

# Minutes of Portishead Railway Group Members AGM (PRG124)

Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> November, 2016 7.30 Folk Hall Portishead

**1. Welcome and Introductions Introduction** – Chairman, Alan Matthews welcomed the 47 members in attendance to the AGM and introduced our guest speaker James Willcock, MetroWest Phase 1 Project Manager.

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

**3. Minutes of the 2015 AGM**, These were approved at the February members meeting.

**4. Approval of Accounts for year ending 31/10/2016** – The accounts were presented by Wendy Thorne and copies were circulated at the meeting. PRG has £2999.22 in four accounts. Approval of the accounts was proposed by Valerie Hampshire and seconded by David Chillistone and approved.

**5. Chairman's Report** - Alan Matthews reported that two members of the committee had met with our MP, Dr Liam Fox in July; Dr. Fox continues to give the project his full support. During the year we had three meetings with the MetroWest Project Manager, attended the project Stakeholders Meetings and attended the WoEP Joint Transport Board as observers. Feedback from these meetings will be covered in James Willcock's presentation. We continued to look for a home for the mural but despite several conversations with Waitrose they felt that they were unable to accommodate it on their site.

**6. Election and Appointment of the Committee** – the current committee members were all prepared to continue for another year. Individual members stood and introduced themselves. The committee, as a group, was proposed by John Dixon seconded by Robin Emony and approved.

**7. Appointment of Independent Examiner** - Mike Travers was prepared to continue. He was proposed by Colin Howells and seconded by Roger English and approved.

**8. Webmasters report.** – In the last 12 months there have been 28,377 page loads, averaging 77 per day, with a maximum of 345. Viewing figures have been lower than usual in recent months due to the lack of updated news and developments. The highest ever daily figure was 2406 page loads on 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2015. The timescales shown on the website are mostly estimates pending official updates The News pages can now be easily navigated to see news from any year back to 2005. Similarly, press articles can be viewed back to 2005. The website consists of about 90 pages, which should all be up-to-date.

**9. Secretary's Report** – Debbie Sherreard was not present and Roger English gave a very brief comment on our Facebook page, we currently have 966 likes.

**10. Membership Secretary's Report** - Peter Maliphant reported that the membership comprises of 550 households of which 80% are in Portishead. A further 10% were relatively local and 10% were all over the world. Most of these are life members. He requested members check their email addresses. If they had not received PRG invites recently they should contact him. He reminded members that £10 covers new life membership until the line is re-opened and trains running. It was said that we are a tenacious bunch, stay with it.

The official business of the AGM closed at 8pm and there was short refreshment break.

### **Guest Speaker.**

James Willcock gave a 45 page presentation to the AGM, summarised below.

The project is led by North Somerset Council on behalf of the 4 local councils.

It is being funded by the four local councils and the Local Enterprise Partnership.

Network Rails electrification programme, four tracking at Filton Bank, BASRE (signalling) and local junction improvements are causing considerable delivery challenges. These Network Rail projects do not conflict with the delivery of MetroWest Phase 1, however the extent of projects currently underway in the West of England is unprecedented and this amount of change to rail infrastructure increases risks (i.e. cost, timescale and specification) for MetroWest Phase 1.

The proposals for the Portishead rail link will include new stations at Portishead and Pill, plus stops at Parson Street, Bedminster and Temple Meads with alternative trains going on to the Severn Beach line. The journey time to Temple Meads is expected to be 17 minutes. Initially the proposal is for a 3 carriage train operating 7 days per week with a reduced service on Sundays, but this will require significant re-engineering of the branch line, particularly the existing section of the freight line.

Why is it taking so long?... The rail network is not in the control of MetroWest, it's owned by Network Rail. The project has to follow the Network Rail GRIP process. The project requires a Development Consent Order. The line passes through a Site of Specific Scientific Interest and a Special Area of Conservation. The line includes 4 tunnels, 3 viaducts, 12 under-bridges and 14 over-bridges, and the engineering work through the Avon Gorge is "challenging". The train is expected, on part of the line, to reach speeds of 70mph.

GRIP 3 the outline design is in fact quite detailed level of design, with over 300 drawings and documents, and 8 main engineering disciplines. GRIP 3 is expected to be completed in the next few months and GRIP 4 to follow in summer 2017.

When construction begins there will need to be freight line closures and the project team are currently discussing these with the Bristol Port Company.

Consultation is currently taking place on 3 options for new highway access to the Ashton Vale Trading Estate.

It is anticipated that an update on the timescale and budget will be presented to the West of England Joint Transport Board in March 2017.