

18.11.2020 / Agenda 19:30, Zoom via <http://mrug.org.uk>

Melksham rail user group

An update ...

- * Melksham Hub update
- * Service and travel status / performance
- * Station adoption update

A look a little forward ...

- * Timetable 21 (and beyond)
- * Service support from MRUG
 - * Journey Makers
 - * Buses 21

MRUG activities ...

- * Promotion 21 and events 21
- * Pandemic considerations
 - * Meetings 21
 - * Web site

Of more general interest in Melksham ...

- * Melksham bypass - Public and sustainable transport and environmental matters



Melksham Hub

Before July 2020



After – November 2020



Melksham HUB – Key Milestones & Business Plan



- Kitchen fit out complete – 23rd December 2020
- Café manager recruitment commences – early January 2021
- Volunteers to clear site and paint building – January-March 2021
- Café manager in post – mid February 2021 shadowing at Hearty Hare Café at Chippenham station
- Volunteer training commences – early March 2021
- Soft launch date – mid March 2021
- Target Official Launch– Saturday 3rd April 2021 (Easter Saturday)

Also ... longer term plans

- Track capacity
- Extra capacity at Westbury and Salisbury Stns
- More trains (passenger and freight too)

- Northern Access to station (foot and cycle)
- Connecting buses with trains

Train / passenger performance

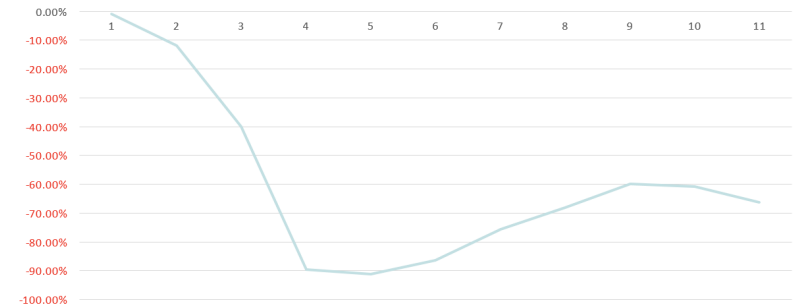
Train data for Melksham Station

Month	Due to Run	On Time	Over 5 mins Late	Cancelled
June	356	302	14	5
July	406	352	10	11
August	392	304	29	9
September	442	304	26	7
October	467	274	14	37

Reliability Figures (Compiled by Melksham Rail Users Group)

Swindon-Westbury

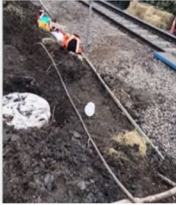
Four weeks to	LY Journeys	% YOY	TY Journeys
1st February 2020	18,005	-0.78%	17,864
29th February 2020	19,525	-11.80%	17,220
31st March 2020	20,630	-40.00%	12,389
2nd May 2020	18,277	-89.58%	1,904
30th May 2020	18,792	-91.17%	1,658
27th June 2020	18,854	-86.39%	2,565
25th July 2020	19,923	-75.72%	4,837
22nd August 2020	19,497	-68.17%	6,206
19th September 2020	20,019	-59.97%	8,014
17th October 2020	20,493	-60.76%	8,041
14th November 2020	20,350	-66.37%	6,843



Covid Capacity

Melksham Cable fault 11-14 October

- Planned engineering work to rectify drainage issues at Melksham
- Cable strike early hours of Sunday 11 October
- Complex level of damage highlighting poor information control and processes



Lessons learnt and improvements

- GWR → Trans Wilts communication link
- Investigating facility of access to new APP/alerts
- Key trains to be protected
- Focus on accurate CIS information especially at Melksham
- Get you home safely policy
- Reviewing RRS resource and Stations involvement
- Confirm tickets via Melksham tickets valid via Bath during disruption

Melksham Cable fault 11-14 October

- As cabling connected Monday 0400 alarms indicated a signalling issue
- Uncertainty over problem and location
- Additional resource , uncertain resolution milestones
- Pilot working implemented but some services via [Bathampton](#)
- Initial information poor and difficulty resourcing RRS

Update 14 (1116 14/10/20)
&T Techs have been able to connect the axle counter to the cable resulting in the Axle counter being They are now working on testing the remaining core pairs to ensure they are producing strong readings.. The ETR is estimated as 1400 with all assets up and running.
Plans are in place for 900 metres of new cable to be laid alongside the damaged cable area, in a safe location with the intention of jointing this in over the next few days.
Pilot working will continue until the testing has been completed and all assets are working correctly.
A further conference with all involved will be held at 1200pm

Lesson missed ...

Keeping THE PASSENGER informed

- during the ongoing problems
- afterwards to explain and reassure.

Brief public post but "[our CRP] [suppressed the apology] as it was agreed it breached confidentiality with NR."

As a User Group, it is a primary task of MRUG to inform the users – and as such we publish this slide.

Station Clean

- Very limited MRUG station activity during Covid to rules set by GWR and conveyed by TransWilts to all stations.
- GWR also limited staff staff available
- Melksham Station became scruffy / unkempt
- Knorr Bremse and TransWilts complained
- GWR and MRUG have been able with better availability to do some cleaning and light gardening in recent weeks





Train timetable for 2021

- 2020 has seen 7 timetable changes in 7 months
- 2021 plan is for one (point 5) through year

19:15 Southward and 20:20 Northward are back

(fills gap off Swindon from 17:36 to 20:45)

First Sunday train runs as a bus in the winter

(serious risk of losing train all year has been overcome)

May 2021 adjustments in discussion

(hope for extra Saturday evening northward)

Statement – GWR / MRUG

During lockdown from 5th November 2020 to 2nd December travel is restricted. You can find details on the Government website <https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>. However, GWR have advised that they are not anticipating any timetable changes. This means that all trains which have been running recently will continue to do so. The one remaining gap in provision from the timetable planned for 2020 before Coronavirus hit us is the evening gap of over three hours. Nasty for people who miss the 17:36 train home.

From 14th December 2020 to May 2021 (and potentially through the rest of 2021), Great Western Railway will have a new timetable. It has been developed with the Department for Transport and Network Rail and will bring weekday timetables across the network back to around 98% of the May 2019 timetable. To allow for increased improvement work, especially around Bristol for the Bristol East junction remodelling and on the Didcot/Oxford corridor, and in recognition of the backlog in driver training due to Covid, GWR are proposing a later Sunday start up, and earlier Saturday closure on some routes.

MRUG, TransWilts, GWR and others have been working closely over the past couple of months to help ensure that the still-reduced general services for 2021 do not leave a gap. This needed to bear in mind the already-infrequent nature of our trains, yet still provide a service that runs and is reliable to a timetable.

As a result, GWR plan an additional service on Mondays to Fridays in each direction which will extend the service northbound, and will plug the southbound gap. A big relief for people who work in Swindon and can't be sure of being back at the station for the 17:36.

On Sunday mornings, the 08:11 from Warminster and Westbury to Swindon (08:37 at Melksham) which built up a healthy clientele will still run, but probably as a bus rather than a train during the winter. The journey will take longer, but the need to ensure a good connection onwards from Chippenham into Swindon (if the bus only goes to Chippenham) is known at the timetable planning level, so that we should have a practical, useful service start at around the same time as at present, and in both directions.

The MRUG officers have offered to have a volunteer able to inform and help at Melksham Station on Sunday mornings through the period that the train is replaced by a bus, and to promote the service which will offer an opportunity for days out subject to government regulations, as well as work travel.

A word of caution - none of the parties involved have a crystal ball to know with certainty what will happen with coronavirus and its effects into next year, and plans and timetables remain subject to late changes in a way we didn't see before 2020.

And a note of thanks to all involved at GWR and elsewhere through this year and onto planning for next - it has not been easy, won't be easy or ideal, but the train service has been and will continue to be a lifeline.

MRUG train use support

- *2021 timetable plans have to have a “subject to Covid effects” caution applied.*
- MRUG will be helping support services including presence at Melksham Station on Sunday mornings. Also events, community marketing, etc
- Unless Covid changes the rules...

2021 is a “Use it or loose it” year

And we are talking 2022 already.

Journey Makers – Melksham too?



Buses

- Running to timetables as were planned pre-Covid and intent to continue as such
- Passengers few at times, especially during times of lockdown
- Bath Bus station – passengers being dropped off one stop early (? problem for hard of movement catching onward to RUH)
- 271/2/3 services bedding in well, but some confusion as to which service calls where (not just passenger confusion either).
- Much better relationship with Faresaver now that competition with First on the Bath route has been removed.

2021 for buses

- “Use it or loose it” on the buses too.
- Buses and trains WILL be provided safe by their operators. Evidence (worldwide) tells us that there is negligible transmission on public transport, especially with all the precautions now being take.
- With fixed train timetable and a rebuild of buses from very limited passenger numbers indeed, and with emergency transport planning resources no longer responding to constant change, a good time to re-arrange town bus to connect with other public transport as it is running now rather that as it was a decade ago.

MRUG meetings for 2021

- 13th January 2021
- 17th March 2021
- 19th May 2021 (AGM)
- 14th July 2021
- 15th September 2021
- 17th November 2021

As a minimum, meetings online

In person meeting where we safely and legally can, taking steps to continue to welcome members who wish to join virtually

These are the 'regular' meetings – see next page for other events

Other Diary Dates:

30th November 2020 - Current Melksham Bypass consultation closes
4th December 2020 - TravelWatch SouthWest AGM
9th December 2020 - Community Rail Network Annual Awards
13th December 2020 - New Timetable (and first MRUG support Sunday)
3rd April 2021 - Official Opening by TransWilts of the Melksham Hub
16th May 2021 - First day of any changes for summer to timetable
17th May 2021 - TransWilts members update
1st December 2021 - Santa's Elves - present wrapping
5th December 2021 - SANTA IS BACK!
12th December 2021 - First day of 2022 timetable

To be added to the diary as and when planned:

- * Melksham Party in the Park
- * Melksham Carnival
- * Melksham River and Food Festival
- * Melksham Maker's Markets
- * Imber bus running day
- * Trip by train to Weston-super-mare

Facebook, Twitter, Website

Updates by secretary and vice chair

<http://melksham.am/trains> for immediate running

(trains from Melksham, Maps, Taxi numbers, etc)

<http://www.mrug.org.uk> - main site and links

(Including links to newsletters, minutes, etc)

<https://www.facebook.com/MelkshamRUG>

<https://twitter.com/MelkshamRUG>

MRUG officers can be reached though any of the above

Melksham Neighbourhood Plan

From a phone call this morning (18.11.2020)

- Plan accepted for validation
- New page 53 including updates for the better on public transport and rail station as per inputs from this group and others. Not yet online.
- Sits well alongside upcoming ... “bypass ...”

“Melksham Bypass” ...



Why has this proposal come about?

Headline statements tell us that the intent of "Melksham Bypass" proposals, implemented, is to speed up traffic at current and future volumes from north to south through / past Melksham.

Are there wider solutions?

- Route traffic to the west (A36/A46) or east (A338 or A34)
- Route traffic by rail
- Look at society and climate changes - is the traffic still needed?
- Look at society and climate changes - do we need faster and more capacity?

The headlines suggest the prime goal is for through traffic. Backup data looks at the whole route from the M4 north of Chippenham to Bournemouth with Melksham being just one piece in the jigsaw. **This through traffic benefit is unlikely in itself to be Melksham based, but there are potential local positives and negatives if, how, and what goes ahead.**

Bypass – effect on our trains

1. The acknowledgement of the traffic flow north to south through Wiltshire and onwards to the South Coast, added to our rapid rail growth in recent years onto a now-full single railway line, **helps confirm the need to add back in the second track which was previously removed and increase passenger services from a poor to an appropriate level along the corridor**

2. The suggestion of a dramatically increasing population in Melksham (and other towns to the south) in parallel with the new road - our MP suggested it might double the population of Wiltshire - suggests **a much increased passenger catchment for Melksham Station which will lead to increasing journeys and the need for more and longer trains, and better station access.**

Some effects on public and sustainable transport of options

3. Options 7a looks forward to an increase in traffic roughly along the current corridor between the station and town, and potentially reduces the ease of access to the station from the town and residential areas to the north. It would certainly feel separated and need significant mitigations to support station access. Options 7a through 7c are evaluated as low to medium value.

4. Options 9b and 9c bring the new bypass road in from the north via the A365 bridge at Melksham Station. The bridge has a single lane each way and there are many questions arising with regard to capacity, clean air, continued access, and to how much traffic would actually be accelerated. Both options are already evaluated as low value for money too.

5. Road options 8a, 8b, 9a, 10a, 10b, 10c and 10d would all route traffic away from the railway station area. Prior to 2020 (which has seen coronavirus and also parking charges introduced at the station), Melksham Station had been used as a "parkway" - estimate around 5,000 rail journeys per year. That traffic is visibly absent at present. Whilst those options would hinder the return of this traffic, they would encourage other use (including local parking) by having the station more accessible and less "trafficked".

6. All road options except option 7 / 7a return the section of road from the A365/A350 junction near the top of Station Approach through North Melksham and Beanacre to the countryside between Beanacre and Lacock to "minor road" status and offer the opportunity to provide a good walking / cycling route to Lacock. The section from the new road junction into Lacock - what and how it is provided - would make a significant difference. There is also a logic to providing the northern access to the station for all alternatives.

7. Options 10a through 10d offer the opportunity to improve both national cycling route 403 and fill in a major gap in quiet roads - clearing a rat run - and also offer an opportunity and a risk to the Wilts and Berks Canal. A canal bridge will be necessary for the restoration; a flat crossing would block restoration plans. Sadly, we note that the consultation document does NOT count for a canal crossing here.

MRUG – bypass position?

- This is the first of a series of consultations and it's a very short one looking at route options
- Members are encouraged to make their inputs
- **Proposal – to make inputs from MRUG asking that due attention be give to public and sustainable transport inputs and offering to work with planners to help for maximum benefit in these areas whatever the wider outcome.**