

# Melksham Rail User Group

# Melksham rail user group

**Minutes****22<sup>th</sup> May 2019 at 19:30****Melksham Town Hall****Present**

Peter Blackburn *Chairman*  
 Rolf Brindle  
 Paul Carter *MWPC*  
 Peter Chidley  
 Peter Colegate  
 Julie Colegate

Graham Ellis *Vice-Chair*  
 John Glover *MWPC*  
 Judith Gradwell  
 John Hamley *Secretary*  
 David Phillips *WC*  
 Roger Witt  
 Peter Tapscott  
 Alan Whetherly

**Apologies**

Geoff Elwell  
 Kevin Hayes  
 Paul Johnson *TWCIC*  
 Horace Prickett *WC*  
 Sophie Martin *TWCIC*  
 Eddy Watts  
 Adrienne Westbrook *MTC*

**1. Minutes of meeting 20<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

- Item 2 reference to 'ATM' should read 'TVM'
- Minutes were otherwise agreed - Proposed Peter Chidley, seconded Roger Witt.

**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, and a new poster provided, but the data provided is not complete.
- 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 (which could give the passenger a saving of £18),
  - Advice should be displayed describing what passengers should do when the ATM is not working.
- Better taxi services are desirable perhaps with peak trains being met on a routine basis.
- Hopefully MRUG will be able to 'adopt' the station, allowing us to undertake some basic duties, such as maintenance of the flower beds.
- The underpass to town could be promoted as it is a good facility. It could be used for community advertising etc.
- There are proposals to route the 14/15 bus through the station, and the community bus could also be used to provide a station service.
  - A bus timetable should be displayed at the station.
- A station tidy morning was held in April, but owing to difficulties in training to work on the platform, work was restricted to the car park and station approach.
  - We await a further training date to be able to clean up the platform area.

**3. Melksham station community café etc and master plan**

- The infrastructure upgrades are based on CCIF funding from GWR/DfT. Some applications were not successful this year and parts of the project could get delayed.
- The car park infrastructure changes are expected to go ahead soon, using other funding sources.
  - TWCIC, not GWR, will operate the car park using a contractor and an agreement to do so has been made with the contractor.
  - Car parking fees will contribute to the cost of leasing the land from WC, (currently thought to be approximately £13,000 once off and £1,000 pa. The lease can be terminated after 3 years if necessary).
  - Parking fees will be payable by card (not cash) and can be topped-up on departure (if a train is late etc). Charge levels are being determined. 100% of parking fees would be paid to TW, the contractor taking only penalty payments. Movements will be monitored by CCTV.
  - Two payment machines will be provided. Clear advice to station car park users to ensure no unexpected fines is needed.
  - There will be a 20 minute station-business no-charge facility. The area in front of the station will be for short term visitors only. There will also be the ability to flag specific vehicles as acting on station business and not chargeable.
  - The car park will provide at least 35 spaces and 4 electric charging points, which may require an upgraded incoming feeder to the site
  - VW/Audi do not wish to take over part of the proposed area for access to their facility but another tenant for that part of the site is being sought.
- Consideration is being given to the Hub environment being a separate company under TW.
  - Volunteers may be needed for the café although an 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.

### Times of buses at station

#### 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), but the timescale for a potential service commencement is not yet known. It is not included in the December 2019 timetable.
- 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
  - There is a further need for later trains from Bristol/Bath to Chippenham on weekdays.
- **The current rail service seems relatively reliable**, after an initial poor start in 2019.
  - Given the 2 hourly schedule, provision of road transport automatically (without chasing the helpdesk) is desirable.
  - 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](mailto:info@mrug.org.uk).
- The provisional timetable for 12<sup>th</sup> December 2019 onwards has a number of changes, some of which have significant implications, e.g.
  - the 17:35 ex Swindon will run earlier which could affect working commuters.
  - some connections are improved and others are less convenient.
  - there is one less train (in one direction)
- CoOp have been considering an open-access service from Taunton northwards through the TW line to Oxford and beyond for some years, as an open access service provider
  - **They have held meetings to discuss current plans for a 2 hourly service Taunton to Nottingham. A further meeting is scheduled for Westbury on 6<sup>th</sup> June.**
  - Provision of such a service would mean an hourly service on the TW. How this would be implemented is not clear at this time. Proposal appear to indicate a start in 2021.
- 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.
  - **Arrangements for alternative transport in the event of a cancellation are not satisfactory. This will be addressed with GWR.**
  - **Taxis are often made available from the manned stations but only after a long delay. At Melksham where there is no manning, getting a GWR provided taxi is much more difficult.**
    - **Taxis using a station rank are obliged to accept railway business if requested, as part of the agreement to use the rank**
  - **An example of unsatisfactory provision was last summer. A taxi brought passengers from Swindon to Melksham. At Melksham there were other passengers stranded, but the taxi was not authorised to take them on.**

#### 5. Promotion

- Spring and summer outings to the south coast, a visit to Imber, and guided walks are provisionally scheduled.
- A 2019 Santa trip will be held, possibly running on two trains to allow additional participation.
- The MRUG website at [www.mrug.org.uk](http://www.mrug.org.uk) has been remodelled and now includes real-time train and bus information, and a wealth of other local information related to transport.
- **Timetable leaflets for the TW route (for May to December 2019) are available.**
  - **A Melksham based leaflet covering trains and buses will be produced, costs of printing to be the MRUG's account.**
- **A guided outing by train to Weymouth is planned.**
- **A stand at Shaw fete and participation in both the Melksham River/food festival and the Carnival are planned.**

#### 6. Buses

- **The MRUG plan to include buses in its remit, on the basis of integrated public transport.**
- **One of the Officers is a member of Bath Bus User Panel. Members of MRUG met to discuss detailed changes to some Melksham services prior to a meeting on local buses.**
- **The 21:30 ex Bath D3 goes empty stock to Westbury after Melksham, partly due to driver hours limitations, Proposals to run this via Bowerhill (which is almost on the same route are being pursued.**
- **Bus routes 14&15 are being looked at in detail. By some minor changes to the route and retiming, a service from the new housing estates to the station in peak (and other hours) would be possible.**
- **Use of the community bus to provide a station service, perhaps with volunteer drivers, is being considered.**

#### 7. Finance

- **A grant will be applied for from Melksham Town Council.**

#### 8. 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.

- 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 next **Travelwatch SW** will be in **October 2019**. MRUG members include a board member of TWSW and MRUG also sends a representative to all open meetings.
- **Graham Ellis has been elected as a board member for Railfuture and members of MRUG intend to support that organisation activities**
- **MRUG members also support the West Wilts Rail Users Group.**
- **TW and the CoffeeShop had stands at ACoRP's 'Rail in the City' event at Reading on 15<sup>th</sup> May.**
- **GWR will hold a community rail event in Bristol, 14<sup>th</sup> June. MRUG members will be attending.**
- **A group from MRUG travelled to Seaton on 28 April to scatter the former treasurer's ashes at Seaton Tramway.**

#### 9. AOB

- The new Freedom passes giving travel on trains and buses are worth looking at when planning local travel.

#### 10. Next and subsequent meetings

Wednesday 24 July 2019 at 19:30,

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

- Wednesday 24 July 2019
- Wednesday 27 November 2019

#### **Other provisional dates of interest to members**

- 26 June 2019 - TW conference (public invited) \* ticket required.
- 29 June 2019 - Participation in Melksham carnival
- 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