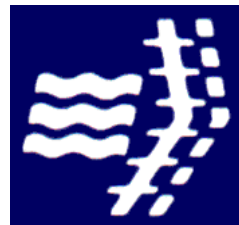


MARLOW - MAIDENHEAD PASSENGERS' ASSOCIATION

Newsletter 187 August 2021

Newsletter Editor Robert Latham *Email: newsletter@mmpa.org.uk*



2021 Committee Report & Autumn newsletter

Nigel Hunt. We learned recently of the passing of our former Chairman. Nigel was a tower of strength and transport knowledge and will be greatly missed.

It is nearly eighteen months since our 2020 AGM had to be cancelled at short notice owing to the restrictions introduced by the government in response to the Coronavirus pandemic. Your committee invited members to vote on-line on the usual business resolutions, relating to approval of minutes, the financial account and committee membership and responsibilities, which had been scheduled: nineteen members unanimously voted in favour of all of them.

The committee held monthly meetings on Zoom between April 2020 and June 2021, resuming face to face in July. Unsurprisingly, with the much reduced level of passenger rail traffic, our activities have been seriously curtailed, not least because the advanced age of committee members has necessitated care in contacting outside parties. Taking a station by station approach we can, however, report as follows:

High Wycombe. Our greatest success has been brow-beating NetworkRail into installing a repeater signal on platform 1 after many years of trying. Hitherto it could take nine minutes to make one's way on foot from the southbound platform 3 to access the southbound stopping service. This has now been reduced to a still lengthy six minutes. Nigel Phillips, who is vice-chairman of the Chiltern Railways Passenger Board, must take much credit for this.

Bourne End. The frustrating wait for NetworkRail and GWR to agree the specification for direct access for trains from platform 2 to the Marlow branch through the installation of a new chord continues: this would allow two trains per hour from Marlow to Maidenhead without a change at Bourne End. It is now six years since it was first mooted and the delay has resulted in the promised funding from Local Development agencies being withdrawn. With the expected replacement of the existing Turbo class 165 trains by re-engineered ex Thameslink class 769's (which has required various upgrade works to stations) we look forward to an update from

GWR at our AGM on the prospects for this project.

With the demolition of the former cafe to the south of the running lines and the creation of a small car park we have pressed NetworkRail to liaise with Buckinghamshire Council to instead create a pull-in area for local buses, which start and finish their journeys at the station, and which at present cause significant traffic disruption in busy times.

NetworkRail have failed to rectify long-standing defects at the station, notably a leaking canopy which leads to the ticket office being flooded in heavy rain, puddling on the platform opposite train doors and loose paving stones. They have recently surveyed the waiting room with a view to refurbishment, but they did so two years ago and nothing resulted.

Marlow. We have still been unable to recruit a volunteer to keep an eye on the station. However, occasional visits by committee members have not brought up any major issues.

Cookham. The siting of poster timetables in the ticket office, which has only limited opening hours, rather than on the platform where they would be always visible has been raised with GWR.

A planning application to build a block of twelve flats in Station Court adjacent to the running line was rejected by RBWM councillors although recommended by officers.

Furze Platt. We were advised that GWR intended to install a card-only ticket machine, but this has not yet happened. A new wheelchair ramp has been provided, presumably in advance of the introduction of new trains.

Maidenhead The Station forecourt is undergoing major remodelling to the layout. This removes long term car parking except for four spaces for disabled badge holders. Otherwise only a few short term spaces will be available plus taxi rank and taxi waiting spaces. A bus pull in is included in the work, which should be completed shortly.

We have drawn NetworkRail's attention to the dreadful state of the listed Brunel bridge, which has graffiti, foliage and leaking down pipes in clear sight. NetworkRail have, in the past, reacted promptly to similar reports but this time no action has been taken so far.

Taplow. The station is now fully branded TfL, with

London Transport type purple station names. Works have continued all year to install a new ticket office on the north side and a gateline on both north and south sides. We have expressed our disbelief that the enormous expenditure on a relatively lightly used station, including lifts, is economically justifiable.

After the installation of gatelines it is still not clear whether it will be possible for pedestrians to use the railway overbridge when the road under the tracks is flooded, as frequently happens after heavy rain, or whether a legal right of way exists. The pre-existing flower beds have been done away with and replaced by pots, already subject to breakages. We drew the attention of NetworkRail to foliage which was blocking the footpath on Approach Road and this has now been cleared.

Other matters.

Membership. We started the last year with 107 individual and 7 corporate members. Perhaps not surprisingly at the time of writing the former have declined to 72. On social media we have 781 Twitter followers and on Facebook 274 follows and 263 likes.

Finances. Members can see from the account included with this mailing that these remain healthy. Our usual main item of expenditure is room hire for committee and annual general meetings, which did not take place.

Paper timetables. GWR have not issued these for some time and it is not clear that they will resume doing so. Given the widespread availability of on-line tables the committee has decided to cease distributing these, if they do become available in the future, unless a member specifically requests them.

Outside meetings. These have been almost exclusively held virtually over the past eighteen months and have included RailFuture, GWR timetable (Local Forum) and CRPB meetings.

Talk on the Wycombe Railway. We had hoped to hear John Gurney’s excellent talk in May 2020 but it was inevitably cancelled. Bourne End Community Association plans to host it on 17 March next year. Nearer the time precise details will be advised to members.

Track renewal. Network Rail replaced all the track between Bourne End and Marlow in November and upgraded several crossings, notably that at Spadeoak Reach. The track between Cookham and Bourne End, which would benefit from a similar effort, had to be speed limited to 10mph during a recent heat wave.

The Future of MMPA

Your committee has faced up to the sad fact that our membership has steadily declined over recent years. Despite active efforts to recruit a new generation of supporters, involving leafleting at branch line stations and local businesses, response has been virtually nil. There comes a time when any organization must address its future prospects and relevance. This was indeed the situation with the Taplow Rail User Group a few years ago, and led to MMPA absorbing their remaining members and assets. As things stand all your committee members are well above three score years and ten in age and with one, sadly brief, exception no-one of a younger cohort has offered their services. Unless this situation can be changed then we shall have to face facts and consider either winding the Association up or, perhaps, becoming on-line only. If nothing changes then a resolution to this effect will be discussed at our 2022 AGM.

Membership matters.

If you are not currently a member of the Association (or a lapsed member) but use or are affected by transport issues in the area we invite you to join us. Membership taken out at or before the AGM will be valid until March 31 2023.

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TRAVEL INFORMATION

Arriva Buses Beds & Bucks	01622 697000	0900-1700 Mon-Fri
Chiltern Railways	03456 005165	0830-1730 Mon-Fri
Carousel Buses	01494 533436	
Courtney Buses	01344 482200	
First Berkshire & Thames Valley Buses	01753 524144	
National Rail Enquiries	03457 484950	24 hours
Traveline (premium rate)	0871 200 2233	0800-2000 daily
Traveline London	0343 222 1234	24 hours
Transport for London & MTR Crossrail	0343 222 1234	24 hours
BBC Radio Berkshire Travel	01189 311333	
Car Parking (APCOA)	01249 444538	

Also see our web site www.mmpa.org.uk for links.

Contact MMPA

If you have any issues or comments regarding public transport in the area that you would like to raise please use the *Contact Us* links on the MMPA website www.mmpa.org.uk.

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