

Melksham Rail User Group

Melksham rail user group

Minutes

23rd January 2019 at 19:30

Melksham Town Hall

Present

Peter Blackburn	<i>Chairman</i>	Sophie Martin	<i>TWCIC</i>
Peter Chidley		David Phillips	<i>WC</i>
Peter Colegate		Peter Tapscott	
Julie Colegate		Eddy Watts	
Graham Ellis	<i>Vice-Chair</i>	Adrienne Westbrook	<i>MTC</i>
Judith Gradwell		Alan Whetherly	
John Hamley	<i>Secretary</i>	Roger Witt	
Kevin Hayes			

Apologies

Pauline Baker	<i>TIC</i>
Paul Carter	<i>MWPC</i>
John Glover	<i>MWPC</i>
Paul Johnson	<i>TWCIC</i>
Horace Prickett	<i>WC</i>

1. Minutes of meeting 28th November 2018

- Minutes were agreed - Proposed Eddy Watts, seconded Peter Chidley.

2. Melksham station improvements

- A need has been identified to keep posters etc up to date.
 - GWR have been very proactive in advising of engineering works, but when the works are cancelled (so that trains can still run), revised information is not always displayed
 - The WWRUG poster is currently 2 months out of date - a process is needed to ensure up-to-date.
 - Posters list two taxi companies that no longer exist
 - TWCIC posters need to be refreshed as needed. Currently Graham Ellis is handling this, but it should become the responsibility of the station ambassador, see item 9.
- A loudspeaker, possibly remotely controlled from Chippenham or Westbury is desirable, to advise of a delay or cancellation, and provide guidance on alternatives.
- 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.
- Better taxi services are desirable perhaps with peak trains being met on a routine basis.
- Routing local buses through the station is desirable and will be promoted by MRUG in 2019.
- Hopefully MRUG will be able to 'adopt' the station, allowing us to undertake some basic duties, such as maintenance of the flower beds.
- During significant planned disruptions, MRUG would like to see a manned assistant to provide help to users. GWR have been unable to provide this due to the lack of 'welfare' facilities.

3. Melksham station community café etc and master plan

- TransWilts are reviewing options for conversion of the Reeds hut into a community café/toilet/advice centre for travellers.
 - The first phase may be limited by funds to lease existing Reeds building (estimated at approx. £77k).
 - The café could be operating before planned car park changes, possibly in 2019.
 - Changes to the lease arrangements are envisaged, allowing GWR to take over the car park after the rebrand award has been finalised. Therefore the plan is for TWCIC to operate the car park (using a contractor). Charges need to be finalised but typically £4 per day (£2.50 part day) is envisaged. The arrangement would need to be time limited with a review after 3 years
 - Matched funding from GWR CCIF to support this project has been applied for.
 - Other funding/sponsorship from local companies is being sought.
 - Volunteers may be needed for the café although existing catering companies have shown an interest.
- A 'master plan' covering all enhancements is being prepared. Currently the following works are being considered
 - Improved access via Murray Walk.
 - Northern pedestrian access to Foundry Close (which will also provide a better interchange route with the Chippenham / Melksham buses). Although desirable, routing buses via Foundry close is not practical at present.
 - 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. Service issues

- TW is still pressing for
 - an hourly service in each direction (by 2020) which needs a loop to provide timetable resilience.
 - A design solution for the passing loop will be needed, hopefully funded in CP6. The LEP may be able to assist but will need matched funding.
 - Extension of the route to Southampton (possibly the airport), which is being viewed positively by the TOCs and the DfT.
- The following changes are also desirable (in advance of the more frequent service)
 - 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 Wilts Rail Strategy consultation, funded by LEP and WC, was held on 16th January 2019. MRUG attended. See item 9.
- The current rail service has stabilised after several weeks of engineering disruption, and seems reliable, after an initial poor start (e.g. for Westbury works overrun)
 - MRUG would like to keep track of any service issues, and members should report these, via the Coffee Shop or by email to info@mrug.org.uk.
 - Engineering works which affect the line are expected 9th-11th February and in May.

5. Surveys

- Chippenham station usage will be the subject of surveys in w/b 28th January. If you can help, please contact Sophie Martin on sophie@transwilts.org.
- Melksham station usage concentrating on the car park will be the subject of survey in w/b 4th February. If you can help, please register via the Coffee Shop or by email to info@mrug.org.uk

6. Community Rail Report

- Sophie Martin, TW Community Rail Officer, outlined her current activities which are being expanded as the role develops.
 - Chippenham rail users had a presentation on possible changes to the station forecourt and solicited suggestions at the meeting with GWR. This has led onto surveys, see item 5.
- A program of school activity is being developed, currently by shadowing a Community Rail education officer in Sussex

7. Promotion

- For activities planned for 2019, see the schedule in item 12. This mirrors a more active program in 2019 to promote both MRUG and local rail services.
- Spring and summer outings to the south coast, a visit to Imber, and guided walks are provisionally scheduled.
- MRUG will participate in ACoRP's 'Rail in the City' event at Reading on 15th May.
- The 2018 Santa trip to Swindon was very successful
 - We had a dedicated coach and were generously supported by GWR. £252 profit was made. 80 seats were filled.
 - Thanks are due especially to Graham Ellis for the organisation and Paul Johnson for Santa!
 - Additional security/safety arrangements were in place for the 2018 trip. Including DRB checks for Santa, and a full risk assessment.
- A 2019 Santa trip will be held, possibly running on two trains to allow additional participation.
- The MRUG website has been remodelled and now includes Realtime train and bus information, and a wealth of other local information related to transport.
 - Pauline Baker (of the Tourist Information Centre) is assisting with details of the town
 - The website is at www.mrug.org.uk.

8. Finance

- The signatories on the Coventry account will be updated to include John Hamley.
 - Other signatories are Rolf Brindle, Peter Blackburn and Graham Ellis.
 - The changes will be made after the AGM when the treasurer is appointed.
- Total balance going forward is £2060.55 with some existing commitments
- A grant application has been made in January 2019 to MWPC.
- Insurance for MRUG to cover volunteers at events and other significant risks is now in place. The cost is currently £174 pa.

9. Other Organisations

- **TransWilts** activities have been covered elsewhere in these minutes.
 - Discussion is needed on the role of a Melksham station 'ambassador'.
- MRUG officers have agreed to apply for membership of **ACoRP** as a station 'friend'. This could open new avenues of funding to MRUG.
 - Previous membership had lapsed when TWCRP was formed.
 - **ACoRP**'s national conference is in March. MRUG may send a delegate.
- The **Coffee Shop** forum covers many issues of interest to Melksham rail users, and may be accessed at <http://www.firstgreatwestern.info/coffeeshop/index.php>.
- The **SW LEP** consultation held on 16th January addressed:
 - Forward rail strategy in the area,
 - The economic benefit of rail services
 - Support for a Bristol – Didcot service, linked to EWR at Oxford, and possibly calling at Corsham.
 - Support for the TW aspiration of a Swindon -Southampton service.

- The SW LEP consultation report will be submitted in March 2019.
- Whereas Corsham is outside MRUG's immediate mission. **Corsham station** is of great interest to rail users in the area. MRUG are pleased to support activities related to this objective, accepting that MRUG has very limited manpower.
- **Travelwatch SW** have a bi-annual meeting in March. MRUG members include a board member of TWSW and MRUG also sends a representative to all open meetings. (Attendance is open only to invited delegates).
- MRUG also support the activities of **Railfuture** and the **West Wilts Rail Users Group**. Hopefully we can get reports from these organisations as appropriate.

10. AOB

- Future meetings may include a public transport speaker
- 8 December 2018 was the 5th anniversary of the improved rail service through Melksham – our great success story.

11. Next and subsequent meetings

Wednesday 20 March 2019 at 19:30.

12. For advance information, meeting dates for 2019 have been set as follows. All meetings at 19:30, in the Town Hall.

- Wednesday 20 March 2019
- Wednesday 22 May 2019 regular meeting plus AGM
- Wednesday 24 July 2019
- Wednesday 18 September 2019
- Wednesday 27 November 2019

13. Other **provisional dates of interest to members** (Locations/times will be advised when confirmed)

- 9 February 2019 - Coffee shop forum – invite only
- 6 April 2019 - Railfuture meeting, Severnside at Dilton Marsh
- 27 April 2019 -TW AGM (location tba)
- 28 April 2019 -Trip to Seaton, for both a seaside outing and (optionally John Money's celebration
- 20 May 2019 - TW stakeholders meeting (TW members only), location tba
- 29 June 2019 - Participation in Melksham carnival
- 29 June 2019 - TW conference (public invited)
- 7 July 2019 - Day trip to Weymouth by train
- 17 August 2019 - Imber bus running day
- 18 Sept 2019 - Guided walk Trowbridge to Melksham, train in one direction
- 15 December 2019 – Santa train