

Minutes of Severnside Branch AGM at Bridgwater Railway Club, 14 April 2018.

13 members and one visitor present. John Hassall was in the Chair until he departed at 2.40 pm. David Redgewell took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

1. 10 Apologies for absence were received.

A raffle and donations raised £ 20 for Branch funds.

2. Minutes of the previous AGM at Gloucester on 8 April 2017 were accepted.

3. Chairman's Report

John Hassall said the Branch had held four meetings in the past 12 months. He noted that Severnside was one of the few Branches making money from donations and raffles at meetings. In August Railfuture would have a stall at a WSR event in Norton Fitzwarren. This would need literature, membership forms and volunteers to staff it. We were represented at the first two meetings of Somerset rail campaigners in Taunton and the next would be on 23 May. He commended the Minehead Rail Link Campaign and a document produced by RF East Anglia on Seamless Public Transport.

4. Secretary's Report

Nigel Bray said that work to upgrade the network in 2018 would continue to cause disruption but there would be a better system to show for it in 2019. He referred to progress with GW electrification and rolling stock cascades; platform lengthening to accommodate Class 16x and InterCity Express trains; improvements on the TransWilts route; and the work to reinstate four tracks on Filton Bank.

Railfuture Branches would be participating in a unified response to a DfT Consultation on the next Cross Country franchise. He hoped this exercise and a study of the passenger environment at stations by RF Passenger Group would encourage member involvement. Air quality was an issue which Railfuture ought to exploit.

Chris Hughes commented that the Government was proposing electric road vehicles while cutting back on rail electrification. There was a danger that rail could be perceived as a dirty transport mode and lose its moral advantage. Railfuture ought to make electrification a huge issue.

5. Treasurer's Report

In Tony Lloyd's absence, Nigel reported a deficit of £ 117.48 on the profit and loss account, mainly because £ 168 was spent on room hire but also because of a decision at the November meeting to award £ 300 of grants to campaigning organisations against a grants budget of £ 250. It had been difficult to forecast the cost of venues because they were often arranged at relatively short notice. The Branch's financial position was relatively healthy with a balance of £ 857.49 at year end. He anticipated

the Branch would at least break even in 2018 as the first two venues including the AGM had been provided free of charge.

6. Election of Officers

David Redgewell was nominated for Vice-Chair to replace Julie Boston, who had stood down. It was decided to abolish his former position of Political Chair. The following were elected unopposed:

Chair, John Hassall; Vice-Chair, David Redgewell; Treasurer, Tony Lloyd; Secretary, Nigel Bray; Media spokesman, Bruce Williamson.

Committee members: Dave Chapple (Friends of Bridgwater Station), John Dixon (Portishead Railway Group), Gerard Duddridge (representing Somerset and liaison with Devon & Cornwall Branch), Graham Ellis (TransWilts CRP), John Stretton (Ashchurch, Tewkesbury & District Rail Promotion Group).

It was agreed to leave a vacancy for Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways. Discussion followed on how to recruit more women and younger people.

7. Any Other Business

It was agreed to renew the Branch's affiliation to Bus Users UK. Dave Chapple referred to the scarcity of evening and Sunday buses in Somerset. Gerard Duddridge added that the early finish of bus services made long-distance trips by train difficult without a car or taxi for the final journey. Glen Burrows suggested lobbying full meetings of Somerset County Council, followed by press statements. Nigel Bray was asked to write to GWR seeking retention of the Integrated Transport Manager post.

In reply to Nigel, David Redgewell said the Bristol City Centre Framework Consultation was looking at walking and cycling across the city centre, including access to stations.

Asked about Wellington station, Gerard said he was on the working group for the Taunton extension of the Devon Metro, involving local authorities and the LEP. Taunton Deane Council had been looking at station sites and much timetabling work had been done. In reply to Dave Chapple, he said a realistic timescale for reopening was five to six years. Gerard thought that reopening Chard Junction probably depended on additional passing loops to enable more Exeter- Yeovil services to operate.

Chris Hughes said Castle Cary was the railhead for the mid Somerset towns which had poor bus connections to it. Gerard said he would like to see Castle Cary become a transport hub with improvements such as an hourly Bristol- Weymouth service.

David Redgewell noted that South Gloucestershire Council and Gloucestershire County Council were working on extension of MetroWest to Gloucester.