

Melksham Rail User Group

**Minutes****16th December 2016 at 19:30****Melksham Town Hall****Present**

Graham Ellis *Vice-Chair*
 John Glover *MWPC*
 John Hamley *Secretary*
 Kevin Hayes
 John Money *Treasurer*

Apologies

Peter Blackburn *Chairman*
 Mary Jarvis
 Paul Johnson *Chair TWCIC*
 Tom Steward
 Eddy Watts

This meeting was an informal session to round the year off and cover plans for 2017, and this record lists the main points covered only.

The next meeting will work forward from the minutes of 5th October 2016.

1. Minutes of meeting 5th October 2016

- Item 3: The trial period of TW running ends in December 2016. The service going forward forms part of the contracted service and is not funded under the pilot arrangements.

2. Passenger Usage

- Recently published figures for the usage of stations in West Wilts show Melksham has a 17% increase in 2015/2016 over 2014/2015. This is the highest increase rate for any station in the area, with 60700 users for 2015/2016. The next highest increase is at Severn Beach.
- All stations on the TW corridor (except Chippenham) had increased usage.
- Significant incoming flows to MKM, and an increase in MKM travellers to the South direction, have developed.
- Typically trains through MKM on average have 50% who alight or get on, and 50% passing through. This is increase on previous years where typically 75% were through travellers
- Overcrowding on some TW commuter trains (notably 15:38 ex SWI) is limiting growth.

3. Santa Promotion

- One Santa train run on 4 December 2016, to Westbury and back, unfortunately 10 mins late but this didn't spoil the event.
- 13:54 MKM – WSB, back 14:49 (planned 25 mins turnaround at WSB), worked well as in daylight
- 2 car unit, with one effectively reserved for the special.
- British Transport Police supported us encouraging safe use of the railway
- Paul Johnson was Santa, thank you
- Only providing for travellers from MKM (80 approx sold) at £10 (adult)
- The success of the train during the year is thought to have reduced demand for a special
- Costs were covered and a reasonable profit made

4. Promotion

- GWR will be running SWI to Weymouth, summer Sundays in 2017, always good for promoting train services
- Facebook/website promotions to use train for Christmas shopping and other non-commuting use seems to be successful,
- Good contact maintained with ACoRP
- A number of one-way dog walking outings, with return (or outward) by train have been held.

5. Services and fares

- Provision of trains to fill gaps, and for later/earlier services (such as 5:20 and 17:20 up, 7:36 and 20:36 down) still urgently needed
- Later evening trains still needed, as well as additional Southbound commuting service
- Changes to timetable for December make only small alterations to times
- Fares subject small increases, unlikely to affect the number of travellers on the TW segment significantly
- TW been able to redistribute the balance of fares slightly, a consequence of service 'designation'
- Certain rovers covering MKM now extend out to Pewsey making it a very useful option for leisure period travel
- Co-Op are still hoping to provide an open access service from Taunton to Nuneaton via MKM, possibly at 2 hourly intervals and possibly from 2018
- TW still pressing for hourly service in each direction (by 2020) and also for extending route to Southampton via Southampton airport
- Input needed to minimise trains bypassing WSB via avoiding line, as this station provides a wealth of interchange opportunities at present

6. Station Plans

- Cascaded trains from electrification still expected from 2018, and necessary platform extensions (initially to North) should be complete by end of 2017 (which is already funded)
- Subsequently relocation of Melksham Tyre Services to the vacated Reeds site, allowing the existing South platform to be recommissioned (making a 5 car platform) anticipated. This would have the H&S advantage of separation of passengers flows from car movements at MTS and allow reinstatement of the steps from Bath Road and provide additional bus turning space.
- Whilst extending the platform, other enhancements will be actively pursued (at least passive provision made for them), including
 - Improved access via Murray Walk
 - Northern pedestrian access to Foundry Close (which will also provide a better interchange route with the Chippenham / Melksham buses).
 - This could later be the basis of a local bus route.
 - Routing other local buses through station (currently thought to be difficult due to turning space) or provision of a bus stop on Bath Road near station near the traffic lights
 - 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
- Information presentation poor
 - Station display not often working
 - Banner displays typically found at other stations would be ideal, and ideally a remotely driven PA should be provided.
- The (unused) 'bicycle houses' should be removed, to make space for another station bench.
- The yellow safety line on the platform needs repainting
- TWCIC are also considering use of the empty Reeds office as a station 'welcome' facility, manned by volunteers who could provide help to passengers informally. Other possibilities include provision of Wi-Fi, toilets, defibrillator and the sale of cakes etc,
 - Outline costs for conversion are estimated at sub £2,000 (e.g. painting etc), but operational costs have not been reviewed.
 - The facility would not provide manned ticket sales unless volunteers were specially trained and liability issues could be resolved.
- Longer term, provision of intermediate signals allowing two trains running in the same direction between Thingley and Bradford Junctions, is needed, followed by a passing loop (perhaps mid platform) at Melksham, which would allow movements in both directions between these two points.

7. Finance

- Grant to be applied for from MWPC

8. AOB – n/a

9. Next meeting date

- Meetings for 2017 will be advised as soon as room booking confirmed, pattern likely to be similar to 2016.