

48 Spa Road, Melksham, SN12 7NY



info@melkshamchamber.org.uk

26th May 2014

Dear Sir,

On behalf of the Melksham Chamber of Commerce and Industry in response to your consultation on the Great Western Specification.

At a meeting of the Chamber on 20th May, it was resolved to respond as follows:

The Chamber wishes to support the continuing strong growth of passenger traffic of the Swindon - Westbury rail service with the economic and social benefits that is bringing to all the towns it serves, their businesses, residents and visitors.

The town of Melksham has benefitted in the last six months from an improved train service, which is making a significant positive difference for businesses, commuters and residents. In addition to the previous service of 2 trains each way per day, a single carriage train has been deployed to make 6 round trips per day. This results in a service every two hours filled in by the existing train to provide an hourly peak service to / from Swindon. As well as serving Melksham, these trains now provide a much more useful service between Westbury and Trowbridge (our county town) and Chippenham and Swindon (the largest employment base in the area). Passenger numbers on the Trowbridge to Chippenham section have risen from around 55 per day to around 370 per day, with many being new journeys or transfer from private car. If traffic continues at this level, the second year forecasts will have been exceeded within the first year.

Specific answers to your questions:

1. **In answer to question 7.** Services between Westbury and Swindon should not drop below the current level. This is two-hourly with additional commuter services making the service hourly at peak times. It is not as stated (simply "two-hourly") on page 31 of the consultation document. Service currently start before 06:45 on Monday to Friday, 07:45 on Saturday and 08:45 on Sunday and end after 20:45 on all days and these times should be minimum hours of operation all year.

2. **In answer to question 12.** The success of the new service on the Westbury to Swindon line is due in part to the activities of the TransWilts Community Rail Partnership (a member of the ACoRP, with train operator, local council and community working together). Please include the TransWilts Community Rail Partnership and the train service on the line as an officially designated service and

partnership as you do with the other active partnerships in the region - Devon & Cornwall, Severnside, Heart of Wessex.

3. In further answer to question 7 and to question 18. When local trains are replaced with IEP on the Swindon to Gloucester line during the next franchise period, the through trains between Westbury and Gloucester via that route should continue to run between Westbury and Swindon, with the train used to also provide additional return services. Trains should continue south from Westbury to Salisbury (or perhaps with linkage to existing services to Southampton or Romsey), replacing the various irregular short route trains there with a consistent service. This will make more efficient use of trains, removing or reducing long layovers at Westbury, trains parked up for 75 minutes in every 120 at Swindon, and 45 minutes in every 60 at Salisbury. The net result will be a consistent half-hourly service south of Westbury (in combination with Cardiff - Portsmouth services), and hourly north of Westbury, with a net reduction of 1 train diagram.

4. In answer to question 8 and to question 13. All trains on the Swindon - Westbury - Salisbury service should call at all stations on the line. Should additional stations be opened on the line during the currency of the franchise, TransWilts trains should call there too. Good reliable connections (especially at Westbury to Taunton and the West of England, where there are significant waits if a connection misses) should take priority over saving a few minutes on the journey time, with trains scheduled to take a little longer to ensure reliability.

A stakeholder report on the current TransWilts services, including a review of newly generated traffic since service the service was increased to the current level in December 2013 at

http://www.twcrp.org.uk/may2014_stakeholder.pdf

Technical comment on the importance of the full current service may be found at <http://melksh.am/4278>

Data on recent (may 2014) passenger counts may be found at <http://twcrp.info/m154931>

Data on uptake of usage of service changes for 2014, and marketing feedback at <http://twcrp.info/m152974>

Further Technical data backing up the case for these inputs has been assessed by member of the Community Rail Partnership, and will be included in a submission from the partnership or its members.

Please address any questions to the secretary or president, who represent the Chamber of Commerce on the TransWiltsCommunity Rail Partnership and will be happy to clarify / discuss / answer further.

Colin Harrison – Chair. Graham Ellis – President. Phil McMullen – Secretary