

Some thoughts on the GW Franchise consultation, closing 21.2.2018

Consultation document mirrored at

<http://www.twcrp.org.uk/great-western-rail-franchise-consultation-2017.pdf>

where the document include links to individual questions, how to answer, etc.

My notes of key items I wanted to answer with specific comment

- * 1. Objectives – add “when and where people want to go” [1]
- * 2. Minimum hourly, 7 days, inc. evenings for all but exceptional cases [5]
- * 3. Direct services, Swindon to Solent; Westbury to Plymouth [8]
- * 4. Train facilities - luggage space on new trains [12]
- * 5. Community Rail, bus, ticket and continuity of funding [16]
- * 6. Connections key in our (Wiltshire plus) area, note - Westbury & Buses [8]
- * 7. Station facilities - station friends via Community Rail & Melksham [14]
- * 8. "Any Permitted" -> "Any Reasonable" if faster, e.g. Westbury to EXC [15]
- * 9. Brightons. Decent regular connections might be much better! [3]

Main question numbers being answered by each of these in square brackets

For background of author and of these suggestions, see page 13. Pages 14 onward are supporting material from TransWilts surveys in October 2017.

*** Question 1a

Franchise Objective "Provide safe, punctual and reliable services with enough seats and space for people who want to use them"

should read

Franchise Objective "Provide safe, punctual and reliable services with enough seats and space for people who want to use them **and run at times that people want to use them to destinations they want to reach**"

Narrative - the trains run for the passengers and it's important for the operator to have passengers as their priority. Franchises have historically specified numbers of trains on a route without a requirement to maximise use that will be made of them, and this has resulted in trains being run at operationally convenient times rather than for customer benefit. Example - Swindon to Westbury services in the 2006 franchise "2 per day" ran at 06:10 and 18:44, other way at 07:04 and 19:35. For customer benefit, better timing of such a sparse service would have been at 08:10 and 17:36, and at 07:04 and 16:35 - thus offering commuter travel. Trains ran with just a handful of passengers, as no-one really could make use of them at that time. Extras now run - that 17:36 got so busy an extra carriage has to be added, and the use of the 07:04 has rocketed because people can now return usefully at 17:36.

*** Question 2

I do not agree with splitting the franchise, though a re-arrangement within a franchise to have separate logical business units could be advantageous

** Reasons:

* Swindon to Solent traffic already has two franchise areas to deal with, without adding a third. Arranging connections between trains will be difficult to specify and police across operators, and third party (minor) operators tend to be poorly serviced by station operator staff of the major operator.

Example - 20:42 arrival at Bristol from Glasgow used to arrive at 20:37 with advertised connection into 20:49 last train to Weymouth; always a nightmare when the advertised connection failed - sometimes with passengers running up the steps to the 20:49 to see its tail lights leaving. Won't solve this one by "single franchise" but we do not want more of the same!

Example - When the franchise was previously split, First Great Western staff at Swindon use to advise passengers asking for Melksham to catch the First train to Chippenham or Bath and change into a First bus, even when a Wessex Trains service was waiting at the platform!

* Robustness of service/ability to respond to special event / seasonal change , or immediate disruption is strengthened by having a larger franchise area.

Example - extra services to Glastonbury run by thinning out services from London via Swindon.

Example - London to Bristol trains to call at Oldfield Park and / or Keynsham when disruption to local trains from Westbury

* Duplication of management and facilities, is avoided with a single franchise.

*** Question 3a

One Monday to Friday through train from Bristol runs to Brighton and two run from Brighton to Bristol. More trains run each way on Saturdays and Sundays.

I agree with the Monday to Friday transfer of the Southampton to Brighton section of this route to an operator who runs electric trains (already) between these stations, subject to the proviso that a good connection is made at Southampton or at Fareham between the service from Cardiff and Bristol to Portsmouth (diesel train) and the ongoing service to Brighton (electric train). Also in the opposite direction enabling Brighton to Bristol journeys. Both services run hourly at present, and a Bristol to Brighton time of 3 hours 45 minutes should be achievable clockface all day.

Through trains to suit the different weekend metrics should remain operating - probably within the GW franchise - potentially using Bristol based rolling stock that strengthens peak trains on Mondays to Fridays. Portion working could be considered for the through workings. See also other answers which allow the removal of local stops between Warminster and Bristol on Brighton services.

* Reasons

Through traffic to the one train a day (2 the other way) tends to precipitate to that train because the connections at Southampton are awful the rest of the day. Improve those connections and you offer a good alternative.

The through services were running prior to regular Southampton to Brighton services - at one time the only way along the coast apart from the trains that went up to Salisbury and beyond from Brighton was to double back at Fratton. What is left if a stock-expensive vestige of those days. The service ties up a train all day - it should continue to operate between Wiltshire and Bristol where it forms part of the regular interval service, but the rest of its time may be better employed filling the gaps that the one odd-ball train that goes out of area creates.

***** Question 3b**

Transfers to / from other franchise?

We are suggesting linking Swindon - Westbury, Westbury - Salisbury and Salisbury - Romsey via Southampton services. These currently run using the same types of trains but in different franchises. Business case / suggestion at http://twcrp.info/technical_2019 with management slide set at http://twcrp.info/presentation_2019

Whether this joined up service would fit into GW, SW, Red or Blue - or be worked jointly (sensible to get it going jointly for the management period, I suspect) is not something I have a strong opinion on - but I am flagging it here as a transfer may make sense.

***** Question 5a, b and c**

Improved train frequencies (and regularity of service) would be of benefit from Swindon to Westbury, and between Westbury and Salisbury.

These improvements will meet the demand of passengers and wannabe passengers who do not use rail because of long service gaps - see examples below. They will also allow for evening leisure traffic (and people employed in the leisure business) to use the train.

End-on joining a 5 station service (10 different journeys possible), a 4 station service (6 possible journeys) and an 8 station service (28 possible journeys) gives a 15 station service which offers 105 through journey opportunities versus 43. (Figure excludes tail of service back up to Romsey which will have little through traffic. Many of these journeys opportunities aren't very significant but some are major flows:

Swindon, Melksham and Chippenham to Warminster, Salisbury, Southampton Central, Southampton Airport and Eastleigh

Trowbridge, Westbury and Warminster to Southampton Airport and Eastleigh

* Swindon to Westbury

Currently Swindon to Westbury trains run about every 2 hours, with some longer gaps. For example (using midline i.e. Melksham times) there is no northbound service to Swindon between 07:49 and 10:04, and no southbound service between 06:36 and 09:15.

The aim should be for an hourly service from around current first train time to late evening, such that the final train leaves Swindon at the conclusion of the social evening - theatre, evening soccer, pubs, evening classes, etc.

Our passenger survey of October 2017 (3 days / help of GWR, Atkins and Wiltshire Council) revealed top wishes of additional trains and evening trains - current last train at 18:32 off Westbury on a Saturday was strongly criticised

* Westbury to Salisbury

Currently an hourly service (Cardiff to Portsmouth) operates on this line, together with occasional SWR trains between London and Bristol/Yeovil via Salisbury/Westbury, a handful of extra GWR trains to Southampton, the Brighton train (question 3) and some short Westbury to Warminster workings. There are some startling gaps and inconsistencies as a result - you can travel to Salisbury from Dilton Marsh (2 stops) in the morning to arrive at Salisbury at 07:36, or at 11:32 - may have been OK when Dilton Marsh served a rural catchment, but these days the station is sandwiched between the residential areas of Dilton Marsh and Westbury Leigh and the service is now inappropriate.

We suggest that the Cardiff to Portsmouth service continues at current levels, but that the remaining GWR trains be replaced by an hourly service, linked to Swindon - Westbury and to Salisbury - Romsey via Southampton. This would provide 30 minute frequency from Westbury to Salisbury (the whole Cardiff to Portsmouth route having now 2 trains an hour - one faster and one slower).

Joining up Swindon - Westbury, Westbury - Salisbury and Salisbury - Romsey - Southampton Central - Airport - Eastleigh (Romsey) into an hourly service requires no extra rolling stock above what's already needed for these services.

Significant turn around times currently give stock utilisation between 60% and 75% and that can rise to 85%. See http://www.twcrp.org.uk/Solent_to_Swindon_2019.pdf

* Comment on staging:

The single line between Thingley Junction (near Chippenham) and Bradford Junction (near Trowbridge) prevents the running of a clockface hourly service. It does allow a regular service every 2 hours, with an additional train between (so gaps of 40 and 80 minutes in each 120 minute period).

We propose the additional train service initially runs two round trips in the morning and 2 at the evening peak, to Warminster and/or Salisbury. The initial service will be every 2 hours (middle of the day and evening).

Capacity studies sponsored by Wiltshire Council with WSAtkins are ongoing to look at the case for enhancement works to allow an hourly service to be run robustly all day and also offer sufficient freight paths.

* Other Service improvements

There is strong call for better morning SWINDON AND CHIPPENHAM to BATH and BRISTOL services. Services at 06:00 and 07:00 would fill the morning gaps - currently the service is half hourly after the peak! A late service from Bristol to Swindon (after 23:00) is also called for, allowing theatre trips, etc, from Chippenham and Swindon. Note how well loaded the 23:20 Bristol to Frome service is.

We support calls for service improvements to Frome. Our proposed linkage of services from Swindon to Westbury with local services south of Westbury will allow resource to be redirected towards Frome to meet this objective.

***** Question 5d**

If more time is needed for engineering works should length of service be extended, when should that be?

* There may be logic in short stoppages in the middle of the day, Monday to Friday. Trains are quieter at that time, and rail replacement buses could be sourced between morning and afternoon school runs.

* On TransWilts, we are a diversionary line and with good notice occasional weeks in which only peak services run are acceptable; we have three such weeks in the first half of 2018 ... ideally a maximum of 2 a year once electrification is completed?

*** Question 6

New Stations

* TransWilts is supporting the promotion of a new station an **WILTON**. We would like to see the franchise operator being asked to ensure that services passing through have time within their schedules to allow an hourly stop at least in each direction. The requirement of work with the promoter and look at the Solent to Swindon corridor is a part of the SWR franchise already and should be included in the GW management agreement and franchise.

* Another new station at **Devizes Parkway** also looks likely to attract third party funding in the near future, and service should be planned (the semifast Berks and Hants service) to allow it to be served at least every 2 hours, and every hour as and when that service goes hourly.

* New stations at Corsham and Royal Wootton Bassett are less advanced, but note should be made that service changes should safeguard opportunities.

*** Question 7

Skip stopping speed up services should not normally be considered where it leaves a station with less than one train an hour in each direction.

In Wiltshire, Dilton Marsh and Avoncliff are skipped by most Cardiff to Portsmouth trains, and Dean is skipped by all GW trains.

Some already-occasional stops on Cardiff - Portsmouth train at Dilton Marsh may be removed if the Swindon - Westbury - Salisbury service takes over the requirement at the 13 trains each was per day (or higher) specification. Peak services from Warminster to Bath and Bristol in the morning peak and back in the afternoon peak remain, including stops at Dilton Marsh.

Avoncliff is served hourly by local trains and there is potential for this to increase to twice an hour during the franchise period, with the extension of an extra Bristol to Bath service to Westbury. Dean has an hourly SWR service - part of the Swindon - Solent TransWilts proposal - and that continues with the Cardiff to Portsmouth still skipping.

Bedwyn, Pewsey and Westbury all suffer from a sporadic service while express trains whistle through. I encourage the future specification for GW services to maintain services at - at least - the same level. As well as traffic to London, there is considerable traffic from Westbury to Devon, including Plymouth, and beyond. From Bedwyn and Pewsey, there is little traffic to the west - however, with only one morning train calling at Pewsey in a westerly direction, and none at all at Bedwyn, there is no viable service for anyone who wants to make the journey. We are aware of proposals to replace the current service with a two-

hourly service from next year we note that public utterance talk of it terminating at Exeter, but early draft timetables have show some extensions to both Paignton and Plymouth. We would encourage those extensions, and also a stop at Bedwyn for inbound connections.

Looking ahead to the next Franchise, a suitable pattern for the Berks and Hants might be

Half hourly electric to Newbury

Hourly London - Reading - Newbury - all stations to Taunton - Exeter (continues below)

Hourly London - Reading - Taunton - Tiverton - Exeter - Plymouth - Cornwall

Hourly Exeter - key stations to Newton Abbott, Totnes, Ivybridge, Plymouth

Express overtaking semi-fast at Exeter giving faster journeys for people who are happy to change

Incorporating Bedwyn trains into semifasts releases class 802 units for those semifasts

***** Question 8a and 8b**

Direct links should be provided from Swindon to Southampton linking up Swindon - Westbury, Westbury - Salisbury and Salisbury - Southampton. See business and operational case at http://twcrp.info/techincal_2019 , and management presentation at http://twcrp.info/presentation_2019 .

Direct services should be provided between Swindon and Oxford. These may be usefully joined to services arriving at Swindon from Chippenham and beyond, and may call at Didcot to also provide part of the Didcot to Oxford shuttle service

***** Question 8c**

Timetables are changing in January 2019 and at this stage it is best to list key connections at Westbury, in order of importance (where no through train is available)

From Swindon to Salisbury and beyond

From Salisbury and beyond to Taunton and beyond

From Swindon to Taunton and beyond

From Swindon to the Weymouth line

From Bath and Trowbridge via Frome

From Salisbury to Frome

From Bath and Trowbridge via Pewsey

Other key connectional journeys:

At Trowbridge (from Melksham to Bristol Temple Meads)

At Chippenham (from Melksham to Bristol Temple Meads)

At Didcot (from Swindon to Oxford)

*** Question 9

Train service lengths should continue to be adjusted with seasons to ensure capacity at holiday destinations during the main holiday period when services in the commuter areas are a little quieter.

*** Question 10

It should be noted that there is a lot of travel on 26th December and key services should be provided on that day. With few signal boxes these days, the cost of opening a line for a few trains is much reduced.

*** Question 12a

Rolling stock priorities

For the two year management extension, we cannot realistically ask for new stock provision. What we can ask for is:

- enough rolling stock
- any rolling stock with suburban (2+3 seating) to be used for services where the typical journey is less than 50 minutes
- minor refitting such as the provision of additional luggage space on services such as those which daily handle significant very long distance traffic (air ports and cruise terminals)
- WiFi on all services, power points on services where the typical journey exceeds 50 minutes
- Consideration given to units such as class 769 to operate on services with significant electrified sections along their routes, but not fully electrified

For the next franchise period (7 to 10 year look ahead). Many trains will be life expired or getting very close to that. New West fleet should be:

- sufficient in quantity
- reliable (so modern to avoid it slipping out of reliability)
- comfortable seating with enough space for laptop or other device
- no more than 2 seats alongside each other
- 100 m.p.h. Capable

- through gangwayed between sets
- with toilets, WiFi, air conditioning, power point on longer distance
- luggage space and bicycle space
- to a standard interoperable and intercoulable design
- consideration should be given to adding electric power collection from overhead and / or third rail so that these trains can operate on electric power as when and where that is available

***** Question 14d - Stations / Intermodal connection improvements**

Melksham. see Mastepan work. Major works here; the station has grown from around 3,000 journeys per annum to 75,000 and indications are that with suitable (hourly, all day and evening, reliable, enough capacity) services it will grow to over 250,000 per annum (based on journeys per head of population per annum / population now around 30,000 and growing). Note – ORR figures for years prior to 2013 are higher than the 3,000 due to a ticketing distortion – Melksham fares cheaper than Trowbridge to Bristol at the time; 3,000 is a realistic journey figure.

Residential development in Melksham is largely but not only on the opposite side of town to the station; bus experiment built up 11k journeys per annum in 2014 but was pulled through lack of funding. Buses restart serving station in April 2018 on a more secure but off peak only basis.

Station needs better facilities to safely handle growth. We are please that platform is due to be lengthened by May 2018. Community cafe / information point, scrolling displays, announcement system, footpath access to Foundry Close all needed.

***** Question 15 - Fares and Ticketing**

Agree with objectives. To consider also:

* "Any Permitted Route" to become "any reasonable route".

Background - sometimes there are journeys which are quicker via a route that's not permitted using the current routing guide, and these train should be automatically allowed. Examples are journeys from Exeter Central to Westbury via Yeovil, and (I understand) from Bristol to Lydney via Gloucester.

All routes should offer an "any permitted" or rather "any reasonable route" fare, and if no such ticket is offered then specific route tickets should be

accepted by any reasonable route. Example - Melksham to Bristol Parkway. Fastest journey often via Swindon, but only "via Bath Spa" tickets available. [[Try 10:04 ex Melksham - journey planner via Bath Spa gives 11:38 arrival, but arrival at 11:09 possible via Swindon. All the more absurd as Melksham to Cardiff may route you via Swindon and with a call at Bristol Parkway!!]]

* Just as taxi prices go up at 10 p.m., could some rail fares? Even senior bus passes cut off at 11 p.m.

Late night trains are expensive to staff and thus justify. Passengers starting their journey after (say) 21:30 are likely to have been at a social event / entertainment that's unlikely to have been cheap, so such journeys are unlikely to be cost sensitive.

* Where a rail to rail connection misses and seriously delays the passenger, there is a "duty of care" to the passenger. That is lacking in total journeys that include bus and train, even where the bus operator is also a train operator (perhaps even the same one). With through ticketing options, should a duty of care also be included?

***** Question 16 - Community rail**

We agree with the consultation document which complements the current operator on working well with Community Rail

The Question asks what more could franchisee do.

* Please (Mr DfT) specify programs in such a way that the are assured and ongoing upon the change from one management contract / franchise to the next and offer some degree of interim protection to give us time to establish new relationships should the franchise area be remapped or a new operator who takes a different view of community rail be selected. Whilst we appreciate that a good promise and record of working with the community is a positive mark for franchise bidders, we are realistic enough to realised that the decision between bids is based on many criteria, and the award could go to a company who doesn't have that positive background.

* Total journeys including bus and train are hard to support from the bus / local authority end where funding has been tightly squeezed and the priority for supported services is now on mandatory requirements (school and social care) and the vulnerable. Where a Community Rail Partnership works with a bus operator for rail connections at unstaffed stations, a mechanism to allow a small levy (say 10p pr journey) to allow the CRP to support the local bus would be useful to all parties - helping the buses in the area, the CRP, passengers, and the train operator in raising passenger numbers.

* Information Systems and station services including ticketing - request for

favourable ticket agency terms for Community Rail to sell tickets at smaller stations

Local support and promotion at unstaffed stations and in their communities brings significant extra traffic to trains. Facilities such as somewhere to wait in the warm, a cafe / mini-shop, and toilets as a stand-alone facility or as part of a business close to the station all help and are not uncommon. What isn't easy is to provide personalised customer information and ticketing.

Running a ticket selling facility for a single station is expensive for setup and ongoing fees, and commission rates on tickets sold are now a small percentage of what they used to be. For larger online agents such as The Train Line, there is still good business, but the high setup & running costs and low commission rule out the setup of a community agency at / for a single smaller station, to the detriment of people who want information prior to travel / comfort and reassurance before they board and only find out what their journey will cost when they are already committed. On line research often helps people, but the ticket system is complex enough to scare the un-initiated.

There is a place for community rail to offer advise and / or ticket sales for which they are paid a reasonable commission that's at a guaranteed rate for a number of years. Extra traffic generated for existing trains is almost pure extra income, and a significant percentage should be used to support CRP aims and direction - for example to help support / seed bus integration which in itself will generate more traffic. There are issues with volunteer and accommodation provision and support - there may well be an opportunity for "ticket agent light" where the CRP / volunteer provides timetable and ticket advise with a printout to hand to the train manager without actually having ticket issuing facilities.

Examples where this might generate significant business and community buy-in - TransWilts line. Melksham, Dilton Marsh, Dean, Mottisfont and Dunbridge. It actually use to be done at Dilton Marsh ... """"Being a "halt" there were no staff to sell tickets, but a sign directed would-be passengers to the "7th house up the hill" where Mrs H. Roberts sold tickets from her home. She had sold tickets on a commission basis since 1947.""""

Interesting to note that the Melksham TIC has an agency for selling National Express coach tickets - 1 bus each way through the town - but had to rule out a rail ticket agency - 8 trains each way per day at the time they looked - due to high setup and overheads and low commission rates.

***** Question 18b - which is most urgent for 2020 - 2022**

1. **Increase from 9 to 13 trains** from Swindon to at least Warminster with most running through to the Solent area
2. **Good connections**
3. **Support for bus links and CRP funding continuity** through the various contracts and ticket agency terms

Some other issues such as fare proposals may flow naturally from the above.

***** Question 18d - promote equality of opportunity**

As well as physical disabilities, there are people who don't use / travel by rail because they don't know how and are too worried about the idea to find out. Better publicity for schemes that enable people to have "flash cards" they can show to staff, and funding available to CRPs (who would seem to be a good vehicle) to take such people and perhaps a family support member too on a short train trip.

***** Question 18e - any other comments**

Some of the answers given in this response are short summaries that would benefit from being fleshed out during detailed consideration. Please do contact the undersigned for further thoughts should you wish to have clarification and / or look in to them in detail.

Sources and References

Consultation Document

Swindon to Solent technical work – http://twcrp.info/technical_2019

Swindon to Solent presentation- http://twcrp.info/presentation_2019

Survey results – October 2017 (attached short report – pages 14 onward)

Melksham Station Masterplan

WS Atkins Route study

Coffee Shop Forum – <http://gwr.passenger.chat>

Joining the dots (TravelWatch SouthWest)

Meetings and discussion with others – January 2018 - including

TWSW, Railfuture, DfT Bristol, MRUG, CHRUG,

Coffee Shop, FoSBR, Bedwyn, Three Rivers CRP

with largely common views that align with one another

Background of the author and data collection

My (Graham Ellis) personal thoughts – so email me via graham@wellho.net / call me on 0797 4 925 928 – but well aligned with others (see below)

I am one of the team who campaigned for an improved TransWilts service; I'm now the Community Rail Officer helping promote that service. Our team has gone all through the making of cases, proving our support, getting a trial service and making that trial service work so that it's now permanent. In fact, it's so successful (fastest growing in GWR territory for 4 years) that we now have longer trains; analysis and reports to be attached to the submission suggest that if we step up from 9 trains each way per day to 13, then to 18, each of them will soon be just as busy as the current trains.

As well as getting people on the train, we have to get them to and from the station and much of the next few years will be about the masterplan and redevelopment of Melksham station (ORR reported 3,000 journeys per annum when I first got involved – now 75,000 and after a static current year because the trains are full, it can double again during the next franchise if we are provided with the capacity at times people want to travel, and at an attractive frequency.

Total journeys by public transport (including buses and trains) and the funding of those buses to connect with the train are key.

Also key to our success will be the ability for passengers to make journeys without changing from Swindon, Chippenham and Melksham to Warminster, Salisbury, Southampton Central and Southampton Airport.

I have limited my responses in this document to the questions as they relate to Wiltshire and the TranWilts in particular, and not provided any answers at all where I have no informed and backed up view.

This document was updated after the DfT consultation event in Trowbridge on 24th January 2018

TransWilts Passenger survey

Passengers departing Melksham Station
19th 21st and 22nd October 2017



Initial report

Data collected by TransWilts and MRUG volunteers.
To be analysed by WS Atkins on behalf of Wiltshire Council.

Sample sizes

19 th	21 st	22 nd	
76	78	40	returned forms (one issued per party)
134	143	79	departing passengers joining trains
1.76	1.83	1.97	departing passengers per form
18	16	13	trains scheduled
18	16	11	trains ran
18	16	9	trains (fully) advertised as running
593	506	447	journeys made on TransWilts only section of line

Weather – dry to start on Thursday then windy and wet. On Saturday, we had storm “Brian” passing through; bad enough for speed restrictions in South Wales although all of our trains ran more or less correctly. Sunday – Blustery

Thursday was the first day of half term, and train crew and regulars noted that services were quieter than normal. On Saturday, Swindon Town played at home; a noticeable number of fans use the train. On Sunday, trains over a wide area were running (no direct engineering changes) but there was evidence of some traffic diverted via our line because of Berks and Hants, and Basingstoke, works.

Two Sunday trains were cancelled due to lack of driver – cancellation being notified online at lunchtime for evening services. GWR advise was to “wait for next train” in one case (63 minutes / a short interval by TransWilts standards) and to ask for a taxi in the other case (as it was the last train).

National Rail were advising callers that two other trains were not running and were replaced by a bus. This happened to at least 2 groups to our knowledge and others may have been put off. Same advise was given on the help point even as the train that was supposed to be replaced pulled in.

Full analysis will follow / data from and via WS Atkins. **However, Wiltshire Council are inviting tenders for the Melksham Town bus service over**

the next few days, and we felt it worthwhile to analyse the station improvement question which includes a bus improvement option in case that should provide any last minute evidence.

"Which of the following improvements to the station would have improved your journey / experience today?"

Selected from tick boxes

Thu 19 th	Sat 21 st	Sun 22 nd	improvement
5	5	2	More Car Parking
4	6	2	More Cycle Parking
16	12	2	Better Street / Station lighting
20	19	8	Audio Announcements
20	20	13	More Seating
30	31	19	Toilets
20	17	14	Shop / Refreshment Outlet
35	33	14	A live arrivals departures board
18	12	9	Improved Passenger Information (notice Board)
10	8	7	Improved Pedestrian Routes to Station
5	3	4	Improved Cycle Routes to Station
18	20	12	Improved Bus Connections
16	17	9	More Platform Shelters

Other - written in (in various forms)

17	13	9	More trains
4	6	3	Longer Trains
1	0	0	Security
2	0	0	re: Access (specific comments)
1	1	0	Longer Platform
0	2	1	Direct service to Bath
0	1	0	Taxi waiting for train
0	0	1	More Platforms

Analysis / comment

1. There is already supposed to be a live arrivals / departure board – however it only works about half of the time. The survey confirms how desirable list facility is to passengers

2. Although check boxes were not offered for “more train”, a considerable number of people wrote in asking for more trains – also longer trains. Wording varied (some were specific); I have grouped these together. Further analysis required.

3. A considerable number of people asked for “improved bus connections”; there are currently no buses to the station though. As this survey was taken

at the station by people who had to get there by other means, I would have expected quite low numbers asking for buses. The higher number indicates that we have a ready market already for buses at the station, in addition to new markets which we will develop when (or if) a connection is provided.

GE / 24.10.2017

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V1.0

Survey Notes

19th, 21st and 22nd October 2017
Melksham Station Departing Passengers



Overview

Survey of passengers LEAVING Melksham Station on behalf of Wiltshire Council for WS Atkins. With big THANK YOU to GWR Staff and managers for their help.

MASSIVE "thank you" to the 16 volunteers who helped too - early in the morning to midevening in rain & sun (oops - very little sun - awful weather!)

Their (Wilts Council and Atkins) purpose
- to inform line capacity and station masterplan

Our (MRUG and TransWilts) purposes
- to gather data for ongoing planning
- to inform customers about the CRP and its activities
- to distribute new timetables
- to help inform and involve our volunteer team in an enjoyable and useful task
- to gather 3 days of data rather than just one!
- to observe passenger interaction with the station and have an excuse to do so!

General

Massively good job done by all our volunteer team; trains ran "normally" which basically means all trains scheduled on Thursday and Saturday, with a few minutes delay here and there. 2 out of 13 cancelled on Sunday due to lack of crew, and 2 others said to be replaced by a bus by National Rail helplines, but turned up as trains. Not sure how many people that put off travelling!

Passengers for the most part delighted to fill in survey forms; return rate will be around 85% to 90% - hard to be exact as surveys were filled in by the lead in each group, and the "group size" box just asked for a range.

Passengers who could / did not fill in forms were mainly due to language barrier - Lithuanian, Polish, Hungarian and Chinese were the ones I spoke with and I did make brief notes on survey cards with what I could learn from them. They are significant early morning traffic. Answers sensible - one exception being the Martian (rather than male or female) who wants to be able to take giraffes on the train.

As previously experienced, "once only" travellers reluctant to help until explained to them that they represent other "once only" travellers, then very happy to help.

Care taken on handing out questionnaires not to say anything to influence replies; our most experienced team members on that role to ensure consistency, with others riding trains, counting, collecting forms that hadn't been completed at the station, passing out timetables, etc.

Weather – dry to start on Thursday then windy and wet. On Saturday, we had storm "Brian" passing through; bad enough for speed restrictions in South Wales although all of our trains ran more or less correctly. Sunday – Blustery

Thursday was the first day of half term, and train crew and regulars noted that services were quieter than normal. On Saturday, Swindon Town played at home; a noticeable number of fans use the train. On Sunday, trains over a wide area were running (no direct engineering changes) but there was evidence of some traffic diverted via our line because of Berks and Hants, and Basingstoke, works.

Passenger behaviours at station

a) Many people arrive at the station and look at the notice board outside for train time details. They see Melksham on the map, but can't make head or tail of the timetable panels. That's because Melksham's trains are NOT on that timetable - they're on the one that's on the platform only. Nothing to tell people that unless a volunteer helps.

b) Large number of smokers - wait outside the gate and then rush in get the train; some will sneak a smoke on the platform

c) Disabled parking space used by many people as a drop off / pick up space - didn't see blue badges in their cars though.

d) Coin slot in TVM is too tempting, as is the note slot. The TVM only takes cards (says so in the text a long way above the payment points)

e) Heavy use of cycle shelter as a waiting room in inclement weather; it's better protected than the "proper" shelter against hard blowing westerlies with rain!

f) Some traffic in people picking up tickets ahead of time, and people having their tyres changed next door often wander to have a look

g) Special note taken of car parking.

- 2 vehicles overnight Wednesday->Thursday and 2 overnight Saturday->Sunday
- Most parking all day. 15/20 (spaces in main park), 2/2 (in front of main park) and 5/6 (at Station) occupied on Thursday. Virtually clears at 18:05
- 10/20 (spaces in main park), 2/2 (in front of main park) and 3/6 (at Station) occupied on Saturday
- 5/20 (spaces in main park), 2/2 (in front of main park) and 3/6 (at Station) occupied on Sunday
- Some Station parkers struggled to get into remaining space / when chatted with had been unaware of extra (unsigned) spaces just up the road
- Suspect 2 parkers on Thursday were working at the care home on Bath Road and not rail users
- Several cars picked up away from train times; people headed out by train, but then back to Melksham by other means?
- Car park in use for other purposes / groups of younger people and sportier cars in the evening
- Lots of drop off and pick up traffic (surveys will give numbers of people); cars parking "informally" where they can. Also using disable space without blue badge for this

Station notes

Several of our team took the opportunity to take a critical look at Melksham Station with a particular view to short term quick / easy fixable items. We appreciate that the platform will be extended in January (is that still on track?)

a) MKM03 - needs to make it clear that cash payment for tickets may be made on the train

b) MKM04/MKM05 - Should display a timetable that includes Melksham and not a map with Melksham and the services on other lines. At the VERY least a panel sending people onto the platform if they want to find out Melksham departure times!

c) There should be directions to the alternative (now main) rail car park - ideally signage at the entrance of that car park to say what it is, not just signage inside to tell people that they're in the right place once they have found it!

d) The help point display is only working half the time. Needs to be 98% or better; it's so bad that people come up and just roll their eyes. Put it another

way - when it's working, we have a perfectly good live arrival and departure indicator at the station, and yet this facility was the top of what people want.
It's so bad it's not fulfilling its purpose.

e) MKM10 - Can the engineering poster please display information at least 8 days ahead? We have some regular journeys made every week, and people travelling on one weekend want to look up what's happening on the next weekend. Sometimes the poster is completely out of date; at the time of our checking it had less than a week to go, but contained a great deal of historic data!

f) The "Melksham" station names are hidden from view of the centre of a train at the platform, by the shelter and notice boards that were later installed (and are much used; installation was a correct decision for those extras

g) The TVM ...

1. Hard to see screen in the afternoon

2. Coin and bank note slots not appropriate. My coin slot cover removed / once again people putting in coins and losing their money

3. Blank on front display really should be a short cut to CHIPPENHAM tickets. It's been stated this isn't a top journey; it probably is a top journey, just that people don't always pay.

4. Says advanced and tickets from other stations "cannot be obtained" and sends passengers to other stations. But they CAN be obtained here if you order online - much better than a trip to Chippenham

5. Front menu offers off peak to London, not super off on Saturday and Sunday. Lower cost ticket hidden behind menus, clear information about which ticket is valid on which trains in both directions is lacking

h) "Do not alight here" signs to the north are faded to being unreadable

i) "Do not pass this point" sign is off the end of the platform slope not at the top of it

j) No yellow line to stand behind

k) No tannoy system of announcements

l) Old Bicycle lockers are rusting and now have jagged corners that could catch someone

m) No buses at station bus stop

n) Disabled space not clearly enough marked to say it IS a disabled space.

See "quick wins" for some suggested easy fixes ; not suggesting everything can / should be done at once!

Volunteer actions / comment

"A1" rated ... though we can always learn and look to be A* next time ;-)

a) People arriving at the station should be allowed to concentrate on buying their ticket from the TVM before being encouraged to complete the survey

(single case failure)

b) I need to make it clearer to volunteers on the train that leaflets supplied are for distribution to passengers on train (a couple of missed opportunities)

c) More visible ID could help; should change the ID cards into badges on lanyards.

d) Volunteers did a professional job with only a short briefing; worthy of the ACoRP suggested hourly rate in evaluating what they are worth.

e) Just under 80 hours of time put in by volunteer help - made that difference and data gathered has already helped confirm bus requests

Survey form notes and passenger form behaviour

a) PTO not spotted by many

b) Unclear how to fill in "return train" for outgoing passengers on their RETURN leg from Melksham

c) Although question asked about today's use of STATION many people wrote in SERVICE requests

d) Form was for multiple people so we have probably only gathered age / gender of lead

e) Technical terms not understood - e.g. "better pedestrian access" not ticked and yet wrote in "open route to McDonald's"

f) At least six departing groups (total 17 individuals) unable to complete due to minimal understanding of English

Quick wins (see station audit above)

Between them, this lot makes a good story

l, j, i, h should all be fixed in January when the platform is lengthened

a, b and e are items that the poster team in Exeter, together with the local station manager's team, can deal with

c should be a simple signage issue

d is said to be being fixed by an upgrade by the "end of October" - so that's in the next week, right??

g needs a software person to put in changes for g4 and g5 (some suspect 5 not done because it will reduce income)

g3 - Not sure who looks after the notices on the TV machine?

g2 - why was blanking removed from coin slot? Could easily be restored

m - being worked on with Wiltshire Council - should bring more passengers

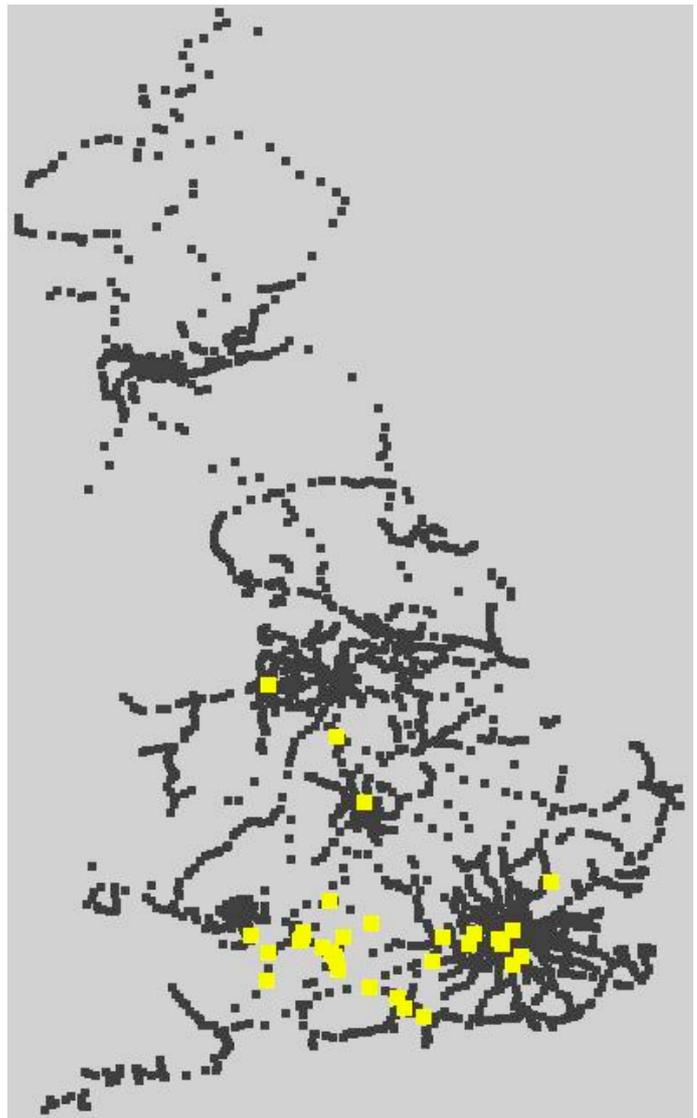
Data to be passed to Wiltshire Council / WS Akins for entry; will be returned to us in spread sheet form.

See Also – Survey Preliminary Results – a brief look at some data gathered to inform bus tendering process that's going on this week.

GE / 20171025 V0.9 01225 708225 grahamellis@transwilts.org

Destinations FROM
Melksham over 3 days
surveyed.

*Note this is a winter graphic
and that the weather was
not good for day trips!*



Train counts / subject to verification

Thursday 19th

	Melksham at	train from	on	off	in	out
WTT	0638	Gloucester	6	0	11(c)	17
WTT	0719	Westbury	20	4	43	59
WTT	0748	Westbury	30	11	44(c)	63
WTT	0915	Swindon	2	2	17	18
WTT	1003	Westbury	13	1	22(c)	34
WTT	1113	Swindon	5	5	10	10
WTT	1202	Westbury	2	1	21(c)	22
WTT	1235	Westbury	4	0	6(c)	10
WTT	1313	Swindon	0	3	10	9
WTT	1346	Swindon	1	6	10(c)	5
WTT	1429	Frome	6	4	17	18
WTT	1539	Swindon	6	14	53	49
WTT	1636	Westbury	17	5	18	27
WTT	1803	Swindon	7	26	94	73(c)
WTT	1847	Westbury	7	5	15	13
WTT	1914	Cheltenham Spa	2	11	37(e)	28(e)
WTT	1946	Westbury	2	1	15(e)	16(e)
WTT	2032	Swindon	4	3	14(e)	15(e)

Saturday, 21st

	Melksham at	train from	on	off	in	out
WTT	0747	Westbury	11	1	11	22
WTT	0837	Westbury	16	4	26	36
WTT	0902	Swindon	10	1	23	31
WTT	0955	Westbury	26	3	29	47
VAR	1107	Swindon	11	9	14	14
WTT	1152	Westbury	23	5	30	48
VAR	1302	Swindon	15	4	19	17
VAR	1347	Westbury	7	3(e)	20(e)	24
VAR	1507	Swindon	3	11	33	25(c)
VAR	1522	Westbury	3	1	23(c)	25
WTT	1548	Swindon	3	5	23	20
WTT	1648	Westbury	1	9	19	11
WTT	1802	Swindon	4	17	66	45
VAR	1847	Westbury	2	4	12	10
VAR	2007	Swindon	5	6	20	19
WTT	2134	Cheltenham Spa	1	3	17(c)	15

Sunday 22nd

	Melksham at	train from	on	off	in	out
WTT	0915	Westbury	9	0	7(c)	16
WTT	0948	Chippenham	6	1	7	12
WTT	1044	Westbury	15	5	19	30
WTT	1154	Swindon	1	3	16	15
WTT	1244	Westbury	6	7	32	31(c)
VAR	1405	Swindon	10	5	76	58
WTT	1449	Westbury	3	6	42	45
WTT	1554	Swindon	8	3	35	30
WTT	1634	Westbury	5	5	60	60
WTT	1744	Swindon	16	12	41	45(c)
WTT	1854	Westbury	Train cancelled - "await next"			
WTT	1956	Westbury	0	2	53(c)	51
WTT	2019	Swindon	Train cancelled - 3 arrived by taxi at 21:05			