

*We have three good news stories for you .....*

## **(1) Four Tracking Celebration - Party on the Platform**



To celebrate the successful completion of the four tracking of Filton Bank, FOSBR held a 'party' on the platform at Filton Abbey Wood railway station on Friday 22 February 2019.

The Great and the Good were invited and we were very pleased that many of them, including those intimately involved with the four-tracking since its inception, turned up to help us celebrate this vital rail service improvement.

FOSBR Chair, Rob Dixon, thanked Network Rail representatives for their successful delivery of the project. Network Rail were represented by Andy Spencer (Senior Programme Manager, West of England) and GWR were represented by John Lanchester (Regional Stations Manager). Rob said: *'FOSBR and others campaigned for a long time for the Filton Bank four-tracks to be re-instated and we are delighted with the success of this Network Rail project. Now we would like to see an improvement in the frequency of services to local stations from December 2019, eventually leading to a half-hourly and better service to all*

*Bristol local stations. FOSBR would also like to see the much needed capacity improvements at Bristol East Junction and the electrification of Filton Bank - to allow trains to travel under electric traction between Bristol Parkway and Temple Meads'.*

*Tim Bowles, WECA Metro Mayor, said 'I'm delighted with the new platform at Filton Abbey wood, which supports my ambitious plans to improve our rail network - including direct services between Severn Beach and Bath, re-opening Henbury station and a brand new station at Portway. I am also working with North Somerset Council on plans to re-open the line to Portishead. I am committed to working with all partners to ensure the West of England has a railway service that is fit for the future'.*

Other speakers included:

- Kye Dudd (Bristol City Council's Cabinet Member for Transport) and Colin Hunt (South Gloucestershire Council's Cabinet Member for Transport) - who spoke about their ambitions for local rail.
- Bernard Kennedy (ASLEF) - who spoke of how Filton Bank is the spine of the local rail network; also that now, as a Cross Country driver, he is regularly signalled to run on the mainline alongside local services on the relief lines - a situation where, before four-tracking, one or other train would have been held.
- Stephen Williams, ex-MP for Bristol West, remarked on the long period it takes to realise projects such as this.
- Martin Garrett (Transport for Greater Bristol) commented on the need and potential for a bus-rail interchange at Filton Abbey Wood station, the busiest local station around Bristol.
- Ken Walton of Severnside Community Rail Partnership spoke of the Partnership's efforts to make local stations welcoming so as to encourage passengers - and that volunteers are always welcome to help with projects such as maintenance of platform planters.

**The event was a great success!**



Those present shared a 'four-track/ themed' cake and sang Morningtown Ride, accompanied by a ukulele.

*'Rocking, rolling, riding,  
via Abbey Wood, all  
bound for Temple Meads,  
not so far away'*  
(with apologies to the Seekers)



The new lines provide capacity for an increase in the number of direct London - Bristol Parkway - Bristol Temple meads services that will be introduced from December 2019. The four tracks also pave the way for (a) the MetroWest Phase 1a scheme due in 2021 which is a half-hourly service to all stations between Avonmouth and Bath and (b) the MetroWest Phase 2 Scheme (also due 2021) which is an hourly service to new stations at Ashley Down, Filton North and Henbury.

## **(2) Portishead - on track at last?**



You may remember that, in Newsletter No. 98 (October 2018), we reported that there was still a *shortfall of £48 million* needed to complete the £116 million scheme to re-open the Portishead line to passenger service.

Well, it now seems that this gap in funding has finally been plugged and so there is no reason why Portishead cannot now be connected to the main rail network - something that is desperately needed.

*Photo taken 19 March 2019 from the Sheepway overbridge, showing the disused line heading towards Portishead*

To be more accurate, the revised cost of the project was £116.4M of which £69.5M was secured; this left a funding gap of £46.9M. In February 2019, North Somerset Council agreed to allocate up to £15M of regional funding from the Economic Development Fund - this reducing the funding gap to £31.9M.

*Then on 8th April 2019, it was announced that the Government would supply the remaining shortfall of £31.9M. Thus the funds are, hopefully, now all in place for the project to proceed.*

*Image: Bristol Live*



*Councillor Nigel Ashton (N Somerset Council), Chris Grayling (Secretary of State for Transport), Tim Bowles (WECA Mayor) on site - during Mr Grayling's visit at which he announced the funding package.*

But if you think that shiny new trains will be zipping up and down the track to Portishead by the end of the year, ending the current traffic congestion nightmare, please think again. Quite a lot has to occur before this happens.

This project is deemed as a 'Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project', the reason being that it will involve building more than 2 km of new track - which is the main criteria under the Planning Act 2008 that defines such railway projects. Because of this, the project must submit a Development Consent Order (DCO) to the Planning Inspectorate (the government body charged with assessing DCO applications) - which then makes a recommendation to the Secretary of State to approve or not. This process takes about 18 months from time of submission and volumes of paperwork are need to support a DCO application - including, most crucially, evidence that the project is fully funded. It is hoped that that the DCO will be submitted in July of this year.

The Portishead Railway Group have explained all of this in greater detail (<https://www.portisheadrailwaygroup.org>) and also have set out a tentative timeline for the project to be completed:

- ❖ DCO process, from submission to approval 18 months
- ❖ Contracts start-up/ mobilisation 6 months
- ❖ Railway and temporary road works 21 months
- ❖ Testing period 4 months

Putting this all together, it is possible that ***the passenger service could start operation at the end of 2023*** - 'COULD' being the operative word.

Not wishing to be a Cassandra, but there are several factors that could halt the project in its tracks. The potentially most damaging problem would be if there were further cost escalations - say if some unforeseen engineering problems racks up another £30M - who is going to pay for it? We already know this can happen - just think of the original estimated cost of c. £58M rising to a staggering £145-£175M.

Then of course there is the question of how safe is the £31.9M promised by the Government. A General Election will happen before the line is finished - what happens if there is a change in Government or even a change of Secretary of State? As we all know, local politics in this Region is very fractured, compared to the more integrated local regions such as those councils in the Northern Powerhouse. If there is a competition in the future for rail funding, who do you think is more likely to be successful?

It is interesting to note that, at the local elections on 2nd May this year, the conservative majority on North Somerset Council was overturned - and the new Leader of the Council is the Independent Councillor for Pill, Don Davis. He just happens to be a FOSBR member and a passionate supporter of rail, including the Portishead line. We are hopeful that he will continue to push for its re-opening, whatever challenges occur on the way. Is it possible that North Somerset Council might now edge its way to joining WECA - so that we could get a co-ordinated approach to transport planning in the Greater Bristol area?.

Lastly there are still potential problems related to the train operator for the line. Will GWR be running the trains on the line (their existing franchise on the Great Western franchise lasts until 2020 although possibly extended to 2022)? If not GWR, who else could run it? It might seem a small detail, compared to the funding and the works needed, but in fact it has to be sorted before the service can start.

So we can but wait and hope. Obviously things have taken a step forward but it is not in the bag yet!





*Just as a reminder of the sad situation at present, here is a picture, taken in August 2015 by FOSBRite Geoff Peacock, showing the end of the disused line at Portishead.*

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### **(3) Portway Park & Ride Station**

There is every reason to believe that this station, denoted variously in documents as Portway P&R, Portway Parkway or just plain Portway, will actually come to fruition. This will be the first station to be built in the city since Filton Abbey Wood over 20 years ago. The final piece of the requirements jig-saw for this project came about in March 2019 when Bristol City Council gave planning permission for the new station.

The project has been talked about for many years (ever since the park and ride was built) and it was one of the first transport projects to be approved by the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) in 2017. The station and associated rail infrastructure will cost £2.23 million and the funding for this has already been achieved.

£0.55 million has come from WECA's Local Growth Fund and the remaining £1.67 million was secured by Bristol City Council in July 2017 from the Government's 'New Station Fund 2'. This was the second round of a competition (running from 26 August to 25 November 2016) whereby promoters of new stations submitted bids in a competition for a £20M pot of money. Portway P&R station was one of five (out of 19) stations to succeed in its bid.

There is also an additional £400,000 of match funding to be spent on various improvements to the park and ride site - including an amenity building to serve both bus and train passengers, disabled parking spaces next to the station entrance and cycle

parking. The platform will be long enough for five car trains and Network Rail also plans to install a ticket machine at the station - something which is not available on some of the other stations along the Severn Beach line. It will have CCTV, be fully accessible and have a basic shelter.



*Aerial view of the proposed station site, copied from the Full Business Case (April 2017)*

The original opening date was 2019 and obviously that has slipped. Network Rail has already been carrying on work to survey the development site next to the Park and Ride to assess ground conditions. Construction work will start soon and as yet we do not know when the station will actually open - but hopefully in the near future.

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## **Bristol Hosts are looking for volunteers!**

Bristol hosts are an established volunteer group based at Bristol Temple Meads Station who welcome tourists and visitors as they pass through the station and help direct them on their way. They recommend key places to visit and how to travel across Bristol.

***They are looking for new volunteers to join them for half a day per week or a few sessions each month, usually in the mornings.***

You need to be able to understand timetables and maps and have a general knowledge of Bristol. Volunteers should be outgoing, confident and with good communication skills in order to listen to and then advise visitors, as well as liaise with station staff.

Training and support will be provided. No travel expenses will be provided but free parking may be available.

For further information, contact Pat Burkitt:

mobile: 07543 579937 or email: pat\_burkitt@hotmail.co.uk



## MetroBus M1 - Pretty in Pink!

**Carol Durrant**

The third MetroBus route in Bristol launched on Sunday 6th January 2019. The M1 crosses the city from Hengrove to Cribbs Causeway and is easy to spot in its hot pink trim. The M1 route is run by Bristol Community Transport under contract to First Bus.

The M1 buses are powered by 'carbon neutral biomethane gas generated from food waste'. The MetroBus website claims that within 24 months all the MetroBus routes will be served by these vehicles. One of the drivers told me that a biomethane bus can cover a distance of 220 miles on one tank - and so need to be filled up once or twice a day on the M1 route. The gas line comes from the mains gas supply but an equivalent volume of biomethane is fed into the National Gas Grid by the biogas supplier.



I needed to return an item to B&Q and so it seemed a good opportunity to ride the M1 north to Cribbs Causeway (we travelled the remainder of the route, south to Hengrove and back, on another day).

### Northern part of the route:

- Travelling from the Centre, the bus leaves the M32 via the much-vaunted bus only junction, looping through the UWE campus bus station to the ring road - and so thus far the route is similar to the M3 that goes to Emersons Green. The stops on this section sound lovely in the Bristolian accent of the announcer who apparently is a lady called Fran who works in the First Bus depot in Lawrence Hill ('Stoke Parrrrrrrk', 'UWE The Garrrrrrrdens').
- From UWE, the M1 bus crosses the ring road onto the new Stoke Gifford by-pass, cutting through fields which will soon be housing. The by-pass crosses the South Wales main line before the Parkway North roundabout. At this point, the MetroBus should go to Bristol Parkway station but cannot yet until GWR and Network Rail have updated the station access. The current M1 crosses straight over Parkway North roundabout, following Bradley Stoke Way north to Aztec West - and then south on the A38 to join the Highwood Road bus corridor to Cribbs.
- *The journey time from Cabot Circus to Cribbs Causeway was 35 minutes outgoing and 45 minutes on the way back.*



### Southern part of the route:

- The M1 route to Hengrove from the Centre wriggles through Prince Street and Redcliffe Hill, then down Bedminster Parade and, going southbound, stops near Bedminster station (although the stop is called Dalby Avenue). Northbound, the M1 travels up East Street. Along West street, the stop for Parson Street is helpfully called Parson Street! From here, the route south follows the A38 Hartcliffe Way (almost as far as Imperial Retail Park) until it hooks through Inns Court, Filwood and Hengrove Park. New housing developments are taking place along the route in both Filwood and Hengrove.
- The M1 MetroBus was not universally welcomed along this route. The 90 bus now omits the Inns Court section of its original route and the 50 bus now no longer serves Bamfield. In both cases, the M1 offers a more frequent service but serves fewer stops along the route. There have been petitions for an M1 review from residents who have to walk longer distances to a functional bus stop.
- Along Whitchurch Lane, the M1 passes the Bottle Yard Studios and Matthew Clark (an actual drinks wholesaler next door). The southern terminus of M1 (Hengrove Park) serves Hengrove Park Leisure Centre, City of Bristol College (South Campus) and South Bristol Community Hospital.
- *The return journey from Cabot Circus to Hengrove took 40 minutes each way*

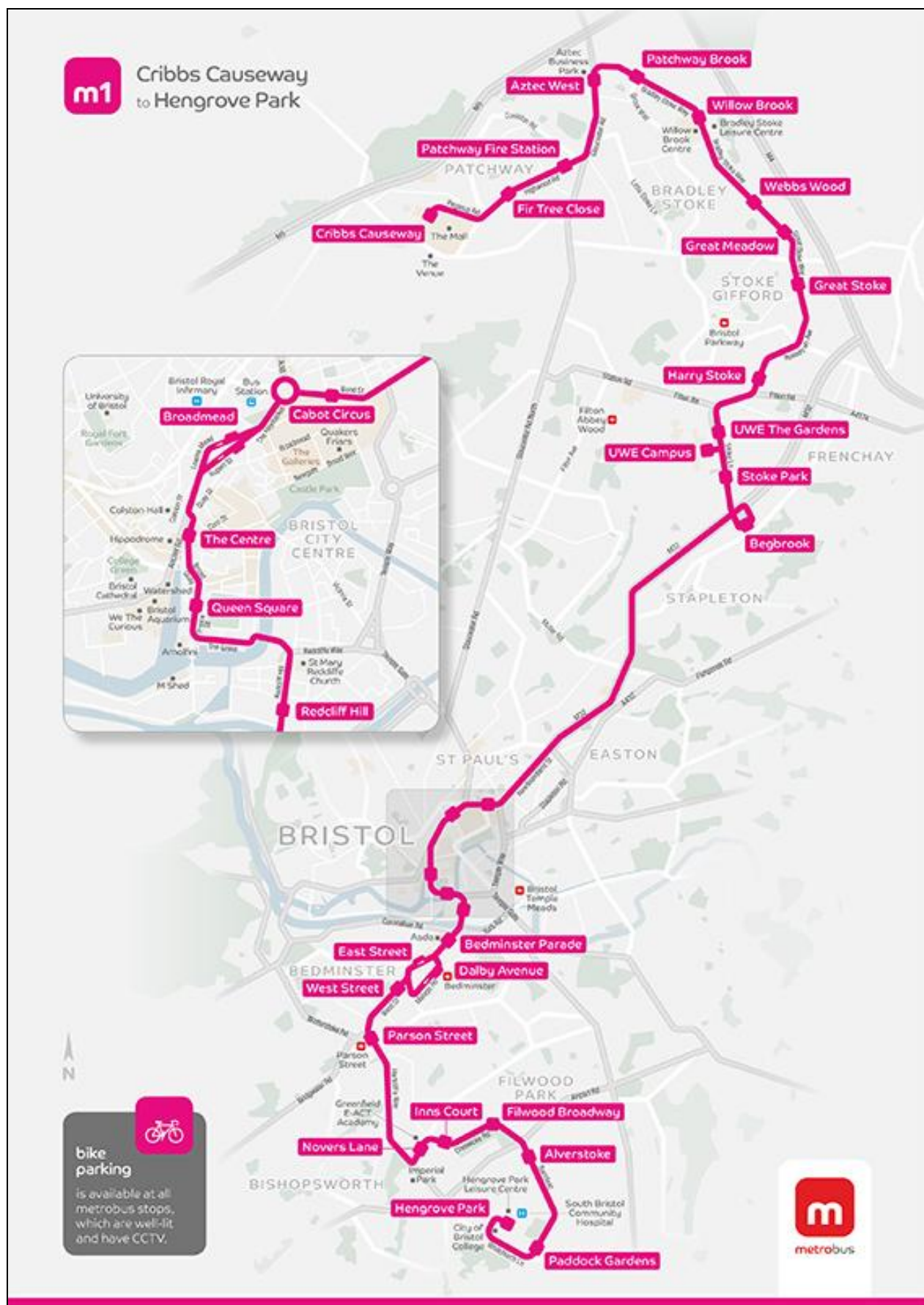


According to James Freeman, MD of First (West of England), the two earlier MetroBus routes M2 (jaffa orange to Long Ashton Park & Ride) and M3 (lime green to Emersons Green) are proving popular and exceeding passenger number projections. Let us hope that this will be true for the M1 route also, especially when the Parkway station access is sorted. There are proposals, in the WECA Joint Local Transport Plan (JLTP4), for seven more routes.

Route maps, timetables and ticketing information can all be found at <https://metrobusbristol.co.uk>.

photo opposite shows an iPoint - at or near all bus stops on the MetroBus routes - where you can buy tickets, plan journeys in the Bristol region and view live running information for

## M1 MetroBus route





## Delays in Germany?

You might think that all German trains are super efficient - never a microsecond of delay - but think again!



A scarf knitted by a German woman, to document her frustrations with frequent train delays, has sold for €7,550 (£6,720) on eBay - as the country's biggest railway company announces plans for a punctuality tsar.

The “**rail delay scarf**” came to prominence when Sara Weber, a journalist, posted a photo of it on Twitter earlier this month. Her mother, a commuter in the Munich area, knitted two lines a day in 2018 to represent how long she was delayed for, she explained.

The scarf is colour-coded: grey wool meant her delay had been less than five minutes, pink signified delays of between five and 30 minutes, while red meant she was delayed for more than 30 minutes or had been delayed both ways. “In the spring, everything was OK. Lots of grey and pink; then for a while it was all red: rail replacement traffic throughout the summer.”

The scarf, approximately 1.5 metres (4.9 ft) long, represented many Germans’ frustrations with train delays, despite their country’s reputation abroad for efficiency and punctuality. After it went viral on social media, Sara Weber and her mother decided to auction the scarf off for charity.

The continuing delays have led the German railway company Deutsche Bahn (DB) to appoint Ronald Pofalla, DB’s head of infrastructure and a former chief of staff in the German chancellery, as crisis manager to improve its punctuality record. *Roughly one-quarter of all trains and one-third of long-distance trains were late in 2018* — a far cry from

the days when 95% of German trains ran on time. For 2019, Deutsche Bahn has set an on-time goal of 80% of all trains and 76.5% of long-distance trains.



Proceeds from the scarf have gone to Bahnhofsmmission, a charity helping vulnerable passengers or those facing travel emergencies.

***Ed: Thanks to FOSBRite Chris Banks for alerting me to this story - which featured in the Guardian on 14 January 2019.***

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## **Games and other events on the Train**

When you think about it, train carriages make a great travelling venue for events - plenty of space to move around and interact with other people while on the move to interesting places. It is good to know that this is being put to good use on our local trains by the holding of different events organised by the Severnside Community Rail Partnership (SCRCP).

One of the first of these was a project 'Days out by Train' which ran from June 2016 to February 2017. The project provided free rail travel (on GWR services only) for groups of people from disadvantaged communities wishing to spend a day out in a variety of destinations. This initiative was developed by Dr Mirriam Ricci, Senior Research Fellow at the University of the West of England, funded by GWR under the Customer and Communities Improvement Fund (CCIF) 2016/17 and was delivered in collaboration with SCRCP. Over 2,000 people took advantage of this initiative and a survey of participants' opinions showed that affordability of fares was the biggest perceived barrier to rail travel, followed by not knowing how to travel by train or about available train services. Additional deep-rooted issues such as social isolation, lack of confidence in using the railways and lack of support from others can also prevent people from travelling by train. See <http://eprints.uwe.ac.uk/32437> for Dr Ricci's full report.



Further 'On Train' events have been organised by Heather Cullimore, Partnership and Social Inclusion Manager for SCRP, together with a host of other organisations. The events take place on specially selected off peak scheduled services - identified as having sufficient space capacity - usually using the four tables and 16 seat at the front or rear of a class 166 Turbo. SCRP promotes use of this space to hard to reach groups by way of encouraging people to connect with their local railway. The Partnership liaises with GWR who generously provide complimentary tickets and, where appropriate, a tea trolley and biscuits. Events over the last couple of years include:

*During 2017:*

- Photography workshop (October)
- 'Crowd on the Train' mental awareness sessions where passengers drew portraits and self-portraits - these displayed on the carriage windows to highlight the fact that one person in four will experience mental health problems challenges (October)
- A 'Carols in the Carriage' event between Avonmouth and Temple Meads - with music and singing led by the members of the 2nd Wind All Stars Band (December)

*During 2018:*

- Arts Workshop delivered in collaboration with Bristol Women's Voice to mark the 100th year of women's votes (January).
- 'When I Grow Up' campaign where sixth form students from Colston's Girls School engaged passengers to discuss what they want or had wanted to be when they grow up (February).
- 'Human Library' whereby local volunteers became human books, lending themselves out to passengers to talk about their chosen subject during the journey. Volunteers for this included Daryl Jones MP, Robot Engineer Steve Bullock and Channel 4 Googlebox's Mary and Marina.
- A 'Communi Tea' party to raise awareness of Crimestoppers charity's 30th anniversary
- During the Bristol Food Festival, various foodie events on the train including the 'Healthy Breakfast Giveaway'.
- 'Singing for the Brain on the Train' when staff and volunteers from Bristol's Dementia Wellbeing Service, a partnership between Alzheimer's Society and Devon NHS Trust, gave 20 dementia patients and their families/ carers a chance to sing along while travelling along the line to Temple Meads.
- 'Games on the Train' - organised by Tracy Edwards-Brown and Liz Dicker of LinkAge, a charity that tackles loneliness for over 55's, in partnership with SCRP. Every two months, participants play bingo or cards on the journey but, most importantly, enjoy a cup of tea, a chat and a change of scenery.

SCRPs 'On the Move Events' programme received recognition in the Best Community Engagement Category at the 2018 Association of Community Rail Partnership's national awards.



# Games on the Train

**ALL ABOARD** for an afternoon of fun and games!

**Wednesday 8<sup>th</sup> May 2019**  
 FREE for over 50s in North Bristol

**Leaving at 15:15** from Avonmouth Train Station (Gloucester Rd, BS11 9JB)  
**Leaving at 15:20** from Sea Mills Train Station (Sea Mills Lane, BS9 1SU)

Starting at Avonmouth Train Station we will travel along to Sea Mills Train Station before traveling onwards to Temple Meads, all the while playing games, chatting and having some fun. Once we arrive at Temple Meads we will then return back to Sea Mills and Avonmouth.



Bingo. Board Games. Knitting. Meet local people.

There are limited free tickets which will be allocated on a first come first serve basis. Additional tickets will be available for £3 which can be purchased on the train. For more information and to reserve tickets please email [lisdicker@hotmail.com](mailto:lisdicker@hotmail.com) or telephone 0780 795 9768.

Supported by:  
 Sea Mills Community Centre  
 Sea Mills Over 50's Group

SEVERNSIDE Community Rail Partnership  
 GWR LinkAge Network

It is so good to see the train being used in imaginative ways for so many good causes.

Similar events , including Games on the Train' will be happening throughout this year. For more information go the SCRП website [www.severnside-rail.org.uk](http://www.severnside-rail.org.uk). If you wish to get involved, or have ideas for group events send a message to Heather Cullimore via the 'Contact Us' tab on the SCRП website.

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## News from Pilning Station – March 2019

*Olga Taylor*

Earlier this year Pilning Station Group approached two railway authorities, asking for improvements at the station.

First, we asked **Network Rail** whether they would be able to recycle the redundant footbridge from Angel Road Station in North London (which is due to close in May 2019). Our argument was that the Angel Road Footbridge was high enough to clear electrification cables; if not reused in Pilning, it would only be wasted; it would give us an opportunity to return home without doubling-back via Wales; and maybe, just maybe, a train operating company would then consider running a trial commuter service if they knew that passengers could return to the station from which they departed. We even offered to raise the necessary funds to move it! About a month later, we received their response: "There are no plans or justification for spending taxpayers' money on reinstating a footbridge at Pilning. This does mean that if you were successful in raising funds to move the bridge, there is not a justification for us to place the footbridge once received."

We then asked **GWR** to consider stopping an earlier afternoon train at Pilning at 13:34, in addition to the current 08:34 and 15:34. The 13:34 actually did stop there previously - and was being used - but was quite unnecessarily withdrawn when the 15:34 was put into the



timetable. Our thought behind the request was that an extra train would gain popularity with the locals who could return home a couple of hours earlier, but also with pub goers and railway enthusiasts, who could arrive on it and enjoy a pint or two or even lunch at the Plough before catching the 15:34 back to Bristol. Surprisingly, GWR were not very keen on the idea of some extra revenue from leisure travellers. In fact, they were rather categorical: "Pilning is on the mainline, stopping trains here impacts on journey times for long distance services at a time when customers and stakeholders in Wales and Bristol are asking for faster connections to support the regional and local economy. We have to be mindful of this and we will not be increasing calls at Pilning beyond the Service Level Commitment set down by the Department for Transport."

One may think that with two harsh responses like that, we have reached the end of the line. On the contrary, we decided to examine these responses closer. We asked further questions, we checked various timescales, we watched the news.

Network Rail were quite open in their feedback. They cannot justify improving infrastructure in Pilning because, according to them, there is "an insufficient business case to invest public funds in Pilning station to replace the footbridge. Additional local services need to be identified by South Gloucestershire council as part of their wider transport planning."

As far as extra stopping services are concerned, GWR referred us to the Service Level Commitment for the current franchise. But we must not forget that the Greater Western franchise is due to expire at the end of March 2020 (albeit a short extension seems likely, maybe until 2022), so it would be good to sow the seeds now for the next operator to be aware of the situation in Pilning and maybe become more mindful of Severnside passengers as well as everyone else.

On the other hand, Office of Rail and Road (ORR) announced their new policy, which begins on 1st April 2019, and will allow ORR to routinely monitor and assess Network Rail's performance, investigate and resolve concerns of rail users at an early stage, and even take enforcement actions where necessary. In other words, ORR can now hold Network Rail to account; the passengers and other rail users should now be at the centre of concerns; and any issues should be resolved as early as possible. We wonder if anyone had Pilning station in mind when they wrote this new policy...

Bearing all the above-said in mind, the good news for those who wish to use the renewed Pilning station is that the onus now is on South Gloucestershire Council to request the service. There may be a few hoops to jump - such as running a local transport survey, building a business case for improved public transport links, maybe even finding some sponsors who would wish to contribute to rebuilding Pilning station. But the overall vision is there.

We are not trying to diminish the importance of other local railway stations, e.g. Severn Beach. But will Severn Beach alone be sufficient to serve the fast-growing industrial area at Severnside? It only gives access in one direction - Pilning is ideally placed to provide access to North, South, East and West, if only it had a decent service. Whilst jobs are being lost within half an hour's train journey from Pilning, and thousands of new positions are being

created in Severnside Enterprise Area, we desperately need better public transport links to give the local economy the anticipated boost without causing too much damage to the environment. Could a road be built from the new motorway junction, linking car users to a Park & Ride facility in Pilning, avoiding the use of the existing country lanes? Could the MetroBus route be extended to Severnside, ferrying passengers between Pilning and Severn Beach stations, as well as many other exciting destinations in the area? The possibilities are endless.

All that is needed now is a lot of fact-gathering, careful analysis and a bit of imagination. So the Campaign continues!...

Olga Taylor, chair of Pilning Station Group  
CAMPAIGN WEBSITE: [www.pilningstation.uk](http://www.pilningstation.uk)



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## What's so special about Severn Beach?

**Julie Boston**

There's an hourly service between Temple Meads and Severn Beach stations on Sundays until 20 October 2019. Surely you are tempted by the journey along the River Avon? On arrival at Severn Beach station, you will be welcomed by displays of local information about the wild life of the Estuary which is, in effect, a Nature Reserve.

FOSBRites have found Severn Beach a blessed release for years.. Gill Sheppard, wrote in celebration of the 2008 summer Sunday service :

*" For the exhausted city dweller  
What could be a better cure  
Than to walk along the estuary,  
Breathing fresh sea salted air.*


*The curlew and the cormorant  
Have joined in a refrain  
There's the far off eerie hootin'  
Of the 14.06 train."*

In Severn Beach, the legendary Shirley's Café, the 'Just as You Are Tea Cottage' and the Down's Bakery ensure that visitors can eat, drink and be merry. These venues have fliers advertng local talks and other entertainment. Shirley's Café also provides a lavatory and South Gloucestershire are still keeping the Severn Beach public lavatory open.

**And do not forget the Severn Vale Festival on Saturday 13th July, 11 am to 4 pm.**

**For more details, go to: <https://www.severnbeachvillagehall.co.uk/events>**

## FOSBR - a mini celebration




# FOSBR NEWSLETTER

February  
1999

**LET'S MAKE FULL USE OF OUR RAIL NETWORK**

Bristol City Council is organising meetings throughout the city to present their LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN. These meetings start at 7.30 pm, are extremely well organised and give people a chance to hear and discuss the Council's proposals. Their solutions are :

- Traffic Management / calming,
- Walking /cycling / safer routes to school
- Traffic Restraint
- Public Transport




The Council does not run 'public transport'. They operate a damage limitation policy of topping up bus and rail frequency by giving £1.3 million to First Group and £100,000 to Wales and West each year.

The transport meetings are an ideal opportunity for Friends to publicise Bristol's **S rail route** with our yellow leaflet. Many people do not know that the track is in place and could provide a passenger service from Portishead to Yate. A woman who has just returned from Vancouver told the Henleaze meeting that a 7 year campaign resulted in a brilliant rail system there. Councillor Brown (Henleaze) said that the Transport Committee were interested and had asked the officers to look at the **S route**. Cllr Pyle, (Henbury) Cllr Lukins (Avonmouth) Cllr Keefe (Bishopston) and Cllr Poole (Westbury-on-Trym) have all contacted FOSBR and expressed interest. FRIENDS should take a copy of the **S route** leaflet to their local meeting. (NB We aim to put leaflets in all libraries. Any volunteers ?)

The people of Bristol have had enough of being strangled by car fumes and grid lock, *writes an Easton FRIEND*. It's time to get traffic off the road and back on rail. The only way to get a modern transport system will be when the current ramshackle set-up is replaced by a publicly owned national railway system.

### MEETINGS START AT 7.30 PM

- West Town Lane junior school, Stockwood, Friday, March 5;
- Lawrence Weston School, Stile Acres, Monday, March 8;
- Novers Lane Junior School, Knowle, Tuesday, March 9;
- Redland High School, Redland Court Road, Thursday, March 11;
- Monks Park School, Filton Road, Horfield, Monday, March 15;
- Hartcliffe Community Centre, Hareclive Road, Tuesday, March 16;
- Millpond School, Baptist Street, Easton, Wednesday, March 17;
- Broadmead Baptist Church, Union Street, Monday, March 22;
- Whitefield School, Snowdon Road, Fishponds, Tuesday, March 23;
- St George's Community Centre, Church Road, St George, Thursday, March 25;
- Parson Street primary school, Bedminster, Friday, March 26;
- Brislington School, Hungerford Road, Monday, March 29.



**Listening:** Richard Pyle and Helen Holland with highways director Richard Rawlinson

Some of you may have noticed that this is the **100th FOSBR Newsletter**. We could not let this go by without a little nostalgia trip!

Firstly here is a copy of the front page of the first FOSBR Newsletter - at least we think it is the first proper one. The first few newsletters were actually not given a number.

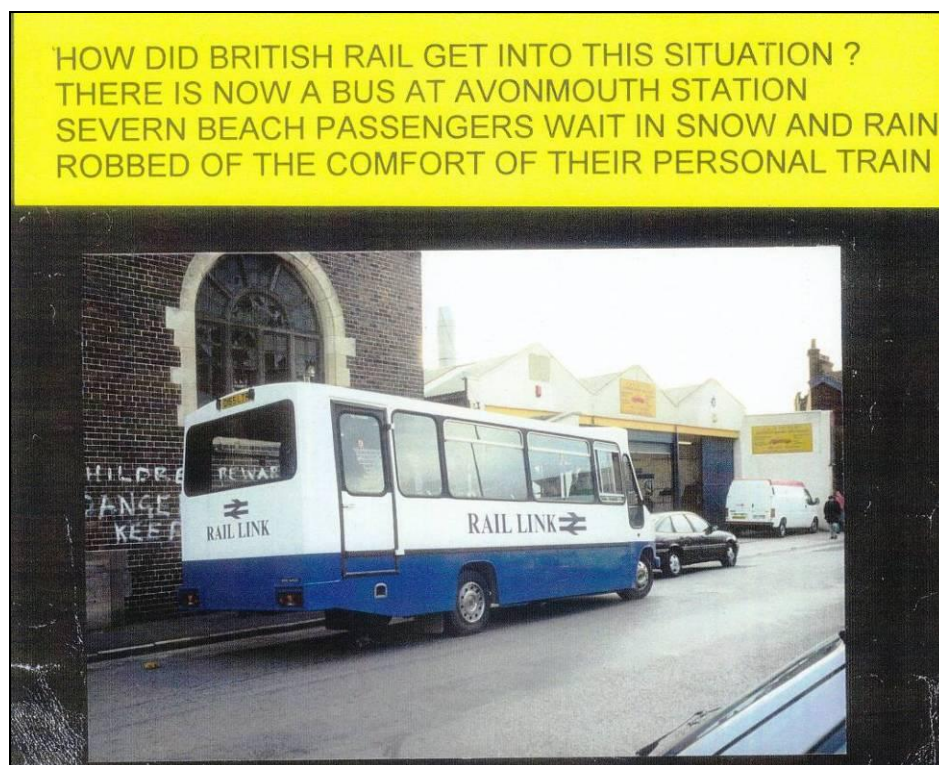
**Also from our archives ..... Julie Boston was one of the founder members of Friends of Severn Beach Railway (as it was called in the early days before it was changed to Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways).**

In June 1995, passengers learnt that the rail service between Avonmouth and Severn Beach could be replaced by a rail bus between Avonmouth and Severn Beach stations from September. Julie wrote a poem in support of the Beach Line and gathered support from local residents and campaign groups.



<p><i>The Severn Beach line is a mighty fine line Clean and friendly and usually on time Remember it's yours. Remember it's mine.</i></p> <p><i>Its safety record is 100%. Doesn't pollute the environment. Cars belch, squelch, crush and kill Trains are relaxed and tranquil Remember they belong to us still.</i></p>	<p><i>The SEVERN SPRINTER is our life line Cheapest way to clock in on time Buy a return - even before nine That's not allowed on Badgerline.</i></p> <p><i>Vultures hover because they know In '96 Avon County will go. We've paid the owners of rail and bus Now's the time to make a fuss And keep the track which belongs to us.</i></p>
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The team organised a publicity stunt at Avonmouth station to show that a 'rail bus' is no substitute for a train. Protesters travelled by train to Avonmouth with bikes, buggies and shopping trolleys to show how difficult it would be to fit these passengers and luggage on the bus. A Bristol Evening Post journalist photographed the protesters failing to board the bus and the rail bus drove off the Severn Beach - empty!



The rail service to Severn Beach was saved and passenger numbers subsequently increased.

FOSBR continues to campaign for frequency improvements to the Severn Beach Line service, particularly the appalling winter Sunday service to Severn Beach where there are only two return trains all day. Many Severnside employees work 7-day shift patterns, so an appropriate level of service is required both during weekdays and at weekends.

**FOSBR have recently launched a petition** calling on the DfT, WECA, GWR and other decision makers to ensure that, with four tracks now in place on Filton Bank, progress is made towards a half-hourly service to all West of England local stations, starting with the Severn Beach Line from the December 2019 timetable, at the latest by May 2020.

The provision of two further tracks between Bristol Temple Meads and Filton Abbey Wood in December 2018 increased capacity. This allows the half hourly service on the Severn Beach Line as far as Avonmouth (MetroWest Phase 1a) that was originally planned for 2019 (but has slipped), and for all local trains to call at Lawrence Hill and Stapleton Road stations, which services have often skipped. It also enables improvements to services at other local stations (such as Bedminster, Parson Street and Keynsham) on services that run across the city. This would allow people to travel to work more easily, particularly to Severnside and central Bristol, as well as for leisure purposes.

We have FOSBR colleagues out and about collecting paper-based signatories for our petition. Alternatively you can sign the online petition on change.org here:

<http://chnng.it/DX56sSST8W> (or follow the link from the front page of our website).

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### **FOSBR 2019 Membership Subscriptions**

Thanks to all of you who have renewed your membership for this year. Your subscriptions and donations are much appreciated and are vital for our campaign to improve local rail services. A 2019 membership card is enclosed.

To those of you who have not yet renewed your membership, it is not too late and we would be very happy to receive your subscriptions. In case you have lost the membership renewal form that was sent out in January, another one is enclosed with this newsletter.

Best wishes, Tony Lloyd (FOSBR Membership Secretary)

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### **Severn Beach line statistics**

Our colleague, Andy Mac has done a breakdown of cancellations, turnbacks and late runners for trains arriving at Severn Beach; this indicates that a large proportion of trains arrive a few minutes late:

	Cancelled	Turnback	On time/ early	Late by up to 5 mins	Late by 6-10 mins	Late by 11-15 mins	Late by 16-25 mins	Late by > 25 mins
<b>March 2019</b>	0	3	97	168	23	5	2	1
<b>April 2019</b>	1	2	115	188	12	4	2	0

On the line as a whole (all trains out and back) we do not gather the statistics for 'late by less than 5 minutes' but we can see that performance has remained stable over the last 5 months.

	Cancelled	Turnback	Late (5 mins or more)
January 2019	7	9	122
February 2019	6	8	114
March 2019	7	8	171
April 2019	5	8	124
May 2019	10	2	157

The number of late trains (5 minutes or more) is hovering around 10% of services while approximately 1% of services are either cancelled or turnbacked. During the previous period of instability (e.g. summer 2018), late trains sometimes exceeded 30% of services while cancelled/ turnbacked trains sometimes exceeded 10% of services. We are definitely seeing the benefits of the recent Filton Bank four-tracking.

Note: There are approximately 1380 services per month on the Severn Beach Line (depending on month length, how weekdays or weekends fall in a month and whether the extra summer Sunday services are in operation).

## Recent Consultations

*FOSBR has replied to two recent consultations and both can be viewed on the FOSBR website:*

- ❖ FOSBR has compiled a response to the WECA consultation on the **Joint Local Transport Plan, version 4 (JLTP4)** which ended on 20 March. This Plan set out WECA's vision for travel and transport within the West of England to 2036.
- ❖ The **Williams Rail Review** was established by DfT in September 2018 to look at the structure of the whole rail industry and the way passenger rail services are delivered. Written evidence for the review was submitted by FOSBR within the consultation period ending 31 May 2019.

*Our next newsletter will be in autumn 2019. If you have anything for the next newsletter (comments, photos, whinges, praise, poems, etc.), please send them in to us.*

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