

# Melksham Rail User Group

**Minutes****23<sup>rd</sup> 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 12<sup>th</sup> 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 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2017.
- TWCIC also attended a consultation with GWR at Barnstaple on 16<sup>th</sup> 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 17<sup>th</sup> 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 **29<sup>th</sup> September 2017 at 19:30.**
- One further meeting for 2017 is scheduled for Friday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2017.