



incorporating TransWilts Community Rail Partnership

NEWSLETTER TWENTY SIX – FEBRUARY 2020

Reliability Up – but still work to do

January saw a big improvement in reliability of TransWilts services with only 12 reported cancellations out of over 500 planned services. Figures compiled by the Melksham Rail Users Group from publicly available industry sources show six services did not run due to faulty rolling stock, two following a fatality, two due to infrastructure problems, one due to human error in failing to schedule a rail replacement bus and one for which no reason could be found.

Sadly early results for February are not so good with two named storms causing services to be cancelled. In many cases the TransWilts service was sacrificed to allow long distance services to use the single line through Melksham after their usual routes were blocked by flooding or fallen trees. TransWilts continues to see if these diverted services could call at Melksham, which otherwise suffers with no service for prolonged periods.

Cleaning up Chippenham and tidying up Trowbridge



Once again the TransWilts will be litter picking and tidying up both Chippenham and Trowbridge Stations in April. Chippenham will get its makeover on Saturday 4th April between 10 and noon while it will Trowbridge's turn on the 18th April – also between 10 and noon.

The events are part of Keep Britain Tidy's Great British Spring clean campaign and you can sign up via the TransWilts website.

Community Rail in the City 2020 – 13th May



Each year, co-ordinated through the Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP), CRPs stage events around the country to highlight the leisure opportunities community rail lines offer.

Last year TransWilts was at Reading greeting passengers after they came off trains from Gatwick and Waterloo. This year, in association with STEAM Museum, we will be at Swindon Station throughout the day meeting and talking with passengers.

Stakeholder Meeting – 18th May 2020

The six-monthly TransWilts Stakeholder meeting will be held on Monday 18th May at Trowbridge Civic Centre between 1:30 and 3:30pm. Details of the speakers will be announced shortly. You can find more details on the Events Calendar page of the website.

White Horse meeting room



Work is continuing to convert a disused room on platform 1 at Westbury into the CRP office and meeting venue. Recent survey work discovered the floor was not quite level and so contractors have been arranged to remedy the situation. Due to the location of the room and the work needed, it has to be carried out at night when train services are not running and passengers clear of the platform. However it is hoped once the floor is levelled the remaining work can be completed without further delay and the room be ready for use in April.

As well as providing a base for our Community Rail Officer, the room, named after the landmark White Horse which looks over Westbury, will be available to hire for meetings at competitive rates. Details can be obtained from Sophie Martin at sophie@transwilts.org.

Celebrations to mark the 35th anniversary of Melksham Station re-opening

The 13th of May marks the anniversary of the reopening of Melksham Station in 1985. The station had closed on 15th April 1966 shortly before the line was singled.

The Melksham Rail Users Group plan to mark the occasion with celebrations at the station on the day and is tracking down some of those who used the trains when they returned to the town in 1985.

Wiltshire to bid for share of Government Railway Fund

In February the Government announced a £500m funding initiative to kick start work to enhance current services by way of infrastructure improvements.

In Wiltshire five schemes are being put forward by Wiltshire Council with support from MPs and the TransWilts CIC.

- Passing loop on the single line between Bradford and Thingley Junctions
- Westbury 4th platform
- New stations at Corsham, Devizes Parkway and Wilton

Support for the extra platform and passing loop near Melksham were also supported at a recent meeting of Network Rail, GWR, TransWilts, Wiltshire and Swindon Councils and others.

The case for extra capacity at Westbury and on the single line is strengthened by the news that the HS2 line is to go ahead. It is planned to transport spoil by rail from the earthworks to Quidhampton quarry near Salisbury. Aggregate from the Mendip Quarries would also be needed during the later construction phases.



Attendees at the Network Rail meeting to discuss infrastructure improvements in Wiltshire

2020 AGM

The 2020 AGM of the TransWilts CIC will be held on Saturday 25th April at Trowbridge Civic Centre starting at 10am. A light breakfast will be available for members from 9.30am. After the formal business Bryony Chetwode of Travelwatch Southwest will give a presentation outlining the work of TWSW and looking at bus/rail integration. It is also hoped representatives of GWR will give a business update. Full details will be announced nearer the time.

All paid up members are entitled to attend and vote at the meeting. There will also be a complimentary finger buffet for members at lunchtime. To assist with catering please register your interest via the website - <https://transwilts.org/2020/02/03/events-calendar/>

Department for Transport still deliberating on GWR Franchise

GWR's agreement to run train services expires at the end of March but there is still no announcement on the future of the franchise after that. GWR has provided the DfT with its plans for services going forward but a decision from the Secretary of State is not expected until the beginning of March at the earliest.

Informed commentators believe GWR will be asked to continue running services for at least the next two years, but the Secretary does have the option to take the franchise into government control as has happened with the East Coast and Northern franchises.

What is certain is that trains will still run under the current timetable after 31st March.

Through Summer Saturday train to Weymouth from Swindon

The May timetable change leaves most TransWilts services unchanged. However until mid-September there will be a through train from Swindon to Weymouth on Saturdays. Leaving Swindon around 08:30 it will couple up with a train from Worcester at Westbury before continuing to Weymouth arriving just before 11. The return journey will leave the seaside at 18:15 and after dividing at Westbury will reach Swindon at 20:50 – thus also providing a welcome later evening service for TransWilts stations.

The TransWilts is continuing to talk with GWR to try to improve timings for trains on Saturdays for those travelling to Swindon for football matches at the County Ground. The December timetable change re-timed services to the extent they are no longer usable by supporters as they arrive too early or miss the kick off.

Engineering Work

Although journeys further afield may be affected, the next two months are relatively free from engineering work locally.

On Sundays the 8th, 22nd and 29th March the early train from Warminster to Swindon will be replaced by a bus as far as Westbury.

There are currently no planned bus replacements between Westbury and Swindon through March and April.

On the line through Newbury, Pewsey and Westbury there are extensive works between 14th and 29th March which will affect services. The line will be closed between Castle Cary and Taunton with trains diverted via Bristol. A shuttle service will run between London and Castle Cary.

Between the 30th March and 3rd April a limited number of trains will run through to Taunton direct but the majority will continue to be diverted. Full details are available at gwr.com

