

Minutes of Railfuture Severnside Branch AGM at Dilton Marsh, 6 April 2019.

12 members and six visitors present. John Hassall in the Chair.

1. Apologies were received from Arnold Berman, Philip Colls, Robert Crockford, Gerard Duddridge, Friends of Bridgwater Station, Tony Lloyd and Wendy Thorne.

2. Minutes of the previous AGM at Bridgwater on 14 April 2018 were accepted. There were no Matters Arising.

3. Chairman's Report

John Hassall referred to campaigns to reopen train services and stations in Somerset. DfT approval was awaited for the extension of some GWR Cardiff- Taunton services to Bishops Lydeard to link with the West Somerset Railway. This would improve the economy of the area. Railfuture needed to assist these campaigns.

4. Secretary's Report

Nigel Bray said the major victory in the past year had been the restoration of four tracks on Filton Bank, giving Bristol a high capacity main line towards the Midlands and South Wales. The segregation of faster and slower trains through having four tracks would be crucial to the implementation of MetroWest. The four-track main line ought to be promoted as a gateway to the city, a point made in our response to the West of England Joint Local Transport Plan 4.

It was encouraging to see that several recent transport Consultations have mentioned the health benefits of using public transport. Electric or driverless cars would not reduce congestion and would if anything reinforce inactive lifestyles which are a major factor in ill-health.

Probably the biggest disappointment in 2018 was the Department for Transport's shelving of the Cross Country Franchise Consultation, on which we had been working with other Railfuture Branches to produce a unified response. The challenges in 2019 would be to prevent slippage of MetroWest and get things moving with some priority station reopening campaigns. A public meeting was being planned in the autumn to campaign for Stonehouse Bristol Road station.

Branch membership at 106, of which 11 are affiliated groups, was fractionally up on a year ago. It was hoped to widen our membership base by attracting some younger people and he was in discussion with a Professor at Gloucestershire University on the possibility of an essay competition sponsored by Railfuture.

5. Treasurer's Report

In Tony Lloyd's absence, Nigel advised that room hire costs in 2018 were £ 97.50, a significant reduction on 2017, thanks to free meetings at Bristol and Bridgwater, the latter through the generosity of Friends of Bridgwater Station. Nevertheless,

expenditure exceeded income by £ 35.27 in 2018. This deficit would have been only £ 5.27 had a refund promised by Gloucester Leisure Centre been paid promptly. This refund of £ 30 represented 50 % of the charge for our September meeting room, where the lighting failed.

£ 250 was paid out in grants in 2018 and it might be necessary to reduce this amount in future. The raffle at Branch meetings raised over £ 65, while a similar amount was generated by donations from members, including one of £ 20 towards the cost of Newsletters.

Tony, who has been Branch Treasurer since 2007, wished to stand down but was prepared to continue for another year if there were no other nomination.

6. Election of Officers and Committee

The following were elected unopposed en bloc:

Chair: John Hassall

Vice-Chair: David Redgewell

Secretary: Nigel Bray

Treasurer: Tony Lloyd

Media spokesman: Bruce Williamson

Dave Chapple (Friends of Bridgwater Station)

John Dixon (Portishead Railway Group)

Gerard Duddridge (representing Somerset and liaison with Devon & Cornwall Branch)

Sophie Martin (TransWilts Community Rail Partnership)

Horace Prickett (TransWilts Community Rail Partnership)

John Stretton (Ashchurch, Tewkesbury & District Rail Promotion Group)

John Hassall suggested that Phil Edge be invited to join the Committee to represent Langport Transport Group.

7. A.O.B.

John Hassall said a decision was needed on whether to have a stand at the West Somerset Railway Association Steam Fayre this Summer. He also invited suggestions for a Railfuture presence at any other public event.

The raffle of railway books raised £ 23 and donations £ 4.70, for Branch funds.

After the formal part of the meeting, Graham Ellis gave a presentation, *Rail Development across wider Wiltshire* and answered questions from the audience.