

Progress Report

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**10 successful years of
working with communities to improve local stations and train services**

Severnside Community Rail Partnership c.i.c

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The national award winning

Severnside Community Rail Partnership

Works with local communities, schools, the rail industry and local authorities to deliver:

- cost-effective community based improvements at local stations
- more friendly, welcoming and safer stations
- reduced station crime, vandalism and anti-social behaviour
- better passenger information at local stations and about local train services.

Has, over the last ten years, helped achieve a 73% increase in passenger numbers at local stations, including a remarkable 300% increase in passenger numbers on the Severn Beach line.

Better stations, locally supported, help encourage more passengers to use local rail services, which means less cars on the road and less pollution.

cover photograph

Staff from Miller Construction build a new compost area at Oldfield Park station during a Community Action Day in October 2013 (Photo: South West News Service Ltd)

Welcome to the Severnside Community Rail Partnership's 2014 Progress Report

This year the Partnership celebrates our tenth anniversary. In 2004 the West of England local and regional rail routes carried 7.2 million passengers; in 2013 the same network carried over 12.5 million passengers. On the Severn Beach line the increase is even more marked - around 331,000 passengers in 2004, 1,057,000 in 2013 – a staggering 300% increase. The Severnside Community Rail Partnership is proud to have played a significant part in achieving this success.

Our main aim is to identify and implement measures to encourage the use of local trains on routes radiating from Bristol; in particular to ensure that access to local stations is easy and that stations provide a safe and welcoming environment. The emphasis is on working with partners and local communities to deliver quick wins and small-scale initiatives that make local rail services more attractive and bring passenger benefits.

Our work has mainly concentrated on working with communities to improve the local unstaffed stations – the shop window of the West of England rail network. Ten years ago the local stations were somewhat neglected – the paint was peeling, former gardens were derelict and often became dumping grounds for refuse; graffiti and petty vandalism were rife. Passengers felt unsafe and intimidated particularly in the evenings. Ten years later the local stations have been transformed. By and large the station infrastructure is still the same – but it is now cared for; local schools display their artwork on the platforms (and compete for the available space!), community groups tend the gardens, the graffiti has (largely) gone. The stations are now much more inviting, safer and less intimidating places to use. A key factor in all this has been local community “ownership”. Communities are now encouraged by the Partnership to become actively involved in looking after and improving their local rail station – and the results are compelling.

The running costs of the Partnership, and many of our projects, receive significant funding by way of grants from First Great Western and the local authorities. Without their support and encouragement the Partnership could not operate and deliver the real benefits which are being achieved. The growing financial pressures on local authorities have impacted on the funding available for the Partnership in 2013 and

this is likely to continue in 2014. On page 12 we set out the benefits which local authorities gain from their membership and funding.

With the award of the new short term franchise to First Great Western, we welcome the promise of more funding for community rail. We are also pleased that more ticket examiners are being recruited, which should help reduce unpaid travel and improve the financial performance of the local train services.

Keith Walton [Chairman](#)

Partnership Organisation and Structure

The Severnside Community Rail Partnership is a Community Interest Company; it covers the network of routes radiating from Bristol, bounded by Gloucester, Bath/Freshford, Weston-super-Mare, Taunton, and the Severn Estuary; this includes the branch line to Severn Beach.

The Partnership's principal sponsors are Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol City, North Somerset, Somerset, and South Gloucestershire Councils, Business West, First Great Western, and the West of England Office, who together form the Management Board for the Partnership. We have also welcomed support from CrossCountry Trains, Network Rail and the British Transport Police. The principal sponsors also have the option of being nominated as Directors of the Partnership, who are legally responsible for the conduct of the Partnership, in accordance with the Companies Acts. The principal sponsors fund the running costs, including the post of part-time Partnership Officer. Projects are funded largely through the Partnership's funds, supplemented by specific grants, and considerably assisted by local and community voluntary work.

Working with Communities in 2013

As In previous years, much effort has gone into working with communities to improve local unstaffed stations to provide a safer and friendlier waiting environment. Most of the local stations in our area have now benefited from improvement schemes.

We have been greatly supported in this work by the Probation Service – much of the heavier work has been done by offenders as part of the Community Payback scheme. In 2013 we implemented a new arrangement with the Probation Service whereby we fund a dedicated Supervisor to work with a small team of offenders one day a week. The team is based at Stapleton Road and travels by train to undertake improvements on local stations in the Bristol/Bath/South Gloucestershire area. Subject to funding, we hope to introduce similar arrangements in 2014 at North Somerset and Somerset stations.

The Community Payback work is then followed up by encouraging local schools to look after station gardens and to brighten up the stations with artwork displays – under the banner of the Severnside Schools Community Stations Programme. Some local stations are now being formally “adopted” by local schools.

Experience has shown that involving the local community, and particularly local schools, encourages more pride and less vandalism at stations - better stations attract new passengers to the trains.

We are grateful to Bristol Clean and Green, North Somerset’s Community Safety and Drug Action Team, all the local authorities, First Great Western and Network Rail - for their support, funding and encouragement for the station improvement programme. Thanks also go to the Probation Service, and to British Transport Police who have provided additional support through their Neighbourhood Policing Team.

We have established good working relations with a number of schools and colleges, and with neighbourhood and in-bloom groups.

Contributing our expertise

In addition to station improvement work, the Partnership has also been heavily involved with a wide range of other activities including:-

- developing a proposal to open a new rail platform at the Portway bus Park and Ride – this received wide support and is now being progressed by Network Rail and Bristol City Council
- taking a lead role on proposals for new ramps to greatly improve access to the platforms at Nailsea and Backwell station; and support for the similar scheme at Keynsham, which FGW has committed to deliver by the end of June 2014
- working with FGW on a programme of identifying improvements at local stations, including better customer information, more seating, additional shelters, lighting and cycle storage, which we hope will be taken ahead with funding allocated as part of the new Great Western Franchise
- contributing to various British Transport Police Community Partnership meetings
- considering, and responding to, various consultations from the Department for Transport, Network Rail and other organisations
- further developing the dedicated Severn Beach line website – severnbeachline.org. As well as details of times, fares and general information, this gives direct access to First Great Western’s live train running system. There are over 13,000 visits to the site each month
- continuing to work with employers on the North Bristol fringe to encourage rail commuting via Bristol Parkway and Filton Abbey Wood, and liaison with Severnside employers and the Local Sustainable Transport Fund on potential greater use of rail at Avonmouth and St Andrew’s Road stations
- membership of the MetroWest Programme Board for delivering half hourly services across the local network and reopening the Portishead and Henbury lines
- encouraging scholars to use the train, where there is capacity, by promoting scholar season tickets for the Severn Beach line, and to schools and colleges throughout our area; these tickets offer termly or academic year seasons at considerable discount

- working with the Friends of Suburban Bristol Railways on a summer weekday count of passengers using the Severn Beach line; and on other promotional activities
- participation in Network Rail's West Country Community Safety Partnership Group
- liaison with the West Somerset Railway on the feasibility of extending a limited number of summer Sunday local trains through to Bishops Lydeard
- attendance at station user group meetings
- contributing to community events including the Easton Arts Trail and the Keynsham Music Festival
- working with FGW on the development of new university student tickets for the Severn Beach line
- facilitating working party meetings for all Somerset and North Somerset station volunteer groups
- forming a partnership with cub packs along the Severn Beach line aimed at supporting attainment of the Personal Safety Badge.

Around the Area – a snapshot of our work

Bath and North East Somerset

Two unstaffed stations in Bath and North East Somerset have seen the benefit of large construction companies fulfilling their corporate social responsibility obligations.

At Keynsham, staff from contractors Willmott Dixon, who are currently working on the on-going town centre development, worked alongside local volunteers as part of the inaugural Keynsham-in-Bloom planting event at the station. The contractors created an eye catching shrub garden while the In-Bloom team planted out new troughs on the

station railings, each of which had been generously sponsored by a local business.

Miller Construction, the contractors building new halls of residence at Bath Spa University, supported a community action day at Oldfield Park station, when staff from Miller Construction, Bath Spa University Student Union and Severnside Community Rail Partnership joined forces with regular station volunteers to create a new compost area and make some of the existing flower beds more sustainable by replacing traditional bedding plants with low maintenance, drought resilient shrubs.



Bristol

The City to Seaside Arts Project, funded by the Arts Council England, First Great Western and the Association of Community Rail Partnerships gave students from secondary schools close to the Severn Beach line an opportunity to build an understanding of their local railway line and the places and communities around it.

Working with community artist Rachel Sokal, students from Cotham School took several journeys along the Severn Beach line. Hopping on and off the train, they used specially purchased cameras to document the neighbourhoods and the history that surrounds the line. They met with rail staff, the BTP and various members of communities. During their final session students selected and edited their favourite images for display in poster cases at Lawrence Hill station.



Each of the five phases of the project has a special launch event to celebrate the students' work, and in 2014 dedicated web pages will map the entire Severn Beach line with a photographic station by station guide.

North Somerset

The Strawberry Line Café at Yatton, which provides work experience in a real commercial operation for adults with learning difficulties, continues to thrive.

Now in its third year of trading, the café is set to break-even for the first time. Severnside Community Rail Partnership nominated the station for the "Best use of a Station Building" category at the 2013 Community Rail Awards. We were delighted that Café Director Natasha Pester and apprentice Lucy Colman were at the awards ceremony in Llandudno to receive their creditable second place award.



Somerset

Sixty year-four pupils from Churchfield School in Highbridge participated in a rail familiarisation visit to Taunton, including a tour of the station. This was the first train journey experience for over 30% of the pupils and they clearly enjoyed the trip. The visit included a guided tour of Taunton station and a question and answer session with PCSOs from the British Transport Police.

Prior to the visits pupils had produced artwork for the poster case display at Highbridge station, and viewed their work as part of the day out.



South Gloucestershire

Volunteers at Patchway station received additional support from Severnside Community Rail Partnership and First Great Western as a one off planting event during RHS National Gardening Week. Filton Abbey Wood has seen the Community Payback team clear foliage and undertake planting which will brighten the station approach in the springtime

Youth organisation “Young Bristol” has taken on the Network Rail community licence at Patchway station, giving young people participating in the National Citizenship Scheme an opportunity to create a new wildlife friendly garden at the station.



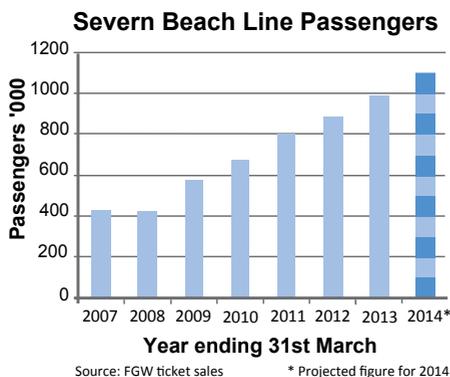
Capacity problems on the local trains

Overcrowding continues to be a problem. Last spring an additional carriage was provided on the busiest morning Severn Beach line trains and from December 2013 the other morning peak services also have 3 coach trains. While this has alleviated the overcrowding problems on the Severn Beach line, the extra carriage has been achieved by removing a carriage from a well loaded service on the Weston-super-Mare line – the effects of this transfer of a carriage need to be monitored carefully. In the medium term the hope is that diesel trains cascaded by the electrification of Thames Valley services will be made

available for use in the West of England, but this is not going to solve the serious short-term overcrowding.

However overcrowded trains are not just a feature of weekday commuter periods. A sudden increase in passenger numbers, for instance families travelling to Weston-super-Mare on a sunny day, to Bath on a Saturday for sport or shopping, or even extra mid-week shoppers because of school closures on in-service teacher training days, can put a real strain on the local services. With instances of passengers being left behind, those occasional users who experience overcrowded trains may be put off travelling by train in future. So we think it is also important that extra carriages are also provided on appropriate weekday off-peak and weekend services.

The Severn Beach line



Over 1 million passengers on the Severn Beach line, passengers using Clifton Down up by 30% in 2013

The Severn Beach Line has been formally designated by the Department for Transport as a Community Rail Route. This gives the Partnership an enhanced role and real involvement in the development of the line, and helps encourage innovation.

With this continuing growth in passengers – the November 2013 count shows a further 27% in 2013 - the Partnership wished to gain a better understanding of the views of key groups of passengers. Because of the limited funding available, we decided to commission focus group research initially concentrating on two groups of passengers - students, who form a significant proportion of passengers in school and university term time, and passengers who use the outer Bristol stations on the line – Sea Mills, Shirehampton and Avonmouth. We hope to commission further research in 2014.

Two of the points highlighted in the Focus Group and elsewhere - the low fares on the Severn Beach line, compared with fares on other local routes, and the failure to collect on-train fares have occupied much time in Partnership meetings. The low fares have undoubtedly helped patronage growth, but fares need to rise to allow a business case for further improvements to the line. Much work is in progress on improving ticket issue and revenue collection.

Main observations and suggestions from the Focus Groups

- There is low awareness of the existence of the line and the location of individual stations. A marketing campaign is needed, with stations better signposted and focussing on the destinations of Temple Meads and Clifton Down.
- The “Severn Beach Line” name is not helpful or known – a change of name should be considered.
- The line has unique selling points of price, speed, reliability and being stress free – these need to be exploited.
- Some criticism of the irregularity and frequency of the service, and overcrowding at peak periods; the timetable should have a regular interval pattern, with more frequent trains, and Sunday evening services extended to 9pm.
- Stations are acceptable, but more shelter and seating is needed.
- The carriages currently used are acceptable given the short, cheap journey.
- Non-payment is endemic, unusually unintentional (apart from school children whose scams are well known); there is some resentment over non-payment and failure to collect fares.
- Buying a ticket is not straightforward for new users, who assume it must be bought before boarding.
- Regular users find buying on-train easy and attractive; tighter controls will receive support; ticket purchase needs to be straightforward, quick and easily communicated.
- Extra carriage (with Conductor) needed at peak times.
- Current price is a major asset (“ridiculously cheap”); bus and shared taxi prices are the benchmark.

Passenger Statistics

Passengers using local stations on weekdays			
Station	2007	2012	2013
Yate	694	1231	1193
Patchway	139	361	408
Filton Abbey Wood	1958	3637	4412
Bedminster	156	352	415
Parson Street	108	353	453
Nailsea and Backwell	1315	1682	1588
Yatton	1192	1425	1562
Worle	841	1368	1455
Weston Milton	261	316	395
Weston-s-Mare	2279	2415	2583
Keynsham	839	1198	1459
Oldfield Park	841	1208	1480
Freshford	89	164	134
Highbridge	408	511	n.c
Bridgwater	474	720	n.c
Severn Beach	135	165	252
St Andrews Road	30	51	79
Avonmouth	218	481	521
Shirehampton	86	313	375
Sea Mills	121	314	452
Clifton Down	500	1321	1924
Redland	264	751	814
Montpelier	253	958	1083
Stapleton Road sb	326	776	970
Lawrence Hill sb	263	530	732
Temple Meads sb	649	1853	2373
Severn Beach line trains total	2845	7513	9575
Stapleton Road nsb	91	373	475
Lawrence Hill nsb	49	470	457
Stations - Temple Meads - Severn Beach - all trains	2985	8356	10507
Grand total West of England Partnership local stations (does not include Somerset)	13697	24066	28044

Passengers using local and regional trains in the West of England 2013	
Route	2013
Cardiff - Bristol - Westbury - Portsmouth/ Weymouth	8,391,000
Bristol - Severn Beach	1,063,000
Bristol - Weston-super-Mare - Taunton - Exeter	1,781,000
Bristol - Gloucester - Great Malvern	1,315,000
Total West of England local/regional journeys	12,550,000

Notes: The above figures are from First Great Western ticket sales allocated Lennon data and include only FGW journeys. Some journeys made for example on rover tickets or employee passes, or on substitute buses, may not have been recorded. So the figures may underscore the total journeys, but this is unlikely to be significant.

Notes: The figures to the left are from the November weekday count which is undertaken annually by the local authorities.

The figures show a one-day snapshot of the total number of passengers both boarding and alighting at the station on the day of the count. The 2013 figures are provisional.

nsb = not Severn Beach line passengers

sb = Severn Beach line passengers

n.c. = no passenger count in 2013

Accounts and financial statement

Severnside Community Rail Partnership

Year ended 31 March 2013 Balance Sheet		
	£ 2012-13	£ 2011-12
Fixed Assets	-	-
Current Assets		
Debtors	-	-
Cash at bank and in hand	47,573	32,772
	<u>47,573</u>	<u>32,772</u>
Creditors : Amounts falling due within one year		
	(839)	(797)
Net Assets	46,734	31,975
Total Assets less Current Liabilities	<u>46,734</u>	<u>31,975</u>
Represented by:		
Restricted funds	12,875	9,202
Unrestricted funds	33,859	22,773
	<u>46,734</u>	<u>31,975</u>

The Directors are satisfied that the company is entitled to exemption from the provisions of the Companies Act 2006 (the Act) relating to the audit of the financial statements for the year by virtue of section 477, and that no member or members have requested an audit pursuant to section 476 of the Act. The Directors acknowledge their responsibilities for:

(i) ensuring that the company keeps proper accounting records which comply with section 386 of the Act, and

(ii) preparing financial statements which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company as at the end of the financial year and of its profit or loss for the financial year in accordance with the requirements of section 396, and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Act relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the company.

Year ended 31 March 2013 Profit and Loss Account		
	£ 2012-13	£ 2011-12
Income	111,314	114,588
Administrative Expenses	(96,555)	(103,183)
Operating Profit/Loss	14,759	11,405
Interest Receivable	-	-
Profit/(Loss) on Ordinary Activities before taxation	14,759	11,405
Corporation Tax	-	-
Retained profit brought forward	<u>31,975</u>	<u>20,570</u>
Balance carried forward	<u>46,734</u>	<u>31,975</u>

The Company has no recognised gains or losses other than the profit/loss for the above financial period.

None of the Company's activities were acquired or discontinued during the above financial period.

Severnside Community Rail Partnership

Year ended 31 March 2013 Income and expenditure information

	£ 2012 -13 Restricted	£ 2012 -13 Unrestricted	£ 2012 -13 Total	£ 2011 -12 Total
Income				
Contributions from partners	-	45,000	45,000	47,500
Bank Interest	-	-	-	-
Miscellaneous	-	-	-	200
Station Improvement Projects	747	-	747	4,913
First Great Western	495	-	495	-
Scholar tickets project	65,072	-	65,072	61,975
	66,314	45,000	111,314	114,588
Expenditure				
Travel & Subsistence	-	1,299	1,299	1,086
Salary costs	-	27,831	27,831	27,831
Miscellaneous	1,556	821	2,377	1,927
Depreciation	-	-	-	-
Telephone/IT	-	1,681	1,681	2,774
Postage/stationery	-	245	245	239
Meetings/Conferences/Seminars	-	348	348	313
Accommodation	-	-	-	-
Printing/Publicity	-	-	-	-
Accountancy/Audit/Insurance	-	1,338	1,338	1,430
Station improvement projects	2,638	351	2,989	13,982
Leaflets	-	-	-	-
Scholar tickets project	58,447	-	58,447	53,601
	62,641	33,914	96,555	103,183
Surplus/deficit for the year	3,673	11,086	14,759	11,405
Transfer between funds	-	-	-	-
Balance brought forward	9,202	22,773	31,975	20,570
Balance at 31/3/13	<u>12,875</u>	<u>33,859</u>	<u>46,734</u>	<u>31,975</u>

Contributions in kind: we are grateful for travel passes provided by First Great Western and Cross Country Trains, which are not included above.

Local authorities gain considerable benefits from their funding towards the running costs of the Partnership.

Active help in delivering Local Transport Plans and other Targets, including the Localism Agenda

Local authority targets to attract increased use of local rail services will not be achieved without considerable work; the Partnership's active role in this is:

- working with train operators to achieve more frequent off-peak local train services – already largely delivered
- working with train operators to resolve problems of lack of peak capacity - some additional carriages now in service
- delivering small scale improvements to make local stations more welcoming, safer and environmentally friendly - on-going programme:
- making rail travel easier for local passengers
 - simplified timetable posters - displayed at unstaffed stations
 - better, and better targeted, local publicity through leaflets and special promotions
 - reducing barriers to travel through:
 - improving station safety and security – CCTV already installed at most stations, with a programme to extend this more stations during 2014
 - better station access - the Partnership is able to sponsor and attract match funding for small schemes
 - promoting integration - eg combined bus-rail tickets.

The Partnership's work also helps local authorities deliver a sustainable transport system, as well as achieving the wider objectives set out in Local Area Agreements, assisting with local regeneration schemes and promoting economic growth. Much of our work is in socially deprived areas which helps meet local authority social inclusivity targets. We have developed a range of measures to encourage localism, including local volunteering.

Increasingly the Partnership is providing a facilitation role with the industry and stakeholders in the delivery of small rail improvement schemes.

Augmenting Councils' influence on the rail industry

The Partnership provides an opportunity for local authorities to have regular and easy access to senior rail management; and for local authorities to come together with other Partnership members and the train operators to make representations, for instance to the Department for Transport. The Partnership "club membership" provides a mechanism for consultation, input and influence on rail issues varying from significant policy development to more practical issues such as local timetables, which would not otherwise be so readily available. There are many different bodies in the privatised rail industry – commercial, regulatory and statutory – each with their own interests and with inter-dependent relationships. The Partnership is a unique forum to bring these together.

Information for local authority members and transport officers

The Partnership provides a source of independent expertise and briefing for local authorities on rail issues, such as timetable changes, rolling stock, performance and infrastructure development issues. The briefings help local authority members and officers, and reduce the need for each local authority separately to devote time and effort to researching rail issues.

Support for the local economy by encouraging rail tourism

The Partnership works closely with tourism agencies, and produces leaflets promoting days out by train in the West of England.

Access to funding, which is not available to local authorities

As a Community Interest Company, the Partnership is able to attract grants and match funding not available to public sector bodies. This has already been used to help deliver local station improvements.

A mechanism for involving local communities constructively in supporting public transport

The Partnership provides a mechanism for involving local communities constructively in supporting public transport – for example not only do art displays and gardens help to make the stations more friendly places, but local "ownership" helps reduce vandalism and anti-social behaviour.