

Melksham Rail User Group

Melksham rail user group

Minutes

4th July 2018 at 19:30

Melksham Town Hall

Present

Peter Blackburn	<i>Chairman</i>	John Hamley	<i>Secretary</i>
Rolf Brindle		Judith Gradwell	
Paul Carter	<i>MWPC</i>	John Glover	<i>MWPC</i>
Peter Chidley		Paul Johnson	<i>TWCIC</i>
Peter Colegate		John Money	
Julie Colegate		David Phillips	<i>WC</i>
Graham Ellis	<i>Vice-Chair</i>	Eddy Watts	

Apologies

Phil Alford *WC*
 Geoff Elwell
 Kevin Hayes
 Horace Prickett *WC*

1. Minutes of meeting 25th April 2018

- Minutes were agreed, except item 2 bullet 3 where £4000 should read £28,000. Proposed PB, seconded GE.

2. Melksham Station Master Plan (community café etc)

- TransWilts are reviewing options for conversion of the Reeds hut into a **community café/toilet**/sheltered waiting and advice centre for travellers.
- GWR have already agreed to take over the car parking, both the existing fenced car park and the new spaces to be created on the old Reeds site (including the former store which cannot be let without major renovations such as insulation).
- Three options are being considered, for which a potential life of 20 years is assumed. (*Details can be seen in the TW slide presentation at http://twcrp.org.uk/Cafe_Melksham_040718.pdf*)
 - Conversion of existing building only with solar heating arrangements (estimated cost £30k)
 - Conversion of existing building and addition of a new area for use a community space (meeting room) for 12 people (estimated cost £100k)
 - Replacement of the building and provision of community meeting room. (estimated cost £120k)
- All options include
 - Solar heating and other environmental features.
 - Office for community rail volunteer
 - Small café with seating for 6+
 - Real time train information displays in the facility
 - Accessible and unisex toilet (maybe combined)
 - External seating area
 - Revised turning space for buses
 - Additional disabled car parking and electric charging points
 - Preferably 'highly' visible from train to emphasise Melksham station
- Considerable discussion followed on these options.
 - The community facilities are useful but not strictly necessary for railway purposes and would need independent funding, perhaps from MWPC and MTC combined.
 - Current designs would proceed on the basis of option 1, potentially upgradeable to option 2 if funding was available.
- Matched funding from ACoRP and other sources could provide half the required costs.
- Jacques Partnership will be instructed to produce a detailed design/provisional cost by TWCIC.
 - This is likely to cost £2,700. It was agreed that MRUG would provide half of this (£1,350) and an instruction would be issued to TWCIC to this effect.
- Paul Johnson was thanked for his time in presenting these proposals to MRUG.

3. Melksham Station Master Plan (except café)

- Further upgrades are now covered under a holistic approach by TWCIC. A '**master plan**' covering all enhancements is being prepared. Currently the following works are being considered, in addition to the arrangements for car parking (see 2 above).
 - Improved access via Murray Walk.
 - Northern pedestrian access to Foundry Close** (which will also provide a better interchange route with the Chippenham / Melksham buses).
 - An additional signal midway between Thingley and Trowbridge to allow two trains in the same direction, or (preferred) provision of a passing loop at the station (or nearby at Broughton Gifford) sufficient for passenger trains, to be subsequently extended to a longer loop for freight trains (probably mid/late 2020s).
 - Improved subway access and making the underpass more inviting.

4. Melksham Station Improvements

- **Platform lengthening to the North for 3 car trains is almost complete and is in use.**
 - Reprofiting of the old platform edge to slope away from the track has been included in the works.
- Removal of the **cycle houses** is desirable.
- The **TVM** is invaluable but
 - is difficult to use in bright weather
 - offers overpriced tickets prior to the first off-peak train, not differentiating Off-Peak and Super-Off Peak.
- As the station does not implement penalty fare rules, **tickets can be bought from the train conductor.**
- Better taxi services are desirable perhaps with peak trains being met on a routine basis.
- Routing **local buses** through the station is desirable.
- The **station information display** has now been upgraded and has been found to be more reliable, although there are still times when it is not working.
 - A loudspeaker, remotely controlled from Chippenham or Westbury is desirable, to advise of a delay or cancellation, and provide guidance on alternatives.

5. Trans Wilts Rail Partnership (TWCRP) and Community Interest Company (TWCIC)

TW issues consider the services and general issues for the entire TW corridor. The following summary lists the key issues that relate directly to the Melksham service.

- The trains on the TW service now usually have 3 cars, although this will become 2 cars later in the year. Overcrowding in peak times is now less of an issue.
- Considerable disruption to services has been seen in the first half of 2018
 - This has been made worse by substitution due to the use of the line for diverted long distance trains
 - In some cases an alternative routing to Chippenham is possible via Bath rather than direct, normally considerably more expensive. However whilst the service is disrupted, the 'via Melksham' fare is allowed via the alternative route
 - It is noted that where a change is required, **reliability in arrival timings is needed** to ensure that the connection can be made. This could be more important than quicker journey timings.
 - It was noted that if a last train connection was missed, it should be possible to get GWR to provide a taxi.
- TW is still pressing for **an hourly service in each direction** (by 2020) and also to extend the route to **Southampton airport**
- The new timetable (starting May 2018) has some changes to times. However
 - Provision of trains to fill gaps, such as an additional down commuting service in the morning, and for later/earlier services (such as 5:20 and 17:20 up, 7:36 and 22:36 down) are still urgently needed
 - User requests for earlier and later trains in each direction indicate that additional passenger generation could be created at those times. In the evenings, a late train could provide travel security for passengers that use earlier trains, and hence even if lightly loaded, are still desirable.
 - There is a further need for later trains from Bristol/Bath to Chippenham on weekdays.
- The TW live trains 'app' for mobile phones has been very successful.

6. Promotion

- The GWR community rail conference was held in Swindon on 15th June 2018,. During the event
 - A stall advertising our services was located in the station entrance, and then in the conference exhibitor's area
 - A promotional trip SWI-WSB-SWI was organised
 - Success of the TransWilts services and achievements was recognised by GWR with a presentation
- MRUG supported the TransWilts Annual Review at Trowbridge on 22 June, at valuable presentation from GWR and SWR were made.
- MRUG supported the 'Community Rail in the City' initiative at Waterloo on 15th May 2018, (This will be the second year).
- MRUG will support **the Carnival on 28th July**, at which First Bus intend to provide one of the new D3 yellow branded buses.
 - Volunteers should let Graham Ellis know if they can help at this event.

7. Finance

- The decision to use TWCIC as our treasury, rather than the Coventry BS has been implemented. This allows us to easily make payments by cheque.
- John Money's services as treasurer over recent years had been much appreciated, and John was thanked for his help.
- All income should be payable to 'TransWilts CIC'. However, the Coventry account is still open as an interim, to allow receipt of cheques payable to Melksham Railway Development Group. Graham Ellis has control of this account.
- It was agreed that travel costs for John Hamley attendance at TravelWatch SW would be payable by MRUG.
- Balance going forward is £1,360.50 (after existing commitments including that in 2 above) are paid.
- A grant application will be made to MTC during July 2018 by JRH.

8. AOB none

9. Further meeting dates

- 2018 meetings (all in the Melksham Town Hall) are scheduled as follows

- **Wednesday 26 September 2018**
- Wednesday 28 November 2018
- Wednesday 12 December 2018