

Annual General Meeting

If you haven't done so already, please note the date of our AGM in your diary: **Saturday 1st April 2017**. We've booked a room at **Brockenhurst Village Hall**, Highwood Rd, SO42 7RY, just a 5 min walk from Brockenhurst station. You can see the hall from the train as you approach the station if arriving from Weymouth/Bournemouth. See hall details at www.brockenhurstvillage.org.uk

Doors open at 12:30 for a **1pm** start. We plan to finish by **4:30pm**. You may wish to arrive early and enjoy a ride to Lymington and back on the branch line, or maybe have an early lunch in Brockenhurst (there are several pubs and cafes within a short walk of the station). Tea/coffee and biscuits will be served at the AGM.

We will begin the meeting with a review of the previous year and any news updates, after which there will be a chance to have your say about local issues of concern and how we need to be campaigning in the year ahead. The main AGM business will be conducted later in the afternoon.

Our guest speaker will be **Jonathan Prettejohns** of the **British Transport Police** who will be telling us about the work of their specialist policing teams and how we can keep ourselves safe on the railways. This promises to be a very interesting presentation and should provoke some lively discussions afterwards.

Directions to Brockenhurst Village Hall: From the station booking hall, bear left and head diagonally across the car park, then through a pedestrian exit gate into Avenue Road. Continue along Avenue Road (becomes East Bank Road), walking parallel to the railway. At the end of East Bank Road, continue straight ahead along a footpath. Go straight across Partridge Road and carry on along the footpath until it ends at the junction with Highwood Road. Turn right into Highwood Road and the Village Hall is a few yards up on the left.

This year sees the 170th anniversary of Brockenhurst station opening and 50 years since the line through the station was electrified. It was voted Best Medium-sized Station in 2009 and has been awarded prizes for being especially cycle friendly. The new £4.6m footbridge with lifts was completed in late 2015, but renovation work on the platform canopies seems to be going on for ever.

Chairman's Message

Your committee met on four occasions through the year, and has been kept busy between meetings, attending conferences and contributing to consultations, etc.

With regard to the committee, there's been a couple of developments since our last newsletter...

- Alan Mayes has kindly agreed to be co-opted onto the committee to strengthen our representation in the South Hampshire area – Alan is a part-time resident of Fareham and currently works in Cambridge.
- Committee member Robin Attwood has a special interest in freight matters and has consequently joined Railfuture's national group responsible for Freight issues.

In advance of our AGM on 1st April, please do consider whether you could spare a little time to attend our Branch committee meetings and contribute to discussions. There's no need to attend every

committee meeting – just joining conversations via email is a great help. To find out more or put your name forwards, please get in touch with either myself or our Secretary (see contact details at the end of this newsletter).

Railfuture's specialist groups (Freight, Passenger, Infrastructure etc) are always on the look-out for new members, so please ask if you want further details.

Finally, I would encourage those of you with internet access to sign up for Roger Smith's monthly *Rail User Express* bulletins. These provide a flavour of the campaigns and activities of rail users around Britain, as well as important announcements from Government and the rail industry. You can sign up by sending Roger an email via ruglink@railfuture.org.uk.

News from around our network

South West Trains ran Christmas Shopper trains and Santa Specials between Weymouth and Salisbury in the run up to Christmas (with the proceeds going to support a local hospice), although we understand they were poorly advertised and subject to cancellations. If any of you went on one of these trips, please let us know what you thought of it.

The new and improved car park at Basingstoke station, adding an extra 400 car parking spaces as well as better facilities for passengers, is now open. Work started on Basingstoke station car park last year with funding from the Department for Transport. The car park includes improved security and lighting, extra CCTV cameras, new Help Points and segregated walkways. A new, decked car park has also been completed at Havant providing over 200 additional spaces.

In November 2016, Alliance Rail Holdings began consultations within the rail industry about starting a new 'open access' rail service between Southampton and London Waterloo using Class 442 units to begin in December 2017. They propose 7 off-peak services a day, calling at Eastleigh, Winchester, Basingstoke and Hook, with 2 peak services introduced a year later in December 2018. Following consultations, the application will be determined by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR).

In January, the Army completed an exercise to send armoured vehicles through the Channel Tunnel as part of a trial looking at ways to dispatch heavy armour quickly to the Continent. The train formed of heavy-vehicle transporter wagons began its journey at the Army's rail head in Ludgershall. It's good to see that the branch line remains in use for freight. There's a case for reinstating passenger services now that a large housing development is being proposed.

A scheme to build 1,350 homes on the old power station site at Hamworthy Quay has just been given a boost from the Government's "Growth Deal" funding pot. A weekly stone train resumed running in January over the branch line to the quay – could this line too have a future use carrying passengers?

Growth Deal funding of £8.5m has also unlocked an ambitious plan for the "Lansdowne Business District" alongside Bournemouth Station, which involves filling in and landscaping the intimidating pedestrian space beneath the Station Roundabout. The ambitious improvements will help to attract more visitors to Bournemouth, particularly by rail, as well as helping Bournemouth University to attract more students to their Lansdowne campus.

A replica running-in board (large station nameboard) was unveiled at Upwey Station in a brief ceremony on Tuesday 28th Feb. The board was jointly funded by South West Trains and the Heart of Wessex Community Rail Partnership. Your secretary went along as free cake was on offer!

Be warned: from 5th to 28th August, fewer South West Trains services will run while work starts to extend platforms at London Waterloo. The impact on your journey will vary depending on when and where you travel but as fewer trains will be running your journey might be changed, even if you are not travelling into London. Make sure you plan ahead if intending to travel over this period.

News from SERUG

SERUG, the rail user group for the Salisbury-Exeter line, was pleased to receive a “commendation” in the Best New Group category of Railfuture’s Rail User Group Awards competition. The Awards ceremony took place after lunch at the Rail User Group conference held in Birmingham last November and attended by several members of the Wessex Branch committee.

The group’s new website at www.serug.co.uk is now up and running, and has some interesting details of the Salisbury-Exeter route together with some of the group’s aims for infrastructure and service improvements.

The big event coming up is: **TEA WITH NIGEL HARRIS AND CHRIS AUSTIN** on Thursday 6 April from 16:30 to about 18:30 at Yeovil Steam Centre (next to Yeovil Junction station). Come along and hear about the crusade for better rail services between Salisbury, Yeovil and Exeter, and discuss our rail network with two of the industry’s best-known characters: the editor of Rail Magazine, Nigel Harris, and retired rail manager (and Railfuture Director), Chris Austin ... plus other rail speakers. The evening is bound to trigger a lively debate, so get there if you can! The cost is £6/person (£4 SERUG members or £10 to include SERUG membership). To book, email contact@serug.co.uk or write to Bruce Duncan at The Milk House, Fosters Hill, Holwell, Sherborne DT9 5LQ.

News from the Isle of Wight

Rail campaigners on the Island are concerned about the composition of the IoW Transport Task Force chaired by former rail manager, Christopher Garnett. The Task Force appears to be an unrepresentative organisation with little opportunity for the IoW Community Rail Partnership, Railfuture and other transport groups on the Island to contribute to discussions. The IoW Bus and Rail Users’ Group had submitted written comments to the Task Force in advance of one of their meetings, but remains unconvinced that any of these views would be taken into consideration.

Garnett was quoted as saying that there could be Department for Transport funding for upgrading the Island Line, but that transport projects would be ranked in order of priority and then considered for funding by the Solent Local Enterprise Partnership. This gives the impression that the Task Force is merely a “talking shop” and has no powers or funding of its own.

A new station for Welborne?

One of the 14 new “garden villages” announced by the Government is to be at Welborne on the northern edge of Fareham, close to Knowle Village (built some 20 years ago on the site of a former mental hospital). At the planning stage for Knowle, Railfuture unsuccessfully argued for a new station on the land once occupied by Knowle Hospital halt. The council’s planning document for Welborne commits to merely “safeguarding this site for a new railway station while assessing its viability”. Railfuture’s view is that this half-hearted commitment is simply not good enough.

It would now appear that the council agrees with us: they’ve persuaded Network Rail to prepare a feasibility study into a new 2-platform station serving Welborne, saying: “it will certainly alleviate traffic on the M27 and provide an extra option to encourage environmentally friendly transport”.

Small steps for a better railway

In the Autumn, Rail Minister Paul Maynard MP invited Railfuture to submit ideas for small schemes (costing less than £2m) which would be of tangible benefit to passengers. Railfuture’s Chairman Chris Page then asked branches to come up with their own shortlists. Wessex Branch rose to the challenge by identifying projects that seemed to fit the criteria, after bouncing ideas around the

committee and among rail users locally. These are the ones that made it onto the national list for submission to the Minister...

Bus/rail interchanges at Weymouth and Salisbury; car park extensions at Micheldever, Shawford and Ryde St John's Road (the latter for Park & Ride); live departure screens at Dorchester West, Maiden Newton, Chetnole, Yetminster and Thornford; a second (Hovertravel) entrance at Ryde Esplanade; better waiting facilities at Poole; a cycle/footbridge linking Whiteley to Swanwick station; lifts at Yeovil Junction and Dorchester South; a ramped walkway to the Up platform at Dorchester West; more luggage space on Class 444 trains; a 20-minute frequency for Island Line; and a trial passenger service over the freight branch to Marchwood.

Although it's too late to add items to this list, there will be opportunities in the future to campaign for low-cost schemes. Maybe you have a pet project of your own - please let us know so that we can build up a picture right across our region.

Gift Membership Cards

If you haven't already made use of the Gift Membership Card we sent you with the Autumn newsletter, there's still time to send it to a friend or family member. In fact, you can use it any time in the coming year, perhaps as a birthday present or by way of thanking someone for looking after things while you're away.

Do remember that, at the same time as sending the card, you need to post a cheque to our Treasurer (John Holland) to cover the cost of a year's membership: £14 for OAP/Student/Unwaged and £18 for others. John's address is: 24 Marine Court, Southsea, Hampshire PO4 9QU. It would be helpful if you tell John the name of the person who is to benefit from gifted membership.

The person receiving the card can live anywhere in the UK, not necessarily in the Wessex Branch area. If you want extra cards, we'll have them available at our AGM.

Dates for your diary

Wednesday 29 March 2017 East Hants CRP meeting in District Council offices, Petersfield.

Saturday 1 April 2017 Annual General Meeting of Railfuture Wessex at Brockenhurst Village Hall from 13:00 (doors open 12:30). Guest speaker from British Transport Police.

Thursday 6 April 2017 from 16:30 at Yeovil Steam Centre: Tea with Nigel Harris and Chris Austin. Cost: £6 (£4 for SERUG members) via contact@serug.co.uk

Saturday 20 May 2017 Railfuture's national AGM in Peterborough.

Sunday 21 May 2017 National rail timetable change

Saturday 17 June 2017 Railfuture summer conference in Leeds: "Rail Revolution in the North".

June 2017 Swanage Railway plan to start their shuttle service to Wareham. Details tba.

5 – 28 August 2017 Major engineering works at Waterloo affecting all services on the SWT network. Check before you travel.

Branch contacts

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