

TransWilts Partner Update for Melksham Area Board on 16th November 2016

What's been happening

Melksham's train service has been officially designated - giving the local community via the Community Rail Partnership some extra inputs into how the service is run.

Further, the Rail Minister (Paul Maynard) confirmed that the additional trial service that was running from December 2013 to December 2016 will be continued as a permanent service within the current Great Western franchise

At the annual National ACoRP (Association of Community Rail Partnerships) awards in Southport in September, the TransWilts and Great Western jointly won the marketing award for last year's "Weymouth Wizard" promotion.

Passenger numbers continue to be buoyant, with Great Western managing director Mark Hopwood describing us as the "fastest growing line in the country". Station usage figures to March 2016 are due to be published in the lead up to Christmas, and we expect to see a significant growth from the 58,000 journeys last year for Melksham; by way of comparison, the number of journeys was around 3,000 at the start of the millenium, and around 7,000 in 2012 (figures adjusted for known ticketing distortions). Since March the trains have continued to get even busier, and we're halfway to seeing yet another big growth figure published before Christmas 2017.

A big "Thank You" for helping with this success to:

- Passengers
- Operational Staff
- Volunteers
- Great Western Railway management
- Department for Transport
- Wiltshire Council and its Area Boards, members and officers
- Town and Parish Councils
- Members of Parliament and candidates, present and past
- Advocates
- Press and publicity - broadcast, printed and online
- Campaign and Partnership groups
- Association of Community Rail Partnerships and TravelWatch SouthWest
- Network Rail

and

The volunteers and team at TransWilts - chaired by Paul Johnson

The volunteers and team at the Melksham Rail User Group (formerly MRDG) -
chaired by Peter Blackburn

What will be happening?

The trains carry on running - switch from temporary LSTF grant funding to permanent franchise - on 11th December

As they're released from the Thames Valley, 2 coach trains will replace the one coach trains currently used on the line

Melksham Station will be improved - Paul Johnson will be telling the Area Board more about this at the 16th November meeting. Huge subject - small comment here as Paul's telling you in person and there will be a separate presentation available.

Some extra services are planned later in the franchise - though the services currently to be added do not necessarily fill the most obvious gaps / meet the most pressing. GWR and the community are putting together a case for a later evening train. Looking further ahead, the South West franchise will be awarded in the New Year and the successful bidder is required to examine options for the Swindon to Southampton route, which links the Swindon to Westbury via Melksham, Westbury to Salisbury and Salisbury to Southampton and Eastleigh services. We are hoping that in due course this will lead to an hourly service.

The first fruits of designation will be announced in the new year - a package of small measures (but very significant to some people) that will sort out some fare anomalies of the line and move us towards a better business base on which to justify a late train.

Santa Claus will be on the train on 4th December ... with presents for the children, and mince pies and a seasonal drink too. Departures at 13:45 and 17:45 from Melksham, £10 adult and £5 child. Pre-booking essential at the Tourist Information Centre. Trip time - just over an hour.

Melksham Rail User Group meets on 6th December at the TransWilts office at Well House Manor on Spa Road at 19:30. All welcome for a further update - and volunteers and help also very much welcomed. It's the people who use the train who have made it work and will continue to do so. Enquiries - John Hamley (secretary) who can be reached via secretary@mrug.org.uk

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on 6th November 2016