

# Shoreham Society

## Reinstating Shoreham-by-Sea Railway Underpass in 2021

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Southeast Communities  
Rail Partnership  
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*A voice for Shoreham-by-Sea*

*The Shoreham Society is an independent voice  
for all who care about the town of Shoreham-by-Sea.  
Its remit covers planning, conservation, development, the  
local economy, environmental issues and general local interest.*

## INTRODUCTION

Shoreham-by-Sea is fortunate in having a station in the centre of town. What is less convenient is a level crossing which is often closed for 15 minutes or more. However, a pedestrian subway was soon built by the railway company so that people would not need to wait for trains passing through. This subway was appreciated and well-used for over 88 years.

But in 1987 British Rail closed it to do some work, then left it closed for no apparent reason. Now it just links two platforms and is a completely wasted asset. There is no logic to this. It is extremely inconvenient and causing some to behave dangerously. There is thus every reason for this situation to be rectified. That's what this report is about.

The subway was originally built for shared use with railway passengers able to use it from the station, to cross the line and change platforms. It connected the Booking Hall on the south to a ramp on the north side. So there was no need to build a footbridge over the line for passengers, such as was done at Lancing and Portslade. This would be a cost saving.

Figure 1



The subway entrances as they were originally.

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Figure 2



Signal Box prior to demolition in 1988. The white-painted wall is where the subway entrance was.

## LINE TO HORSHAM CLOSED

Shoreham was, until 1966, a junction station and passengers going to and from the Worthing area would need to change platforms for the line to Steyning and Horsham. This branch line was finally closed by British Rail in 1987. So there was less need for passengers to change platforms, and certainly trains. The subway was a convenient route to the car park or to the ticket office and useful for station staff too.

Most of the people using the subway would be pedestrians from the street, not train passengers. And this situation remained so for a period of some 80 years. But in 1987 this stopped when British Rail suddenly closed the street access. It could still be used from the station, but not from the street.

## SUBWAY CLOSED, albeit temporarily?

The reason was pretty simple: British Rail needed the spot where the steps came up on the north side to install new automatic barriers (A on the plan, Figure 3). These replaced the old swing gates which had been operated manually with a large wheel in the signal box for many years. On the south side there was space to install electric barriers without closing the steps.

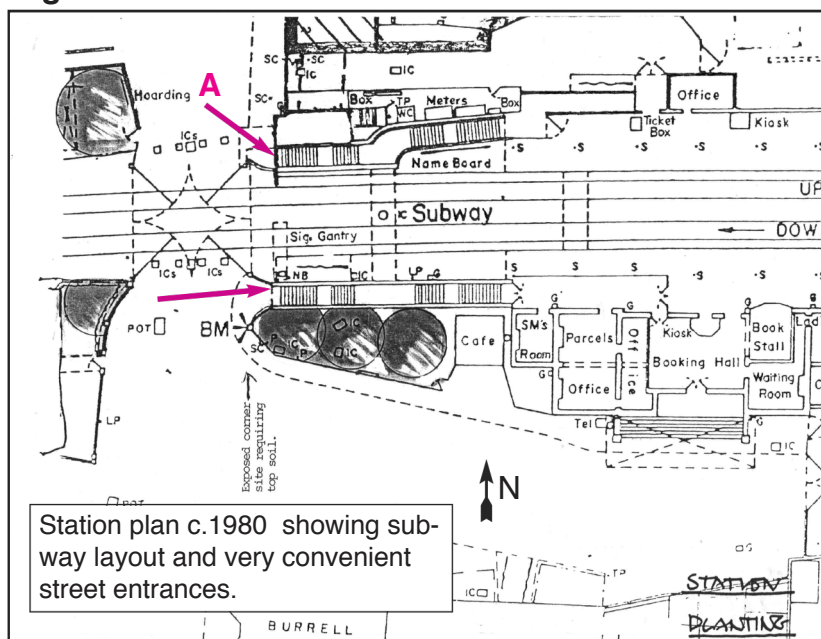
But street access would be temporarily withdrawn until the 'Shoreham B' signal box alongside could be demolished. In May 1988 it was, and a new access point to the subway could have been put in for pedestrians at this time.

IT WAS NEVER DONE. **What we do not know is why.** Presumably the construction team were busy installing new barriers along the line, and maybe they forgot to come back?

The new electrically-operated barriers would be faster and more convenient than the old swing gates. So waiting times were probably reduced and if the people of Shoreham had got used to the new regime, maybe they were not complaining very much?

It can be argued that pedestrians could still

Figure 3



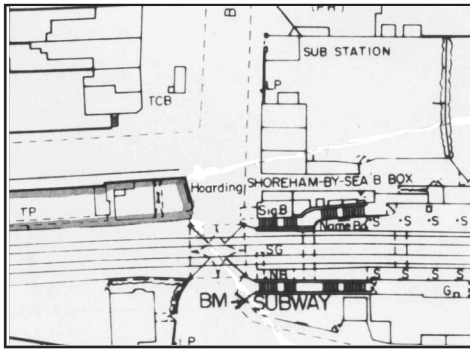
Station plan c.1980 showing subway layout and very convenient street entrances.

walk into the station and use the subway from there. But it was hardly very convenient. It was a long way round and by the time you'd done that, the barriers had probably re-opened and you looked a bit foolish. British Rail, however, maybe left it at that. They were not looking for extra work.

One more thing though. More recently when electronic ticket barriers were installed the fencing was rearranged to lead directly onto the platforms. Now only ticket-holders can use it. This was the last nail in the coffin: the pedestrian subway was totally closed to public use.

**Shoreham Society believe this situation is completely unacceptable in this day and age.** With increasing train traffic, a rising population in the town, with the crossing closed for longer periods due to safe working practice, and people jumping over the barriers to avoid long waits (Figure

**Figure 4**



Another plan showing the subway as it was meant to be.

5) this is not only inconvenient it is very dangerous and one person was killed doing it.

## MISINFORMATION

There is a great deal of misinformation about our subway, which persists to this day. Many people in the town, and also railway workers, do not realise that it was built as a pedestrian subway which passengers could also access from the station. The clues are there, and you can see the sealed-off routes to steps behind metal panels and pieces of roof just terminating at a timber end-stop. Fences along the platforms remain where ticket-holders and pedestrians were separated. But most people don't realise that.

## NETWORK RAIL INTRANSIGENCE

Network Rail were not responsible for closing the subway but they have, in spite of repeated requests, kept it shut throughout their ownership. They seem to be in complete denial that it was for pedestrian use and they insist on the status quo, platform to platform only. Discussions have been met with stalling and complete indifference. Reasons as to why it must remain closed to the street, when finally given, are sadly, quite illogical.

**Figure 5**



Over two million man-hours have been wasted by people of all ages waiting for trains to pass, often in inclement weather conditions. The scandal is... a perfectly good subway is there, built for them to use, under the tracks, but Network Rail insist they cannot use it.

## HOW LONG MUST YOU WAIT?

Writing in January 2017, Richard Messingham, Network Rail's Senior Public Affairs Manager, said, "The maximum down time is 16 minutes 28 seconds, and the minimum is 1 minute 36 seconds with an average 6 minutes and 33 seconds. When compared against an estimate of the time it would take ...\* to use an underpass ...\* this means that 90% of the barrier down times are longer than the time it would take to use the underpass."

Here, Richard was making the case that lifts would have to go in for vulnerable people (which are clearly far too expensive) so that was a reason for maintaining the status quo. Of course, rail passengers will be using this subway for years to come, without lifts or problems, so why can't pedestrians do likewise? With steps it's not quicker 90% of the time, it's quicker 100% of the time. This, for some reason, is not permitted but it's high time it was.

\*the time to use lifts into and out of the underpass would be well under 2 minutes 21 seconds, according to Richard.





**Figure 6**

Revenue protection fence on Platform 2, 1985.



**Figure 7** Proposed entrance/exit from subway into Booking Hall

## REVENUE PROTECTION

Pedestrians without tickets must not have access to the platforms to protect revenue. However, in the evenings, when staffing is reduced and ticket checks cease, they can.



**Figure 8**

## PLATFORM 2

Figure 6 shows the situation in 1985. The fence closed off the south platform, (Platform 2), with a ticket check as you left it, before either turning left into the Booking Hall or going straight ahead into the subway for Platform 1 to London & Brighton. Most of the fence is still there (Fig. 8). Figure 7 shows how this could be achieved by re-positioning the control point for station staff.



**Figure 9**

Revenue protection fence on Platform 1, 1966. As you leave the subway you go out through what is now the Night Gate, indicated by the arrow.



**Figure 10**

## PLATFORM 1

On the north side, (Platform 1), Figure 9 shows that you left the subway via what is now the 'night gate' to the outside. In the evening a gate in the fence could probably be opened to the platform after ticket checks ceased but this does not seem visible in the photo. This arrangement could easily be reinstated (Fig. 10).

## OR INSTALL EXTRA TICKET GATES

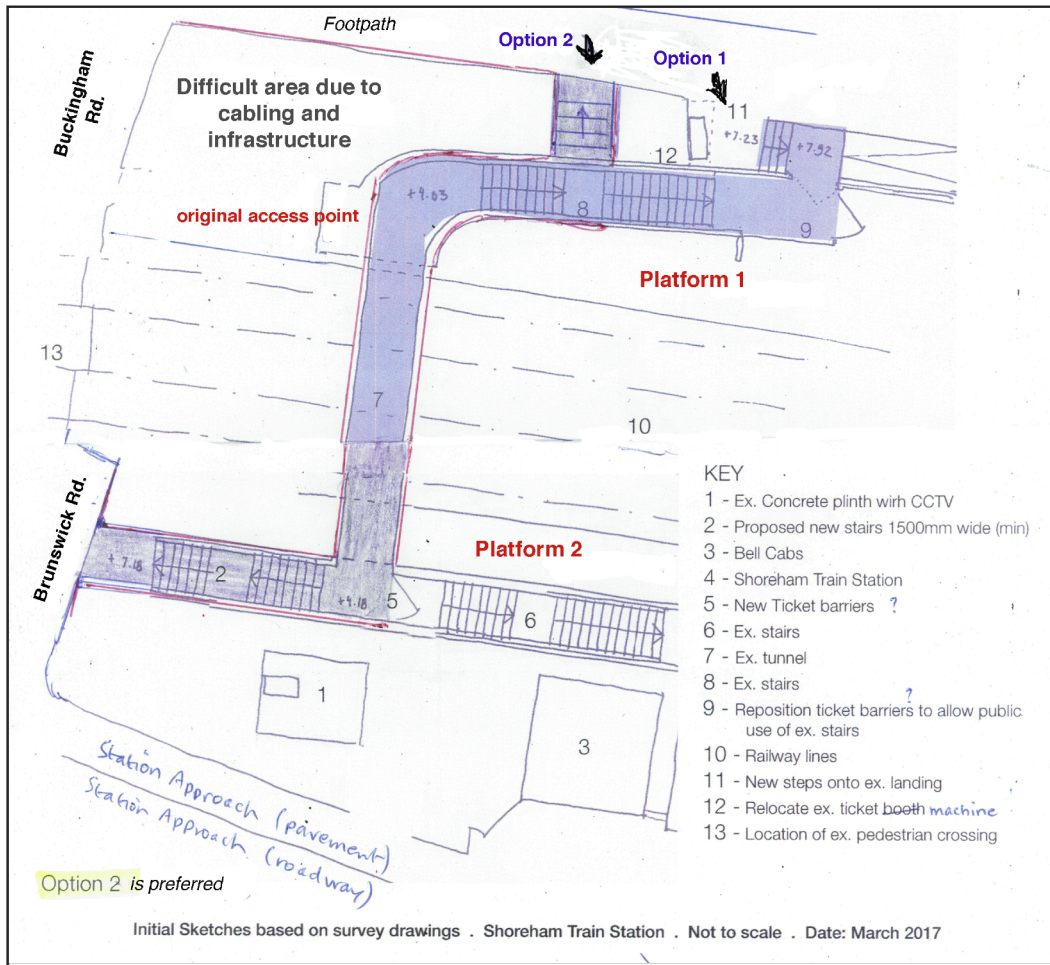
For the convenience of passengers, two new ticket gates could be installed at the tops of the subway steps onto the platforms if the expense can be justified. Then it could be left with direct access to platforms as it is now.



## THE PROPOSAL

Figure 11 shows what Shoreham Society proposes for access points into the subway, with arrangements as described above to protect revenue.

Figure 11



## SOUTH OF THE TRACKS

...the steps to Brunswick Road could, it seems, go in where the original steps were, see Figure 12. In fact, those steps may be still there, buried under the soil. Some infrastructure may need to be re-arranged but we do not know what is there because Network Rail have not allowed us to see their station plans. We commissioned our own and paid over £1,000 in 2016.

## NORTH OF THE TRACKS

...the best solution seems to be access to the landing half-way down the existing steps. This is **Option 2** on the plan, the shortest route for pedestrians and the one

we prefer. The landing may need to be enlarged to meet current regulations, and the lower flight of steps rebuilt further out to accommodate this.

**Option 1** would be cheaper as it uses the existing Night Gate but is further to walk and requires some fairly tedious climbing up and then-down-again steps.

Option 2 has an additional advantage. It only gives pedestrians access to an **existing** flight of steps. These are not suitable for the disabled but will continue to be used by rail passengers in the future. Therefore the argument that there must be good disabled access from the street and not from the platforms, is nullified. Passengers and pedestrians are treated equally. A pair of lifts would be needed but as there is no requirement for anyone to change trains they cannot be justified.

Unfortunately, because this project was not undertaken years ago, the ideal space for a diagonal route in ("Difficult area due to..." on the Plan) has now been filled with other structures.

## CONCLUSION

For far too long the people of Shoreham have been treated very shabbily by the railway companies. They have waited at the crossing in all weathers, for increasingly long periods of time and one person has been killed. In Lancing they have a bridge. In Portslade they have a subway. Shoreham has a subway too – but people are not allowed to use it. This should change, very soon.



Figure 12 **IN**