
| 2 - St Andrew's Road | 7 - Redland        |
| 3 - Avonmouth        | 8 - Montpelier     |
| 4 - Shirehampton     | 9 - Stapleton Road |
| 5 - Sea Mills        | 10 - Lawrence Hill |

## Stations

Many of the unstaffed stations in the Partnership's area are in poor condition and unattractive to passengers; they are desperately in need of some care and attention.

The Partnership is working with the local authorities, First Great Western and the police and other organisations to identify what needs to be done, the priorities, and possible sources of funds. We very much wish to involve the local communities and users in this work – it is their station – and as part of this we are encouraging the setting up of local station support groups. Personal safety and security is a real concern at a number of locations, so one of the improvements we would like to see is the installation of a modern CCTV system at local stations (and their access routes), and covering station car parks.



*Full house at Nailsea car park*



*Replica period style seating at Yatton*

To start our stations initiative, the Partnership hosted a meeting to discuss possible improvements at Nailsea and Backwell station. Among the issues discussed were

- The lack of ramped access to platform 1 (there is a possibility of 50% funding from the Department for Transport to help achieve this, but this would depend on 50% matching from other sources which may be difficult to achieve)
- Security at the station, including making the car park safer by reducing the height of the overgrown shrubs, and the need for CCTV
- Seating on the platforms (A small bank of four seats has now been provided on platform 2 at Nailsea, and very attractive replica Great Western Railway traditional seating has now been provided at Yatton by John Hobby, Public Transport Co-ordinator for the National Trust, with funding assistance from North Somerset Council)
- Better signage for passengers arriving by train (which way is Nailsea, which way is Backwell and how far to the centres!)
- Provision of ticket machines and the opening hours of the ticket booth
- Community notice boards
- Generally improving the appearance of the station

What is now needed is action, but this will require funding - and if you multiply the problems at Nailsea by the number of local stations in need of attention, then the funding requirement overall is quite a sizeable amount. The Partnership will be looking closely at this over the next few months.

The Partnership is very pleased that a ramp is now to be provided to the Bristol bound platform at Keynsham following a successful bid by Bath and North East Somerset Council for funding under the Department for Transport's Access for All Scheme.

The Partnership will be holding meetings to discuss possible improvements at other local stations. We need station users to let us know the problems and priorities – and best of all to form a local station support group. If you are willing to help with this do please contact us.



*New platform and shelter at Freshford*



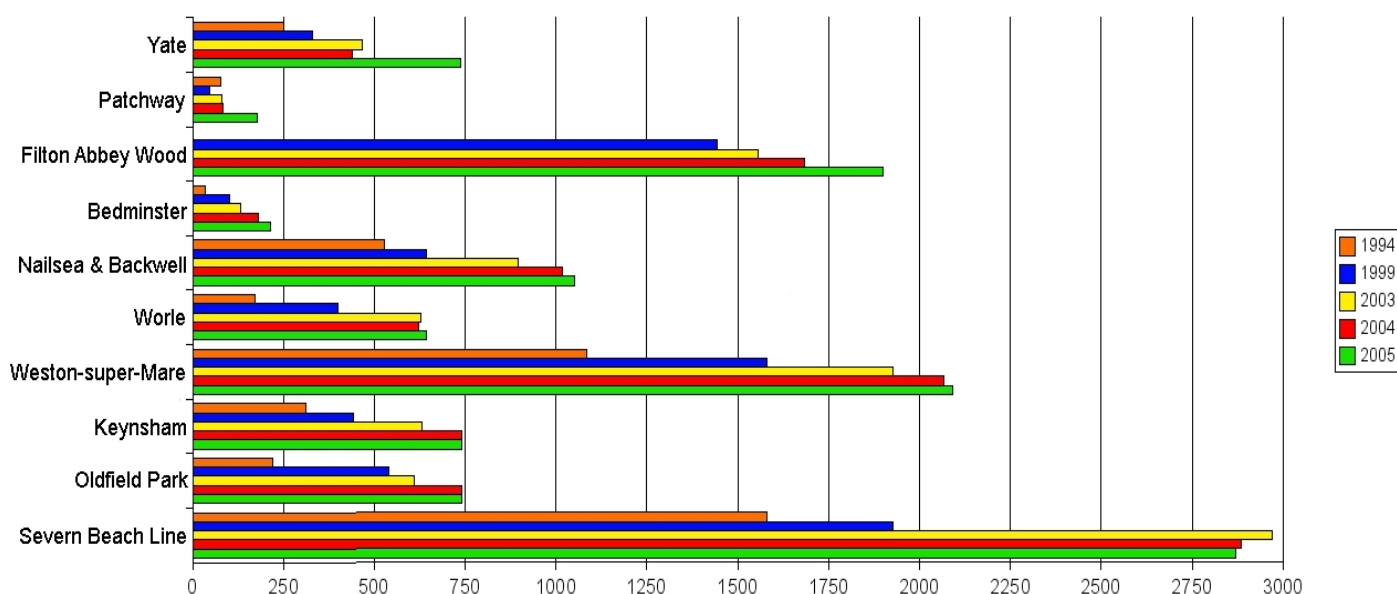
*Traditional glory at Bridgwater*

## The Severn Beach Line

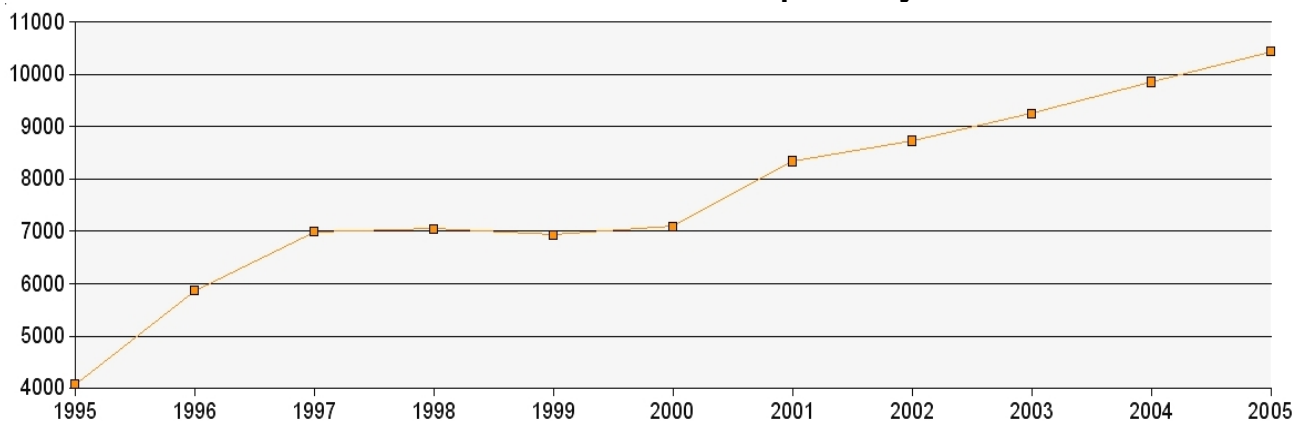
The Severn Beach line is one of Bristol's best kept secrets - but this is changing! As part of the Government's Community Rail Strategy, the Severn Beach route is to be designated as a Community Rail Line. Designation brings greater local involvement and influence in the development of the line. Part of the process entails the production of a Development Plan, concentrating on realisable short and medium term improvements. The Partnership has now formed a Severn Beach Line Working Group, with representatives from First Great Western, the local authorities, Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways, Sustrans and Passenger Focus. A number of initiatives are feeding into the Plan including:-

- an up-to-date count of passengers using the line. The latest count, in June, showed a 20% increase in passengers on off-peak trains (but peak numbers were static) compared with November 2005
- consideration of further surveys to ascertain the origin and destination of passengers, with the possibility of contacting households within easy access of stations to establish what would encourage them to make use of the line
- a detailed analysis of the condition of the stations on the line, prioritising what improvements are needed, and how these can be achieved
- consideration of the need for improved security at stations, in particularly CCTV and "help points"
- better signing to the stations
- community involvement in the stations, including local support groups
- a simpler fare structure
- better publicity and marketing of the service

## Number of passengers using Greater Bristol local stations every weekday



## Growth in the use of Greater Bristol local stations over the past 10 years



This chart shows the total number of passengers using the local stations each weekday; it excludes Bristol Temple Meads, Bristol Parkway, Bath and Weston-super-Mare.

(chart also excludes Bridgwater, Highbridge & Burnham and Cam & Dursley as a series count is not available on the same basis)

## **Local authorities provide a main source of funding for the running costs of the Partnership. In return the local authorities gain considerable benefits :**

### **Active help in delivering Local Transport Plan targets**

Targets to attract increased use of local rail services will not be met without considerable work; the Partnership's role in this is

- pressing for more frequent off-peak local train services – already largely delivered
- working with the train operator, First Great Western, to resolve problems of capacity constraints in the peak period
- making rail travel easier for local passengers
  - simplified timetable posters at stations – already trialled successfully, and to be introduced at unstaffed local stations this winter
  - better, and better targeted, local publicity through
    - leaflets – on going
    - special promotions – on going
  - reducing barriers to travel
    - improving station safety and security – working groups being set up for individual stations
    - better station access – the Partnership is able to sponsor and attract match funding for small schemes
    - integration – particularly promoting combined rail-bus tickets, such as the Bristol Bus Link

### **Augmenting Councils' influence on the rail industry**

The Partnership provides an opportunity for local authorities to have regular and easy access to senior rail management; and for local authorities to come together with other Partnership members and the train operators to make representations for instance to the Department for Transport. The Partnership “club membership” provides a mechanism for consultation, input and influence on rail issues varying from significant policy development to more practical issues such as local timetables, which would not otherwise be so readily available.

### **Information for local authority members and transport officers**

The Partnership provides a source of independent expertise and briefing for local authorities on rail issues - for example in the last year the Partnership has provided briefing on the Greater Western Timetable consultation, the rolling stock situation in the West of England, and the Department for Transport consultation on the new Cross Country Franchise. The briefings help local authority members and officers, and reduce the need for each local authority separately to devote time and effort to researching rail issues.

### **Support for the local economy by encouraging rail-based tourism**

The Partnership works closely with local tourism agencies, and has produced a range of attractive leaflets promoting days out by train in the West of England. We are giving particular attention to promoting the use of the train service to Gloucester (and to special events at stations served by the line, for example the Medieval Joust at Berkeley Castle), and we will be promoting rail travel to events such as the Somerset Autumn Carnivals and the Bath Christmas Market.

### **Access to funding, which is not available to local authorities**

As a Company limited by guarantee, the Partnership is able to attract grants and match funding not available to public sector bodies. This has already been used to finance and promote experimental rail/bus links to tourist attractions in Gloucestershire, which the County wished to do but did not have the funds within its own budget.

### **A mechanism for involving local communities constructively in supporting public transport**

The Partnership is increasingly working with local communities in station improvement schemes, and we are looking at new partnerships to make local stations more attractive, for instance by the sponsorship of art schemes by local schools.

**SEVERNSIDE COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP**  
**Year Ending 31st March 2006**

**BALANCE SHEET**

	<b>2006</b>	<b>2005</b>
	£	£
<b>FIXED ASSETS</b>	841	-
<b>CURRENT ASSETS:</b>		
Cash at Bank	10365	16018
Debtors	-	193
Total assets	11206	16211
<b>CREDITORS:</b>		
Amounts falling due within one year	(5997)	(1682)
<b>TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>	<b>5209</b>	<b>14529</b>
<b>REPRESENTED BY :</b>		
Restricted funds	910	-
Unrestricted	4299	14529
<b>TOTAL FUNDS</b>	<b>5209</b>	<b>14529</b>

The directors are satisfied that the Company is entitled to exemption from the provisions of the Companies Act 1985 (the Act) relating to the audit of the accounts for the year by virtue of section 249A(1), and that no member or members have requested an audit pursuant to section 249B(2) of the Act.

**INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT**

	<b>2006</b>	<b>2005</b>
	£	£
<b>INCOME</b>	<b>52073</b>	<b>30250</b>
Administration expenses	(61393)	(15721)
<b>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT)</b>	<b>(9320)</b>	<b>14529</b>
Interest Receivable	-	-
<b>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) ON ORDINARY ACTIVITIES BEFORE TAXATION</b>	<b>(9320)</b>	<b>14529</b>
<b>CORPORATION TAX</b>	-	-
<b>ACCUMULATED RESERVES BROUGHT FORWARD</b>	<b>14529</b>	-
<b>BALANCE CARRIED FORWARD</b>	<b>5209</b>	<b>14529</b>

The Company has no recognised gains or losses other than the surplus/deficit for the above financial period. None of the Company's activities were acquired or discontinued during the above financial period.

**INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT (DETAIL)**  
**Year Ending 31st March 2006**

	£	£	<b>2006</b>	<b>2005</b>
	Restricted	Unrestricted	£ Total	£ Total
<b>INCOME</b>				
Contributions	24876	26807	51683	29725
Grants	-	-	-	450
Misc	390	-	390	75
Total Income	25266	26807	52073	30250
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>				
Insurance	-	371	371	293
Travel & Subsistence	54	1587	1641	379
Stationery	-	22	22	43
Payroll fees	-	220	220	-
Fees & Memberships	-	481	481	360
Salaries	-	20968	20968	11051
Inland Revenue	-	10248	10248	1424
Refunds	140	-	140	-
Misc.	17	352	369	-
Depreciation	-	280	280	-
IT Support	-	1354	1354	-
Telephone	-	555	555	-
Conferences/Seminars	-	294	294	-
Recruitment	-	-	-	1378
Events	230	145	375	231
Projects	18758	-	18758	-
Return of funds (Art Project)	3650	-	3650	-
Printing	1507	-	1507	412
Accountancy/Audit	-	160	160	150
	24356	37037	61393	15721
<b>SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR YEAR</b>	<b>910</b>	<b>(10230)</b>	<b>(9320)</b>	<b>14529</b>

**Contributions In Kind**

Accommodation provided by RPC and DfT	7000
Travel passes provided by train operators	1500
These contributions have not been included in the above income and expenditure.	

**Notes :**

- 1 - Unrestricted funds are income received for the general operation of the company
- 2 - Restricted funds are given for a special purpose, e.g. a particular project
- 3 - Members liability. The company is limited by guarantee. In event of winding up, members are required to contribute to the assets of the company such amounts as may be required, but not exceeding £1 per member.