

## NEWSLETTER FOUR – MARCH 2016

### Government opens consultation on giving TWCRP a greater role in the running of the line

The TransWilts Community Rail Partnership (TWCRP) (part of the TransWilts CIC) is set to get a bigger say in the running of passenger services between Swindon and Westbury via Melksham if the government goes ahead with plans to designate the 32 mile route as a Community Rail Service.

40 routes around the country have already benefitted from being designated and comments are now being invited as consideration is given to the TransWilts to joining them. The new status would give extra status to the TWCRP and open the door for it to apply for grants for such things as marketing, improvement projects at stations, training, research initiatives and reaching out to the community along the route the line serves.

In its prospectus inviting comments from the public and other interested bodies, the Department for Transport says designation will give the TWCRP the opportunity to build on the good work it has done up to now.

If granted the new status not only includes the train service but also the stations at Chippenham and Melksham.

The TWCRP campaigned for an improved service along the line which was introduced in December 2013. Since then it has run a number of publicity campaigns to increase passenger usage and regularly has volunteers aboard the trains to count the number of people using them and answer questions from passengers and would-be travellers at stations. Melksham Station passenger growth of 117% is the seventh highest in the UK. Passenger journeys grew from 183,000 in 2014 to 235,000 in 2015.

Melksham station has benefitted from an expanded car park and a ticket machine, where tickets for immediate travel can be purchased as well as the collection of those bought on the internet. At Chippenham a new footbridge and lifts have made the island platform, where all trains call, more accessible.

### Control Moves to Didcot

Over three weekends in November, January and February the supervision of signals and points previously controlled by the panel box beside Swindon Station was moved to the state of the art Thames Valley Signalling Centre at Didcot. TransWilts trains are now the responsibility of the signallers at Didcot from Swindon until they pass Thingley Junction where their colleagues at Westbury take over.



### Dates for your diary

- 2<sup>nd</sup> - 11<sup>th</sup> Apr Line Closure Bath to Keynesham
- Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> Apr TransWilts CIC Link – Salisbury
- 23<sup>rd</sup> July Melksham Carnival

## 2016 AGM

The first Annual General Meeting of the TransWilts CIC was held in Swindon on February 13<sup>th</sup>. Chairman Paul Johnson outlined the progress we have made in the first year and our hopes for the future.

Full details were included in the Annual report which has been circulated to members and other interested parties and is available on request from the Friends Administration Office, P O BOX 3781, SWINDON, SN2 9GW.



## New footbridge and lifts for Chippenham

Chippenham MP Michelle Donelan officially opened the newly constructed footbridge at the town's station on January 22<sup>nd</sup>. Built with funds from the Government's £3 million scheme to improve accessibility at stations, the bridge features lifts on the town side of the station, the island platform and the north car park as well as improved staircases.



## Important change to Friends Memberships

As part of the development of the CIC a small change has been made to the Friends agreement. For all those joining since the AGM a clause has been added which makes each member liable for no more than £1 if the CIC is ever wound up. This is a standard procedure in many societies and member groups. Those who joined before this year's AGM will be deemed to have paid their £1 as part of their joining fee. Friends are also eligible to vote at meetings and stand for officer posts within the CIC.

## Timetable leaflets

Pocket size leaflets with the current TransWilts train AND bus timetables are available from a number of locations, including the STEAM Museum and Central Library in Swindon. You can also obtain a copy, complete with a ticket wallet free of charge, by emailing the Friends Administration Office – [friends@transwilts.org](mailto:friends@transwilts.org) .



## HSTs come calling

For the first time in many years two HSTs called at Melksham on February 15<sup>th</sup>. Due to over running engineering work in the Bristol area some morning services from the West Country were diverted via Westbury and the TransWilts Line.

To make room for them on the single line the usual service was suspended and two London bound trains called at Trowbridge and Melksham. First to arrive was the 05:09 from Plymouth where around 20 boarded at Melksham. The 07:40 from Paignton also called a couple of hours later. Sadly there were no southbound calls made by diverted services. Were the two trains which stopped the first through trains to London since the station re-opened in 1985?



## Wiltshire by bus for £8.50

A little known ticket allows you to travel on most buses in Wiltshire for just £8.50 a day. The Wiltshire Day Rover can be bought from the driver on the day – and from the start of service, no need to wait for the rush hour to finish.

As well as the majority of destinations in the county it is also valid further afield to Oxford, Cirencester, Hungerford, Bath, Frome and Southampton.

## Electrification work comes to Bath

From Saturday 2<sup>nd</sup> to Sunday 10<sup>th</sup> April the railway between Bath Spa and Bristol Temple Meads will be closed for improvement works. This will mean alterations to the TransWilts services as well as a revised train service will operate from Bath Spa and Bristol Temple Meads, and some services will be diverted, buses will replace trains between Bristol and Bath Spa while Oldfield Park and Keynsham stations will be closed.

Services between Portsmouth and Cardiff Central will be diverted to Swindon where connections can be made to South Wales. Some of these trains will call at Melksham to replace the normal TransWilts Services which will be suspended.

Bath Spa and Chippenham will be served by an hourly service to London throughout the day while trains to and from Weymouth will start from Bath Spa.

## TransWilts Forum – 16th April – Salisbury

Plans are well advanced for an important TransWilts event at the Best Western Hotel in Millford Street in Salisbury on the 16th April. Starting at 9.30am the morning session will provide an update on plans to open a new station at Wilton Parkway and the potential to provide a tourist link to Stonehenge. Vision 2020 is the TransWilts aspiration for transport in four year's time. Launched a year ago, there will be an update on the progress made in the last 12 months followed by a look at Integrated Transport.

The afternoon session, which begins at 1.30pm, will be devoted to a question and answer session with noted railway journalists Nigel Harris and Christian Wolmar (pictured presenting Graham Ellis with one of four awards the TransWilts received at last year's Railfuture awards).



There is no charge for the day but to assist with planning and seating for the event, please email [secretary@transwilts.org](mailto:secretary@transwilts.org) or telephone 0845 459 0153 to book for either session or all day.

The event is planned to finish at 3.30pm.

