

# Minutes of Portishead Railway Group Members Meeting (PRG137)

Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> March, 2018 7.30 Folk Hall Portishead

**1. Welcome and Introduction** – Vice Chairman, Colin Howells, welcomed the members in attendance.

**2. Apologies for Absence** – There were apologies from 15 members.

**3. Minutes of the AGM were accepted**

Minutes were available and were proposed and seconded.

**4. Chairman's report**

The Vice Chairman thanked the committee and provided an update: Reopening the line is now going to cost £116m, the cost has been tested by Mott Macdonald and everyone accepts it cannot be more than £116m. An application for £58m funding was submitted 22<sup>nd</sup> December to the Department of Transport, MetroWest have been guided towards that fund. We are expecting an answer by the end of April/ May.

Q: What happens if they say no?

A: answer is that they would look elsewhere for the money; this may however delay things while different applications are submitted. However they were guided towards that fund so we are hopeful.

**5. Treasurer's report**

Message from Treasurer Wendy Thorne, we have £3038.16p.

**6. Membership report and GDPR**

GDPR will take effect on May 25th 2018. It is intended to ensure there is no misuse of data, it is not explicitly clear what membership organisations have to do, but we believe that we need to gain permission from members to continue to get in contact with them. We have therefore sent an email to the membership and so far had 185 responses. We have about 325 answers to go. Anyone who has not yet responded please do so, so that we can continue to contact you. We may see a shrinking membership as a result of this.

PRG always has, and always will, only contact its members to:

- a) Inform you of upcoming events and meetings
- b) Give you news about the Portishead line project
- c) Seek your help with consultations or specific campaigns
- d) Seek your financial support in the unlikely event that PRG funds run low.

PRG will never:

- a) Pass your data to any other organisation or body, including other campaign groups
- b) Attempt to sell you any product or service by e-mail

Data is held securely solely by the membership secretary, never have we or will we share the database.

**7. Webmasters report**

If you're doing online banking you will know to look for https//: but most sites don't have that, only secure ones. Google is changing that and wants every site to be secure, so will be shaming sites that don't have this by telling people those sites are not secure sites to visit. Paul has acquired a free version of what is needed (an SSL) for the Portishead Railway Group.

The current website uses software that has features on it that won't work shortly, this includes the contact form and the site search facility; the former will cease to work at the end of March and the latter at the end of August. We are looking for alternatives, when we find the right software; we will also put in place a members-only area.

## **8. Secretary's report**

Not much to report as not much has happened in the past three months, while we wait for the result of the funding bid. We still have over 1000 likes.

## **9. Keith Walton – Severnside Community Rail Partnership (SRP)**

Severnside Rail Partnership is a Community interest company, set up in 2004, funded by local authorities, train operators and with lottery grants, covering an area from Gloucester to Taunton and Severn Beach across to Bath. Funding is easier if you become formally designated as a Community Rail Route by the Department for Transport. It is hoped that the Portishead line will be designated.

Main focus is to identify and implement measures to support and encourage the use of local trains. Also ensure easy access to stations and to provide a safe and welcoming environment. Reason for the partnership was to make stations safe and welcoming. SRP works with Network Rail and the train operators to make this happen. SRP also acts as a timetable consultation group by the local authorities.

Information called 'Lenin' reflects how many people use the trains, but data is not being properly collected or analysed as on local trains sometimes the fares aren't collected, so the figures under represent the number of people using the line. At one point the number of passengers was under reported by 25%, on the Severn Beach line. Turbo trains could count the number of passengers, but have never been used to do so, so SRP want them to start

SRP are now working with passengers to get them to pay their fares. SRP produced a film for local schools to say what to do to get to school, or day trips during the Easter period, when there are a lot of rail works. Family resource packs went to children and parents. Every child gets a free trip on the train at the end of the primary school with their teachers – a familiarisation and education exercise. The children are taught how to read a timetable and how to behave on a train, as many haven't used a train before and may need to for secondary school.

SRP encourages local ownership of stations by station friends and adopters. This can make a huge difference as they become friendly welcoming places with children's drawings and flowers. This has greatly reduced vandalism and graffiti. SRP work closely with schools, and young people's groups, to respect their station. SRP have focused mostly on the Severn Beach line but would love to do this when there are stations on the Portishead line. SRP provide 'it's your neighbourhood' awards have been successful in using 'community payback' initiatives

A case study was explained showing work done on Severn Beach station with a wooden fence, new shelter, new seats, new lighting and tubs for planters with local people looking after the plants. Information boards about the line are also used on the station. SRP would now like to get CCTV with a voice over. Severn Beach has gone from a bleak empty station to a pleasant welcoming one. Network Rail quoted around £150,000 for just the fence and shelter, which was unaffordable. Severnside CRP reviewed the scheme, challenged the costs and sourced funding of £92,000. They delivered the scheme in total for £80,000. As the costs go up on the Portishead line we will similarly need to look at value for money and what the costs savings could be if not using Network Rail.

At Avonmouth, commuters won't leave bikes without CCTV in operation, for fear of them being stolen. There has been considerable increase in train commuting over the last 2 years linked to employment

growth in the Avonmouth/Sevenside Enterprise Area. There was no factual data on who was using the train and when, so SRP conducted a survey. They found employees walk considerable distances from the station so it was important to them that they could take their bikes on the train. 70% travelled to work from inner Bristol. Buses and trains weren't co-ordinated, so SRP worked with employers to get co-ordinated transport.

Upcoming priorities include more shelter for passengers waiting to buy tickets at Yate, Keynsham, Oldfield Park and Worle. Pressing for action to reduce step heights between the train and the platform, as large gaps are not only bad for passengers but also for train punctuality as ramps need to be put in place for disabled passengers. SRP is currently fighting for money for Parson St Station to be upgraded.

Q Why are the platforms built to that height creating such a gap?

A Because they were built many years ago when it was less important, and every time Network Rail does some work it raises the height of the track. SRP is hoping for a raised platform at Nailsea for at least the length of one carriage, probably at the front of the train.

Q. You rarely get challenged for fares, is this the case for all community railways?

A Because the fares are so low there is little incentive to collect it. Fares were set many years ago. There are some initiatives especially for school children where the schools have been included.

Q Why are there no toilets at stations?

A There is a policy not to provide toilets at local stations because of vandalism, feeling was that travellers could use toilet on the train.

Q How does community payback work?

A It usually instructs people who've done something wrong to do community work.

Q Ticket machines with 2 way voice are very helpful for unmanned stations, can we have that in Portishead?

A We will ask for that, also more conductors are being put on trains.

## **AOB**

Bristol area infrastructure works during Easter – the Bristol Area Signalling work is the cause of the Easter work at Bristol Temple Meads.

**Dave Chillistone:** Stapleton viaduct will be completed by the end of the year.

Filton Four tracking has resulted in the replacement bridge and a fourth platform at Abbey Wood and at Bristol Parkway. This should all be complete by the end of the year and well in advance on the work on the Portishead line.

**Peter Maliphant:** as the line comes to fruition it is likely that the function of PRG will be more like we have heard of tonight in terms of getting the most out of the line

**Meeting concluded at 8.55**