TransWilts — Connecting Wiltshire's Communities

incorporating TransWilts Community Rail Partnership

NEWSLETTER THIRTY NINE – APRIL 2022

March fare rises announced

The annual fares rise took effect from 1st March. The average increase nationwide is 3.8%, Some sample local fares are shown below. New prices in red.

Anytime return fares		
Westbury to London (any route)	£214.20	£222.40
Chippenham to London	£187.80	£195.00
Anytime day return fares		
Melksham to Swindon	£ 10.80	£ 11.20
Trowbridge to Chippenham (via Melksham)	£ 7.10	£ 7.40
Super Off Peak return fares		
Westbury to London (any route)	£ 64.70	£ 67.20
Chippenham to London	£ 57.40	£ 59.60
Off Peak day return fares		
Melksham to Swindon	£ 8.00	£ 8.30
Trowbridge to Chippenham (via Melksham)	£ 6.10	£ 6.30

Having a Spring clean?

With the warmer weather your thoughts may be turning to having a declutter at home. If you want to make some money from things you no longer want you could take advantage of the new monthly car boot sale at the Melksham Hub. Held on the first Saturday of each month it is an ideal way to get rid of your items and perhaps enjoy a breakfast at the café too!

Litter picks rescheduled

February's storms led to the postponement of the planned clear up operations at both Trowbridge and Chippenham stations. These have now been rescheduled. Volunteers are invited to help at Trowbridge on Monday 11th April and at Chippenham on Maundy Thursday 14th April.

If you are interested please email Community Rail Officer Sophie Martin at sophie@transwilts.org for details of how to take part at either event.

Previous events have seen bags of rubbish collected and made a real difference to the station environment.

2022 AGM

The TransWilts Annual General meeting will be held at Trowbridge Civic Centre in St Stephens Place on Monday 23rd May starting at 10am. As well as planned speakers from GWR, Community Rail Network, Wiltshire Council, and Knorr-Bremse there will be a chance for members to ask questions.

Members can register for free tickets at https://tinyurl.com/mr2vb3wk

The meeting will close at 2.45pm.

Community Rail Week

The annual week to highlight the work done by Community Rail Partnerships will take place between 23rd and 29th May. Co-ordinated by the Community Rail Network the week aims to promote travel by train through a series of events both on and off railway stations.

TransWilts will be staging an event in Swindon on 25th May. More details will be announced shortly.

Forthcoming Engineering Work

The first train on Easter Sunday 17th April from Warminster to Swindon will be replaced by a bus running around half an hour earlier to maintain the usual arrival time in Swindon. On the weekend of the 7th and 8th of May the line from Bath to Trowbridge will be closed leading to some minor timetable changes to TransWilts services but these will still run via Trowbridge two and from Westbury.

On Sunday 15th May the first two trains of the day will be replaced by buses running to and from Westbury and Chippenham.

Further afield buses will replace trains south of Salisbury to Southampton on Saturday and Sunday the 23rd and 24th of April.

As usual there may be other late changes so if you are travelling weekends it is best to check journey planners just before you leave.

Passenger numbers still to recover

Figures from GWR show 12,574 people travelled on TransWilts services in February. This is based on ticket sales so excludes those who were travelling on Rover Tickets or other non specific Swindon to Westbury tickets. It represents a fall of a third on those travelling in February 2019. Overall in 2021 the 127,403 travelling represented less than half those who used the trains in 2019.

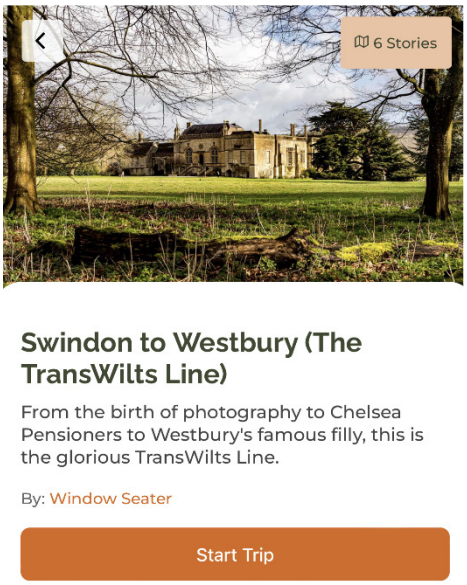
Giving young people a Platform

TransWilts has teamed up with three other Community Rail Partnerships to encourage schools to use the railway. Funding from Great Western Railway, Cross Country and the Community Rail Network allows Platform to offer rail familiarisation days to school groups who may never have travelled by train before.

Members of the group are also available to go into classrooms and explain about timetables, ticketing and what to expect on board.

You can find more details on the project's website - https://platformrail.org/

At seat guide to the TransWilts



As part of an initiative partly funded by the Community Rail Network the TransWilts line is one of those newly featured on an updated Window Seater app. Using a smartphone's GPS capability it provides travellers with an audio commentary based on their current location.

The guide provides a history of the places you are passing and ideas of things you can visit. The free app, which includes a number of other lines in the area, can be downloaded for both iPhones and android handsets.

It is hoped to add further points of interest and other routes in the future.

Helping to find your way in Melksham

New signage is coming to Melksham station to help you find your way around the town.

In time this will be extended to the town to both highlight points of interest in the area as well as lead the way back to the station.

Reliability

A rise in staff absences at both Westbury and Gloucester depots has continued to affect the reliability of TransWilts services over the last two months. We understand, from talking to GWR, that the situation is improving although further short notice disruption is still possible.

Services were also affected by long distance trains being diverted along the single line because of problems on the route through Newbury and one occasion a round trip was cancelled because the train needed for the service was accidentally trapped in the sidings by a freight train.

For those who use the early trains on weekdays there is good news; the first round trip, suspended in January due to staff shortages, will be re-instated on the 11th April.

GWR wins accreditation under Safeguarding on Rail scheme

GWR has become the first train operating company to be accredited under the Department for Transport's scheme to help vulnerable children and adults on or near the railway.

Staff have been trained to look out for those who are at risk and be "professionally curious" if they see someone who may need extra assistance. According to British Transport Police in the last year GWR staff have reported an average of one person a day who might be vulnerable - more than two thirds of all the cases that get referred to them.

At a ceremony at Paddington Rail Minister Wendy Morton presented GWR MD Mark Hopwood with a certificate to note the occasion and unveiled a vinyl on train 802 102 to highlight the work GWR does with the Railway Children charity.