

## Melksham Update – 15<sup>th</sup> June 2015 – TransWilts CRP / LSTF

Wiltshire Council have asked me (Graham Ellis, Community Rail Officer, TransWilts CRP) to provide them with a quote about what the Local Sustainable Transport Fund grant has meant for Melksham Station. The request was last Friday (12<sup>th</sup> June 2015), with a deadline of "early next week", so please excuse my rough note form.

Coverage of changes over the summer re: engineering works is outside the scope of this sheet – in summary we will have trains every weekday and Saturday (very limited 18<sup>th</sup> to 31<sup>st</sup> July).



## Local Sustainable Transport Fund – Melksham Summary

Background - "Local Sustainable Transport Fund" monies from the Department for Transport have been used to provide the current trial train service, and many (but not all – thanks to First for a very great deal) of other improvements. They're a three year scheme because it's reckoned that trials and services will take that long to build up / need startup funding. The grant was made 3 years ago, but due to rail franchising delays the extra trains only started in December 2013 ... and arrangements have been made to ensure they continue for the full three years. However other investments that you see around should now be at or near completion, and we move into a phase in which you won't see lots of new things appearing around the station. And I am concerned (as are the rest of the community team) that works which are incomplete get completed, and trials are allowed to run their proper course.

**In summary – a huge amount of useful stuff has been done that sets us well for the future. But there are trials and works to complete in order to make the very best of the opportunity and to continue to support the community.**

My quote:

"LSTF funding has made an order of magnitude change to train use from Melksham, and with such to the lives of many people in their daily commute and in leisure journeys too. People have moved homes, changed jobs, and sold cars based on the new service, and it's brought business to the town. The ancilliary services are exceptionally helpful, feeding the train, and station improvements allow it to cope with the new traffic levels.

There are concerns that some of the linked services will be withdrawn next month after successfully running (and still growing) for just 15 months of what we understood to be a three year trial, and that certain projects are incomplete - a ticket machine that's not switched on is of zero value, as is a path blocked by a fence or a bus that won't stop at the station, and we look forward to the completion of these projects very soon indeed.

Looking further ahead, there are maintenance issues with items such as signage and bus maps as routes evolve (or are cut) and in keeping the community involved and informed. With the community funding element for the CRP resolved, we're confident that Wiltshire Council and the Community can work together on these ongoing issues to ensure that the LSTF investment is proven in time to be the seed of a sustainable transport system rather than just a flash in the pan. It's up to Wiltshire Council and the Community to make sure this works, and we would like to thank them for all their positive work, without which we wouldn't have been able to achieve what has been achieved.

Detail – element by element

## Melksham (Station) related improvements in / around LSTF

### \*\* Services

#### \* Train Service Improvement

- Extra trial service for 3 years
- Doing very well indeed after 1.5 years (well over all expectations)  
[Link journeys up 10-fold year before new service to first full year, and still rising]
- Overcrowding and gap in service issues
- Runs to December 2016. Some questions over "what then". Positive vibes.

#### \* Melksham Rail Link Bus

- Trial / interim service until cut through and service bus linkage provided
- Now loading well - double figures on some runs / significant traffic to rail
- report on usage and future as requested to WC on 8th June
- **Decision to withdraw (last run 17th July) by WC advised to us on 12th June**
- Alternative facilities not in place. Withdrawal of service so quickly without replacement is astonishing

#### \* Bus to take train tickets

- Service bus 234 takes train tickets in the evening after last train
- Useful facility to allow people to get home; saves need for late train
- **Route 234 being withdrawn after 1st August**
- Unclear as to what if any alternatives being provided

## Summary

- Trains run to December 2016
- Rail Link Bus runs to 17th July 2015 and is then withdrawn.
- Evening bus runs to 1st August 2015 then unknown.

## **\*\* Railside at Station**

- \* Platforms at Melksham
  - Sufficient for 1 car train / 2 car with centre doors.
  - 2 car with end doors has to use "Single Door Opening"
  - Not a problem until passenger numbers per train double again
  - Not part of LSTF
- \* Cycle Racks at Melksham Station
  - Old racks replaced by new
  - New racks in good daily use
- \* Signboards at Melksham Station
  - Increased from 3 to 8 at station. Still 2 on approach road.
  - Excellent and providing useful information
  - 8 updated by FGW, 1 by community, 1 is Wilts Council / public transport and cycling map
- \* Shelter at Melksham Station
  - Old shelter replaced by new, bigger, lit one
  - Excellent. Being made use of; improves safety feeling
- \* Ticket Vending Machine at Melksham Station
  - Installed by 24th March 2015
  - Not commissioned and has never sold a ticket
  - Customers with Advance tickets from Melksham must order a week ahead or collect from Chippenham
  - Rail revenue being lost because conductor can't sell all tickets needed and nearby stations are unbarriered
- \* CCTV at Melksham Station
  - Installed early 2015
  - **Unknown Operational Status**
- \* Train departure screen at Melksham Station
  - Screen with departures installed just prior to LSTF
  - Prone to failure (guess out of order around 40% of the time)
  - Emergency and information buttons useful

## **\*\* Outside the station ("Roadside")**

- \* White lines marking route to station
  - Painted in November 2013
  - Provide useful waymarking
- \* Car Parking
  - Up from 6 spaces to 12 in December 2013 to around 25 in April 2015
  - And not before time - usage already over 12 and growing
  - Superb job done on new spaces and fencing of area (but why when no gate?)
  - Suggestions made to charge for use, but unclear about this at present
- \* Raised Platform at top of Station Approach
  - A Sleeping Policeman to control traffic at the top of station approach was planned
  - Nothing has appeared on site. Plans unknown.
  - No great problem (in my opinion) - traffic slow anyway as it's at a road junction and bend
- \* Bus Stops at top of Station Approach
  - Buses on routes 271, 272, x72, x34, 68, 69 and 14 (also 234, to be withdrawn) pass top of station approach
  - No bus stop on any of these routes at the station approach or for a considerable distance
  - A "Melksham Station" stop would encourage changes - routes make this logical as feeder service.
  - Melksham Rail Link (see above) is an interim until these stops provided and services co-ordinated
  - No sign of bus stops; Melksham Rail Link ceases next month. Big problem.
- \* Subway repaint
  - Subway under A350 was considered eyesore and offputting
  - Repainted (walls but not ceiling) around March 2015
  - Artwork planned for subway / direct arrangement between Melksham Oak School and Wiltshire Council
  - New white walls are once again attracting graffiti
  - Ongoing status unknown

- \* Cycleway improvements on A365
  - Plans were to widen a section of the footpath near the top of station approach
  - This work appears to have been completed, with fresh tarmac and edging
- \* Northern Station Entrance
  - Council own land at Station to fence to Foundry Close, and there's a roundabout spur up to the fence
  - Housing at Foundry Close is high density limited parking. North & Bridge to Melksham Forest that way too.
  - Original plan was for bus (and taxi??) and cycle and footway through.
  - Due to sharp corner, plans pulled back to cycleway and footpath
  - Entrance saves a walk of about 1 km and 2 crossings of trunk road (A350)
  - Entrance provides station with facilities (McDonald's and shop / 7-11) almost on site
  - Fence panels still in place (can walk up to both sides, but some improvement needed to path)
  - **No projected date as to when fence panel will be removed and access allowed**
- \* Electric car charging points
  - Installed at other stations; in Melksham 2 points in the town centre car park at opposite end to station
  - Excellent idea for Melksham - of no use for people to charge their cars when travelling by train

## **\*\* Marketing and attracting people**

- \* Connecting Wiltshire / Travel Planners
  - A team that went round making sure people were aware of the new service
  - Melksham was planned in the second tranche, when the new trains were running
  - Second tranche diverted; no personal travel planner work done in Melksham ("works better in bigger towns")
  - Work done in Trowbridge, Chippenham, Bradford-on-Avon
  - Our untested view is it would have been helpful especially in Melksham where new travel modes available
- \* Literature printing and supply
  - Wiltshire Council have been excellent in their support of printing community brochures
  - A really useful map of Melksham showing bus routes has been produced and distributed
  - Question - will an updated version be produced bearing in mind route changes mentioned above?
- \* Poster Map
  - Poster map provided showing cycle ways and bus routes at top of Station approach for arriving passengers
  - Ideally would be situated at the station - where it is, we really need directions to the directions poster.
  - Question - will an updated version be produced bearing in mind route changes mentioned above?

## **\*\* Admin**

- \* Admin funding for Community Rail.
  - LSTF documentation promised assistance and funding for admin of community support
  - ACoRP states that community investment of £1 will bring £4.20 in benefit
  - With 10 x the passenger numbers (still growing) the CRP needs local authority support / rail match funding?
  - Virtually every other CRP is helped in this way, but WC has provided no funding and says it has no money.
  - Wiltshire Council have been exceptionally helpful "in kind"

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The TransWilts Community Rail Partnership is a member of the Association of Community Rail Partnerships

My role with the CRP is predominantly voluntary; we receive some funding from First Great Western under their community rail program, and have a historic grant made in 2011 from other sources via the Chambers of Commerce and the local enterprise partnership with which we are funding many of our expenses during the 3 year trial.

If you are concerned at the news about any of the items, please feel free to discuss them with us, and raise them with us or as appropriate with councillors, council, or First Great Western. We will be happy to advise on which is best.

I will be speaking to my concerns about

- Melksham Rail Link Bus
- Lack of progress on Ticket Vending
- Evening Bus future
- Lack of progress on northern access

at Melksham Assembly Hall on 17<sup>th</sup> June from 6:30 p.m. And would welcome support. You might make a difference!

This document is online at **<http://twcrp.info/1stfmelksham>**