



*** Report for Melksham Area Board from TransWilts CIC

* prepared 28th August 2017
- by Graham Ellis, grahamellis@transwilts.org

*** RAIL

** Train services

* Lack of Reliability

- Staff shortages mean that cancellation rates have rocketed to around 10% v target of 1%
- GWR fully aware and "urgently" addressing, but not possible just to take someone from Job Centre and tell them to drive
- TransWilts is often the easiest service to cancel, but leaves huge gaps since it's only infrequent in the first place

* Still the fastest growing community rail line

- Currently at 10% year on year (other lines at 1%)
- Melksham estimate 70k journeys per annum up from 60k last year
- Business estimates that given services and capacity Melksham journeys should rise to over 300k per annum

* Lack of Capacity

- 2nd carriage on peaks trains was scheduled for May 2017 but now scheduled for January 2018
- Full and standing daily - peak and "shoulder peak" trains too
- very long gap to next / previous train if yours is filled beyond comfort

* Engineering Disruption

- 8th to 16th July no trains Chippenham to Swindon

- 3 of those days no trains at Melksham
- Rail replacement buses provided. Information good but connections awful
- Journey time on Sat 8th up from 25 mins to 100 mins Melksham to Swindon

*** Passenger number robust**

- In spite of service "Meltdown" passenger number have been holding up well
- We have no train capacity left for any more significant growth until we get more carriages or trains
- Double the capacity and it will be filled within a couple of years

**** News**

*** Appointment of Horace to board**

- TransWilts welcomes Horace Prickett (Wiltshire Council Portfolio Holder) to our board, 30th August
- Horace is a long time active supporter of TransWilts

*** Change of secretary and office**

- With changes at the company where we were previously based and provided support services, our base is moving
- secretary@transwilts.org and Rosemarie Johnson (welcome, Rosemarie)
- office base to be Chippenham - see later
- Current Community Rail Officer (Graham Ellis) working from home / 404 The Spa Melksham / small meetings AOK

*** Other potential changes**

- Health issues and changing workload now that we have grown so much may lead to further changes
- Possible that the Community Rail Officer role will need to be re-assigned

*** Peter Blackburn shortlisted for ACoRP award**

- Peter Blackburn is our President, without whom Melksham probably wouldn't have a service
- Peter shortlisted for national volunteer award, to be presented 5th October, Derby
- Well done Peter - you're already a winner and we owe you a huge debt of gratitude!

*** CCIF for this year**

- GWR Grant fund, Â£60k, matching funding from councils
- Station Masterplan for Melksham to ensure everything aligns for 5 x current station usage

*** CCIF application for next year**

- Applying to refurbish room at Chippenham Station as base and community / visitor welcome point
- VisitWiltshire's Great West Way will bring in overseas visitors to TransWilts via Chippenham Rail

*** Friends**

- Thank you to Bob Morrison for continued management of TransWilts Friends / Members
- Thanks also to Bob for the production of the newsletter to keep friends in touch

*** Facebook and Coffee Shop promotions**

- On line marketing and information - continued active source of questions

*** CHRUG and MRUG**

- Chippenham Rail User Group, founding meeting, 21st September
- Melksham Rail User Group, next meeting 29th September, 17:30, Town Hall

* **Research Survey**

- 2014 on train survey was immensely useful
- 2016 survey was damaged due to severe train cancellation and disruption
- Planning to run another survey in Mid September, with Wiltshire Council and Atkins

* **Evening train options**

- Cost of a later train has been increased from Â£50k pa to Â£200k pa / alternatives being sought
- also noting lack of late train from Bristol / Bath to Chippenham / Swindon
- unlikely to be improved for 2018

* **Afternoon train options**

- Extra capacity via extra train at 16:36 Swindon to Melksham / 17:20 back rejected
- GWR don't have enough staff, and don't want to start something that could only last a year

** **Coming up**

* **2 coach trains (but when?)**

- Current schedule is January 2018 (but previous schedules have slipped)
- Once trains are 2 coaches in the peak, we can start active marketing again

* **Sunday morning service all year**

- The first train on Sunday morning has been summer only (ends 3rd September)
- From 10th September, a new train Sunday train runs Melksham to Westbury at 09:20
- First Swindon service remains at 10:44

* **Sunday morning to Swindon from January**

- From January 2018, first Sunday train to Swindon will be at 08:44 (i.e. summer service all year)
- Extra Sunday trains are a huge boost for Melksham passengers making Sundays out practical all year

* **Breaking of connection at Westbury**

- As from January 2018, the 15:12 from Swindon becomes 15:18
- This train will NO LONGER offer a good connection to Salisbury (5 mins wait becomes 55 mins)
- We have severely protested this, been promised a new look, but connection remains broken in draft timetable
- Very disappointed. This connection is used by many people. We see no reason for the change

* **Longer Platform**

- Melksham Platform is due to be lengthened early in 2018
- These works will enable longer trains to call without delays while passenger use a single door as at present with longer trains
- Platform surface and camber will also be improved
- Anti trespass system to be installed to stop people walking onto the track
- This latter needed due to some of the idiots wandering around when steam trains pass through

* **Thanks to Paul Johnson**

- recording huge THANK YOU to Paul Johnson for his ongoing work on Melksham Station's future and service futures
- Paul's experience in the rail industry and with the LEP and his drive give him the tools to do things none of the rest of us could

* **2 year hire of yard**

- Wiltshire Council is short term letting the land with the potential community hut for 2 years
- This is because they require the income, and there is no definition on Master Plan completion
- It is stated to be a short term let, but still waiting for the lease to expire may become critical path
- This letting prevents TransWilts from setting up information point / cafe / facilities / office at Melksham Station

* **Master Plan**

- Melksham Master Plan work underway - joined up planning for a station to meet future needs
- Platform length and access, parking, bus facilities
- Northern access and access towards the west (George Ward Gardens)
- Moving of Melksham Tyres to the yard across
- Objective of Master Plan is to specify facilities for 300k+ annual passenger flow
- Once scheme is "shovel ready" it can be submitted for DfT new station funding, and to LEP, or similar

* **SWR obligations on Wilton Parkway and Southampton - Swindon flow analysis**

- New operator (First / MTR) on the old SWT (Stagecoach) franchise to the south
- New franchise is required to progress Wilton Parkway station
- New franchise is required to Study Swindon / Southampton service flows
- TransWilts (Swindon - Westbury - Salisbury) and Three Rivers (Salisbury - Southampton) promoting joint service

* **Capacity reports**

- Wiltshire Council, Network Rail, GWR studying what needs to be done to improve robust capacity on line through Melksham
- Future service requirements may include hourly train each way and increased freight
- Options include extra signalling, passing loops (at or away from the station) and significant redoubling

* **Other timetable changes**

- As from December 2018, express trains will all be retimed between Swindon and Chippenham, and at Westbury
- This will have a significant knock-on effect on TransWilts timings.
- The DfT requires an extra morning train from December 2018 to arrive into Swindon before 06:15!
- We are concerned at loss of connections and some useful trains too.
- We are working with GWR at a very early stage of timetabling to ensure the best possible outcome across Wiltshire

** **Diary**

* **Board - 30th August 2017**

* **Food and River - 2nd and 3rd September 2017**

* **CHRUG and MRUG - 21st and 29th September 2017**

* **ACoRP awards - 5th October 2017**

* **TWSW - 7th October 2017**

* **ACoRP update - 22nd November 2017**

* **Santa - 17th December 2017**

* **Hosting GWR Community Rail Conference, Spring 2018**

*** BUS

* **TransWilts adoption**

- Bus work has moved very much from campaign to partnership with Wiltshire Council
- As such, TransWilts is taking elements such as the Melksham Bus proposals under its approval wing

* **Retendering (General)**

- All Melksham Supported services being retendered at present
- Some already out for bidding, other were due out but are currently delayed by WC staff sickness
- TransWilts not actively involved in evening 271 or Zigzag retenders
- Our suggestion for Sunday 271 (already out for tender) has not been forwarded to bidders as an option
- We are disappointed at this rejection which could have brought Sunday buses to Rugby, Football and Station
- We understand Council Officers felt that our timetable needed adjustment to make it feasible

* **Monday to Saturday town bus retendering**

- Significant work has been put in by Lee Fletcher, Natacha Tagholm and others to revise the service
- Huge thanks, especially to Lee. He has also done lots for rail.
- Lee will be splitting his time in future between Wiltshire and a new home in France.

- Our proposal is to reroute 15 from Berryfield via Bowerhill Industry, and to run on to / from Station
- Service 14 to fill gaps between 272 runs, with 1 departure running a shortened route.
- Longer lunch break (hour rather than minimal) for drivers, allowing a vehicle at both commuter peaks
- Timetables, driver rotas, passenger forecasts, train connections all submitted to Wiltshire Council
- Summary analysis suggests 40% increase in passengers - perhaps 12,000 extra journeys to/from station
- Most extra journeys will be paid by passengers traveling rather than subsidy or ENCTS kickbacks.

- Wiltshire Council have promised to include our option in requests for bid (but then they had promised to include Sundays ...)
- Indications are that decision will be made almost entirely on price of bids rather than future prospects, quality or price per journey
- it would be possible for a commercial operator to provide a limited town bus service (1 vehicle between school runs) in which case it would be unlikely that Wiltshire Council would be able to provide a supported work bus service

- Our proposals have support on Melksham Town and Melsham Without Parishes, Melksham Community Bus Group, GWR, ACoRP, Department for Transport
- We have volunteers who could help to look after information at bus stops and distribute leaflets within the community
- DCRDF and other funding (est. £10k) available, but only if an integrated solution (Train connects to bus) is selected.
- Should the community bus option be selected and our offer of support accepted, we would anticipate bringing on extra resource to assist but well within that extra funding.

* **Prepared Graham Ellis, 28th August 2017 / update 29.8.2017**

- at request of Kevin Fielding on 23rd August, submit by 28th August for 18th October Area Board.
- Much of this information may usefully updated by that date and I would be happy to come along on that date and provide a quick update.