

# railfuture

## Rail Severnside

Newsletter of the Severnside  
branch of Railfuture

Issue 49 • Autumn 2022

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bigger and better railway  
(passengers + freight)**

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## JOINT MEETING WITH WEST WILTS USER GROUP

Railfuture is joining forces with West Wilts Rail User Group for a public meeting on Wednesday, 2 November 2022 at the Bethesda Church Hall, Gloucester Road, Trowbridge, BA14 0AA (map/photo below). It's just 250 metres from the station.



Members of Railfuture's Severnside Branch are invited to arrive earlier to attend a short meeting from **18:30** to discuss the future of the branch. Following on at 19:00 we'll have tea and coffee for a 19:30 start. We expect to be completed in time for you to catch the 21:19 northbound or 21:29 southbound trains towards your home station.

Climate change, new rail industry structures, prime minister and King, post Covid-19 recovery, inflation and industrial relations ... we are in a changed world in which the government, the rail industry and the rail unions are planning for a potentially very different future. But what consideration for the future? Trowbridge, where we hold our meeting, has lost its through services to London (Waterloo) and Brighton, catering and first class on all trains except the 05:41 departure.

We have invited GWR's Customer Experience Manager to set the scene for us on current and future changes, and our campaigning committee members and friends will form a panel at which we'll look forward to where we may be headed, and how best we can promote the passenger in the future of rail in West Wiltshire and the wider Severnside area by partnering with and persuading the key players to provide a positive, reliable, affordable, consistent and sustainable customer service.



## Inside this edition of RAIL SEVERN SIDE...

- Portishead Line—saga continues
- Charfield station could reopen
- Severnside branch meeting
- Future local+national rail events

## LAST RAILFUTURE SEVERNSIDE MEETING

The last Railfuture Severnside meeting was on Saturday 16 July 2022 alongside the national AGM at St Michael's Church Centre (pictured) adjacent to Bristol Parkway station. Sharing a venue and holding the meeting immediately before the national event was cost effective and, importantly, made it convenient to attend.

Discussions took place on how we could get more members involved in running the branch and it was

decided to hold a meeting in the late autumn to give members a further chance to join the branch committee. With the UK's economy under pressure, the railway could be squeezed, so we need a branch that is fighting fit to resist cuts and make the case to politicians and decision makers for a strong growing railway. Please contact Wendy and Bruce (see details on page 6) if you want to become involved.



## RAILFUTURE NATIONAL CONFERENCE IN 2023

**Rescheduled for Thursday 30 March 2023 - Turning Point for the Railway  
'What do we want the railways to look like in the future?'**

Book at [www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences/](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/conferences/) Info: [conferences@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:conferences@railfuture.org.uk)

We were all very excited about the conference, planned for 15 September 2022, not least because there is likely to be great change for Britain's railway in the next few years. Railfuture certainly has some ideas on where it should go, and the wide line-up of other speakers will cover most angles. Unfortunately, because a rail strike involving train drivers and signallers had been called for the day of the conference, we had to postpone the event. We were not alone: the National Rail Awards was delayed twice. We hope that industrial action will have ended before the re-scheduled date (30 March 2023). Bookings have reopened. Those who have paid to attend the original date have been given the choice of keeping their booking with a price guarantee, or receiving a full refund.

The conference will be held in Leeds, but we're confident that it will be worth travelling there. All of the planned speakers have confirmed their presence on the new date, although one or two may have to send colleagues in their place.

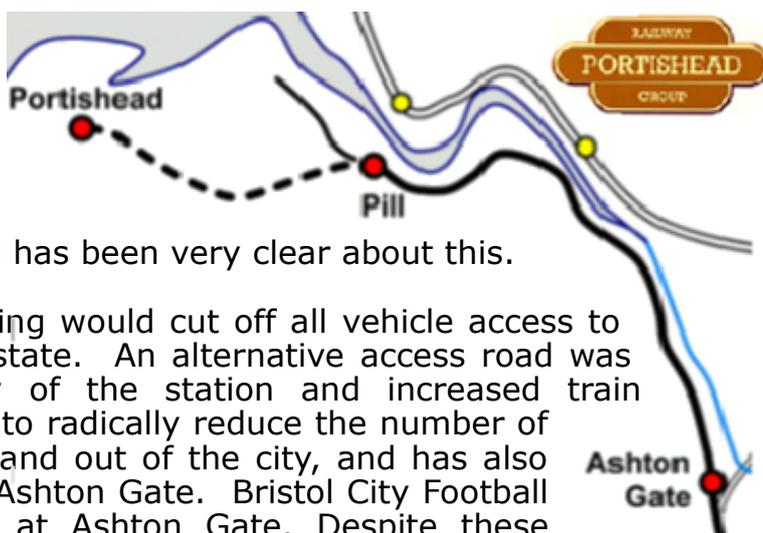


- Nick Flynn and Abby Taylor, Campaign for Family Friendly Trains
- Stewart Palmer, Vice President and Director, Railfuture — Railfuture's view on whether the railway is working for passengers
- Karen Bennett, Community Rail Education Development Officer, Community Rail Lancashire — How young people can be engaged in the railways
- Phil Smart, Assistant Policy Manager, Rail Freight Group — Rail's role in the future movement of freight
- Anna-jane Hunter, Partner, Winder Phillips Associates, Women in Rail — How Women in Rail see the future roles of women in the railways
- Dr Manuel Ojeda Cabral, Senior Research Fellow in Transport Economics and Appraisal, University of Leeds — The value of new railway lines and stations
- Alison Smith, Head of Accessibility and Inclusion, Great British Railways Transition Team (GBRTT) — our Keynote Listener and updating us on GBRTT
- Conference Chair: Brian Barnsley, Deputy Chief Executive of Community Rail Network and Head of Support and Development, Community Rail Network

## PORTISHEAD RAILWAY — THE SAGA NEVER ENDS!

Everyone involved in the reopening of the railway line to Portishead — whether that is Railfuture, the Portishead Railway Group, the local authorities and the rail industry — are expecting the Secretary of State for Transport (recently-appointed Anne-Marie Trevelyan) to approve the Development Consent Order this month or early November. It will then mean that the detailed business case stage can begin and trains could be running as soon as 2024. However, some joined-up thinking is required. The Bristol—Portishead Railway will be reinstated at an initial hourly service, driven by the available budget, but two future developments of the Bristol—Portishead Railway must be protected: a) building a station at Ashton Gate, and b) increasing the train frequency to half-hourly.

Either of these developments (with slower trains around the new station caused by braking and acceleration, or increased train frequency) will require the permanent closure of the level crossing at Ashton Vale; Network Rail has been very clear about this.



Permanent closure of the level crossing would cut off all vehicle access to and from the Ashton Vale Trading Estate. An alternative access road was planned, to ensure future viability of the station and increased train frequency. Bristol City Council wants to radically reduce the number of carbon-fuelled vehicle journeys into and out of the city, and has also ring-fenced the land for a station at Ashton Gate. Bristol City Football Club also wishes to see a station at Ashton Gate. Despite these laudable aims, Bristol City's Local Planning Authority and Bristol City Football Club are also supportive of the Longmoor Village development, south of the Ashton Vale Trading Estate, which would build across the only alternative route for a replacement access road for the Ashton Vale Trading Estate.

The housing development was given planning approval on 6 October, but is subject to approval from national government. As currently envisaged, this development would ensure that a station at Ashton Gate can never be built and train frequency can never be increased. Simply put, this is a mess, but it spells danger for other possible rail developments, such as completing the Henbury Loop, or developing the Tytherington Quarry line from Yate to provide passenger services for Thornbury. It seems those who support the development of railways to help defeat climate change cannot rely on the help of Local Planners and Big Business.

## JOINT STAND AT THE WC&P

On 2 October, Wendy Thorne and Bruce Williamson, the joint chairs of Railfuture Severnside, joined forces with Colin Howells and Roger English from the Portishead Railway Group to host a stand at the Weston, Clevedon & Portishead Railway Anniversary Exhibition, held at Parish Wharf Leisure Centre, Portishead.

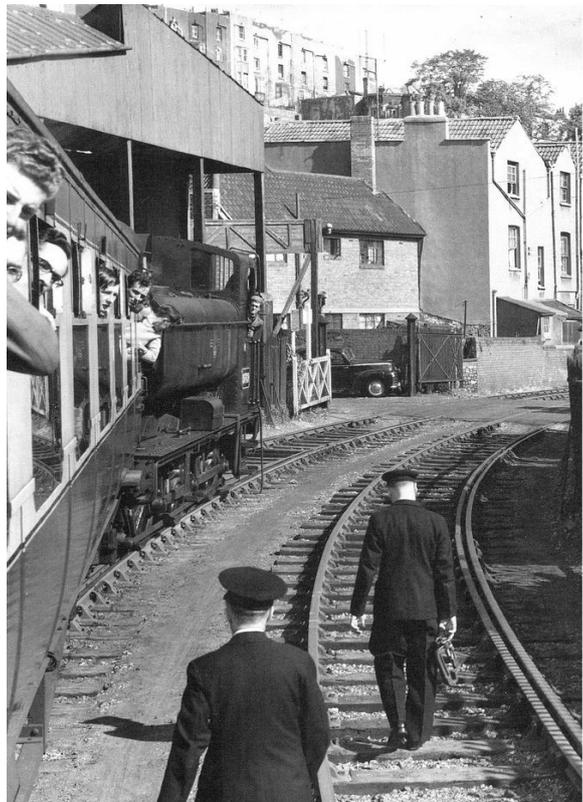
A railway society is fertile ground for potential new members, and a good opportunity to raise our profile. This photo (of Wendy and the stand) was taken early on, and it later became much busier.

Railfuture is eager to meet the public and get its message out. Suggestions of opportunities can be sent to [severnside@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:severnside@railfuture.org.uk).



## BRISTOL HARBOUR RAILWAY: THEN AND NOW

This is a 1959 rail tour of the Bristol harbour railway, and the same location today. For those of you who know Bristol, the view is looking towards the city centre, with Hotwells Road to the left and the harbour to the right. The white building is now the back of Red Pizza.



## TRAVELWATCH SOUTHWEST GENERAL MEETING IN TAUNTON

Railfuture members are invited to this [TravelWatch SouthWest](#) meeting, which is titled **"Your Vision for Getting Around by Public Transport"**. It will be held on Friday 21 October 2022 between 10:30 and 15:45. Apologies if you do not get this issue through the post in time. Please visit the branch website page ([www.railfuture.org.uk/Sevenside+Branch](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/Sevenside+Branch)) to keep informed of events. Also please let us know your email address if you have not done so already.



The meeting revolves around the need to create a vision, discussing key questions:

- How will connectivity patterns change and what role will public transport play?
- What support do places/communities need to grow and change?
- What are the community priorities and how to work together to support them?
- Where is the funding going to come from and how can we deliver more with less?
- How can we collaborate to meet our shared objectives?

Professor Graham Parkhurst (University of West of England and TWSW Director) is setting the socio/economic/environmental scene,

Nigel Blackler (Cornwall Council) will be inspiring the audience around unity of vision and delivering an outcome which improves journey experience quality across the region and supports communities.

Mark Hopwood, (Managing Director, GWR) considers the way in which rail operators can address passenger need in light of the emerging social, economic, and environmental themes.

Go South Coast examine the ways in which can adapt to meet the evolving scene and highlights the essentials steps to be taken now.

## CHARFIELD STATION — REOPENING PLANNING APPLICATION

A planning application has been submitted for Charfield Station.

Charfield is a village in Gloucestershire straddling the Bristol Birmingham line, between Cam & Dursley and Yate stations. It was opened in 1844 and closed to passengers in January 1965. The main station buildings remain.



A Wikipedia article about the station refers to a “Proposed reopening” as follows:

*Services between Bristol and Birmingham pass through Charfield. There have been discussions about the viability of reopening the station. The costs would be shared between Gloucestershire and South Gloucestershire councils since, although the station would be in South Gloucestershire, the nearby town of Wotton-under-Edge would be a principal beneficiary.*

*In February 2019, the West of England Combined Authority announced a £500,000 feasibility study into plans for two new bypasses and work to see whether Charfield is viable for reopening to passengers. In June 2019, a further £900,000 was allocated for the production of a full business case for the reopening of the station.*

*The January 2020 version of the Joint Local Transport Plan 4 (JLTP4, led by the West of England Combined Authority) proposed to deliver by 2023 - 2024 a "New station at Charfield funded through the WECA Investment Fund, to support housing growth".*

*In June 2020, Councillor Toby Savage, leader of South Gloucestershire Council, mentioned the possibility of re-opening Charfield station during an announcement of plans for enhanced services between Bristol and Gloucester.*

*A plan agreed by the West of England Combined Authority on 8 December 2020 set out projects that could potentially be delivered between 2020 and 2030, including the reopening of Charfield station.*

*A 12-week public consultation on the re-opening proposals was held between 19 October 2021 and 10 January 2022, with the new station proposed to open at the end of 2024.*

Railfuture submitted its response in January 2022, fully supporting the proposal, and this can be viewed on our website at [www.railfuture.org.uk/display2918](http://www.railfuture.org.uk/display2918).

Now a planning application to the local planning authority, which has been submitted jointly with Network Rail, also includes proposals for local highway improvements to enhance access to and from the station and car parking.

The proposed station, to be built on land off Station Road in the centre of the village, will include two platforms serving north and southbound journeys, a pedestrian footbridge, a bus stop, covered cycle parking, and car parking.

The Local Planning Authority, which decides the application, has launched a public consultation, providing an opportunity for people to comment on the application.

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## DILTON MARSH TO WARMINSTER — SUCCESS!

As from December, there is a permanent extra "request" call at Dilton Marsh at 08:04, filling the southbound gap between 06:57 (to Southampton) and 09:54 (to Warminster). This extra call on a train that passes through has been requested for many years, as it will provide a practical get-to-school service at last. Pupils from Westbury Leigh (close to the station) and Dilton Marsh will be able to use public transport both to and from school, ending the situation in which children are taken to school by car and come home on the 15:30 from Warminster.

In the past, operators have been concerned that the extra stop would damage timetable robustness, but a three-week trial this spring (rather forced on GWR because the 06:57 was suspended) showed it working well every day, and even though unadvertised locally up to 10 passengers joined the train southbound each day. It is also going to be a useful service for people who want to commute to Salisbury, or have the day out in Salisbury and beyond without having a very early start indeed. Thank you GWR - a small change that will make a big difference.

# **railfuture** Severnside

## **CONTACTS**

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**Secretary: *Vacant***

**Membership administration: Lloyd Butler**

[renewals@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:renewals@railfuture.org.uk)

### **LAST MEETINGS**

Previous Severnside branch meetings in 2022 were on Saturday 5 March and 16 July. Thank you to everyone who gave up their time to attend. We hope you found it productive, and look forward to seeing you all again at our forthcoming meetings.

### **RECEIVING RAIL SEVERNSIDE BY POST OR ELECTRONICALLY?**

Thank you to Railfuture members who agreed to receive newsletters by email. This helps to keep Railfuture's costs down and so spend funds on rail campaigning.

You can be emailed a copy of Rail Severnside before it is posted out. To switch please email [renewals@railfuture.org.uk](mailto:renewals@railfuture.org.uk). Your co-operation will be appreciated.

### **CONTRIBUTIONS FOR NEXT ISSUE**

Please contact Wendy or Bruce — see above.

This issue of Rail Severnside has been formatted by Jerry Alderson.

## **MEETING DATES AND VENUES**

### **NEXT BRANCH MEETING**

**SATURDAY 2 NOV 2022**

Bethesda Church Hall  
Gloucester Road

**TROWBRIDGE**

BA14 0AA

### **NATIONAL CONFERENCE**

**THURSDAY 30 MAR 2023**

St George's Centre  
Great St George Street

**LEEDS**

LS1 3DL

### **NATIONAL AGM**

**SATURDAY 15 JUL 2023**

Venue still to be chosen  
Will be close to London

Railfuture Severnside on Twitter <https://twitter.com/RailfutureSSide>

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