

Draft - Proposal to Wiltshire Council to seed

Melksham Town Bus improvements

using additional grant monies (£671,000) available for the coming financial year, but primarily making use of resources already to hand.

Overall objectives

- to tune the service so it takes people where and when they want to travel now.
The one-year funding used to supplement the income as usage grows.
- to ensure that existing bus passengers are properly catered for
- to publicise that service so that people know it and use it
- to provide it at good fares that can be easily understood and collected

Immediate suggestions ...

Idea: Extend Town Bus (14 and 15) to station and also re-route through Portal Way. Update timetable to call at station just before a train calls, cover the northern loop close to the station before returning there just after the train calls.

Why: This will allow for connectional journeys in to and out of Melksham using public transport - to and from work, business and leisure. Until now service times and routes have made it impractical to use the bus to access the rail network, and to get to and from the Bowerhill Industrial Area by bus.

Idea: Update timetable to network with planned Faresaver buses through Melksham Forest. At the time of writing, not clear if this is hourly in one direction (and if so, which?) or hourly in both directions.

Why: People want to go both ways and not in a big loop. For example, get from The Forest to the doctor's (has been up to 4 buses an hour) but getting back has had to be via town centre as there have been no daytime buses at all in the opposite direction

Idea: Add a driver shift to one of the town buses - that provides for one vehicle to be running before school runs (commuter services) and another up until early evening. Also better rest break cover.

Why: Provides a robust beginning / end of day service to allow residents who work in Bristol, Swindon and elsewhere, and on Bowerhill with an early start, public transport options to reach those jobs. Also college journeys, etc

Idea: Flat fare £1.50 and monthly transferrable season ticket at £45.00

Why: Based on current town fare (a few pence higher), but 2 x £1.50 is below the daily car parking rate to be introduced soon. As a reliable bus service to / from town and station will mean people don't need a car, it's very attractive and will not put people off. Melksham Station is to the North West of the town, with most new development to the south and east

Suggestions co-ordinated by Melksham Rail User Group - www.mrug.org.uk / V 0.91, 9.3.2020 / GE.

<http://www.mrug.org.uk/20200309.pdf> / 0797 4 925 928 / info@mrug.org.uk

for local councils in response to Wiltshire Council's request for 2020/21 bus improvements for 1 year funding

At around £45, that's 15 journeys each way and represents a saving for daily travellers. Allowing the ticket to be transferrable removes ID issues (though tickets would need to be numbered and could be stopped) and it becomes a sales tool to encourage other members of the family to try the bus.

Idea: Saturday and Sunday - 1 vehicle, single shift, to station for 08:45 ish train, lunch break, afternoon service final connection off 17:45 ish ex Swindon (18:10 Melksham).

Why: Sport, social, work carry on over the weekend these days. Senior bus card traffic may be thin, and the current Saturday vehicle could usefully provide links just as in the rest of the week.

Idea: Publicity / launch help - ACoRP small stations fund

Why: Community involvement / pride / ownership will help with publicity and get people to think of them use the service. Applying for an extra central funding pot will help with further cement our scheme as forward looking, national policy aligned, strategic.

Longer term

The case for 2020/21 seed funding for town bus changes is NOT dependent on these. How will this look in 2022, 2024, 2026, ...

* The Department for Transport are looking for an "**Electric Bus Town**" for major funding for the next five years. Melksham could qualify. Congestion, dirty air from over 200 extra lorries passing by the town every day, population size and growth projections, flat nature of the land, electric vehicle charging points in King's Street and (coming soon) at the Station all help this work.

* **The suggestions above should stand on their own beyond 2021.** The Melksham Rail Link bus - funded from a short term grant in 2014 - rose to 9,000 journeys per annum in 9 months, with 4 services a day, and was on a continued upward curve at the point of withdrawal. At that point, Melksham Station was 1 carriage long and had an experimental service generating around 50,000 journeys per annum. After a hiatus when the trains got full, grown resumed in 2019 and indications are 80,000 journeys for the calendar year. Comparison to other town stations in the area points to 250,000 journeys in a decade or so.

* The operator of the Zigzag contract have stated that they have invested in the current contract which still has several years to run, and do not wish to see it reframed / re-tendered. **Come 2022/23, there may be an stronger case for Zigzag changes**, but the Zigzag can be left as a side issue at present. Should the operators wish to call at Melksham Station and thus provide a rail link for the likes of Holt prior to that date, no reason they shouldn't.

Comments

- a) Detailed work cannot be done until we have x72 and perhaps x34 changes
- b) Earlier draft included Whitley- with hourly commercial Faresaver bus, not a requirement. Also evening and Sunday, supported x72 now promised.
- c) Fits long term geography - bus services to Pathfinder and other new estates as they become occupied.
- d) Direction of buses may alter a.m. to p.m.to give shortest journeys, and may be opposite to current depending on both-way, one-way nature of Faresaver services to Melksham Forest.
- e) A route up Kenilworth Road may be impractical due to speed limit.
- f) Background, see earlier draft http://www.mrug.org.uk/mkm2020_o247.pdf
This needs an update which will logically be done once we have new x72 timetable - "hopefully 16th March" say Wiltshire Council.

Here is an early draft of routes

... with tuning needed once commercial routes are clarified

Route "12" - every 2 hours

Melksham Station - Addison Road area - Melksham Station

Route "13" - every 2 hours

Melksham Station - Granville Road area - Melksham Station

Both routes 12 and 13 continue as route 14

Route "14" - every hour, daytime

Melksham Station - some Asda - some Sainsbury's - The Bear - Lowborne - Awdry - Pig and Whistle - Sherwood - Foresters - Blackmore - Queensway - The Spa - Melksham Hospital - Market Place - The Bear - some Salisbury's - some Asda - Melksham Station

Route "15" - every hour including early and late services

Melksham Station - some Asda - some Sainsbury's - The Bear - Lowborne - Foresters - Water Meadow - Snowberry Lane - The Spa - Pathfinder - Bowerhill Industry - Police Station - Berryfield - Kenilworth Road - Spa Road - Market Place - The Bear - some Salisbury's - some Asda - Melksham Station

Route "16" - every hour, Saturday, Sunday

Melksham Station - The Bear - Lowborne - Pig and Whistle - Foresters - Water Meadow - Snowberry Lane - The Spa - Pathfinder - The Spa - Queensway - Foresters - Lowborne - The Bear - Melksham Station. Alternate weekend services Awdry and Sherwood?

Suggestions co-ordinated by Melksham Rail User Group - www.mrug.org.uk / V 0.91, 9.3.2020 / GE.

<http://www.mrug.org.uk/20200309.pdf> / 0797 4 925 928 / info@mrug.org.uk

for local councils in response to Wiltshire Council's request for 2020/21 bus improvements for 1 year funding