

Bristol & Me: Julie Boston

Interview for Bristol Property Live – 20th May 2016



Age: 82

Job: Co-founder FOSBR

Years in Bristol: 27

Favourite place: St Andrews

In 1995 there were plans to replace the commuter train on the line from Bristol to Severn Beach with a bus. I was a member of a cycling campaign, because they were the only people that seemed to be concerned about transport. I went to a meeting and gave out a poem, which starts: “The Severn Beach line is a mighty fine line / Clean and friendly, and *usually* on time”. Later, I had a call from a man putting his energy into Sustrans, who said “I really like your poem, let’s do something about it”. That was the beginning of the Friends of Severn Beach Railway.

When I ride the train to the end of the line, I find it very tranquil. For anyone interested in nature, there’s an amazing range of flowers and birds at Severn Beach. If you go toward the bridges, there’s a great feeling of space, and a lovely circular walk along the estuary to the Boar’s Head at Aust.

We always said that if people knew about the service, and it was reliable, people would come. It took years of campaigning from a lot of people, but it happened. Passengers numbers have been going up since 2001, but really jumped in 2008, when a more frequent and reliable service started. The organisation’s name has subtly changed, to Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways. Problems cannot be solved on roads alone, and neglected railways can make a crucial contribution - our website is full of local towns and communities demanding greater rail access.

We hold monthly committee meetings in Halo on Gloucester Road, near where I live in St Andrews. It’s an area with great community living - nearby I’ve got the park, shops, train station, bus routes, and I go to La Ruca a lot; they’ve always been very supportive. There’s a lot of energy in the group - if only similar energy would come from our politicians! Besides campaigning events, we have things such as Fosbeer - a guide to pubs near local stations - and in support of this month’s Walking Festival we’ve produced a leaflet showing walks from rail stations or bus stops to five local libraries. Find the leaflets at: fosbr.org.uk

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