

**FOSBR comments submitted in response to North Somerset Core Strategy
Consultation Draft (February 2010)**

1. Portishead Vision (VIS 5)

The draft states: 'A passenger rail or rapid transit link into central Bristol will have been reinstated, providing a real alternative to residents commuting into Bristol for work' (p. 16).

FOSBR strongly supports the reinstatement of passenger services on the railway line from Portishead to Bristol. We are, however, dismayed to read that a rapid transit link is being considered as an alternative. For the reasons we have set out under CS10, we urge that the words 'or rapid transit' are deleted from this sentence.

2. Priority Objectives

FOSBR is dismayed that none of the priority objectives (pp. 18–19) makes any mention of improvements to North Somerset's rail infrastructure. FOSBR urges that such improvements, in particular the restoration of passenger services on the Portishead line, should be included as priority objectives. This would contribute to carbon reduction and a greener environment.

3. Addressing Climate Change and Carbon Reduction (CS1)

None of the ten guiding principles set out in Policy CS1 (pp. 21–2) mentions the potential of modal shift to rail to contribute to carbon reduction. FOSBR urges the addition of the following guiding principle to CS1: 'encourage increased use of the railway for passenger and freight transport by improving rail infrastructure and reopening stations'.

4. Minerals Planning in North Somerset (CS8)

Policy CS8 mentions the active aggregates quarries at Stancombe near Flax Bourton and Durnford near Long Ashton (pp. 51–3). Although both these quarries are close to the Bristol to Taunton railway line, the paragraph on the potential impacts of mineral working does not mention the possibility of serving them by rail.

FOSBR suggests that, in order to reduce the environmental impacts of these mineral workings, the Core Strategy and proposed Development Management DPD should consider the feasibility of transporting aggregates quarried at these sites by rail.

5. Green Infrastructure (CS9)

Among the nine priorities listed in support of CS9 is (8) 'The upgrading and extension of the public rights of way network including improved connectivity to areas of green infrastructure outside North Somerset' (p. 54). However, no mention is made, either

here or in the supporting text, of the use of disused railway corridors for paths and cycle tracks.

FOSBR urges that disused railway corridors should be protected so that they can be used as cycle tracks, as set out in Policy T/8 (Strategic Cycle Routes) in the North Somerset Replacement Local Plan (2007). Policy T/8 includes as proposed strategic cycle routes the disused railway lines between (vii) Yatton and Clevedon; (viii) Congresbury and Blagdon; and (xxvi) Yatton and Winscombe. FOSBR urges that these corridors, together with that of the former Weston, Clevedon and Portishead Railway, should be protected for use as cycle tracks.

Although we understand that Policy T/8 is to be saved in the short term, it is a matter of concern that it is listed for replacement by the weaker policies in the Core Strategy in due course. FOSBR urges that equivalent protection should be included in CS9 and in the planned Green Infrastructure Strategy.

6. Transportation and Movement (CS10)

FOSBR is dismayed that Policy CS10, and the Core Strategy in general, is less positive towards rail improvements than is Chapter 9 of the Replacement Local Plan (2007).

It is a matter of concern that, according to the Proposed Programme of Replacement of Adopted North Somerset Replacement Local Plan Policies, the transport policies in the Replacement Local Plan are to be replaced by Policy CS10, which does not make the same commitments to rail improvements.

We understand that Local Plan Policies T/1 (Existing and Proposed Railway Lines), T/2 (Existing Railway Stations), T/3 (Proposed Railway Stations), and T/8 (Strategic Cycle Routes) are proposed to be saved. We hope these policies continue in effect until they are replaced by new policies in that are no less favourable to rail.

FOSBR comments on the detail of Policy CS10 as follows:

(4) 'Reopening of the Portishead to Bristol line for passenger services, or its use for bus rapid transit'.

FOSBR strongly supports the reopening of the Portishead to Bristol line for passenger services, but urges that the words 'or its use for bus rapid transit' should be deleted from this sentence.

Bus rapid transit would be a much less effective solution to Portishead's traffic problems; indeed, it would make little difference, as having used the railway alignment from Portishead to Portbury, buses would then proceed along the congested A369 from Portbury to Bristol just as they do now. A bus-based solution would be a waste of the alignment from Portishead to Portbury, preventing its use as a railway line but doing little to improve journeys to Bristol.

The Portishead to Bristol Corridor Study Stage 2 (2001) recommended a half-hourly passenger rail service on the route. Reinstatement of passenger rail services on the line, with intermediate stations at Portbury, Pill and Ashton Gate, as mentioned in Policies T/1 and T/3 of the Replacement Local Plan, should be a priority. The protection for rail use of the route between Portbury and Portishead, as set out in Policy T/1(ii), should be maintained.

(6) Bristol Rail Metro (including the opening of bay platform at Weston Railway Station).

FOSBR supports this proposal, and urges that land surrounding the Bristol–Taunton line should be protected to allow for possible quadrupling in future, as set out in Policy T/1 of the Replacement Local Plan. The land surrounding the stations at Worle, Yatton, and Nailsea and Backwell should be protected to allow for future growth, as set out in Policy T/2 in the Replacement Local Plan. Consideration should be given to reopening stations at Flax Bourton and Long Ashton.

(12) Double tracks on the loop line between Weston Railway Station and Worle.

FOSBR supports this proposal, which will enable the frequency of services between Bristol and Weston to be increased.

FOSBR urges that provision of the Weston southern chord should be added as a scheme to be promoted, as set out in Policy T/1(i) of the Replacement Local Plan. This would allow a continuous service to be run between Weston and Bristol. Such a service could also serve the new station we propose for the bypass line, adjacent to the development proposed for the airfield site.

7. Weston-super-Mare Town Centre (CS29)

FOSBR supports the policy of ‘minimis[ing] the generation of car trips by concentrating uses around the train station and improving the public transport infrastructure’ (p. 128), and of ‘creating an office quarter around the railway station on a number of vacant or underused sites in this location’ (p. 124).

8. Weston Urban Extension (CS30)

Key requirement (9) mentions ‘rail and bus improvements’. FOSBR urges that the rail improvements should include consideration of a new station for the Weston bypass line, which is adjacent to the development proposed for the former Weston Airfield site. Such a station would enable access to the site and surrounding area, and mitigate the environmental effects of its development. The station would be served by the fast trains which run on this line, avoiding Weston-super-Mare station itself, and would be a valuable addition to the area’s transport facilities. It could also be served by local trains if the Weston southern chord is built (see our comments on CS10). This proposal

should be mentioned in the Core Strategy and in the Weston Urban Extension Supplementary Planning Document.

9. Market and Coastal Towns (CS31)

FOSBR urges that the words 'rapid transit' should be deleted from the sentence: 'For Portishead the re-opening of a rail/rapid transit link to Bristol is a priority'. See our fuller comments under CS10.

10. Service Villages (CS32)

FOSBR urges that reopening of the station at Uphill should be considered, since Uphill is included in the list of settlements where the service village policy will apply (p. 151). A station at Uphill would be served by the existing local train service between Bristol and Taunton, and would serve both Uphill itself and neighbouring communities.

11. South West Bristol Urban Extension

FOSBR urges that the 'critical transport infrastructure' mentioned in guideline (2) (p. 161) should include reopening the station at Long Ashton. This would serve both Long Ashton itself, a village that generates significant commuter traffic into Bristol, and the development proposed for the Yanley area.