

Melksham Rail User Group

Melksham rail user group

Minutes**27 November 2019 at 19:30****Melksham United Reformed Church****Present**

Pat Aves	<i>Cllr MTC & WC</i>	John Hamley	<i>Secretary</i>
Peter Blackburn	<i>Chairman</i>	Jo Harries	
Paul Carter	<i>MWPC</i>	Kevin Hayes	
Peter Chidley		Horace Prickett	<i>Cllr WC</i>
Peter Colegate		Paul Johnson	<i>TWCIC</i>
Julie Colegate		Sophie Martin	<i>TWCIC</i>
Graham Ellis	<i>Vice-Chair</i>	Eddy Watts	
Geoff Ewell		Roger Witt	

Apologies

Rolf Brindle	
John Glover	<i>Cllr MWPC</i>
David Phillips	<i>WC</i>
Peter Tapscott	
Alan Wheatherly	
Judith Gradwell	<i>Treasurer</i>
Adrienne Westbrook	<i>Cllr MTC</i>

Abbreviations:

ACoRP - Association of Community Rail Partnerships

CCIF - Customer and Community Improvement Fund

LEP - Local Enterprise Partnership

MTC - Melksham Town Council

MWPC - Melksham Without Parish Council

SNTB - subNational Transport Bodies

TWCIC - TransWilts Community Interest Company

TWCRC - TransWilts Community Rail Partnership

WC - Wiltshire Council

WWRUG-- West Wilts Rail Users Group

1. Welcome

- Joanne Harris, a regular passenger, was welcomed.
- Cllr Pat Aves attended for MTC, as Adrienne Westbrook was unable to come.

2. Minutes of meeting 16th October 2019

- Go-Op railway incorrectly named at C0-Op railway.
- Geoff Ewell was incorrectly listed as George Ewell.
- Minutes were otherwise agreed - Proposed Eddy Watts, seconded Roger Witt.

3. Melksham station current issues (exc major works)

- Training for on-platform tidying activities has been arranged for 14th January 2020. 4 named MRUG members have been nominated.
- Posters at the station detailing engineering works and service modifications are not updated frequently enough and hence forthcoming cancellations etc may not be given enough notice.
- Penalty fares are applicable at Melksham station, but as the TVM only accepts cards, cash payments must be made via the train conductor. Similarly, Groupsave tickets cannot be purchased at the TVM.

4. Melksham station upgrades (TWCIC activities)

- Upgrades to the car parking arrangements await rectification of the site water supply, before the lease can be finalised.
 - Work is due to start early December, talking about 2 weeks which will be followed by several weeks other work before charging for parking can be implemented
- Early phases of the upgrade may include the CCTV, ramp to the former Reeds area and possibly electric car charging facilities
 - Volunteers will be sought to help clear the former Reeds area.
 - Debbie Bentley at MTC may be able to HELP source volunteers
 - It is anticipated that the spaces adjacent to the platform will include 5 blue badge spaces, and the remainder will be for short stay
- Funds are being sort for the later phases including the café.
- Parking charges will be roughly in line with those at Westbury.
 - Season parking permits should offer significant reductions for regular users
 - Prior notice of parking charging arrangements will be given to avoid misunderstanding and unintentional contravention of the charges
- The North end of the platform where the previous gated entrance has been closed off, may be reopened to form a pedestrian walkway to the new car park.
- Illuminated poster frames have been funded for Swindon, Melksham, Trowbridge and Westbury, and are expected to be installed in q1 2020. Pockets for documents such as timetables will be included.
- An additional station nameboard will be installed for the extended platform, and other nameboards will be moved
- Dot matrix displays will be provided, giving details of the next/subsequent trains, using equipment released from other stations where newer, more detailed displays have been provided.
 - The platform has been marked for three zones (due to the bidirectional service) to correspond to the dot-matrix displays
- The hard work and time from Paul Johnson and the TWCIC team in pursuing these upgrades is gratefully acknowledged.

5. Service changes/issues

- It is understood that a potential Go-Op service has been deferred for two years due to a lack of rolling stock.
- A number of line closures are planned at weekends in January 2020.
- The improved performance (re cancellations and delays) noted in the early autumn seems to have deteriorated in recent weeks,
 - In w/b 18Nov2019, 17 out of 119 trains were cancelled of which 14 were due to a lack of crew.
 - This has led to some loss of confidence in the users.
 - GWR sent several senior planning staff to the recent TW Stakeholders meeting to demonstrate how seriously they see this issue, together with a representative from Network Rail
- In spite of the poor service in 2019, passenger numbers seem buoyant, with a 3.9% rise in 2019 on the TransWilts line.

6. Promotion

- MRUG attended the Christmas Craft Fair at the Assembly Rooms on 23 November 2019 handing out timetables and travel advice
- The 2019 Santa trip will be held on 15th December (running from Melksham (15:05) to Swindon and back), supported by GWR.
 - All 80 tickets have been sold.
 - Present wrapping will take place at 48a Spa Road on 12th December - thanks to Graham for use of his room there.
 - Help from members to hand out presents etc on the train would be appreciated.
 - Roger Witt, Horace Prickett and Peter Chidley will start from Westbury to prepare for the arrival at Melksham
- A separate trip, organised by TW will be held on 8th December, picking up at Westbury and Trowbridge. Contact Sophie Martin sophie@transwilts.org for more details.
- A Melksham orientated timetable leaflet has been prepared and will be distributed at the station just in advance of the December timetable change (distribution from 29th November through 1st December). A PDF is available at <http://www.mrug.org.uk/Winter2019Spring2020.pdf>
- The December revised timetable will be circulated with the local newspaper.
- A new timetable poster for use with the presentation 'ladder' has been purchased for use in the New Year promotional activities.
- The MRUG website has been favourably received, but more active work is needed on Facebook and Twitter postings.
- 2020 meetings will include, where possible, presentations to complement the work of MRUG. In January 2020, Guy Watts from GWR will be attending to talk about fares and answer questions (which should be submitted as soon as possible to info@mrug.org.uk).

7. Buses

- Changes to the D1, D2 and D3 daytime services to hourly have been implemented.
 - D1 service seems to be unreliable now. Roger Witts will investigate and possibly join the bus forum in Bath for this route.
 - D2 service to Frome seems to be working.
 - D3 service (through Melksham) has issues, although usage is helped by routing through Batheastern and also onward to Bowerhill during the day
- Changes to the X72 and X34 by Faresaver are possible.
- The timetable poster board in the Market Place is out-dated, whereas the board at the Melksham library is correct..
- The 21:30 ex Bath D3 now runs via Bowerhill en route to Westbury for overnighting.

8. Finance

- Application for a grant from MWPC will be made prior to the January 2020 closing date.
- Revised signatories for the MRUG Coventry account are being finalised

9. Other Organisations

- **TransWilts** <https://transwilts.org/> held a **stakeholders and members meeting** on 18th November, which included presentations from several GWR senior team members and network rail.
- When platform training (see 3 above) is complete, MRUG may apply for membership of **ACoRP** as a station 'friend'. <https://communityrail.org.uk/community-rail/>
- 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>.
- Several MRUG members attended the last **Travelwatch SW** open meeting on 18th October 2019 <http://travelwatchesouthwest.org/>.
- **West Wilts Rail Users Group (WWRUG)** <http://www.wwrug.org.uk/> meetings will be of interest.
- On 6th November 2019, MRUG members supported a **Westbury transport discussion** (<https://www.wiltshiretimes.co.uk/news/17987478.transport-agenda-westbury-public-meeting/>)

10. AOB -None

11. Next meeting and diary

- **Wednesday 22 January 2020 19:30 in the Melksham United Church hall**
- For advance notice, the provisional schedule for meetings in 2020 is
 - 22 January 2020, *where we plan to concentrate on fares with an expert speaker from GWR*
 - 18 March 2020
 - 20 May 2020 AGM
 - 22 July 2020
 - 16 September 2020
 - 18 November 2020
- Other meetings/significant dates which may be of interest are:
 - 29th November 2019 through 1st December 2019 - distribution of new timetables at the station.
 - 12th December 2019 19:30 **Present wrapping** for Santa outing on 15/12/2019
 - 15th December 2019 15:00 **Santa special** from Melksham to Swindon <http://www.mrug.org.uk/santa.html>
 - 14th January 2020 - Station briefing (attendees by invite only).

Brought forward items for the record

12. Brought Forward Station Issues

- 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.
- The underpass to town could be promoted as it is a good facility. It could be used for community advertising etc.
- 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.
 - 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. (Note taxis using a station rank are obliged to accept railway business if requested, as part of the agreement to use the rank)
 - Given the 2 hourly schedule, provision of road transport automatically (without chasing the helpdesk) is desirable when cancellations occur.
 - Lack of communication when the train is late or is cancelled is seen as a significant problem.
- Taxi companies would like to be able to display a simple 'card' giving telephone numbers etc. *Currently there are some cards displayed informally.*

13. Brought Forward Service improvements desirable

- The following changes to the train service are desirable (in advance of a more general hourly 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.
- Desirable service improvements are being sought by TWCIC for the next few years.
 - an hourly service in each direction. The LEP may be able to assist but would probably need matched funding.
 - Extension of the route to Southampton (and the airport):- Currently Bournemouth airport is seen as the hub by the Western Gateway subnational transport body, not Southampton. It is suggested that MTC/MWPC are requested to write to the sNTB to state the case for Southampton airport as the rail/air hub.
 - In the other direction Oxford is seen as a desirable destination. Oxfordshire CC have been promoting the case for a Bristol/Oxford service reinstatement, which also assists a case for a Corsham station.

14. Brought Forward Bus Issues

- A bus timetable should be displayed at the station.
- Bus routes 14&15 are being reviewed 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.