TransWilts Connecting Wiltshire's Communities

incorporating TransWilts Community Rail Partnership

NEWSLETTER FIFTY NINE – AUGUST 2025

Chippenham Station forecourt works in final stages

The works to improve the area at the front of Chippenham station are nearing completion.

It was hoped the scheme would have been finished in June but is now on target to be completed by the end of the school summer holidays.

Over the next few weeks the works at the entrance to the bus loop will be finished and the temporary traffic lights well be removed. Once the works within the bus loop and old taxi rank are complete the area will be opened up and the contractor will move back into the short stay car park to complete the kerbing and white lining.

When complete there will be improved provision for the many buses which call at the station, additional disabled parking spaces and bicycle spaces for 200 machines.

Meanwhile work to remove decaying parts of the station roof and canopies have been completed. However Network Rail says a lack of funds means the replacement will not be in place until after the winter.

TransWilts passenger levels virtually back to pre Covid levels

Despite on going reliability issues, passenger numbers are now less than a percentage point of pre pandemic levels.

Swindon - Westbury

18,905	0.5%	-0.06
Journeys	on Last Year	on pre-COVID

Figures released by GWR for June 2025 show 18,905 journeys were made on the Swindon to Westbury route. That is 0.5% up on the same period last year and just 0.06% down on 2019 levels.

The figures are based on ticket sales but do not include rover or ranger tickets such as the Freedom of the South West or Heart of Wessex Day Ranger.

Salisbury station improvements unveiled.

A ceremony has marked the official opening of the new improved forecourt at Salisbury station. The £4.5 million pound scheme has seen the front of the station transformed with better provision for buses, pedestrians and cyclists.

A new bicycle hub encourages people to cycle to the station knowing they can leave their machine securely while travelling onward by train. Improved positioning of bus stops makes it easier to transfer to the Stonehenge tour bus or other local destinations.

Car users have not been forgotten with better pick up and drop off facilities and a new taxi rank.

The opening ceremony was carried out by Baroness Taylor of Stevenage, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and local MP John Glen.

Work is now turning to increasing the capacity of the lower car park with a temporary car park in Fisherton Street being provided while improvements are being carried out.

Be mindful on Swindon's Buses

Swindon's Bus Company is reminding its passengers to be mindful of their fellow travellers when it comes to excessive noise while on board.

Music played without earphones, loud phone calls or noisy conversations can cause considerable anxiety for those with hearing sensitivities, autism, or cognitive impairments.

In an article on its website the company has outlined the problems noise may cause and ways to avoid it.

Director Bill Parks stands down

At the recent board meeting of TransWilts Bill Parks tendered his resignation after nearly three years as a director.

Bill, who represents Warminster North & Rural on Wiltshire Council, feels the demands of his other responsibilities means he cannot devote the time he needs to carry out his TransWilts role effectively.

Paying tribute to his contribution chair Paddy Bradley thanked him for all his work with the CIC, particularly during the period between the retirement of the previous chair and Paddy's appointment.

A replacement for Bill on the board will be announced in due course.

Walking Group marks anniversary

The Wessex Wanderers have been celebrating their 30th anniversary with a gathering at Westbury Station.

The group uses the railways to take participants to a starting point where they either embark on a circular walk or make their way to another station further down the line.

The group is supported by TransWilts, two other community rail partnerships and GWR. GWR's Managing Director, Mark Hopwood, was among those to offer his best wishes on the anniversary saying "I am delighted to write to you on behalf of everyone at GWR to extend my warmest congratulations on Wessex Wanderers reaching its 30th anniversary".

Taking advantage of TransWilts White Horse Meeting Room on Platform 1 at Westbury the group met to celebrate the occasion and enjoy food and refreshments, including a cake supplied by GWR.

More details of the organisation and a list of forthcoming walks can be found at Wessex Wanderer Railway Walks

Westbury White Horse tops Railway 200 poll

An 85 year old painting of a Westbury landmark has come top of a poll to find the best railway themed artwork of the last 200 years.

Eric Ravilious produced his water colour of the Westbury White horse in 1940. His wife Tirzah Garwood then used elements from different artworks to portray the picture as though seen through a third class carriage window.

Called "Train Landscape" it has now been voted the most iconic in a worldwide poll to find the most iconic picture as part of the celebrations to mark the 200th anniversary of the modern railway.

You can read more details here – 'Train Landscape' by Eric Ravilious wins global vote to find the public's favourite UK railway artwork – Railway 200

Engineering summary – August and September

Network Rail will be working on the line from Swindon to Gloucester between the 26th and 30th August. Buses will replace trains to Kemble, Stroud and Stonehouse while trains to Cheltenham Spa will run over an alternative route via Bristol Parkway. More work means Gloucester station will be closed between 27th September and 6th October.

On Sunday 7th September the first round trip on the TransWilts line will be replaced by a bus to and from Chippenham.

On Sundays 14th and 21st September the line between Westbury and Castle Cary will be closed with West of England services diverted via Swindon and Bristol. Passengers for Pewsey will have to use a replacement bus to and from Swindon.

Don’t forget our photography competition

Amateur photographers of all ages and abilities are being urged to take part in our Down the Line Photography Competition.

Whether it’s a striking shot of a modern train or a nostalgic glimpse of vintage railways, we want to see your unique perspective on the rail journey through time. The theme is – Railways – Connecting Communities Past and Present – Celebrating 200 years of the railway.

Participants can submit up to three photographs that showcase the role of rail in our lives – from bustling stations and scenic routes to historical moments and everyday journeys.

Winning entries will be featured in a public exhibition and may appear in TransWilts and The Arts Society publications. Prizes include photography gear, travel passes, and more.

The competition closes at midnight on Friday 31st October 2025.

Submit your entries – here

Looking back and forward with TransWilts

Attendees at July’s Annual Meeting were given an update on the work of TransWilts over the last year and a look ahead to plans for the next 12 months.

280 organisations have worked with TW over the year ranging from local authorities and stakeholders, through to schools and voluntary groups. 54 new volunteers have been recruited and are carrying out work at stations along the line with tasks like litter picking and tending to platform planters.

As well as the photo competition – see above – more volunteers are due to be trained to work safely at stations, a try the train experience to the seaside and litter picks at local stations are planned.

You can also read our annual report via the link on the front page of the website.