TransWilts

Connecting Wiltshire's Communities

incorporating TransWilts Community Rail Partnership

NEWSLETTER FORTY THREE – DECEMBER 2022

TransWilts Winners!

Platform – the joint education project set up by TransWilts, Severnside, Gloucestershire and Worcestershire Community Rail Partnerships – came up trumps at the National Community Rail awards in October.

At a gala evening in Manchester the four organisations were presented with the top award in the Influencing Positive Change and Sustainability category.

Platform offers schools and other educational establishments free support to encourage young people to use the train. Bespoke sessions can be arranged in school and followed up with practical sessions at stations and on board trains.

Everyone at TransWilts offers you the compliments

of the season

and all good wishes for 2023.

Corsham Station takes another step forward

Plans for a new station in Corsham have progressed after Wiltshire Council, in partnership with Corsham Town Council, Michelle Donelan MP, TransWilts and other local stakeholders, have submitted a Strategic Outline Business Case to the Department for Transport.

The document looks to address the key problems, challenges and opportunities identified by the station project, including:

- To improve transport connectivity to key destinations and ensure the local community has better access to jobs, services and opportunities.
- To support the economic growth of Corsham and the wider region.
- To increase the share of journeys taken by public transport and reduce reliance on cars.
- To support Wiltshire Council to reach its 2030 net zero ambition.
- To deliver transport that is affordable and financially sustainable.

Preliminary assessments show that site of the original Corsham Station site is the best location for the new station, and four train service options have been considered: an hourly service between Bristol and Oxford; an hourly service between Bristol and London Paddington; a combination of the first two options; and two services per hour between Bristol and Oxford.

Strike Action still hampers TransWilts Services

Industrial action by trade unions across the rail industry continue to affect services between Swindon and Westbury to vary degrees. On some strike days there has been no service while in others trains at the start and the end of the day have been cancelled. These changes tend not to appear in the overall line statistics are they are removed ahead of the day and therefore not regarded as cancellations.

Aside from that the latest figures from GWR show cancellations running at around 3.3%, slightly above the 3% benchmark but down from the nearly 7% recorded two months ago. Meanwhile 71.5% of services ran within three minutes of the timetable which is on a par with the target. TW services are not prone to extensive late running as any service which is significantly late is liable to be cancelled if it has not left either Westbury or Swindon. This is to avoid a conflict on the single line through Melksham.

December Timetable sees no change

GWR launches its winter timetable on the 11th December. TransWilts services are unchanged. The timetable runs until 20th May. On Sundays from the beginning of April the 11:41 departure from Swindon will be extended beyond Westbury to Weymouth. Between Christmas and New Year the first round trip on Tuesday 27th December will not run and services will start later on New Year's Day.

New Board member for TransWilts

The TW is pleased to welcome Bill Parks to the Board of Directors. Wiltshire Councillor Bill Parks is the latest recruit to bring their experience to the running of the CIC. He is also a member of Warminster Town Council.

He joins fellow recent recruits Tamara Reay, also of Wiltshire Council, and Alun Crockford who sits on Corsham Town Council.

Engineering Outlook

On the 4th December the first round trip from Westbury will be replaced by a bus to and from Chippenham while Network Rail carrying out track improvement works. Rail connections will be available for those wishing to reach Swindon.

On the 7th and 8th January Swindon station will be closed for most trains. As a result TransWilts services will run to and from Chippenham. Similar arrangements will also apply on two weekend dates in February.

Still rebuilding after the pandemic

The Office of Road and Rail has released its annual round-up of station usage figures for the year to this March. For local stations they show a rise from last year, but not yet back to the levels before lockdown.

	Apr 2019 to Mar 2020	Apr 2020 to Mar 2021	Apr 2021 to Mar 2022
Swindon	3,713,738	651,824	2,048,246
Chippenham	1,937,240	373,482	1,124,226
Melksham	75,292	18,800	52,342
Trowbridge	917,458	252,156	640,376
Westbury	557,756	152,216	438,970

The figures are mainly based on ticket sales with some adjustments made where there are known anomalies.

Meanwhile the latest journey figures from GWR show 17,252 journeys were made on the Swindon to Westbury route in October this year – that is 25% down on pre-virus levels.

Santa is back

Father Christmas will be meeting local children at the Melksham Station Café on the 10th December. Children will be travelling from stations along the TransWilts line to meet him and enjoy a snack with their parents and carers. A group will also be travelling to Melksham the week before for the town's Christmas lights switch on.

GWR Smartcard

GWR has introduced a Bristol area smartcard which covers Chippenham. After registering for a GWR smartcard you can tap-in and tap-out and the system then calculates the best fare along with any other journeys you make on the same day within the smartcard area.

The area covered is from Chippenham and Freshford in the east, Weston-Super-Mare in the south, Severn Beach in the west, and Ashchurch for Tewkesbury in the north. It's also valid for travel on Cross Country and Transport for Wales services within the area.

If you are travelling further afield, even if starting within the area, you must buy a conventional ticket.

Chippenham Milk Platform refurbished

The Friends of Chippenham Station have been pleased to report the old milk platform on the south side by the footbridge has been repaired as it was suffering from tree root and plant damage.