

To : Planning Inspectorate Team. Mr James Bunten
From : Mr R G Fox Registration Number PORT003.

24/02/20
update11/10/20

Subject : Bristol to Portishead Railway Branch Line.
Planning Application TR040011.

Metrowest Ph1 Representation Form.

The objectives in this representation is to improve the environment for the residents and users of Sheepway road by reducing or eliminating the impact of work associated with the construction and operation of the new railway branch line. The objective is preservation of a quiet environment, not opening up to heavy construction and maintenance traffic over bridges and roads not suitable for such work.

1. Ref drg. 467470BQ04-20-600. The new access on the north verge of the A369, due west of the Portbury Hundred footbridge, is opposite a level crossing in the disused railway line. These should be used during construction to access the fields required both south and north of the railway line to minimise or eliminate use of the access AW3.2 in Sheepway.

This would be appreciated greatly by the residents of the Hamlet, and the occupants of the mobile home site, that use Sheepway road every day. Access AW3.2 is directly opposite the access to the mobile home site, also access to the business park, and access to the allotment gardens, not a good design from Metrowest.

Section 2. Representation continued.

2. Safety from Aviation HP fuel line failure.

Beneath the existing private access from Sheepway, contiguous to Priory Croft, now used for horse riding and farm tractor purposes only, are very high pressure kerosene fuel lines (720psi). Will these lines remain safe when access AW3.2 is in use by Metrowest ?

A proposal is that it would be much safer to separate the envisaged access traffic whereby the existing traffic remain using the existing access unchanged, and the Metrowest traffic use a relocated AW3.2 to be alongside AW3.3 since there are splayed twin accesses there already. This revised position for AW3.2 could then follow the original track diagonally across the field, as before, to the existing ditch underpass.

3. Weight, noise and quantity of Metrowest traffic.

No mention of the type of traffic that Metrowest will be sending along the access. Will there be heavy construction/maintenance vehicles etc?

The weight of such vehicles must travel over either Station Bridge or Tarr Bridge.

Both of which are listed bridges from I.K. Brunel railway. The Planning Inspectorate must be satisfied no damage will occur to the bridges or historic Sheepway road through the hamlet during construction or operation.

The present use of Sheepway road by subcontractors of National Grid is appalling.

However North Somerset Council allow these movements on a minor road that has no foundation against the 20 ton gross weight of stone ballast carrying vehicles at the rate of dozens per day has been negligent.

4. Sheepway road drainage.

From Station Bridge to LA15/21 the underground road drainage is severely damaged. NSC is aware of this, they have inspected the problem, repair action is planned for October 2020.. The quantity and weight of Metrowest construction/maintenance traffic will increase the risk of damage to the drainage system. A mandatory weight limit needs to be included in the DCO to protect the Brunel bridges and roadway.

5. Land drainage of the Metrowest local development.

In the area of Sheepway, this is an historic arrangement of open ditches and culverts. I know a new design is underway. The new scheme, particularly north of A369 and south of Sheepway must be serviceable and much better use made of the ditches alongside A369 that feed drainage to Sandy Rhyne, Portbury Ditch and the sea. Sheepway is not on mains drainage despite a sewage works on Portbury Wharf nearby.

END.

Mr R G Fox

24 Feb 2020

Reissue 25 Sept `20

Reissue 11 October `20

To : Planning Inspectorate Team. Mr Bart Bartkowiak.
From : Mr R G Fox. Registration Number PORT003

29/07/2020
reissue 4/10/20

Subject : Bristol to Portishead Railway Branch Line.
Planning application TR040011

I have had severe trouble in viewing the application on line, home broadband speed too slow. The local Portishead Library, closed in early February 2020, was due to open on 4 July (post Covid-19) still has not reopened. Similarly, Bristol Central Library, I phoned this week, is not open for viewing the enormous planning application documentation and cannot forecast a date when it will be.

I am now dependent on information gained from a brief introductory visit to Portishead library in late January 2020 . Others besides myself must be dissatisfied with the effect Covid-19 has had on application inspection opportunities.

I do wish to submit more evidence from better understanding acquired during the period from 26th February 2020 to date.

From being a supporter in principle of the re-introduction of a rail transport connection to Portishead, I have learned a lot, educated myself, changed my mind, and concluded that the proposal in the above application does not accord with my views. It is unacceptable, outdated in design, function, passenger service and total cost for the following summary of reasons.

1. The development necessary from the plans will be extremely expensive with much excessive land acquisition. No successful evidence of contacting National Grid, who is carrying out much development in the area, to share use of land and land access at Tarr Bridge Sheepway that is adjacent to the branch line. Considering the chief objective is to extend the railway line over a distance of 4.5 kilometres from the Portbury Dock rail line intersection point near the village of Pill to a new terminus on the outskirts of Portishead, an expenditure of between £100 and £120 million has been mentioned in the local press. A “cash cow” for the contractors indeed, with little thought for economic construction, operation, and minimising disturbance along the line.

2. Before we pour more taxpayers money into this project, please may I suggest that you make an audit into the commercial operating case that I feel has been too optimistic. The proposal admits to a loss making few years at the start but not that the losses will continue for many years. The customer load is not there, the business case is very weak.

3. It may surprise you but most of the public do not realise what they are getting with the new branch line. Lack of communication from North Somerset Council and Metrowest has contributed to this, together with the unanticipated difficulty arising from Covid-19. People say they would like renewal of railway services, extinguished in 1964 by Dr Beeching because of lack of passengers, but surely not replaced with the outdated scheme identified in the DCO. The problem today is just the same as it was when Dr. Beeching closed it. That is, no one wants to go to Temple Meads Station in order to get to the shopping and entertainment districts at Broadmead or the city centre. Parsons Street Station is much further out. There will need to be a connecting bus service at Temple Meads to take customers to the city centre and bring them all the way back with their shopping to Temple Meads station for the return journey. Not very attractive.

4. Likewise visitors to Portishead by rail, face a similar problem. The proposed Portishead station and terminus is planned on the outskirts of the town requiring a long walk or special bus journey that does not exist at present to the town centre or lake grounds. Please note that the proposed rail route is worse than the Beeching route because the new station is on the outskirts of Portishead whereas the Beeching one was in the centre of Portishead, at what is now the Waitrose motor vehicle fuel station. Even including a minority of passengers with job connections mornings and evenings and passengers for interim stops, it will not make the new service commercially viable. Very expensive road works need to be done to put the station where planned. A couple of hundred metres back up the disused line land is available with no significant road works required at all.

5. The choice of diesel locomotive power even as infrequent as an hourly service is not in line with the low carbon policy that UK transport must take to reduce hydrocarbon pollution and help reach climate change objectives. The train will not take significant cars off the road because the train does not take customers near enough to where they want to go. Motor cars and buses will still be the people`s choice. Railways are suited to long distance travel and not short distances.
6. Bus services are very good at present from First Group and Stagecoach. The train can never beat this service. The train fare will have to be free or very heavily subsidised to get passengers at all on a route that is worse than the Beeching route, not taking passengers near enough to where they want to go.
7. House builders support the new branch line because they are following Govt. policy of development along lines of communication. However, there is no land available at least to the extent the developers want it. It is all very wet land in the Gordano Valley and the nature reserves, even squashy in summer, very difficult to drain being at sea level. Land raising is not a suitable solution. Drainage of the Portbury Basin and the Gordano Valley is essential and indispensable, there is no other way out.
8. I would like the Planning Inspectorate to insist on North Somerset Council together with Metrowest evaluating other more up to date transport methods and to include loop routes at both Portishead and Temple Meads to get passengers nearer to where they want to go. A tram route based on the railway gauge could be built into existing roads to provide the loop extensions at each end. But better still a bus road can be incorporated into the rail route without hindering industrial rail traffic from Portbury Docks and can still pass onto conventional roads giving superb flexibility and even be part of the Bristol Metrobus system. The route would be a Metrobus route allowing no other vehicles. Ashton Gate looks a good place to have the intersection although there probably could be others also. That would be a very fine addition to the Bristol and vicinity future public transport system. A Metrobus system can go up hills and down hills whereas railway extensions must always be horizontal. Bristol and Portishead are distinctly hilly areas.

9. Considering the enormous necessary increases in annual deficit and national debt due to Covid-19, together with budgets for austerity recovery, and if public spending must be trimmed back, the expenditure of more than £100million on a bad choice for the new branch line at more than £25million/kilometre, gives sound reasoning to halt or refuse this particular DCO until a better one comes forward. Hence there is not a compelling case for the order to be made. This will be an appalling error if this particular DCO is allowed to go ahead.

I remain, yours faithfully,
Mr R G Fox.