TransWilts — Connecting Wiltshire's Communities

incorporating TransWilts Community Rail Partnership

NEWSLETTER FIFTY EIGHT – JUNE 2025

Three stations tidied for Earth Day

Volunteers have helped TransWilts celebrate Earth Day 2025 by collecting 14 large bags of litter around three local stations.

GWR staff, members of staff from Siemens Mobility and local students helped clear the car parks and surrounding areas at Chippenham, Trowbridge and Swindon stations. Collectively the volunteers gave 11 hours of their time to carry out the spring clean.

It is the latest in a series of volunteer days.

If you are interested in taking part in a future event please contact Sophie Martin sophie@transwilts.org

Council on demand bus service spreads to North Wiltshire

Wiltshire Connect, the on demand bus service provided by Wiltshire Council, has been expanded to include Royal Wootton Basset, Malmesbury and the surrounding areas.

Originally launched in the Pewsey area in 2023, it allows passengers to book a journey by phone or the dedicated app and this is then matched with other requests to draw up the most appropriate route. So far over 100,000 people have been carried.

The newly expanded service covers rural areas like Bradenstoke, Broad Town, Cricklade, Great Somerford, Sutton Benger, Minety, Ashton Keynes, Purton and Hook. The service will also provide new public transport links to the Orbital Shopping Park and the Great Western Hospital in Swindon.

Meanwhile Swindon Bus has revised the 10:40 departure from Marlborough on its number 42 service to Calne (featured in the last newletter) to run 10 minutes earlier so it connects with Faresaver's number 33 to Devizes at Calne Town Hall.

Come and volunteer with TransWilts

Representatives from TransWilts were at the Volunteers' Fair at County Hall in Trowbridge on Monday 12th May to showcase the volunteering opportunities that exist with the organisation.

Throughout the event they met with a number of volunteering groups and families who were looking to make good use of their free time or gain life experiences as part of their education programme.

There are a number of openings available at local stations through TransWilts. At Trowbridge, Chippenham and Swindon there are already existing groups who tend the various planters around the station and would welcome additional help. Meanwhile others tidy the car parks and other areas near all the stations on the TransWilts line between Swindon and Westbury.

Visitors to the fair were also able to find out more about the train trips TransWilts offers to get those who have never used a train, or lack the confidence to do so independently, to experience railway travel – from buying a ticket, to finding their train at the station and being on board.

Anyone interested in finding out more should contact Sophie Martin – sophie@transwilts.org

New signs at Melksham

The programme to allow IETs to stop at Melksham has taken another step forward with the installation of marker boards at the station.

Currently IETs on long distance services have been unable to call at Melksham when they are diverted along the single line because of problems elsewhere. This has led to complaints as the usual local service is withdrawn to provide the capacity for the diverted trains to run.

The "stop boards" have been put in place after the software was updated on the trains which will ensure the correct doors are opened and not those which are not adjacent to the platform.

The final stage will be to run a test train to ensure everything works safely.

June closure for the Severn Tunnel

For 12 days in June the Severn Tunnel between Bristol Parkway and Newport will be closed for trackwork. Between the 9th and 14th June and again the following week (16th to 20th) trains from Swindon to South Wales will be diverted via Gloucester and not call at Bristol Parkway. On Sunday 15th June trains will run to Bristol Parkway with buses providing connections to Newport and Cardiff.

The tunnel will also be closed until around 4pm on Sunday 29th June.

Railway 200 commemorations get underway

Dignitaries gathered in Swindon's Railway Village in April for one of GWR's first events to mark Railway 200.

James "Jim" Hurst was one of GWR's first engine drivers and the first to receive a company pension after he retired to a house in Taunton Street in the village. A blue plaque has now been placed on the building to commemorate his memory.

He started his career on the Liverpool and Manchester railway but moved south after becoming friends with GWR's Daniel Gooch, the company's first Locomotive Superintendent. He worked all over their network, driving trains in South Wales and the South West. He was involved in a number of incidents during his career but was always "rescued" by Gooch who valued his experience.

GWR MD Mark Hopwood, Jim Robbins – leader of Swindon Borough Council, Heidi Alexander – Swindon South MP and Secretary of State for Transport, Tim Bryan – historian and Bogdan Lupu from Network Rail after the unveiling.

The event marked the beginning of a number of events planned by GWR and others to mark 200 years since the first passenger carrying train ran in England.

You can find more details here https://railway200.co.uk/

Summer timetable in force

The summer timetable on GWR came into effect last month. There are some minor changes to timings, so of which affect ongoing connections. Meanwhile on Saturdays the usual through trains will run to Weymouth, it will leave Swindon at 08:44 and get back at 22:00. You can see the full timetable on our website – transwilts.org

Engineering work means the first round trip from Warminster and Westbury on the TransWilts on Sundays 15th June and 27th July will be replaced by buses to and from Chippenham.

Siemens Mobility celebrate start of work on new headquarters

The Rail Minister Lord Peter Hendy led events to mark the start of work on Siemens Mobility's new 100 million pound facility on the outskirts of Chippenham.

The offices, which the company describes as a state of the art innovation hub will provide employment for 800 people. They will be working on developing and producing the next generation of modern signalling and other control systems for railways both home and abroad.

Joining Lord Hendy was the local MP Sarah Gibson and past employees with links to those who have worked for the company from the early part of the last century.

TransWilts chair Paddy Bradley was also there to see the ceremony and find out more about what it means for the area.

Speaking afterwards he said "The ground-breaking event at South Point Business Park in Chippenham was a marvellous statement of support for the area by Siemens Mobility. The company is strongly merged into the Chippenham area and its international reach is a major boost for the local economy. The company's focus on sustainable travel and its major emphasis on technology to improve efficiency and effectiveness are very good aspects of the work of the business. TransWilts is proud to be associated with Siemens Mobility and grateful for its ongoing support for sustainable travel options in the area."

Brimble Hill Bingo

Pupils from Brimble Hill School in North Swindon have been the latest to enjoy Bingo on a Train. The group, with their teachers, travelled from Swindon to Westbury and back. While en route they enjoyed games of bingo with Henry from GWR doing the calling. Everyone was a winner with goodie bags containing fidget toys, seeds and other treats. They also enjoyed drinks and snacks provided by GWR.

None of the children had travelled on a train before and the trip gave them the chance to experience railway travel in a relaxed environment.

Speaking afterwards Kelly Winter from the school was delighted "A million thank yous for today! The children loved it as did the adults… it felt like such a treat. Thank you so much for the thought you put into it and the beautiful prizes for the children… the parents really appreciated it aswell."

Latest Passenger numbers

In March 16,898 passengers made a journey on the TransWilts. That was 7% down on the same month last year and a quarter of a percent down on pre-Covid levels.