

# Melksham Railway Development Group

**Minutes****29<sup>th</sup> April 2016 at 19:30****Melksham Town Hall****Present**

Peter Blackburn Chairman  
Graham Ellis Vice-Chair  
John Hamley Secretary  
John Money Treasurer  
Paul Johnson Chair TWCIC  
Eddy Watts

**Apologies**

John Glover (MWPC)  
Tom Steward

**Actions in bold.****1. Minutes of meeting 26<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

- Minutes of previous meeting approved (proposed Eddy Watts, seconded Peter Blackburn).

**2. Station Issues**

- Information presentation
  - Station display not often working, thought to be a result of the GSM connection.
  - Banner displays typically found at other stations would be ideal.
  - Ideally a remotely driven public address system should be provided.
- Station signage could be improved/updated. The sign pointing to the Town Centre could usefully be relocated to the new cycle racks, where users unfamiliar with the station would get an immediate indication of the route to be taken.
- A request to remove the 'bicycle houses' should be made. The space available could be used for a station bench. This is being addressed by Alison Christy.
- The station display boards are filled with GWR information. Some TW and MRDG displays should also be included.
  - No weekend timetable information was shown.
  - Telephone numbers for a local taxi company are not displayed clearly for incoming passengers who do not know the station.
  - Engineering notices as at 2 April only show April data. As there will be disruption in May. Such information always needs to be included earlier to pre-warn passengers.
- The plant troughs have been removed. **Rolf Brindle** and **Eddy Watts** continue to maintain parts of the station in their role as 'friends'.
- The West side of the station has a disreputable appearance but we do not have authority to access that area to clear it.

**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 station.*

- The last TWCIC information forum was held on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2016 at Salisbury, and was attended by about 40 people. MRDG was represented by 4 members.
  - The local MP and senior WC councillors and staff members attended.
  - The afternoon session comprised a presentation by Christian Woolmer followed by a Q/A session with Christian Woolmer, Paul Johnson and Graham Ellis.
  - Strong support for the Wilton station proposals was shown by Wilton delegates, including their mayor.
  - Support for other corridors covered the TWCIC was demonstrated by delegates from Bedwyn and Pewsey.
- The next forum (date / location yet to be confirmed) will have a senior Network Rail spokesman. Support from Network Rail in this way provides a good indicator of the success and importance of the TW organisation.
- 6 new members have joined the TWCIC recently, mainly as a result of this forum.
- TWCIC is now including 'connected' public transport issues in the area, and bus services form a key element. A relatively cost effective proposal has been presented by TW to senior WC councillors in response to the proposed cutbacks. The TWCIC are pressing for retention of many of the bus services particularly late night services which complement the train service.
- Overcrowding on the service at times has led to criticism of the service, although this can be seen as a reflection of the high demand from passengers.

- A key issue is that of service / route designation which would create an obligation under the service franchise. It is hoped that the TW services will be 'designated' in the next few months.
  - Issues related to maintaining freight paths have been addressed, and it is understood that will encourage freight operators to support designation.
  - Designation opens up sources of support and funding through ACoRP and other bodies, and is seen as a key milestone
- Key targets in the next few years are:
  - Station opening/enhancement at Wilton Parkway, Melksham and Corsham
  - Through trains from Swindon to Salisbury/Southampton airport/Southampton
  - A 'strapline for station enhancements has emerged, '1 2 3 4 5', referring to platform 1 at Melksham, 2 new platforms at Corsham, new platform 3 for TW trains at Chippenham, reopened platform 4 at Westbury and reopened additional platform at Salisbury (to facilitate Waterloo-Wilton trains)
- TW is proposing a long term plan for Melksham station enhancement, and has requested some clarity on ownership of parcels of land at the station site. A total of £15,000 in grants is available for a project to look at access, infrastructure, buildings etc.
  - Platform extension is likely to proceed, as stated in the Hendy report. TWCIC/MRDG must ensure that whatever design is implemented, the North pedestrian route is incorporated, and at least passive provision is made for a bus corridor.
- Further disruptions to services is foreseen in the Spring and again at Easter 2017 with services not running between Bath and Bristol. This will result in the Cardiff – Portsmouth service again being diverted as a Swindon-Portsmouth service, with a two hourly stop frequency at Melksham. There is a possibility that 'via Melksham' tickets will only be valid for trains that stop at Melksham. This is under review.
- TW is proposing that each station on the TW corridor has a user group (or Friends). This is further addressed at the MRDG AGM. *See item 4 below.*
- Officers of the TWCIC attended the GWR stakeholders meeting Heathrow on Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2016. The TW line had some positive exposure at that meeting.

#### 4. **Specific Melksham Issue from Trans Wilts Rail Partnership (TWCRP) and Community Interest Company (TWCIC)**

- TW has suggested that Melksham station has a 'Friends' or 'User' group and suggests that MRDG fulfil this role to refocus the Development Group now that a viable train service has been achieved. *This is further addressed at the MRDG AGM, 29<sup>th</sup> April 2016.*

#### 5. **Banking**

- **Rolf Brindle** is proceeding with opening a regular cheque based account at HSBC. Ideally all cheques would require two signatures, although a low limit value for single signed cheques might be possible.
- Current banking regulations require considerable paperwork to ensure the account is being used for legitimate purposes, and this is taking some time.

#### 6. **Finance**

- A grant application has been made to MWPC and £200 was awarded. MRDG appreciate the financial and other support from this council.
- A grant application is to be made to MTC in the near future, **John Hamley**.
- Payment of £268 from Westbury TIC for the Santa trip 2014 has yet to be received.

#### 7. **AOB**

- It was noted that 2016 is a significant milestone for MRDG, which was first active in 1996, and has been pressing over 20 years for the rail services we are now seeing. It is hoped that this milestone can be marked by another step forward, namely designation of the service.

#### 8. **Next meeting dates**

- Friday 24 June 2016
- Friday 30 September 2016
- Friday 25 November 2016