

## **Sustainable Transport Briefing - Melksham / 24th May 2021**

*Comment / bullets from Graham Ellis*

Sector by sector analysis **but TOTAL JOURNEY should be over-riding!**

Note public transport in the economy / business, public transport as a necessity for those who cannot drive, and public transport as we move towards zero carbon. Short term / covid times may have been negative to public transport but it need to recover and go beyond – and that applies to each individual person travelling. Everyone can't leave it to others.

### **Trains**

- 8 each way per day (up from 2 in 2013)
- 75,000 journeys per annum pre Covid (up from 3,000 in 2013)
- projection 250,000 (mine), 450,000 (TransWilts official) in a few years
- need for more trains to achieve this (up to around 15 each way)
- Connections and length of day are key, 7 days a week
- track capacity limits services that can run at present
- trains make a very real difference to the area
- public transport hugely important to those without their own transport
- Covid has decimated rail journeys; they will come back but doubt on detail
- Zero carbon will be a massive push towards public transport
- Rail industry re-organisation under way [GBR – 20.5.2021 / DfT] - elements are overdue
- Operated by GWR / First group - relationship has become good over years
- Support from Central Govt., Wilts Council, Town, Parish over years
- "Fastest growing line / station in England" and ACoRP, RailFuture awards
- Many keen advocates in the industry and in the community

Save the train (2005)

-> TransWilts CRP

-> within **TransWilts CIC**

- \* Longer term, planning, major projects, wider (Wiltshire area)
- \* Active key player, plus board all of current and ex WC councillors
- \* 2 full time (senior one is Sophie Martin) and one PT staff
- \* Newsletter every 2 months, annual meeting
- \* DfT accredited Community Rail Partnership

Melksham Rail Development Group (1995)

-> Melksham Rail User Group

-> **Melksham Transport User Group** (this week!!)

- \* Local promotion, marketing, support
- \* Station adoption group in the Community Rail Network
- \* Meet every 2 months. Pure volunteer. £350 from TC vital to funding. See report pack.

Station facilities

- \* Platform extended 1 to 3 carriages a couple of years back
- \* Masterplan to grow station for expected passengers / numbers
- \* Need buses to station (and they really must connect with trains)
- \* Need better station access to north and east
- \* Cafe, extra parking useful - very new.
- \* For future, taxi rank, knowledgeable rail person, better information

Summary – need better access, more trains, better connections and / or through services, better information systems, fares sorting out while maintain safety and affordable fares. Public Transport travel prices have risen where car travel in real terms has fallen in price and that is detrimental to persuading people to use mass transit.

Don't forget freight – major new and changing flows though Melksham - Rail and Road  
- HS2 quarry filler to Quidhampton, Road stone from Mendips, Southampton Docks

## Buses

### Interurban

- At the cross of Bath to Devizes and Chippenham to Trowbridge and Frome
- Both route sets were First then Faresaver competition and they took over
- Competition was aggressive at times and not in total customer interest
- x34 (Chippenham - Trowbridge) 6 days a week, only to around tea time
- 271/2/3 (Bath - Devizes) runs 7 days into 6 evenings. Poor Sunday service
- Sunday and evening lost Chippenham - Trowbridge in 2015 (WC subsidy removed)
- Sunday and evening Bath - Devizes subsidised by WC for many years
- All now under DfT subsidy via WC (due to Covid)
- Also 68 / 69 (a.k.a Zigzag) ; 2 vehicles filling awkward gaps (Corsham, B-o-A)
- Daily bus Marlborough - Calne – RUH
- School bus 555 to Corsham

### Town

- Routes 14 and 15 a confused variety
- Largely school travel and seniors
- Buses arrive at new houses after people have bought their second car
- Low frequency relative to journey length puts people off
- Lack of real time information puts people off
- Bus does not go to station to connect
- Routes tend to be long way round, run 1 direction only
- Operated by Frome Bus under WC contract, 1 or 2 vehicles CIL/106 support

### Bus stops / information / hardware / fares

- Town Council looks after some stops
- Many stops tired, showing only one operator routes
- Timetables often out of date and unclear if that is the case
- No clear route maps
- No real time information on the stops
- Fares confusing; tickets may not be interchangeable
- Around 100 stops in Melksham
- Some areas not served

### Where are buses going

- Bus Back Better, March 2021, funded £3bn (but is that enough?)
- WC to decide Partnership of Franchise by of June 2021
- Bus Service Improvement Plans by end of October
- Implementation April 2022
- Requirements include Community inputs, intermodal connections, eve & w/e

### - **Option 24/7** (2016)

- To answer WC proposals to cut 50% to 90% of subsidy
- Kept cuts to just 10%
- WC no longer regarded as the "dirty man" or public transport
- Thanks to Horace Prickett (current), and Richard Gamble, just retired
- Excellent key officer at County Hall
- Good relationships built BUT professionals always know better
- WORKING with / on plans – we have a team!

- Real issue getting public to take an interest beyond ..

+ The stop THEY already use.

+ The service (time) THEY already catch.

+ This month / season.

- need for joined up thinking, planning, Community BUS partnerships

Need to add sections for **taxi**, **community buses**, **link scheme** and **National Express**

## **Cycling**

- Some excellent sections
- Not really joined up
- Some silly long ways round and poor (token) facilities
- Real issue towards Lacock / Chippenham
- Waymarking issues
- Bottleneck issues into Town Centre (amount of street space)
- WC are improving Melksham to Trowbridge
- Cycle hire at station is bleeding edge
- Need to connect in through routes / make cycling safer
- Need to pull in community people
- Cycles on buses, trains, parking at hubs - Real issues here!

## **Walking**

- Key to health
- Routes not obvious / waymarking
- Some dangerous
- Some public footpaths impractical

## **Cars and powered vehicles**

- Traffic jams at schools
- Extra bypass traffic with Bath diversions
- Move away from petrol / diesel -> electric
- Charging infrastructure

Wilshire surveys suggest that getting around is IMPORTANT to people and NEEDS ATTENTION to a great degree. Only thing that "topped" travel in these areas was / is health provision.

We have seen massive growth in public transport in the past decade but a huge setback in the last 15 months and we must regrow if we are to meet climate targets. Even going all electric in cars does not sort congestion nor affordability, quote apart from where you get the electricity.

Community PARTNERSHIP needed. New WC councillor with cabinet responsibility, new town council. MRUG becoming MTUG. Priority for People excellent research - we will probably know much / most of it BUT update and learning is key.

Strong community group and community interactions needed. Much for volunteers - bus stop adoption, advocate, helping inform in all directions, helping plan.

Travel is about us going from A to B. We need to work with the people of B too in order to get the whole setup right. Melksham cannot do it alone, but can promote / advocate / even lead with ideas as we have with Save the Train and Option 24/7.

Wider area ...

- TravelWatch SouthWest
- West Wilts Rail User Group
- Great Western Coffee Shop

E&OE - Graham Ellis - 27.5.2021 / graham@wellho.net / 01225 708225

Some URLs to start you ...

<https://transwilts.org>

<http://www.mtug.org.uk>

<http://www.passenger.chat>

<http://option247.uk>

Meetings – Option 24/7 at 19:30 on Wednesday and MRUG at 19:30 Thursday