

NEW DAWN FOR LOCAL RAIL



**THREE CARRIAGES ARE BETTER THAN TWO.
THE 0808 SEVERN BEACH TRAIN MAKES
LIGHT WORK LOADING A HUNDRED PEOPLE
FROM STAPLETON ROAD. (see page 2)**

- **The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.**
- **Stoke Gifford Rail Depot gets go ahead.**
- **Campaigns: Unite the City, GW franchise, McNulty.**
- **Great Western rail franchise up for grabs.**
- **AGM and 2011 year report**
- **2012 subs due-membership renewal form enclosed-plus one for a friend!**

Early morning commuters waiting at Stapleton Road railway station. These travellers used to be served by two coach Pacer trains, now thankfully strengthened to three. The improved capacity will encourage more people to use the train or at least not be left behind.



The whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

The elements of a rail network cannot be studied in isolation each one is a part of a greater system or machine spread across the city. A change or elimination of only one seemingly small or insignificant component can have a devastating effect on the whole, leading to a downward spiral that could potentially result in stagnation or worse.

The decimation of Bristol's local rail network in the latter part of the twentieth century is testament to this. The demolition of the viaduct between Montpelier and Fishponds to make way for the M32, the closure of the old Midland lines to the north and east to Bath and south to Brislington and the Portishead line to passengers in the sixties and seventies was compounded by a further blow in the eighties with the reduction in capacity of Filton Bank from four tracks to two. This was in turn followed by limited services at Bedminster and Parson Street stations in south Bristol and a service reduction on the Severn Beach Line to serve Filton Abbey Wood. It was when the Severn Beach Line service was partially substituted between Avonmouth and the Severn Beach, denying cyclists and mothers with prams access, that local citizens decided that the rot had to stop before the greater Bristol area would end up with no local passenger rail at all.

FoSBR and others have by campaigning component by component reversed the tragedy of local rail in Bristol. It was the relatively small enhancement of the Severn Beach Line service with an extra train making a usable 40' (apart from the evenings) frequency and a surprise Sunday service that began to resuscitate local Bristol rail. The efforts of Severnside Community Rail Partnership to have the incumbent operator call more often at Bristol's main line local stations such as Stapleton Road, Lawrence Hill, Bedminster and Parson Street combined with the extra platform at Bristol Parkway have for relatively little expense laid the foundations of a Bristol Metro rail system.

The growth in local rail brought about by these small enhancements is now pushing at the door at something that a few years ago seemed unimaginable but now a real possibility; the game changing **re-quadrupling for Filton Bank**.

Any potential new franchisee that believes gains can be made by missing out "inconvenient" small stations or pruning quiet evening services will find that they are pulling at a thread that will unravel the gains of the last 15 years. Each small station and quiet service is a green shoot to be nurtured into something much greater.

The multiplier effect in action: an example.

The parts:

- Clifton Down ticket office.
- More mainline services calling at Stapleton Rd.
- Evening services on the Severn Beach Line
- Better services to Bedminster and Parson St.

The so called business cases for each of the above can be greatly strengthened when combined together to be multiplied.

The whole: A new ticket office at Clifton Down can now build on the improved Severn Beach line services and sell tickets for the whole National Rail network, season tickets and perhaps advise on continental rail travel. In other words take the pressure of Bristol Temple Meads not only at the main ticket office but the infrastructure too. If more mainline trains call at Stapleton Road

including the direct Bristol Parkway to Bath Spa trains instead of missing out inner city stations then travellers from Clifton (and further afield) can avoid the hassle of changing trains at Temple Meads and make connections at a human scale Stapleton Road International (And if they have time to spare shop in St Marks Road). In effect Clifton Down will be perceived equally as a mainline station as a local one. (A guard once on a Sunday Severn Beach train showed the £400+ cash he took before 11am from people travelling further afield.) Improved evening services will multiply further the amenity of local trains and long distance trains.

Clifton Down Ticket Office x Stapleton Road Interchange x Better Evening Services x United rail services to Bedminster and Parson St = **Gestalt Leap in rail use**. Once the critical mass and tipping point is reached the explosion in rail use will make the **re- four-tracking on Filton Bank** seem like small beer in the history of Bristol's local rail renaissance.

And there is more. The return of trains to Brunel's rail shed brings the entrance to Temple Meads a couple of hundred yards closer to the City centre that combined with a public transport interchange at plot 6... (for the next newsletter)

Banzai! Hitachi Rail Depot receives planning permission from South Glos. The controversial new depot at Stoke Gifford has been given planning permission by South Glos. council. Local residents have argued that there were more suitable locations, which may have been so had the Swindon works not been closed and turned into a shopping outlet village. It also sticks in the throat that British train manufacturing has been so decimated by political indifference that the Japanese have had to be brought in to provide the rolling stock. Had electrification been carried out in the eighties when first proposed by British Rail nor the Advance Passenger Train been canned then things may have been quite different. No matter, we are where we are and this depot further strengthens the case for **Filton Bank's re-quadrupling** supporting FoSBR's aspirations in developing local Bristol rail. Let us hope that this firm from the land of the rising sun becomes a good and welcome neighbour showcasing the best of rail technology with a touch of Zen.

FOSBR ANNUAL AGM.

The AGM was on 21st January 2012 at Avonmouth Social Club: 23 FOSBRites attended. A full report of the AGM can be found on the FoSBR's excellent website www.fosbr.org.uk

The highlight of the AGM was the Guest Speaker: Steve Tyler First Great Western Manager Central who told us about his job remit and spoke to us about the need for joining with other campaign groups to speak with one voice on:

- * Electrification, currently Paddington to Temple Meads and Cardiff, to be extended to Swansea, Weston super Mare, and local services such as the Severn Beach Line and Yate
- * Henbury loop to be reopened
- * Portishead reopened for passenger traffic
- * **Four-tracking Filton Bank** – “push at that door”. (Rail depot at Stoke Gifford now has been given planning permission).

Steve also fielded well some pretty tough questioning from the floor with a respectively level of candour. It was encouraging to see that he was prepared to spend time to engage with FoSBR and ask be included on other FoSBR events and also to hear that he is himself a regular commuter on local Bristol rail, witnessing himself the exponential growth it has enjoyed in the past few years.

4. Treasurer's report:

To sum up we are still in the black but we need new members. **PLEASE SEND IN YOUR MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM!**

5. Committee: Resignations: Julie Boston is resigning as Campaigns Organiser but is continuing as a FOSBR committee member. We presented Julie with “The Times Mapping The Railways: The journey of Britain's railways through maps from 1819 to the present day” at the FOSBEER Sunday event on Sunday 29th January at the Barley Mow, but look forward to continued involvement!

New FOSBR committee 2012:

Bernard Lane (chair)

Tony Lloyd (membership/treasurer)

Tina Biggs (secretary)

Rob Dixon (press officer)

Co-opted committee

Brendan Biggs Daniel Casey

Dave Wood Eric Wildman

Ian Shortman Julie Boston

Lionel White Teresa McGill

FoSBR's CURRENT CAMPAIGNS.

1. Unite the City (FOSBR/Green party initiative) – please write to your councillor!

In 2007, FOSBR campaigned for a 30 minute service between Temple Meads and Avonmouth stations. We did not win what we asked for but persuaded BCC to pay £1.3 m over three years. From 2008 this created many improvements such as two trains on the line which created a more reliable 40-minute service. In 2010, Cllr Gary Hopkins renegotiated the contract with First Great Western, ensuring that the money from ticket sales went straight to First Great Western rather than to the Department for Transport. As a consequence, the yearly subsidy was reduced to £220,000, thereby saving £200,000 from the subsidy. But FOSBR wants to see that £200k reinvested in rail, in the wider Bristol Metro. This has not yet happened.

The Green Party are putting in £90,000 extra for trains, presumably as Daniel Casey mentioned, from 0600 to 0000. Labour are proposing a more modest £35,000 extra for an additional evening train. FOSBR would like to go further and to see the whole of the £200k saved reinvested in rail, improving the service to Parson Street and Bedminster as well. There is no sign yet of any support for extra rail spending from the Lib Dems or Tories, but nothing will be decided until the Full Council budget meeting on Tues 28 February 2012 to set the budget.

We need to lobby councillors so please write a short statement to your local councillor on the back of the enclosed FOSBR map, outlining your local journey, in time for the budget meeting on the 28 February. Visit the Bristol City Council website to find out the address of your local councillor: <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/councillorfinder/?Task=name>; click on the name to get the address.

Please urge them to vote for all of the £200k Severn Beach Line money to be saved for rail. It was money that was fought for and we want to see it reinvested in rail.

2. The Greater Western Franchise Replacement Consultation – please write to the Department for Transport!

Local council actions:

On 17th January 2012 Councillor David Willingham – a FOSBR member! – submitted a motion to the council which called for the council to ensure that they respond to the consultation for the new Rail Franchise. The motion received cross-party support and was passed unanimously. Amongst other things it stated that the franchisee should provide half-hourly services to existing and any new stations, new and sufficient rolling stock, four-tracking of Filton Bank, and the reopening of the Portishead line and the Henbury loop.

FOSBR was very pleased to see this motion passed and we hope that it both reflects a desire to see improvements and will lead to action!

Tim Kent, Bristol cabinet member for Transport, subsequently announced that Bristol City Council have allocated funds to employ staff to work on the development of rail schemes for the franchise. We welcome this, although we are concerned that the council and the West of England Partnership should have been doing this years ago! We hope it is not too late!

Tim Kent has also announced his desire for a campaign to ensure that the franchise includes a half-hourly service to all existing and future stations. His stated intention is for a campaign including politicians across parties and across the local authorities, businesses, and pressure groups including FOSBR, Portishead Rail Group and Transport for Greater Bristol. These will jointly (and separately) put pressure on the government and bidders to ensure we get a cross-city half-hourly service to existing and any new stations, together with the reopening of the Portishead line and Henbury loop.

What FOSBR told the council we want to see in the franchise:

In our submission to the council, we urged the council and the West of England Partnership to show leadership in pressing the government and potential bidders to include the following in the new franchise:

- 1) In line with the Joint Local Transport Plan, half-hourly services to all local stations must be written into the franchise. It is also important to ensure that these services also run to any future new stations, in order to ensure the franchisee cannot demand extra funding to stop at these stations.
- 2) Half-hourly services should also run in the evenings. At present there is a 90 minute gap in the evening timetable on the Severn Beach line and there are insufficient local services from Temple Meads to Parkway at the weekend. There need to be earlier first trains and later last trains on local routes.
- 3) As an absolute minimum, current service levels must be maintained. These are higher than the level specified in the current franchise. The current enhanced 40-minute service on the Severn Beach Line should be specified in the new franchise until infrastructure permits a 30-minute service.
- 4) The four-tracking of Filton Bank is essential to ensure any improvements and that local services are not reduced in order to enable the new Bristol Temple Meads to London trains, via Parkway, that are proposed after electrification.
- 5) There must be a requirement for integrated ticketing and for action to be taken to promote local stations such as Clifton Down and Lawrence Hill as local interchanges, both for changing trains and to connect with bus services.
- 6) The rail line to Portishead must be reopened and, as elsewhere, an half-hourly service provided.
- 7) There must be adequate revenue protection including spot checks at all local stations and staffed offices or ticket machines.

- 8) Cycling facilities must be provided, such as safe route information, lockers and CCTV.
- 9) The line between Avonmouth and Bristol Parkway, known as the Henbury loop, must be reopened, with a half-hourly service.
- 10) If investment in the infrastructure required to ensure these services is not forthcoming from Network Rail, this should be the responsibility of the franchisee.
- 11) New rolling stock must be provided to ensure the efficient operation of services.
- 12) We hope that there will be electrification of local services, taking advantage of economies of scale.

Whilst we accept that the priorities are for half-hourly services on existing lines and the line to Portishead, plus new rolling stock to ensure this, we believe it is vital to aim higher and to ensure that nothing is done to prevent further improvements in the future, such as new stations, additional services or light rail.

FOSBR's suggestions for the Franchise: You will have received a draft copy of FOSBR's suggestions for the franchise with the last newsletter (see FOSBR website). This will form the basis for our submission to the Department for Transport and potential bidders.

What can you do?

1) Write to the Department for Transport by 31 March 2012

Ask for half-hourly services at existing and any new stations, new rolling stock, the quadrupling of Filton Bank and the reopening of the Portishead line and Henbury loop to passengers. If these are not funded by the Department for Transport or Network Rail, they should be included in the franchise and the responsibility of the franchisee. **As an absolute minimum, current service levels must be maintained. These are higher than the level specified in the current franchise. Responses should be sent to GWconsultation@dft.gsi.gov.uk.**

AND copy in politicians – your Councillor, MP and the Executive Member for Transport for your local council.

2) When the bidders are announced, write to ALL of them asking for these to be included in their bid as 'priced options'.

3. McNulty: Tugging at the fraying thread: Please send a postcard. Threatened Ticket offices: Filton (to close in afternoon); Oldfield Park (morning); Keynsham (morning); Weston-super-Mare (late shift); Bath Spa (late shift); Worle Parkway (morning); Nailsea and Backwell (morning); Yate (morning); Yatton (Morning); Bridgewater (morning); Taunton (late shift); Bradford on Avon (morning); Trowbridge (late shift); Westbury (morning); Frome (morning); Warminster (morning); Gloucester Central (late shift); Cheltenham Spa (late shift).

A campaign postcard is enclosed – **please send!** (Tina Biggs)

Walking between Westbury to Warminster: Exploring Bristol's railway hinterland.



Westbury Station, famous for having the best café on the Weymouth line makes a fine start for a short winters walk to Warminster. Westbury is a busy interchange handling trains from Bristol, London, Weymouth and Devon and Cornwall in addition to freight. As a portal to the rest of the country it is dignified with proper facilities that enhance the attractiveness of rail travel. A example perhaps for the likes Filton Abbey Wood, Stapleton Road and Clifton Down.

Ancient investment in infrastructure. Forts have been in these parts for a long time.





Catching the train back to Bristol from Warminster after a walk, a Sunday roast and a day away from the computer.

FOSBEER Sunday events throughout the year

Alma Tavern (Clifton Down): rail game, Miles Arms (Avonmouth): skittles match. Sugar Loaf (Stapleton Road): rail policy meeting – discussion of McNulty Report. Mill House (Sea Mills): darts match, Prince of Wales (Montpelier): music. Kensington Arms (Redland): rail quiz and discussion on rail policy

Conferences and meetings

Meetings with Charlotte Leslie (Bernard and Rob) leading to a letter to the Transport Secretary (March 2011) and *Bristol Rail Debate* in the House of Commons, July 2011

Travelwatch South West, Saturday 9 October, Taunton (Rob)

West of England Rail Conference, Friday 4 November, Bristol (Bernard, Rob, Julie, Brendan)

Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation, Wednesday 16 November, Exeter (Julie, Teresa)

Regular attendance at Transport for Greater Bristol Alliance meetings, Bristol (Rob, Julie, Bernard, Brendan)

Meetings with Tim Kent, Wednesday 14 December, Bristol (Bernard, Julie, Teresa, Rob, Brendan)

FOSBR stalls (Lionel and Peter) Redland Mayday Fair, Windmill Hill City Farm, Festival of Nature, St Andrew's Park Art, Nailsea Scout Group Fete, Avonmouth Park Fete, Yatton Flower Show

Timetable distribution (Lionel plus helpers): 11,000 timetables given out to 35–40 libraries, shops, cafes, flats, churches, and community centres

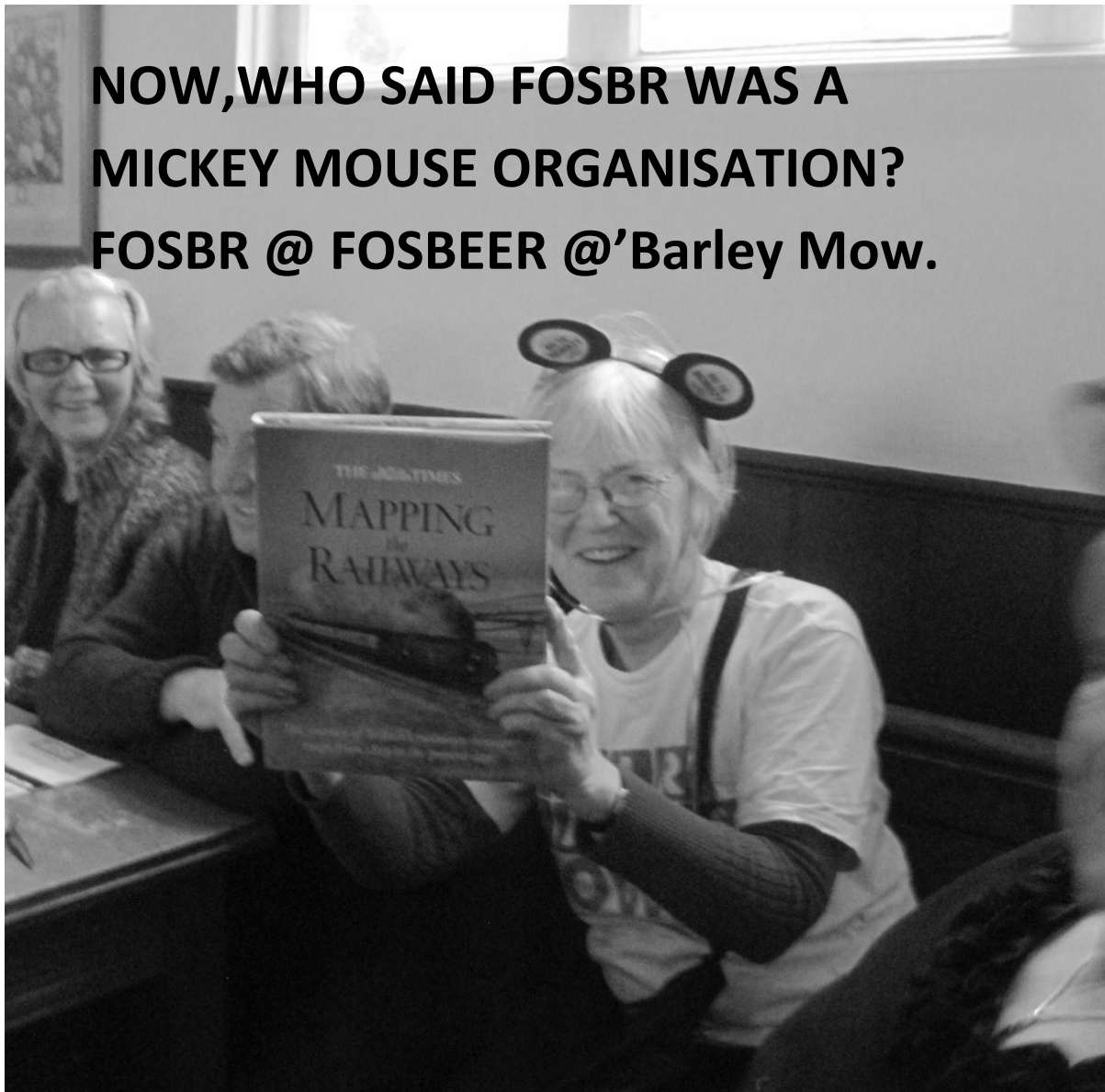
Publications

Submissions to Core Strategies for North Somerset, and South Gloucestershire (Brendan) plus associated meetings in Thornbury and Worle (Bernard, Brendan and Tina)

FOSBR suggestions for the new GW franchise circulated to First Great Western, Bristol City Council, West of England Partnership

Analysis of station usage figures (Rob) see website www.fosbr.org.uk

**NOW, WHO SAID FOSBR WAS A
MICKEY MOUSE ORGANISATION?
FOSBR @ FOSBEER @'Barley Mow.**



Members and supporters of FOSBR gathered together for the first FOSBEER Sunday of 2012 at The Barley Mow pub near Temple Meads Station on 29th January.

We watched the latest YouTube film made by ReelNews and FoSBR members called, Unite the City. A very timely topic as it emphasised the importance of improving the evening service on local branch lines.

Then we listened to Bernard Kennedy of Aslef, who talked about the implications of the McNulty report for our area and the campaign which the rail unions are running in opposition.

This was followed by a useful discussion on how we could play our part. We were encouraged to take part in the postcard campaign.

The next Fosbeer Sunday will take place on the last Sunday in February, the 26th from 3pm until 5pm at The Kensington Arms. There will be a major discussion on the new rail franchise and its implications for our area. All welcome.

Future Sundays planned are Sunday, 25th March 3pm - 5pm at the Miles Arms (Avonmouth Station): skittles match. Sunday 29th April 3pm - 5pm at the Mill House (Sea Mills Station): darts match.

Put the dates in your diary and come along!

Teresa McGill

Keeping in Touch

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