

Newsletter

Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways

Number 71

September 2009

ELECTRIFYING!

PRIME MINISTER ANNOUNCES GREAT WESTERN ELECTRIFICATION!

Finally, after decades of waiting, Gordon Brown has announced the electrification of Bristol's main rail line to London. In a £1.1 billion plan, that has now been ratified by the Government and with work to start immediately, Network Rail will electrify over 300 route miles of track, between London, Bristol and Cardiff. The scheme, which will take 8 years to complete, will also include branch routes to Oxford and Newbury and the Bristol Parkway to Bristol Temple Meads link route.

Brown: "Making the railways fit for the 21st Century"

As one of the last major UK rail routes to be electrified, the Great Western Main line will be upgraded to support brand new, faster, cleaner, more reliable trains, operating at speeds of up to 140mph, leading to more frequent services and reduced journey times. Rail electrification is also the most environmentally friendly mode of powered transport that exists.

Whilst FOSBR obviously welcomes this great news, we will continue to campaign for improvements to Bristol's local rail infrastructure. We will be monitoring the effects of the modernisation on local services, particularly between Bristol and Bath, where peak time overcrowding can still be an issue. We will fight any plans that would be to the detriment of Bristol's local rail users.

Target 2018!

So, by 2018 we have been promised an upgraded main line between Bristol and London. Will it happen? Well, according to Gordon Brown "*We have set aside money for this. It's an important priority for us.*" We have heard of such plans before and we'll probably only believe it when the wires go up – in such uncertain economic times, anything can change. We need assurance from all political parties that they are committed to this electrification scheme. Not only is it the greener option, it will create many jobs and help revitalise our local economy. It is time to drag Bristol's transport system up to the standards of the average European city!! And this time - it might actually happen! Watch this space

Network Rail publish South West “Route Utilisation Strategy”

Network Rail has just published its “Route Utilisation Strategy”, setting out their plans and aspirations for our railway over the next 10 years. The latest South West RUS is now available and whilst FOSBR are still formulating a full response to the document, here are a few initial observations.

This RUS concludes that there are currently capacity problems at Stoke Gifford, Severn Tunnel and Filton Bank. It also mentions current and future capacity problems at Temple Meads. It recommends some schemes, but many are rejected as too costly.

It assumes that the Portishead reopening and Swindon-Kemble redoubling will happen as planned BUT states that these are dependent on third party funding from the region (which is not certain). It also states that resignalling around Bristol will occur in 2014.

The RUS examines the business case for other schemes: it recommends the quadrupling of track from Temple Meads to Parson Street; lengthening of some Cardiff-Portsmouth and Bristol-Weymouth trains and a new hourly service from Swindon to Salisbury via Melksham. It states that services can be changed to provide additional capacity across Bristol. A map shows the number of services calling at each station and shows 4 or 5 services per hour at many stations and 2 per hour to Clifton BUT (as we'd already been warned) at the expense of services to Avonmouth and Severn Beach, which would reduce to hourly. Since the turnaround time to Clifton is over 30 minutes, FOSBR believe it will be impossible to run a half-hourly service calling all stations to Clifton Down. This change would therefore lead to a reduction of services to some stations towards Clifton Down, as well as between Clifton Down and Avonmouth.

The RUS does NOT recommend the quadrupling of the line from Temple Meads to Parkway, because it is too expensive in comparison to the resulting improvements to existing services. It does acknowledge the fact that the current two tracks cause a delay to one service to impact on others and also that they prevent the expansion of services. It calls this scheme a 'key requirement' for the railway which would impact nationally, and also states that there is insufficient capacity for the services planned after electrification and to meet the needs of future growth. For that reason this scheme is going to be examined further and a more detailed business case developed. FOSBR will clearly be commenting on this.

Train 'loads' are not estimated to be high enough in 2019 to justify an expansion of services or infrastructure (e.g. the Henbury Loop or double-tracking from Clifton Down to Montpellier). However we shall argue that Network Rail's figures are from 2007 and so do not show the large increases on the Severn Beach line since then. Nor do they take account of the extra demand which is created by improved and more regular services.

Everyone can comment on the RUS and it is important that individual rail users (and particularly FOSBR members) should give their input. The closing date for comments is November 27th. You can download a copy of the full 192 page document by visiting www.networkrail.co.uk and searching the site for “**Great Western RUS Draft**”. Responses should be sent to greatwesternrus@networkrail.co.uk or sent by post to: **GW RUS Consultation Response, Network Rail, Floor 4 Kings Place, 90 York Way, London N1 9AG**. The RUS document can also be obtained by writing to this address.

RFA Watch

South-West told to “Re-visit Priorities”

Regular readers of the FOSBR Newsletter will recall Issue 69, in which we reported that the South-West's application for “Regional Funding Allocation” pushed rail and public transport development projects to the back of the queue, giving priority to expensive rural road schemes instead.

Well, the good news is that the DfT (Department for Transport), having considered the regional submission, have now written to the South West of England bidders, telling them that they've got it **WRONG!**

To quote the DfT's exact words:

“A number of these schemes are strong public transport candidates that are closely connected with growth and regeneration. DfT would encourage the region to challenge, through its programme management processes, whether deferring some of these schemes delivers the right outcomes for the region.”

The DfT goes on to say that pushing the public transport schemes back as late as **2016/17** in the funding round has cast severe doubt on their **ever** being implemented. (*Where have we seen this before? Ed.*)

Bypass is Bypassed!

So, as expected, the ridiculously expensive, environmentally and economically disastrous plan for a bypass road around Westbury (Wilts) has been thrown out by The Secretary of State for Transport. But – to quote the DfT once again **“it would not be appropriate at this stage for the region to re-allocate the money released within the RFA programme to another major project, without the agreement of the Department”**.

In other words, by getting the bid **WRONG** in the first place, our ever-blinkered, road loving Shire county neighbours, have put at risk funding desperately needed for inter-urban public transport improvements across the entire South West region.

More proof that the region needs a viable Regional Transport Authority - that might just do some “Joined-Up Thinking” for once!

Join FOSBR for a Pre-Christmas Celebration on Sat Dec 5th

Join us on the 09:16 train from Temple Meads (09:29 from Clifton Down) for a trip up to Severn Beach and then back to Avonmouth for breakfast at Andel's cafe. Take the 11:15 from Avonmouth back to Clifton Down where we hope to arrange festivities (including decoration of the FOSBR Xmas tree) on the platform. Then join us on the 12:16 to Temple Meads where we will decorate a New Year's card for Bristol's new transport boss Peter Mann! **Kids welcome** (and will travel **FREE** courtesy of FOSBR!)

STAPLETON ROAD RENAISSANCE ... by Eric Wildman

Stapleton Road to Parson Street, Severn Beach, Yate, The Midlands, The South Coast, London, Wales and beyond

There has been much talk about the expansion of Bristol's local railway network, in particular 'key' stations that are once again discovering their role as both local hubs and multi-modal transport interchanges. Parson Street and Lawrence Hill stations are oft cited as primary examples of interchange with Bristol's new Showcase bus routes.

But there is another station that has been forgotten in these hub or interchange articles – and it is traditionally Bristol's second station - not Bristol Parkway or Clifton Down, but **Stapleton Road**.

It is now a good time to celebrate the re-emergence of Stapleton Road station as a thriving passenger railway hub. The combined frequency of trains to Filton Abbey Wood, Patchway and Bristol Parkway, along with the invigorated Severn Beach line services, means that people are once again using Stapleton Road to change trains - instead of Bristol Temple Meads.

With National Rail's train information website now regularly indicating Stapleton Road as the ideal place to change trains, internet-savvy rail travellers are now frequently finding themselves at Stapleton Road. For local journeys, the station is often a far easier and faster interchange than the alternative trip into Temple Meads.

And there is a three and possibly four way interchange at Stapleton Road. Trains calling here not only take you to Avonmouth and beyond, but there are also direct services to Bath and across Bristol as far as Parson Street and beyond. Already it is possible to travel from Parson Street to Clifton with a change at Stapleton Road. These possibilities could be exploited further to include Bath via the "Rhubarb Loop" (avoiding Bristol Temple Meads), to Gloucester, Bristol Parkway and to Wales, thereby easing congestion at Bristol Temple Meads.

With electrification on the horizon and the increase of capacity from Filton to Parson Street, plus the reopening of the Portishead Line, an inner-core of frequent services reconnecting the city could easily emerge.

Stapleton Road is already a good interchange for regular **bus services** to The Eastgate Centre, Lockleaze, Fishponds, Staple Hill, Frenchay and other points to the east of the city. It is served by First Cityline services 4,24, 48 and 49.

Just walk down the steps from the Platform 1 exit, or down the station approach road from Platform 2 and the bus stops are to your right.

What's in a NAME?

It has from time to time been suggested that Stapleton Road Station be renamed "**Easton**", to give more recognition to the area of Bristol that it actually serves.

This long standing station name should be preserved!

"Easton - Stapleton Road" would keep everybody happy!

Keep those wheels a-turning	In memory of Will Fancy
<p>When Bristol's new £92,000 p.a. Transport Supremo Peter Mann, starts work on Monday 4 January 2010, he is sure to have a pleasant surprise.</p> <p>A report awaits him which shows that rail patronage on the West of England rail network is up by 15% on last year and that Bristol City Council's investment in an additional train between Bristol Temple Meads and Avonmouth, has seen a 40% increase in ridership on the route since May 2008.</p> <p>But to keep his promise to improve transport for road users, Mr Mann needs to ensure that rail reduces road traffic. This will mean negotiating continued funding for an additional train on the Beach Line beyond 2011.</p> <p>Nottingham shows the way</p> <p>Nottinghamshire County Council are funding a service on the Robin Hood line up to May 2011 and if the service is used as much as expected, it is hoped the Department for Transport (DfT) will fund it on a permanent basis after this time.</p> <p>Ride, Ride, Ride</p> <p>Radio Bristol could show commitment to bus and rail by replacing their "Drive Time" show with "Ride Time"!</p> <p>Julie Boston</p>	<p>Will Fancy, FOSBR Treasurer and Membership Secretary, died at the end of July. His obituary in his trade union, UNISON, and SERA recorded Will's wide knowledge, intellectual rigour, administrative talent, generosity with his time, political savvy and high principles.</p> <p>He had been treasurer of FOSBR from the beginning in 1995 and added the duties of membership secretary a few years later.</p> <p>Though he always argued to keep the subs down, the bank balance was always healthy. But his work for FOSBR went well beyond book keeping and the maintenance of impeccable records. By drafting and redrafting recruiting leaflets and policy documents, Will did much to lay the intellectual foundations. By arguing patiently, he kept the superstructure from crazing.</p> <p>For everyone who worked with Will, there must be a strong sense of personal loss. For the institutions he supported, the cliché that "no one is indispensable" is about to be severely tested.</p> <p>Friends and family are invited to celebrate the life of Will Fancy - 60 years of Socialist campaigning - on Saturday 21 November, 2 pm – 4 pm at The Cornubia, Temple Street, off Victoria Street, Bristol BS1.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">www.thecornubia.com</p>
<p>Welcome to Bristol, Peter</p> <p>FOSBR welcomes Peter Mann to Bristol and we wish him every success in his new job down at The Council House. However, we ARE concerned that Bristol City Council's press release announcing his arrival states that "he will support the council in driving a challenging and ambitious programme aimed at radically improving the Bristol transport experience for all road users".</p> <p><u>All Road Users?!?</u> Now hold on there a minute Bristol City Council! Let's hope Peter is fully aware that unlike Oxford, from whence he hails, Bristol is a vibrant rail hub with an existing and expandable local rail network. FOSBR will be watching Peter's support for it!</p>	

From across the Pond A quick note from your absent Editor!

It sure seems strange to be sitting in Oregon, USA and to be composing the Autumn edition of the FOSBR newsletter - thinking of Bristol and our precious rail network, so far away. But Julie twisted my arm and made me promise before I left, so here we are! As always, travel expands the mind and one sees many new ideas, so here are a couple from the USA that could work in Bristol too (*Are you listening Cllr Rogers?*):

"Fareless Square" in Downtown Portland: Travel is **COMPLETELY FREE** on trains, trams and buses in the downtown area and is financed by City Hall. That would be about Bishopston to Bedminster to Clifton to Easton in Bristol terms. **Any chance of the same deal please, Bristol City Council & FirstGroup?**

Rail Fares: An average 100 mile journey, any time of day, costs about \$19 on an Amtrak train. That's about £12.50 or 12.5p per mile. Or, you can do a 3 day, trans-continental trip of 3,000 miles for as little as \$208 (that's 4p per mile). **Come on FGW!**

"Transfer Tickets" If you get on any bus here, your ticket is valid for a couple of hours, so you can transfer to another bus to complete your journey without having to buy another ticket .. **and** you can even strap your bike to the bracket on the front of the bus! Now how cool is that?!
JW

ACTION STATIONS! ACTION STATIONS! ACTION STATIONS!

A regular feature detailing Bristol's stations

For this issue, we'll take a look at the history of Shirehampton Station on the Severn Beach Line. Built in March 1865, Shirehampton was not originally connected to the national railway network, but was part of the Bristol Port & Pier Railway, an independent line that ran only between Hotwells and Avonmouth.

It was only in 1877 that the Midland & Great Western Railways jointly opened the line through Clifton Down to connect Shirehampton and Avonmouth to the rest of the railway network. Today, much of the original Port & Pier line to Hotwells is what we now call The Portway.

Shirehampton was the headquarters of the Port & Pier Railway and in its heyday was an important station, with several offices and a large goods yard. The goods yard ceased business in 1965, though an oil depot was still rail served at Shirehampton as late as 1985. Sadly all the original buildings have since been demolished.

Today, one of the major attractions at Shirehampton is the station's proximity to the historic Lamplighter's pub. Dating back to the 1750's, this historic inn was originally built by a Mr Toy, who intended to use it as a residence, but he tired of the smell of the close-by river and rented it out as a tavern instead! Mr Toy was contracted to provide oil lighting for many of the parishes in Bristol at the time and one may wonder whether this connection with the oil business was still there in 1985 when the old oil depot finally closed.

The ferry from Pill to Shirehampton ran since medieval times up to 1973 when the M5 motorway bridge was opened. Many people would make a round trip for a day out, taking the train from Shire via Temple Meads and thence out to Pill, using the ferry to return, or vice versa.

Today, Shire's alternative transport links are somewhat diminished, though it is possible to catch the 902 Park and Ride service that runs along The Portway.

FOSBR's Top Ten Tips for a new Transport Supremo

- | | |
|--|--|
| 1. Maintain that BCC rail subsidy! | 7. Re-open long lost stations at Ashley Hill, Horfield and Ashton Gate |
| 2. Re-open The Portishead Railway | 8. Quadruple the Parson Street to Filton main line |
| 3. Re-open The Henbury Loop | 9. Move Bus Station to Temple Meads |
| 4. Reduce our outrageous bus fares! | 10. Don't build any more roads. |
| 5. Build a new rail interchange at Portway Park-and-Ride | |
| 6. Forget Guided Busways! | FOSBR wishes Peter Good Luck!!! |

It's that Glittering FOSBR Quiz again

FOSBR QUIZ #3 – FAMOUS RAILWAY PEOPLE

This issue's prize quiz will test the knowledge of FOSBR members on famous railway people from the past - both fictional and real.

Contact details for entries by email or post are on the back page, entries must be submitted by the publication deadline. First out of the hat wins and the Editor's decision as to winner is final. Good luck and have fun!

1. "Tornado" is a 2009 rebuild of an LNER A1 Pacific steam locomotive. Which LNER engineer designed the original A1 Pacific on which Tornado is based?
2. Name the great Victorian engineer who constructed the Great Western main line between Bristol & London?
3. Which American loco engineer was the hero of a popular 1960's children's TV series?
4. Whose steam locomotive was the winner of the Rainhill Trials on Merseyside, in October 1829?
5. Name any of the Great Western Railway's famous locomotive engineer's at Swindon?
6. Who was the author of the famous children's book "Thomas the Tank Engine"?

SUMMER QUIZ RESULTS:

The correct answers were:

- Congratulations to **Mr R Redvers Skillicom**, of Withywood, who is winner of the star-spangled summer FOSBR quiz, in which we asked for the extended names of railway stations throughout the UK. A week's season ticket for the Severn Beach line will be winging its way to Withywood in time for a Merry travelling Christmas.
1. Dover **Priory**
 2. Hull **Botanic Gardens**
 3. Bradford **Interchange** (or Forster Sq),
 4. Manchester **Oxford Road** (Victoria or Piccadilly also OK),
 5. Kensington **Olympia**,
 6. Wembley **Central** (or Stadium),
 7. Nottingham **Victoria**,
 8. Loch Eil **Outward Bound**,
 9. **British Steel** Redcar,
 10. Coatbridge **Sunnyside**.

What's On Where

Sat 10 th Oct 7pm	Severn Beach Village Hall, Ableton Lane, Severn Beach	Slide Show presentation "Around Bristol by tram" by the renowned Peter Davey. Also a discussion on Severn Beach Rail options by Peter Gould. Steve Webb MP and local councillors have been invited. Join the 18:03 train from BTM.
Wed 21 st Oct, 9.55am	From Bristol Temple Meads at 09:55	Nailsea to Yatton – 10 mile linear walk Peter Gould 0117 973 3059
Sat 24 th Oct 5-7pm	Sugar Loaf Pub, Stapleton Road Station	"Return of the Editor" - Not so much a newsworthy event, just a chance to meet socially and come share a beer with your long-lost newsletter editor on his return from the USA. All welcome!
Fri 30 th Oct 10am	BAWA, Southmead Rd, Filton	Joint Scrutiny Committee of the West of England Partnership
Sat 7 th Nov 7:30pm	Lamplighter's, Shirehampton	Firework Display – Take the train! Tickets on sale at the pub £2.50 / £1.00 kids.
Sat 5 th Dec	Meet on 09:16 train from Bristol TM (09:29 from Clifton Down).	FOSBR Christmas Celebration – Trip to Severn Beach, FOSBR Christmas Tree decorating, mince pies etc. See this newsletter article. Please check FOSBR website nearer the date for final details.
Sat 12 th Jan 18:00 (Check December Newsletter for time)	Great Western Staff Club, Temple Meads Station Approach	FOSBR Annual General Meeting Treasurer / Membership Officer needed. All posts up for re-election. Proposal that future FOSBR meetings should be held on a weekday evening. Come join us and help spread the FOSBR message!

Deadline for inclusion in next issue is Monday 14th December

NEW WINTER RAIL TIMETABLE STARTS SUNDAY 13th DECEMBER

STAY IN TOUCH with FOSBR!!

FOSBR, c/o 29 Brighton Rd, Bristol, BS6 6NU

Tel: 0117 973 9855 / 07785 367 123 **Web:** www.fosbr.org.uk

Press Officer: Rob Dixon, tel: 07813 270 704, painsmore@hotmail.com

News Editor: Julien Weston, tel: 07767 870394, guillebaudus@yahoo.com

Published by FOSBR. Printed by Sprinters, Stokes Croft, Bristol.