

Chippenham Rail User Group

Formation meeting

21st September 2017



Pre-meeting feedback of issues raised by passengers

Here is a note of feedbacks on key questions that people have raised when told about Thursday's meeting, together with initial (unverified) comment written by myself in my TransWilts Community Rail Officer Role.

Key purpose of evening is to establish group and not to provide full answers, but some comments (you'll see things I've already said at the bottom) will help

Graham

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Facebook post to TransWilts

11,493 reached (7,006 "organic")

1,867 click to read whole article

63 shares to other people pages or groups

88 likes

70 comments (bear in mind that a lot of those are TransWilts answers)

Topics / questions / comments that have arisen on Facebook or during canvassing / leafletting . You will find initial written comment in the Facebook exchanges below the text

**** Services - main line**

1.1 Why is the last train from Bristol and Bath back to Chippenham so early / please can we have a later train? 22:35 is far too early from Bristol - need a service at about quarter past 11. This question asked in various forms many many times. Requirement is to take in a show / go out for the evening and be able to get home afterwards.

1.2 Why is the service so poor to Bath and Bristol before 07:44 - just one train at 06:44. Requests for a train to fill the hour gap, and for an earlier train ("no good to get to work for 7")

1.3 When will the new trains start running? Will they be electric?

**** Connection issues**

2.1 Connections by train from Chippenham to Bournemouth and Poole are poor. SWT (now SWR?) train pulls out just as GWR pull in / as people dash across. "Makes me drive"

2.2 From London (Waterloo) to Trowbridge - change at Salisbury. But have to wait almost an hour! Why?

**** Access and accessibility**

3.1 The gate at the top of the new stairs is locked shut late at night. Why, when both sides are public accessible? Why - if it must be closed - can't there be a sign at the bottom of the steps to warn you it's shut?

3.2 Difficult to get onto platform from north side in a wheelchair - no lift up to bridge

3.3 Can we have seating for the disabled at the bus stop?

3.4 I dont like having to cross the track with my toddlers push chair with the help of staff - having to dodge between trains.

**** Customer Information**

4.1 My Mobile "apps" use the train number these days, and so do Virgin East Coast. Why can't GWR station signs, timetables, etc use these useful codes to identify individual trains?

4.2 It's difficult to find your way round at times / some signs are poor - e.g. flat entrance onto the platform, not at all obvious where the lift is.

4.3 Just after the morning peak / rush has gone, there are a lot of new and occasional users around and no-one around as they get down onto the platform to answer questions. Could a customer host be provided?

**** Services - TransWilts**

5.1 The 17:53 to Westbury is overcrowded. I thought another coach was going to be added this summer

5.2 Reliability and timekeeping of services via Melksham

5.3 Need later services daily to / from Trowbridge

5.4 Need another service to Trowbridge about between 15:29 and 17:53, and one about half an hour after the 17:53

**** Security**

6.1 Station can feel unsafe and scary at night. Never see a policeman, but lots of drunks. Not good for a woman on her own.

**** Ticketing**

7.1 How to buy a Groupsave when the ticket desk is closed? "You must buy ticket before boarding", but how?

7.2 Irritation at going to station to buy difficult ticket when it is supposed to be open and finding it "closed until 17:30"

7.3 Will fares rise when the new trains are introduced?

7.4 "RIDICULOUS" fares!!!

These questions and initial answers may be found at

<http://www.chrug.org.uk/earlyissues.pdf>

"Holding" page for a potential Chippenham Rail User Group at

<http://www.chrug.org.uk>

Full text of Facebook post:

16th September 2017

Do you use Chippenham Station? Do you know what's planned for the future? Would you like your inputs being fed back to the train operator to help shape that future? Do you have immediate questions or suggestions? Would you like to help the community adopt and nurture the station?

Chippenham's one of only two stations in Wiltshire that has neither a user group nor a Community Rail Station Friends group. TransWilts, the local Community Interest Company who help promote the services from Chippenham via Melksham are sponsoring an inaugural user group / station friends meeting on 21st September - informal chat from 5 p.m. - more formal discussion from 7 p.m. at the Central Methodist Hall on Monkton Hill. Please share; please tell your friends; please come along.

ALL welcome - commuters, occasional users, wannabe users (if you're currently put off using the train for some reason). I was handing out leaflets at Chippenham Station for this event yesterday evening and someone asked me "what's the point - the railways do what they want anyway". You might be surprised though ... Chippenham used to have just 2 trains a day to Westbury and now it has 9 scheduled - and that's due in part to the community based group that's sponsoring the Chippenham meeting. Current Chippenham concerns include the lack of a late train from Bristol and Bath, slow journeys to the Midlands and north, high fares, station reconstruction with the addition of ticket barriers, bus and taxi access only via the town, plans to surround the station with more car parks ...

Launch leaflet - http://www.chrug.org.uk/chrug_launch.pdf

Launch meeting draft agenda - http://www.chrug.org.uk/chrug_agenda.pdf

TransWilts Noting safety / security concerns - a member of the British Transport Police, Neighbourhood Policing Team hopes to join us on Thursday, and be involved onwards too. On Thursday, attendance subject to other operational incidents that may require immediate attention.

TransWilts Good to see comments and questions being posted. Any questions posted here by Tuesday evening will be notified to the speakers on Wednesday so that between us we can at least have some initial answers / comments. Speakers include people from GWR, Wiltshire Council, and TransWilts.

GE / 20170921 05:15

Some public comments on the post and initial responses

Julie Clymer Early and late train a great idea, it not fun when you have to cut your evening short so you can get home. Or have to drive and face the traffic

TransWilts Things are never quick and easy to get on rail ... but we've got some experience and now have an official responsibility that includes Chippenham Station.

((Additional Note - the question of a late train from Bristol and Bath back to Chippenham was raised many times on the Facebook Page - this message is representative of what has been asked / commented on by the other posters))

Charles Murphy It would be fantastic if that crap train that runs from Swindon - Westbury was on time for ONCE!!

Graham Ellis I'll have stats at the meeting, and tell you about plans to change that train to a different one. You'll also be able to ask a GWR manager.

Charles Murphy Ok I'd love to hear their excuses. 20 minutes late today with the rest of the days service completely cancelled. Weekly cancellations and barely ever on time! It's almost funny

TransWilts We (Community Rail) are pulling our hair out with cancellations; they HAVE re-instated the 17:36 and the 21:08 hasn't been cancelled either. I could say "unacceptable" but in reality we have to accept and persuade. Please do come along to hear reasons, and the prognosis for how and when they'll get better.

Rebecca Hatfield Tried to travel from Melksham to Bristol last Saturday. All trains cancelled through Melksham due to staff illness. Drove to Chippenham, paid to park caught a train that was absolutely packed. Stood from Chippenham to Bristol. Lots of thoughts, will try to attend.

TransWilts Rebecca Hatfield - Love to see you there. Good time for inputs. Should conclude on Thursday in time for 20:23 to Melksham.

Mike Rogers Getting up and down the bridge is difficult for disabled people !

TransWilts Used to be ... but there's a lift now, so in theory that's sorted. Is it still a problem in some way?

Mark Morgan The lift is only at one end, it's like you are not allowed to be disabled if you live on the other side of the bridge, struggle up the stairs or

take a huge detour down under the railway arches and back up the hill to the station side seem to be the only options

Anna Morgan If you have a wheelchair or pushchairs they do send someone to help you cross further down on the actual track but having done that with a toddler and a pushchair it's very nerve wracking having to cross in between trains so not exactly ideal.

TransWilts The wheelchair crossing has (thank goodness!) been replaced by a pair of lifts, which are available at all times, self operated. Thank Goodness. So you should never again have to cross the tracks on the level.

This pair of lifts is a massive improvement - what's there now is very much better than what was there previously. I would agree that a third lift, giving much shorter step free from the northern side, would be a d**ned good idea. There never was access across the track from the north, so this is a new facility request - and my understanding is was that it was outside the budget and / or remit when the foot crossing and public footpath bridge were replaced. I also understand that "passive provision" has been made - in other words, the new bridge at the north end was put in such that a lift can be added later.

Pauline Barry Lack of early and late trains to Bath. Eg to be at work before 7am and to be leaving work after 10pm. No trains so have to have a lift by car. Station area feels unsafe at night.

TransWilts Noted; lack of early trains to Bath / Bristol is because all of Chippenham's trains come through from London, and the powers-that-be see the first train (at 05:18) leaving Paddington nearly empty so don't see the need for an even earlier one. Reverse ...See More

Pauline Barry Life in Chippenham doesn't always revolve around going to and from London, some of us make shorter trips to other nearby cities. We need a variety of train services for a variety of needs.

Shaun Wilkins Can't attend as I will be out of the country, but a few comments. 1. Can a later service be provided from Bristol and Bath. Have to drive if you want to go to concerts and theatre in the evening in Bristol. 2. Why can't we access the stairs to the "new" footbridge during late evening. I fail to see a reason to close access. 3. When will the electric trains start running?

TransWilts Footbridge - curious - I didn't think that was the intent; meeting should be minuted / comments to questions available afterwards, see what I can learn.

First public call of the new bimode (electric + diesel) trains at Chippenham scheduled to be the 06:25 to Paddington on 16th October. From then on - for the following year or so - the whole Paddington and Bristol service will switch over gradually, with a new timetable from the end of 2018. They won't start running electric all the way; that's currently switched on from London to Maidenhead, next section to Didcot being switched on and under test now. Problems at Steventon with a listed bridge and level crossing have held things up a bit there, but a temporary solution has now been found and the switch on will continue in stages as far as Thingley Junction to the west of Chippenham. Plans for electrification further west from there are no longer in the current electrification schedule, even though a lot of preparatory work has been done.

Colin Sutton Frustrating when I've attempted to book a group ticket on Saturday early evening and the ticket office is not manned and cannot buy group on ticket machine.

TransWilts Bring that along, Thursday. Known issue; can offer you a couple of work-arounds for you to get the fares (but work arounds should not be needed!) and you can help us add another voice to GWR to provide a way of getting these tickets more easily when just a TVM (Ticket Vending Machine) is available.

Colin Sutton Thank you for your message

Kirst Foster I feel like it needs to be manned better at night, the only time I'd see a police officer is if there was a football game in Bath or Bristol. I attended evening classes at the college, and at night when I would go home some many scary people around, and drunks yelling at everyone. It's scary as a woman on their own at night, I felt lucky that I didn't get attacked by these people.

TransWilts Bring that along on Thursday. There will be no instant solutions to many things raise, but an awareness for the future and an ability to work on it. Getting things on the radar is an excellent start.

Frank Bradley I will try to get to the meeting...my main wish also is for later trains from Bristol and Bath...can go to a gig or concert in London no problem and get train back! Thank you for organising this

TransWilts It's our pleasure, Frank. There was a later train in the (distant) past - I've been learning about it, and what's changed that means it can't be done in the same way today. Does not stop it being done in a different way ... but it has to make sense to everyone including the accountants.

Jane Smith It would be useful to have a train to Bath between the 6.44 am and 7.44 am during the week.

TransWilts Noted. The pattern from Chippenham is every half hour and it will be interesting to see what happens at the edges - start times and gaps - in the 2019 timetable, There is logic in suggesting 06:14 then regular interval; the currently "missing" 07:14 is the effect of all-trains-come-from-London ... see other comments.

Kenna Louise Bench out the front for disabled people waiting for the buses would be nice

TransWilts Good point / thought. Yes - they would. Our Paul Johnson will be doing a very brief intro to plans around the station - potential massive changes, and I know that he and I have some concern as to public transport passenger flows (bus and train) through these developments.

Kirsten Marie Kerr Lynne St Aubyn you are a frequent user!

TransWilts We're going to make as sure as we can that there are widely circulated notes after the meeting / this isn't just a one time opportunity. Having said which, the meeting is exploring the setting up of a group and it's just possible that the outcome overall is "thanks for letting us explore this but we don't want a user group for Chippenham".

Lynne St Aubyn TransWilts thank you, I will keep an eye out for ongoing information. I'd be interested in a user group.

Damon Edhouse Hate the fact that sometimes in the afternoon I try to go and book a ticket reserving a seat for the following day and they're a sign in the ticket office window saying back at 17:30

Chris Harvest-Taylor RIDICULOUS fares!!!

TransWilts Some indeed are ... others can be cheaper than the bus. There are far too many fares to understand them all / know the options. Pop in tomorrow and / or send us a message to look at some specifics. If you've got a really long time there are a couple of us who can tell you a history of the fare system.

