



incorporating TransWilts Community Rail Partnership

NEWSLETTER TWENTY THREE – AUGUST 2019

Reliability still a major concern

Although overall punctuality and reliability across the GWR area have improved in recent months this has not been mirrored on the TransWilts line between Swindon and Westbury. The single line through Melksham has always been vulnerable to disruption when problems elsewhere lead to long distance trains being diverted along it – indeed the line's survival was because of its role as a diversionary route.

However many of the problems this summer have been closer to home. Figures compiled by the Melksham Rail Users Group (MRUG) for June show 31 cancellations – over 6% of the services due to run. Seven of these were caused by signalling problems but 20 were down to either problems with the train or a lack of staff. TransWilts have continued to highlight the problems these cancellations cause in meetings with senior GWR managers. With a broadly two hourly service, advice to catch the next train is not practical. The operator has undertaken to look at the underlying causes of the unreliability and the decision making process when services have to be cancelled to see if there would be less impact in cancelling a more frequent service at Westbury rather than the TransWilts.

2019 Stakeholder Conference

June's 2019 TransWilts Stakeholder conference heard some excellent presentations in Trowbridge. The centrepiece of the day was the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership's long awaited rail strategy for Wiltshire. Speakers from both GWR and SWR welcomed the report and outlined the part they can play in developing future services.



Go-Op outlined their latest plans to run a service from Taunton to Swindon and possibly beyond via Westbury and Melksham. While GWR revealed their plans to cope with engineering work scheduled over the next two years.

Preparations are now underway for the 2020 event.

Weymouth Wizard

TransWilts and Westbury Lions Club took around 80 children and adults to the seaside at Weymouth in conjunction with GWR in July. They all came from the Westbury Junior School, Westbury Infants School, Westbury Leigh Primary School and Bitham Brook Primary School and enjoyed five hours on the coast.

As well as assisting with travel costs GWR, along with British Transport Police, provided free goodie bags to keep the children occupied on the train.



Annual Imber Bus day



Each year a group of transport enthusiasts organise a day to take visitors from Warminster Station to areas of Salisbury Plain which are normally closed to the public.

The central attraction is the village of Imber which was abandoned to allow military training in 1943.

This year's main event is on Saturday 17th August but there

will also be a limited service the following day.

Celebrity Power Car visits Swindon



A month after the final full length High Speed Train left London Paddington, one of GWR's power cars paused at the STEAM museum in Swindon on its way to York to be exhibited in the national collection. 43002, named after designer Sir Kenneth Grange, turned a few heads as it travelled along the M5 and M4 from GWR's Laira depot in Plymouth.

At the event in Swindon, staged on Sir Kenneth's 90th birthday, the name plates for GWRs shortened four coach HSTs were also unveiled. They will be used on services in the South West and South Wales.



New GWR timetable less than 100 days away

Billed as the biggest recast of trains times in the West since 1976, GWR is gearing up for this December's timetable changes. Delayed from last year due to problems implementing new schedules in other parts of the country, the alterations will see IET services speeded up to take advantage of their improved acceleration. Currently they are still running on times based on the former HSTs leading to services often waiting at stations having arrived early.

TransWilts is waiting for draft copies of the new timetables and in particular how TransWilts services will connect with other services at both Swindon and Westbury.

The new services are due to open for seat reservations on line in September.

TransWilts investigate noise complaints

TransWilts has been approached by residents living near the line in Melksham concerned about the noise made by trains sounding their horns as they approach the station from the north.



The issue centres around a foot crossing which takes a public footpath over the line near the Beechfield House Hotel in Beanacre.

TransWilts and GWR have visited the site and investigated. The crossing is situated on a short straight section of track with bends either side.

Trains are required to sound their horns on approach, before they come into view, to warn any crossing users.

Given the short distance between trains coming into sight and reaching the crossing it would not be safe to dispense with trains not sounding a warning, although the requirement is lifted during night-time hours when the crossing is less likely to be used and the quieter environment allows trains to be heard over a greater distance.



Summer free of engineering work

TransWilts have been informed there is no further weekend engineering work planned for the Swindon to Westbury line until September.

However work in other locations may mean some services are retimed on Sunday 18th August and the 1st and 8th September.

The first two services on the 15th September will be replaced by buses.



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