

Melksham Rail User Group

**Minutes****23rd June 2017 at 19:30****Melksham Town Hall****Present**

Peter Blackburn	Chairman	John Hamley	Secretary
Graham Ellis	Vice-Chair	John Money	Treasurer
		Kevin Hayes	

Apologies

Lee Fletcher
 Paul Carter MWPC
 Bob Morrison
 Paul Taylor MWPC
 Eddie Watts

1. Minutes of meeting 12th May 2017

- Minutes were agreed. Proposed Graham Ellis, seconded Peter Blackburn
- MWPC Parish Council have nominated two new councillors to support MRUG (Cllrs P. Taylor and P. Carter).

2. Melksham Station Improvements, and Related Infrastructure Upgrades

- There had been complaints of rowdy behaviour and littering (including glass and other dangerous materials) in the new station car park.
 - BTP and WC will be advised in anticipation that additional patrols could pass the station.
 - The possible replacement of locks on the station cycle houses will be investigated, so that cleaning materials could be stored there. MRUG volunteers could possibly provide a regular tidy up service.
 - Provision of a waste bin in the car park, and clearing of the bin, by GWR will also be addressed.
- GWR propose the use of cascaded two-car 165 trains in 2018. This will necessitate platform extensions at Melksham and a basic North extension is now scheduled for build in early 2018.
- Further upgrades are now covered under a holistic approach by TWCIC. A 'master plan' covering all enhancements is being prepared as a basis for discussions with WC and GWR. The anticipated budget is in the region of £1m. Currently the following works are being considered:
 - Additional platform extension to the South, in the area currently occupied by Melksham Tyre Services. MTS would then relocate to the former Reeds area and the Bath Road steps reinstated.
 - Improved access via Murray Walk.
 - Northern pedestrian access to Foundry Close (which will also provide a better interchange route with the Chippenham / Melksham buses).
 - Routing other local buses through the station (currently thought to be difficult due to turning space)
 - Additional signal midway between Thingley and Trowbridge to allow two trains in the same direction.
 - Later - provision of a passing loop at the station sufficient for passenger trains, subsequently extended to a longer loop for freight trains (probably mid/late 2020s).
 - Improved subway access, and making the underpass more inviting.
 - Expanded waiting facilities.
- TWCIC are considering use (on a short-term basis) of the empty Reeds office as a station 'welcome' facility, manned by volunteers providing informal help to passenger. Other possibilities include provision of Wi-Fi, toilets, defibrillator and the sale of cakes etc:
 - Outline costs for conversion are estimated at £50,000 (e.g. painting etc), but operational costs have not been reviewed. Business sponsors for the works are being sought.
 - The facility would not provide manned ticket sales unless volunteers were specially trained and liabilities covered.
- The station information display is frequently unavailable. It is understood that GWR are proposing a revised design to cover all such units.
- The yellow safety line on the platform needs repainting
- The TVM is invaluable but
 - is difficult to use in bright weather (in which case users should purchase tickets from the train supervisor).
 - 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.

3. Trans Wilts Rail Partnership (TWCRP) and Community Interest Company (TWCIC)

TW issues consider the services and general issues for the entire TW corridor. The following summary lists the key issues that relate directly to the Melksham service.

- Co-Op are still considering an open access service from Taunton to Nuneaton via MKM, possibly at 2 hourly intervals from 2018. The status is currently unknown.
- TW still pressing for an hourly service in each direction (by 2020) and also to extend the route to Southampton via Southampton airport
 - Both the GWR and the South West franchise requirements will request proposals for the TW route, including (for the South West) the section to Southampton.
 - 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 20:36 down) 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.
- Publicity is needed to advise what to do if a train to Melksham is cancelled (or overcrowding means that passengers could not board a train)
- Relocation of the TW office to Chippenham is being considered.
- TWCIC will support a Travel Watch SW consultation on the new franchises on 3rd July 2017.
- TWCIC also attended a consultation with GWR at Barnstaple on 16th June 2017.
- Revenue collection of the corridor can be limited at times, particularly when the train is crowded.
- Current analysis of passenger usage shows the TW route has the highest growth on community rail lines in the period from 2015/2016 to 2016/2017
 - Train counts will be undertaken again this summer.
- A case for revised bus services in Melksham to provide better integrated transport and to encourage more usage through innovative fares has been made as part of a current wide-ranging review

4. Promotion

- GWR are running a service from Swindon to Weymouth on summer Sundays in 2017, always good for promoting train services.
- Good contact has been maintained with ACoRP including attending meetings.
 - A joint promotional event was held at Waterloo on Wednesday 17th May.
 - Entries to a number of categories for 2017 ACoRP awards have been submitted.
- A number of one-way dog walking outings, with return (or outward) by train are scheduled.)
- Mini-timetables covering Melksham to Bath and London are being considered.
- An updated MRUG website is being developed providing first source of travel information to the general public, including timetable and fares information.
- It is hoped that MRUG will participate in the River Festival (1/2 Sept 2017), and the Carnival/Family Fun day (22 July 2017)
- New panels for the bus stops in the Melksham market place have been provided to display railway information and timetables. MRUG will provide £100 towards the cost.
- A new local 'rover' ticket which provides similar coverage (at a higher price than typical for PlusBus) is being considered.
- New posters have been prepared for the station.

5. Finance

- An application has been made in June for a grant from MTC.
 - **Accounts for 2016/2017 will be needed to complete this application.**
- As the HSBC branch in Melksham has closed, MRUG need to review whether opening a regular cheque based account is viable. Ideally all cheques would require two signatures, although a low limit value for single signed cheques might be possible.
 - Current banking regulations involve checks to ensure the account is being used for legitimate purposes.

6. AOB

- There have been problems with accessibility on replacement bus services, a particular issue at present with the engineering works necessitating bus provision more frequently than normal.
 - It was agreed that Graham Ellis would write to GWR with a reasonable proposal to ensure accessibility was available on at least half the services.

7. Next meeting date

- The next meeting will be on the **29th September 2017 at 19:30.**
- One further meeting for 2017 is scheduled for Friday 1st December 2017.