

Melksham Transport User Group**Record of Meeting on 15 September 2021****By Zoom****Present**

Pat Aves *MTC*
 Peter Blackburn *Chairman*
 Peter Chidley
 Richard Cowell *WWRUG*
 Graham Ellis *Vice Chair & MTC*
 Lee Fletcher
 John Glover *MWPC*
 John Hamley *Note taker*
 Mark Harris *MWPC*
 Shirley McCarthay *WCA*
 Peter Tapscott

Apologies

Judith Gradwell *Treasurer*
 Jane Jones *GWR*
 David Phillips *WC*
 Steve Plummer *WC*
 Eddie Watts

Abbreviations:

ACoRP - Association of Community Rail Partnerships, - now CRN, Community Rail Network
BBB - Bus Back Better
BSIP - Bus Service Improvement Plan
CCIF - Customer and Community Improvement Fund
GWR - Great Western Railway
LEP - Local Enterprise Partnership
MIN - Melksham Independent News newspaper
MTC - Melksham Town Council
MRUG - Melksham Railway User Group -now MTUG.
MTUG - Melksham Transport User Group
MWPC - Melksham Without Parish Council
PPF - Priority For People
SNTB - subNational Transport Bodies
TW - Trans Wilts
TWCIC - TransWilts Community Interest Company
TWCRP - TransWilts Community Rail Partnership
WC - Wiltshire Council
WCA - Wiltshire Climate Alliance
WCCS - Wiltshire Climate Change Survey
WWRUG - West Wilts Rail Users Group

These minutes are intended to be read with the slide set used during the meeting.

1. Minutes of the Last Meeting

- The minutes of the last meeting on 14th June were agreed, proposed JRH, seconded LF.

2. TW (train) Performance --Slide 3

- Train performance was poor in August with 7.2% cancellations. This might be acceptable where there is a (say) 15 min frequency but can cause major delays with the 2 hourly TW service.
- Many trains were advised as cancelled then reinstated just before the planned running time. This often means that a service is not used due to alternative transport options being adopted.

3. Train Loading --Slide 4

- Trains that do run appear to be reasonably well patronised.

4. Timetables – Slide 6

- Some journeys in our area may have bus or train alternatives. In many cases, e.g.to Bath, the bus is usually the most frequent, quickest and simplest route, although not necessarily the cheapest. Also there are many journeys where a combination of both modes is required.
- To help timetables showing both modes have been linked to the MTUG website.

5. TWCIC and HUB report - Slide 7&8

- The Melksham station Hub has changed its opening hours, now closing at 16:30.
- The cafe personnel have been augmented and the menus have been updated to reflect usage patterns.
- There are now two internal tables and two external tables in the gazebo.
- There is the possibility of a defibrillator being installed, if funding can be found. This should be accessible even when the café is closed.
- TWCIC are looking for a local community bus. Several local services were identified.

6 WWRUG - Slide 9

- A very successful guided walk/talk to Avoncliff was held, and MTUG may hold a similar event next year
- WWRUG are responding to the current proposals for removing the direct Bristol/Waterloo services.

7 Option 24/7 - Slide 10

- Work on Bring Back Bus Better and the Bus Service Improvement Plan is proceeding well, in conjunction with WC.
- MTC have requested rail feeder buses and this is under consideration.
- See slide 11 onwards for specific details of the X34.

8 Train service changes December 2021 - Slide 12

- Planned train service changes in December appear to be mostly service reductions.
- Connections at Salisbury from the TW stations appear to be less convenient.
- (bullet 7) 'Westbury – Southampton' should read 'Westbury – Waterloo' (post meeting - corrected online)

9 Bus service proposals - Slide 13-17

- Many bus improvements are expected later this year and more in 2022. These include evening and Sunday X34 services from Chippenham through Melksham, and additional X69 services.
- Bus service timetables must take into account the efficient use of vehicles and drivers. e.g. X34 improvements out of the working weekday should ideally be based on the use of two vehicles.
- *Timetables shown in slides reflect possible services being proposed, not actual planned timetables.*

9 Wiltshire Climate Change Strategy - Slide 18 -22

- The WCCS looks at climate change issues in Wiltshire under 7 areas, one of which is transport, although no reference to trains is made (comments have been made formally on this).
- Many good issues are raised, particularly related to the 'last mile' requirements.
- The Wiltshire Climate Change Alliance looks at all climate related issues in Wiltshire, not just transport. Shirley McCarthay reported on the program of decarbonisation of buses.
- A pilot project is being pursued to create a zero-emission bus corridor between Frome and Westbury, supported by the town councils. This may be coupled to a service frequency increase to hourly.

10 Priority for People - Slide 23-31

- Priority For People (PFP) started as a widely promoted survey to get views on local transport. Results provide a very useful database which can be interrogated to address many issues
- Initial results indicate that:
 - The ratio of commuters to other passengers has reduced since the pandemic.
 - Convenience in getting to the station is a very high factor in motivating use of the station.
 - Better convenience for interchange between services such as the X34 and 271/272 at Melksham may have a positive effect on usage.
- MTUG will make a response to these results.

11. Going forward - Slide 32 and 5

- A Santa trip is planned for December 5th subject to agreement with GWR.
 - Arrangements may be considered to allow parking without charge to the event, perhaps by a bulk purchase)
 - The event will probably be a MKM/SWI return journey as usual.
- Promotion of rail services by MTUG is not taking place due to poor reliability of the train service at present. However longer-term marketing should be continued with possibly a display advert in the MIN. GE will organise some suitable artwork.
- Members are reminded that many of the events and commentary on MTUG railway matters can be found on the MTUG website and the GW Coffee Shop website.

12. Corsham station

- An application for funds has been made to review whether a Corsham station reopening is viable under the Reversing Beeching scheme for railway reopening plans.
- Previous plans depended on the Bristol to Oxford service which was discontinued about 10 years ago. One possibility is to make one of the two London / Bristol express services an all-stations to Didcot (including Corsham, Wotton Bassett and Wantage).
- However Corsham is still very much a long term goal, and recent speculation that there might be progress is probably optimistic

13. Date of next Meeting (changed)

- A revised date for the next meeting of 10th November at 19:30 (changed from 11th November) is planned. The venue will be advised later but will probably also include a zoom option.

Appendix: Websites for Reference

- MRUG www.mrug.org.uk
 - MTUG www.mtug.org.uk (actually the same site as MRUG)
 - TransWilts <https://transwilts.org>
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- Coffee Shop <http://www.firstgreatwestern.info/coffeeshop/index.php>.
 - Community Rail Network (was ACoRP) <http://communityrail.org.uk/>
 - Faresaver Buses <http://www.faresaver.co.uk/>
 - Frome Buses <http://www.fromebus.co.uk>
 - GWR <https://www.gwr.com>
 - Neighbourhood Plan <https://www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org/copy-of-housing>
 - Railfuture <https://www.railfuture.org.uk/Severnside+Branch>
 - Station Hub <https://melkshamhub.co.uk/home>
 - Trans Wilts leisure Leaflets <https://transwilts.org/2020/09/29/transwilts-walking-and-cycling-leaflets/>
 - Travelwatch SW <http://www.travelwatchesouthwest.org>