

Portishead Railway Group
Minutes of Portishead Railway Group AGM (PRG 168)
Tuesday 22nd July 2025 at the Folk Hall, Portishead.

Welcome and introductions

Chairman Alan Matthews welcomed 40 members and Sadik Al-Hassan, MP for North Somerset, to the delayed 2024 AGM. Peter Maliphant paid tribute to committee member Dave Chillistone, who has recently passed away. A minute's silence was held in memory of all PRG members who haven't lived to see construction commence.

Apologies: Apologies were received from 6 members.

Minutes of the 2023 AGM. The minutes of 2023 AGM were approved during 2024.

Approval of the 2024 accounts

Copies of the accounts were circulated prior to the meeting. The bank balance has remained stable at £3,026.98. Donations had been gratefully received from Ivor King and Crockerne Pill History Society.

A donation was received from Rodney Drew at this year's AGM.

It was proposed by Alan Matthews and Seconded by Gareth Jones that the accounts for 2024 be accepted. The membership agreed by a unanimous show of hands.

It was agreed that the Independent Examiner, Bob Brimley, should continue. This was proposed by Colin Howells and seconded by Brian Hunt, the membership agreed by a unanimous show of hands.

Communications report & Webmaster

Paul Gregory spoke about the PRG website, which is now 20 years old and comprises 114 pages of information, telling the whole story of the line and reopening project. The website gets an average of 150 views per day, peaking in February 2025 at 2,700 views in a single day and over 2,000 on 8 July 2025. The most viewed pages are News, Maps, History and Timescales. We will look to add pictures of construction as it progresses. Work is on-going to make the website layout more mobile friendly.

Membership

Membership continues to decline slightly, as members move away and some have sadly died. We receive the occasional new member, but the membership size is no longer a priority. We have 379 family units, with all but 7 contacted by email news mailings.

Perhaps more significantly, we now have almost 2,000 followers of the PR Facebook page. These cover a very wide demographic, including councillors, universities, local schools, local businesses and even Network Rail employees.

Appointment of the committee

All committee members present have offered to stand for reappointment. David Gradwell proposed and Sue Mason seconded that all the committee be reappointed. Agreed

Chairman's report

It has been a nervous year, awaiting clarification whether the project is going ahead or not. The change of government introduced a further delay and resulted in PRG organising a Public Petition, with over 5,400 signatures collected during a 3 week period in August 2024. This was presented to Parliament by our MP, Sadik Al Hassan.

The recent news has generated a lot of publicity, with PRG featured on the cover of Railwatch magazine, a lot of positive comment, and Chairman Alan Matthews giving interviews on the radio, as well as the usual cynicism and negativity, on social media.

PRG has a meeting with Sadik Al-Hassan and Metro Mayor Helen Godwin in September, to check progress towards construction starting. PRG has always worked by talking to the key people, rather than marching with banners or ranting on social media.

Alan read out the letter that Sadik sent congratulating all of PRG for their efforts. Alan then invited Sadik to speak.

Sadik talked of how the project has been on and off for 25 years or more and been so close, so many times. We have not been at this stage before and he is so pleased to get it over the line. There is no better tribute to those no longer with us, and all the work that has been done, than to get on the train in two years' time. However, the work of PRG is not yet done. The job now is to keep picking away at the detail of what is to be built at Portishead and Pill. We still need PRG to make sure that the best possible facilities are delivered.

PRG's Role for the next few years

Peter Maliphant then spoke briefly about how PRG will do this over the coming 12-24 months. We will keep monitoring construction, think about how we can enhance the station and continue to talk to local groups.

Gareth Jones then outlined how PRG will also be working out how to migrate to being a Rail User / Friends of Portishead & Pill railway / Community Rail group and PRG's long term funding and constitution.

A number of ideas and questions were then raised that will be worked through at future PRG meetings.