

NEWSLETTER TWENTY SEVEN – APRIL 2020

GWR gets three more years

With hours to go before their existing agreement expired the Department for Transport announced it was awarding GWR a three year contract to run rail services with the option for a fourth year. Although it commenced on the 1st April, no immediate changes will be apparent as all railways are currently running under an Emergency Measures Agreement which pays the operators a management fee while all fare income and financial risk is taken by the government during the current national emergency.

GWR Interim Managing Director Matthew Golton said: “We are pleased that the Government has taken the decision to provide long-term stability for our customers and staff. Right now, our priority remains to run services that can be relied on at this time of uncertainty, providing essential transport for key workers to get to and from work.

“However, with time and the measures set out by Government, this national emergency will pass and we must set our sights towards rebuilding our communities and helping customers return to the railway.”



TransWilts chairman Paul Johnson welcomed the news: “We are delighted that GWR have been awarded another three year agreement which includes continuing recognition of the importance of community rail. We have worked closely with GWR over the years and look forward, once the current crisis is over, to continuing our dialogue regarding current and future projects. In the meantime we will provide support in whatever way we can during the present emergency.”

GWR Interim MD Matthew Golton with TW Board Member Horace Prickett

TW Events cancelled during current crisis

In common with many other organisations the TransWilts has been forced to cancel a number of its forthcoming events. The litter picking days at Trowbridge and Chippenham in April were early casualties.

The AGM planned for the 25th April will also not be going ahead although it is hoped the Annual Report will be published shortly and circulated to members. Also off is the Stakeholders meeting on the 18th May.

TransWilts was planning to have a stall at Swindon Station for Community Rail in the City on the 13th May. That has also been cancelled but may be restaged later in the year.

Also on the 13th May the Melksham Rail Users Group were planning events at Melksham Station to mark the 35th anniversary of the station re-opening in 1985. Sadly they too have been postponed – possibly until the 13th May next year.

Other TW events in June onwards are being kept under review and any changes will be published on the website.

ACoRP rebrands



The Association of Community Rail Partnerships has rebranded to the Community Rail Network. The organisation is funded by the Department for Transport and acts an umbrella group for more than 50 community rail partnerships and also station adoption groups. Their new logo will appear on TransWilts literature as it is reprinted.

Stay safe at home

With schools closed across Britain, many parents and guardians may be looking for extra educational resources for children.

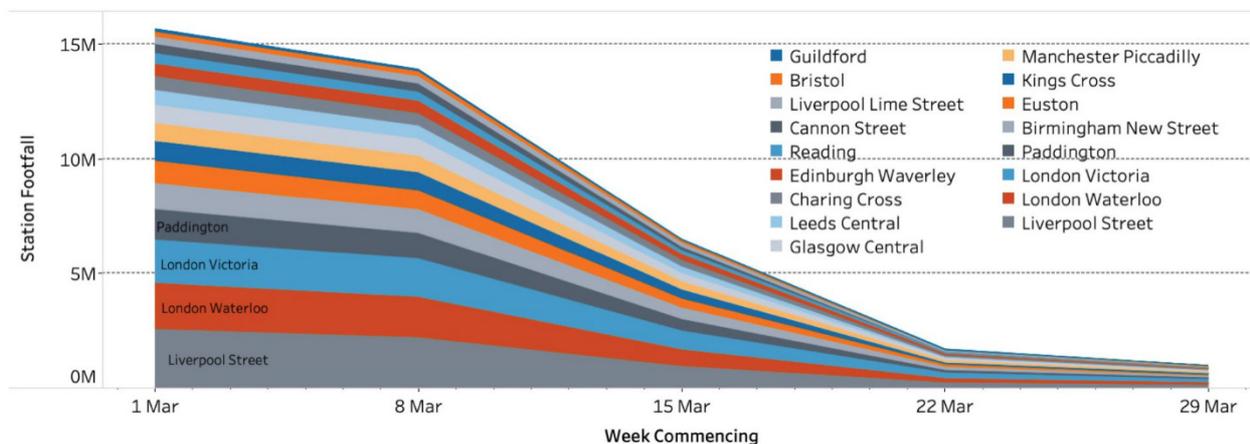
Community Rail Officer Sophie Martin has put together some links to online rail-related activities for children. You can learn about rail safety, history and careers.

Details are at <https://transwilts.org/2020/03/30/train-activities-at-home/>

The logo for Great Western Railway (GWR) in a dark green, stylized font.	<p>Please follow Government advice and only travel by train if it is essential until restrictions are lifted</p>	The logo for TransWilts, featuring a stylized 'TW' in white on a green background with the word 'TransWilts' below it.
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GWR reduces services as travel demand drops

With Government advice to stay at home and only travel if necessary there was a very rapid drop in passenger numbers on rail services. During March there was a 94% drop in the numbers using 17 Network Rail managed stations including Paddington, Reading and Bristol Temple Meads.



As well as the fall in patronage the railways were starting to see rising levels of staff absences as employees went into quarantine or needed to look after children who could not be accommodated at school. After discussions with the Department for Transport, GWR along with other operators entered into an Emergency Measures Agreement with the government, taking on the financial risk and farebox income while paying GWR a management fee to run the service.

Since mid-March GWR has been running a reduced timetable with an hourly service to each of Bristol, South Wales, Worcester and Plymouth from London. On the TransWilts service the weekday timetable is broadly similar to normal with the exception of two rush hour journeys being withdrawn. However the Sunday service was originally reduced to one service a day but has now been suspended altogether.

Cardiff to Portsmouth services via Westbury and Trowbridge have been reduced to every two hours. Trains from Swindon to Cheltenham also run every two hours. Full details are available at GWR.com which also has information on changes to rules regarding ticket refunds.

Progress at Westbury

Prior to the introduction of the Government guidelines in mid-March more work was carried out to convert the room on platform 1 at Westbury into the new White Horse Room. It is anticipated the remainder can be swiftly completed once the situation improves.

	<p>Please follow Government advice and only travel by train if it is essential until restrictions are lifted</p>	
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Latest Chippenham Station plans

The output from the Chippenham Survey undertaken by TransWilts volunteers in February/March last year has been used to inform the GWR design of the southern station approach, now called Station Square.

The survey additionally identified the importance of the northern entrance to the operation of the station. In consequence the scheme scope has been amended to include the north side and improve the existing entrance to the northern car park whilst providing better segregation of pedestrians. The plans include the provision of the lift on the north side and a revised pedestrian bridge exit design to link on the car park side rather than Old Road.

The northern scheme envisages a future second phase, with an eastern entrance to the car park from Foundry Lane opposite the Travelodge Hotel. This second phase would require additional funding and would not be finished in time to meet the existing funding deadline of March 2021.

Meanwhile on the south side work has continued to maximise the use of the space available to reduce conflicts between cars, buses, cyclists and pedestrians.

