TransWilts — Connecting Wiltshire's Communities

incorporating TransWilts Community Rail Partnership

# NEWSLETTER EIGHTEEN – OCTOBER 2018

## Welcome to Sophie

The TransWilts has welcomed its new Community Rail Officer Sophie Martin. She will be supported by outgoing CRO Graham Ellis until the end of the year.

Sophie, who is based in Trowbridge, joins after working for nearly nine years at the University of Bath. She will be working three days a week (Tuesdays to Thursdays) and can be contacted on 07379 175055 or sophie@transwilts.org.

On taking up the role Sophie said "I am very excited for this new opportunity in what appears to be a wonderful community. Thank you for making me feel so welcome.

I hope to meet you all in due course but in the meantime, if you have CRO information you feel I need to be aware of or would simply like to introduce yourself, please feel free to contact me."

## Newbury electrification work completed

Work to electrify the line between Reading and Newbury, which has seen TransWilts services suspended on numerous occasions since the Spring, has been completed ahead of schedule. It was originally intended that the line would be closed for a further midweek period in November but Network Rail says that is no longer needed.

GWR now plan to introduce their Electrostar trains on services to Newbury in the New Year. The work will also allow long distance trains to operate under electric power as far as Newbury before continuing westwards using diesel.

The disruption to services between Westbury and Swindon was also accompanied by reliability problems when services were due to run, particularly during summer weekends.

The TransWilts will now be looking at ways to promote the line again now, with the exception of Christmas, normal services are due to operate.

**Travelling through Westbury or on the TransWilts over Christmas or New Year?**

**See page two for details of extensive engineering work over the festive period.**

**Twelve Days of Christmas at Westbury**
If you are travelling through Westbury over Christmas you need to take note of the engineering work Network Rail has planned.

Between Sunday 23rd December and the start of services on Friday 4th January no trains will call at Westbury and the TransWilts service to Swindon will be suspended. Rail replacement buses and coaches will operate between Westbury, Warminster, Frome and Chippenham. Long distance services via Newbury will still operate but will call at Frome instead of Westbury. Full details will be available on GWR.com and journey planners shortly.

If you are travelling further afield one of the most extensive works programmes of recent years will see a number of routes affected.

- No trains into London Paddington 23rd, 24th and 30th December
- Severn Tunnel closed 27th, 28th, 29th, 30th and 31st December as well as 1st January
- Guildford (affecting services for Gatwick) on 27th, 28th, 29th and 30th December

Away from the GWR area there will also be closures at London Waterloo and London Victoria.

**Extended Bedwyn turnback siding opened**
Bi-mode IET services will now be able to operate to Bedwyn after work was completed to extend the siding needed for trains to terminate at the Wiltshire station and return to London. There had been fears that Bedwyn, Hungerford and Kintbury would be served by a diesel shuttle to Newbury where passengers would have to change before continuing towards Reading and London. The IETs will operate under electric power to Newbury and then fire up their diesel engines for the last 13 miles to Bedwyn.

An empty train was sent from Paddington to test the extended siding in September, to the astonishment of the local livestock!

**Santa coming to the TransWilts**

Christmas may still seem some way off but already Father Christmas is making plans to visit the Westbury to Swindon line on Sunday 9th December. More details will be announced shortly.

**Chippenham Rail Users Group formation continues**

The October meeting of CHRUG heard details of the latest issues affecting the station and made plans to establish a committee at its next meeting in January.

Paul Johnson and Graham Ellis updated those attending with the plans to improve the area at the front of the station, the lift for the northern side and improving the signage around the platforms.

The next meeting will be on the 10th January 2019 at the Chippenham Borough Lands, Ground Floor Room, 32 Market Place, SN15 3HP between 7 and 9pm.

Further meetings are planned for 11th April, 11th July and 10th October 2019.

**John Money – RIP**

A loyal servant of the campaign to improve rail services for Melksham died in August.

John Money was involved from the earliest days and was latterly treasurer of the Melksham Railway Development Group (now Melksham Rail User Group). Content to be largely in the background, he was always on hand when something needed doing – often accompanied by his camera or video recorder and he built up an extensive photographic archive.

Speaking shortly after John's death, Lee Fletcher who worked with him for over ten years, praised his contribution: "John Money was the epitome of a key foot soldier, he was the "How can I help?" rather than the "Why are we doing this?" guy. The kind of volunteer whose name may never be up there in lights, but is crucial to the survival and ultimate success of all User Groups, CRPs, Rail Campaigns and related organisations everywhere."

*John (right) pictured alongside MRDG/MRUG Chairman Peter Blackburn*

**More bus changes in Royal Wootton Bassett**

Stagecoach West made changes to its services from Swindon to Royal Wootton Bassett in September. Service 54, which runs via the Link Centre, has been reduced to run every 90 minutes off peak. However some extra peak hour journeys have been added to the direct 55 service which now has a bus every 10 minutes in the rush hour with most continuing to or from Chippenham.

**Friends Subscriptions**

Apart from members who have joined since last May, all subscriptions expire at the end of October. For those who do not have a standing order in place, reminders will be sent out in a few weeks' time.

Last year every member renewed, which was much appreciated and we look forward to having your support for another year this time round.