TransWilts Connecting Wiltshire's Communities

incorporating TransWilts Community Rail Partnership

NEWSLETTER FIFTEEN – APRIL 2018

Pewsey gets a voice

The TransWilts Community Rail Partnership has lent its expertise to help set up a Rail Users Group for the Pewsey Vale area. A well attended meeting on the 6th April revealed a host of issues rail passengers are facing in the area.

The extension of the electrification scheme from Reading to Newbury means there will be no trains through Pewsey for around 50 days at various points throught this year. Among the observations after the first week of disruption was the lack of replacement buses for people heading to Bedwyn and Newbury with the emphasis being on providing links to Swindon for trains to London.

GWR were represented at the meeting and are looking at the comments raised with answers and explanations due to be provided at the second meeting. This will be on the 11th May at the Bouverie Hall in Pewsey starting at 7pm.

TransWilts AGM

The annual general meeting of the TransWilts CIC wil be held at the Bethesda Baptist Church in Gloucester Road Trowbridge on Saturday 28th April. A pre-meeting to register voting members at 10.30am will be followed by a presentation on our current progress – to which non members are welcome – starting at 11am.

TransWilts app appeal spreads

Following the success of the free TransWIlts smartphone app the concept has been taken up by two other Community Rail partnerships.

Severnside based in the Bristol area have launched a customised app for their area and the Devon & Cornwall Rail Partnership have brought one out for the Devon Metro area.

The apps are localised for their intended area allowing users to easily find their local station page for details of services due to call there in the next few hours. Selected main stations outside the area are also available.

The free apps can be downloaded from the usual app stores for both Apple and Android phones.

Snow woes

The two bouts of snow in March caused widespread disruption to the railway network in Wiltshire and in particular the TransWilts route.

At times of extremely bad weather Network Rail adopt what they call their Key Route Strategy. Amongst other things this involves reducing the number of times sets of points at remote locations are moved. As snow builds up these are likely to fail with the white stuff getting compacted between the moving parts of the points preventing the signalling system from detecting whether they are safely set for one route or the other. To avoid this the points at both Thingley and Bradford Junctions were left set for the main line preventing trains from using the single line stretch through Melksham.

Melksham platform extension delayed – but still happening

Network Rail's plans to extend the platform at Melksham to allow longer trains to be accomodated have been delayed but are still very much on the agenda. It is now hoped the work will be completed by mid-summer.

Until then it means some two and three car trains calling at the station are only able to use certain doors for passengers to board or leave the service. Please listen to annoucements or ask the guard if you are not sure. The various types of trains in use on the TransWilts use different methods and require you to be in different parts of the train.

TransWilts CIC AGM - Bethesda Baptist Church,Gloucester Road Trowbridge on Saturday 28th April from 10.30am

More buses for West Wiltshire

First Bus have registered increased services from Bath into Wiltshire and Mendip from the end of April. Route D3 from Bath to Melksham (Bowerhill) will run every 30 minutes during the day and about every two hours during the evenings and on Sundays. Route D2 from Bath to Frome (Sainsbury's) will run to a similar pattern, and route D1 from Bath via Bradford-on-Avon and to Trowbridge, Westbury and Warminster with some services continuing to Salisbury. These services replace the old routes 265, 267, 271 and 272 with some route modifications. Evening and Sunday services from Bath to Devizes and Urchfont, and to Corsham and Chippenham, continue to run (as part of route D3, and as route X31, shared with Faresaver who provide the weekday daytime service to Chippenham).

Melksham and Frome, with additional Faresaver journeys, will now have three or four buses an hour to Bath where it was just one service a few years ago. And that may tip the balance for many people from taking the car every time to using the bus - a modal shift which will be needed if commercial services are to succeed at this level. Expect to see a rebranding over coming weeks of the "D Series" of routes and significant marketing - with TransWilts backing up this (as any other) public transport initiative that helps people on their journeys. We wish all operators on these corridors a long, full, and prosperous service.

Did you know? All First (Bath) buses including those on the routes that become D1 to D3 can now take contactless payment?

Disruption dates for your diary

As electrification continues between Reading and Newbury there will be disruption at regular intervals for services between Swindon and Westbury as the single line is used for diverted long distance trains. At those times TransWilts trains between the end of the morning peak and the start of the evening peak will be replaced by buses. Tickets, including season tickets, marked via Melksham will also be valid via Bath Spa. The next few dates are

Monday 23 to Thursday 26 April
Monday 14 to Thursday 17 May
Saturday 2 to Thursday 7 June

Chippenham Rail Users Group moves forward
Having been launched last autumn a small group are working on taking the formation of a group to the next stage.

The next meeting is set for July 12th at a venue to be announced. Among the items set to be discussed are.

Following the productive discussions at the last meeting, the next Agenda will include

1. Update on the Chippenham Station - new gatelines' performance

2. Progress on an information/poster site at the station

3. Update on Electrification and wider rail issues in Wiltshire

4. Update on the Public Realm projects around the station including northern lift and access.

5. Progress on the Live Departure information to be displayed in the Town Hall information area.

More information will be available on at www.transwilts.org when available.

Bank holiday railway engineering work
If you are travelling towards London during the early May Bank Holiday weekend there will be changes as work in preparation for the introduction of Crossrail continues. Some trains will terminate and start back from Reading while a few will be diverted and run into London Marylebone.

Meanwhile over the bank holiday at the end of May work will be going on along the Cotswold routes. There will be significant changes to services to Worcester and Hereford while Swindon to Gloucester services will be replaced by buses over part of the weekend.

Reliabity on TransWilts still in the spotlight
Since the turn of the year there has been a slow improvement in the reliability of the service between Swindon and Westbury. The snow (see page two) and two instances of flooding near Chippenham did cause problems. Shortage of crew, largely caused by training needed to operate the different type of trains, also led to a number of cancellations at weekends and holiday periods but recent weekends have been better and indeed on the 14th/15th April a full service ran on both days for the first time in a while.

The TransWilts are in regular dialogue with GWR over reliabilty. If a train is cancelled and the next is not for more than an hour, as it will invariably be if you are at Melksham, GWR are keen you alert staff via the helpoint about the number waiting so a suitable number of taxis are despatched as quickly as possible to get you on your way.