

railfuture

Rail Sevenside

Newsletter of the Sevenside
branch of Railfuture

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FAREWELL TO NIGEL BRAY



Inside this edition of RAIL SEVERNSIDE...

- Nigel Bray obituary
- Portishead Line busway threat
- Portway P&R station
- Sevenside branch meeting

NIGEL BRAY RIP

BY BRUCE WILLIAMSON AND DEREK LUCAS

We're sorry to have to report that Severnside branch secretary Nigel Bray has died at the age of 69. Nigel was born in Reading and after studying at York University he opted for a career on the Western Region of British Rail.

Nigel's grandfather had been a stationmaster and his ancestors, in turn, had also worked for the Great Western Railway. As a teenager, Nigel was traumatised by the savage cuts to the British rail network and probably knew more detail about the lines concerned than Dr. Beeching himself. At university, Nigel started his crusade to improve the rail network and joined Transport 2000. He was totally committed to public transport and so never learnt to drive.



Cover and above photos taken from the Great Western Coffee Shop managed by Graham Ellis

Nigel's rail career started in Barnstaple, then moved on to Weston-Super-Mare, Paddington and Swindon. Nigel was naturally concerned that his rail career might end with privatization but his new employers, Wales and West, found him a new job for which his knowledge made him eminently suited: checking delays to trains to ensure that penalties were applied to the organization which had caused the delay, thereby reducing the fines applied to his employer. Nigel's work had, by this time, been moved to Cardiff but he continued to live in Gloucester. Further re-organisations followed and Nigel took early retirement in 2007.

In retirement, Nigel was able to expand the interests which motivated him most. He was a skilled writer and, although politicians who received missives from Nigel may not have appreciated his skills, his series of definitive histories of rail lines in the South West will long continue to be appreciated by those who read them and also attended his lectures.

On a smaller scale, he developed his model railway layout, often with practical help from his friends in local model railway groups and repaid this by taking on many administrative tasks for the Gloucester Model Railway Club. Nigel's commitment to the railway preservation community continued and, as late as October 2021, he could be found "meeting and greeting" visitors on the Gloucestershire Warwickshire steam railway.

Nigel had undergone surgery on a malignant melanoma in the spring of 2020 but after initial optimism, the cancer gradually spread and despite a great deal of assistance and care from staff of the NHS, in November he was admitted to Cheltenham General Hospital. Nigel moved to a care home on the 15th December and sadly died four days later. The staff at the care home summed up Nigel perfectly: He was a true gentleman.

He was a dedicated and conscientious man who almost single-handedly kept Railfuture's Severnside branch together for some 16 years.

Nigel's death leaves a large void. Currently, Wendy Thorne and Bruce Williamson are holding the fort as joint chairs, but would welcome any offers from anyone who wants to become further involved. Please contact severnside@railfuture.org.uk

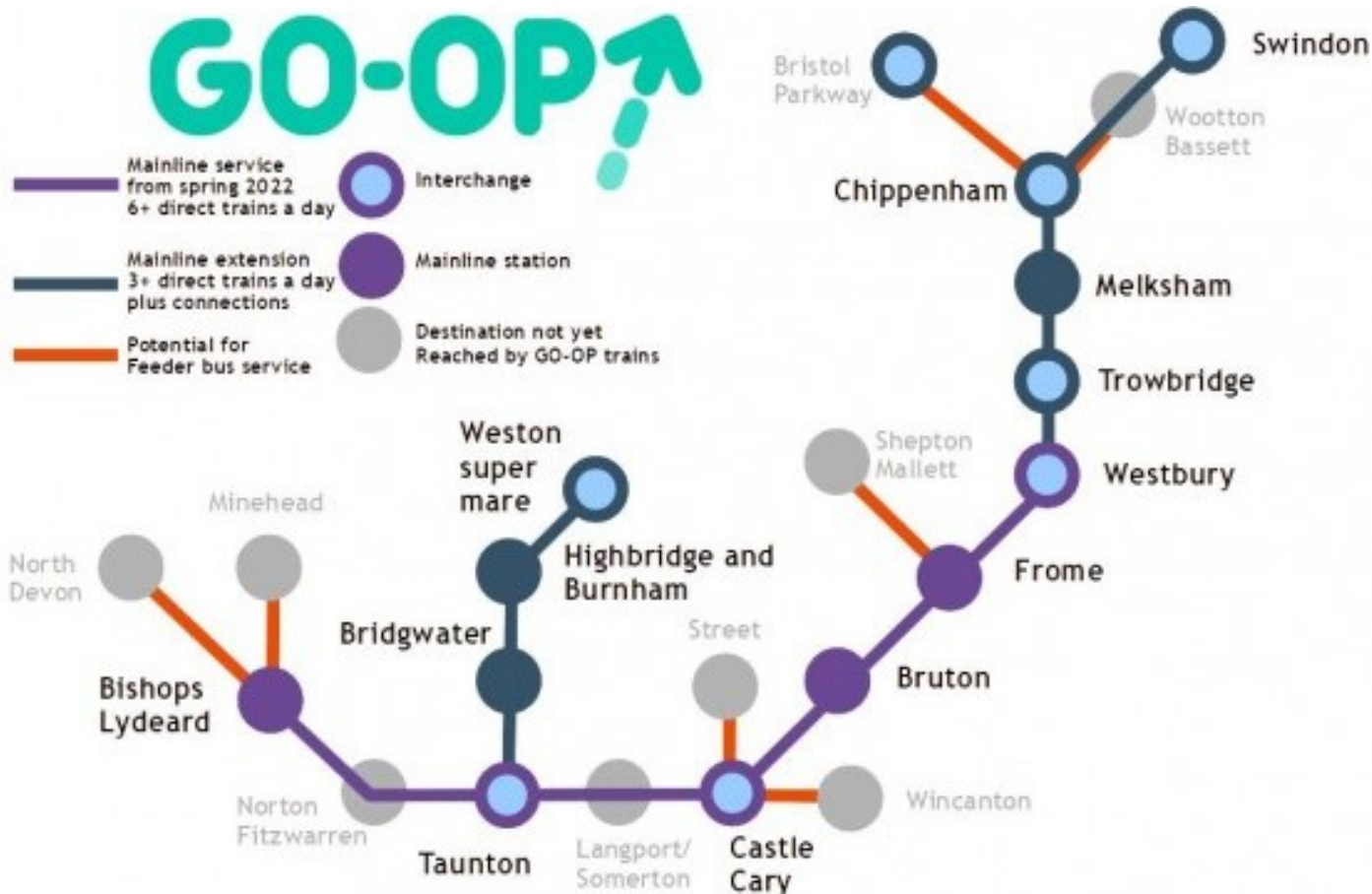
RAILFUTURE SEVERNSIDE MEETING — SAT 5 MARCH 14:00
BRIDGWATER RAILWAY CLUB (FORMERLY "GWRSA")
WELLINGTON ROAD, BRIDGWATER TA6 5HA

The next Railfuture Severnside branch meeting will be on Saturday 5th March 2022 at 2pm at the Bridgwater Railway Club, which is beside the railway station.

The venue is also known as The Shack and previously the GWRSA (see map, right).

The guest speaker is from **GO-OP** Rail (see www.go-op.coop/train/), which hopes to run trains from Swindon to Bishops Lydeard from either May or December 2022 depending on agreements being completed.

According to its website, GO-OP is the UK's first co-operatively owned Train Operating Company (TOC), and the only Open Access TOC in the South West. It will be financed largely through 'community shares' – an innovative model for equity investment used successfully by large community energy societies. GO-OP's mission is to reduce the social and environmental impacts of travel by providing mutually owned, high quality and inclusive public transport services that encourage people to use more sustainable options.



We don't yet have a date for a branch AGM – we'll use this meeting to gauge the level of interest. Let us know if there are any issues that you think need discussing.

PORTISHEAD RAILWAY: BUSWAY — NO WAY!

The prospect of a busway has reared its ugly head again, with a local group proposing a shared use busway and freight railway along the Portishead line, operating on a timeshare basis. Buses would run during am and pm rush hour periods, with freight trains using it in between times. The Portishead Busway campaign proposes adding panels similar to those used at level crossings to create a combined road and railway, claiming that it would be significantly cheaper than running trains.



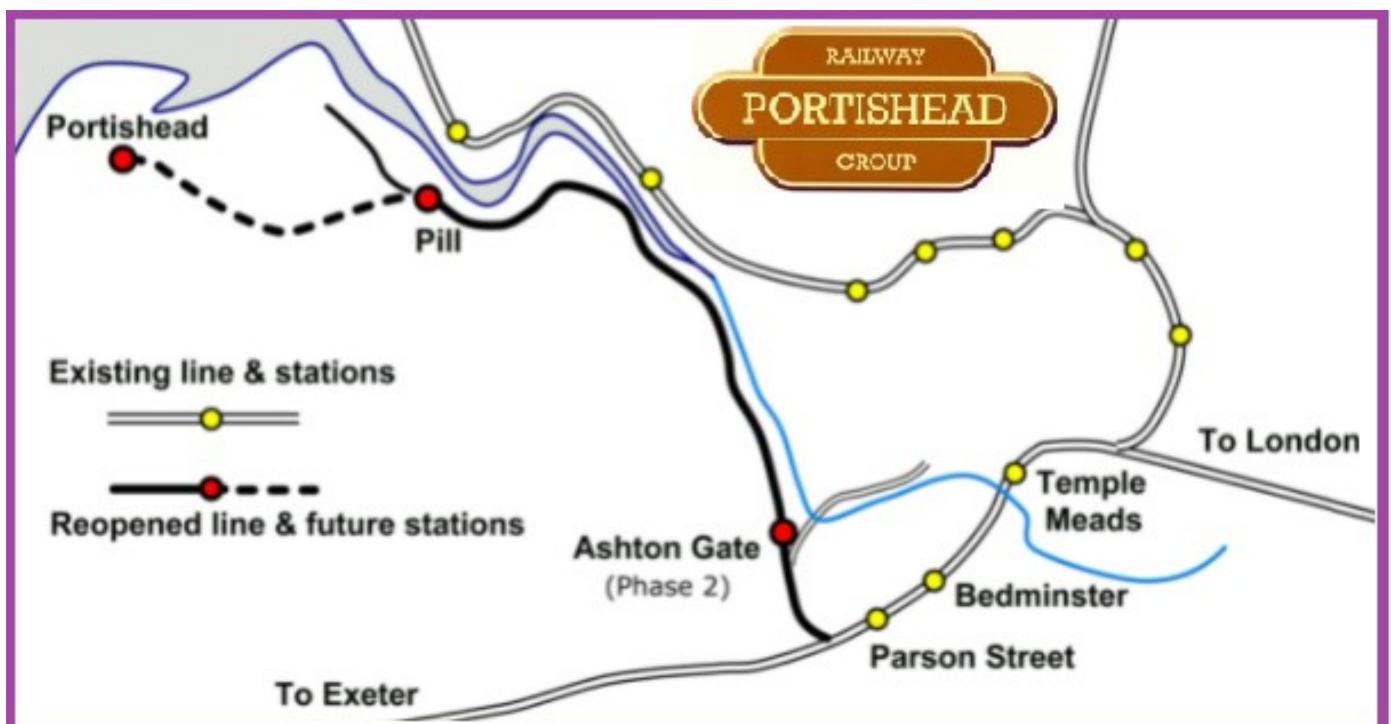
Railfuture-affiliated Portishead Railway Group has presented a detailed rebuttal of the proposals to the planning inspectorate, pointing out, amongst other things, that the system is unproven and untested, a new signalling system would have to be developed and approved to allow buses and trains to safely share the same route, and of course, buses are simply not as effective as trains in attracting people out of their cars.

So far, in Britain, three railway lines, all of which had their track still in situ, albeit derelict (just like the Pill to Portishead line), have been converted into guided busways. They are Cambridge to St Ives, Luton to Dunstable and part of the Fareham to Gosport line in South Hampshire

The above sign was one of several seen in Coton, a village next to the M11 in Cambridgeshire where yet another busway (though not on a former railway line) is proposed.

The busway would not be guided, but the buses would only have 18cm leeway on either side, so a bus driver could not safely steer a standard full-sized bus. Clearly, overall it's a ludicrous proposal, but it once again shows how rail campaigners have to remain vigilant.

Image below from www.portisheadrailwaygroup.org/



METROWEST — A 95-YEAR WAIT FOR BRISTOL STATION INFORMATION FROM A PRESS RELEASE



Work started in earnest in February 2022 on the first new railway station within the city of Bristol for 95 years. **Portway** will be a £4.2 million park-and-ride station on the Severn Beach line. The Shirehampton site is part of wider plans to enhance the local rail network through the MetroWest programme.

The station is jointly funded by Bristol City Council, the West of England Combined Authority and the Department for Transport. Portway P&R is the first new station in Bristol since Parson Street station in 1927. Network Rail completed preparatory work for Portway in December 2021. Much of the work is being done overnight to reduce disruption to rail passengers but the line closed for eight days in February for signalling and drainage upgrades. When open later this year, the station will be served by the half-hourly services between Bristol Temple Meads and Severn Beach. Bristol City Council is expanding the 500-plus car parking and supporting bus link improvements. "Portway park-and-ride station will improve connectivity to the rail network for the local community, allowing many more people to choose to travel by rail to work, study and for leisure," said Councillor Don Alexander. "It will help us to ease congestion on the roads in a sustainable way and reduce air pollution, as we work towards our ambitious goal to be carbon neutral and climate resilient by 2030."

West of England Metro Mayor Dan Norris said: "The combined authority is investing over £1 million here. Improving our public transport network is crucial."

The overall MetroWest project aims to transform rail travel in the South West, and generate a million new rail journeys. MetroWest includes reopening the Henbury Line with new stations at Henbury, North Filton and Ashley Down.

Also included is providing half-hourly services between Bristol Temple Meads and to Gloucester via Yate with a potential new station at Charfield. Another key component of MetroWest is reopening the Portishead line.

Press release: <https://news.railbusinessdaily.com/work-on-citys-first-new-station-for-95-years-gets-underway/>

More info: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portway_Park_and_Ride_railway_station

railfuture Severnside

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Membership administration: Lloyd Butler

renewals@railfuture.org.uk

LAST MEETING

The previous Severnside branch meeting was on Saturday 20th November 2021 at Manvers Street Baptist Church in Bath. Our thanks go to Chris Warren who talked about the history of Saltford station and the campaign to reopen it.

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. 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 5 MARCH 2022
Bridgwater Railway Club
Wellington Road
BRIDGWATER
TA6 5HA

NATIONAL AGM
SATURDAY 16 JULY 2022
St Michael's Church Centre
The Green, Stoke Gifford
BRISTOL
BS34 8PD

NATIONAL CONFERENCE
THURSDAY 15 SEPT 2022
St George's Centre
Great St George Street
LEEDS
LS1 3DL

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