TransWilts — Connecting Wiltshire's Communities

incorporating TransWilts Community Rail Partnership

**NEWSLETTER SIXTY THREE – APRIL 2026**

## TransWilts takes silver!

TransWilts is celebrating success at the 2026 Community Rail Awards.

Over 600 people gathered in Derby to mark the achievements of the last year. There were 16 categories covering all areas of Community Rail activity with TransWilts taking the silver award in the Small Projects under £500 section.

Our entry featured last Spring's Bingo train involving children from Brimble Hill School in Swindon.

You can see details of the trip at https://transwilts.org/2025/05/17/brimble-hill-bingo/

**Third new director for TransWilts in 2026**

The TransWilts CIC is delighted to announce the appointment of Swindon based Chris Van Roon as a director.

A long time Civil Servant, Chris has worked for both the Department for Education and the Research Councils. He is also a former Swindon Borough Councillor and has extensive contacts in the area.

His current role sees him using GWR train services on a regular basis and he is keen to bring that experience to his new role.

Chris said: “It is an exciting time for rail as the industry moves back into the public sector and I am keen to use my local knowledge and expertise with TransWilts. I am looking forward to help it further its aims to improve local services as well as making joined up travelling using buses and other forms of sustainable transport.”

He joins other recent recruits Catharine Symington who is championing a new station at Devizes Parkway and Alan Cudlipp who is supporting plans for a station at Corsham.

In welcoming Chris as the latest recruit to the board, chair Paddy Bradley said: “As with our other recent new members, Catharine and Alan, Chris will bring a wealth of skills to our meetings. His background in the Civil Service and local politics will be invaluable to us and I look forward to working with all three of them”.

**Get more out of STEAM**

Visitors to Swindon’s STEAM museum can now get more from their visit with a new digital guide.

The Museum of the Great Western Railway, which celebrated its 25th anniversary last year, is housed in what used to be part of the GWR works, having previously shown smaller exhibits in a building on nearby Faringdon Road.

Spread over a number of halls, the museum tells the story of the GWR and the role it played both locally and nationally. The Bloomburg Connects guide now brings it all to life on your phone – and it is free! Just follow the QR Code

This spring marks 40 years since the works closed and the museum is marking the occasion with a number of events. An exhibition will run until 2027 telling the 143 year history of the works. The museum, a ten minute walk from the Railway Station, is open seven days a week. More details at https://www.steam-museum.org.uk/

**Official opening of Chippenham forecourt improvements**

The £2.3 million transformation of Chippenham station has been officially opened.

The south side forecourt project has created a modern, accessible transport hub while respecting the station's Grade II listed heritage.

A new 200-space enclosed cycle hub monitored by CCTV has been provided alongside expanded capacity for buses creating more bus rail connection opportunities, and a new taxi rank conveniently located near the platform exit. The redesigned pick-up/drop-off area features a widened entrance which removes a traffic pinch point and helps to reduce delays.

At the brief ceremony Ian Thorn, Leader of Wiltshire Council, said: "By working together, we've delivered upgrades that strengthen Wiltshire's transport network and make everyday travel easier for residents, businesses and visitors.

"These improvements reinforce our commitment to sustainable transport and long-term investment in the county. This shows this power of joint working to create real, lasting benefits for all."

Tom Pierpoint, Industry Programme Director for Network Rail and Great Western Railway added: "This transformation creates a station Chippenham can be proud of, providing modern facilities to support the growing community and the local economy. Continuing to invest in the railway, the new cycle hub and improved bus connections support sustainable travel, while enhanced accessibility for all users ensures the station works for everyone it serves.

**Photo Competition winners to be announced**

The judges have spent the last two months pouring over the entries received in our Down the Line photo competition and the winners will be announced shortly.

**Hurrah for Horace**

Long serving director Horace Prickett has been presented with a memento of his time with the TransWilts CIC.

Community Partnership Manager Sophie Martin put together a collection of photos taken by TW and GWR over the years showing his involvement in community rail.

Horace, who stood down in the New Year has been involved in promoting rail travel in Wiltshire over many years. He championed rail during his time as a Wiltshire councillor, but also through his links with local rail user groups and the Community Rail Partnership.

In receiving the framed print Horace commented it would make a fine addition to his front room wall.

**Live rail updates on local buses**

Bus users in Swindon and parts of Wiltshire can now benefit from real time rail information as they travel towards their local station.

Swindon's Buses and Salisbury Reds have upgraded their on board displays to include latest train times on routes which serve Swindon, Pewsey and Salisbury stations.

The information, which is updated in real time, will be interspersed with the usual next stop information. This too has been improved to include the next few stops along the route so people have more time to prepare to get off the bus.

"Many people are opting to travel by bus and train, and it's great that sustainable transport is proving so popular," said Swindon Bus head of communications, Nikki Honer.

"With this in mind, we've added live train time information to all the 'next stop' screens on-board our buses that stop near railway stations. We hope this will make people's journeys easier than ever."

**Direct Oxford trains a step closer**

GWR is waiting to hear from the Office for Rail and Road on whether it can introduce a direct weekday service from Bristol Temple Meads to Oxford via Chippenham and Swindon in May.

This follows a successful trial on Saturdays over the winter months. The new service is planned to run every two hours and cut the journey time from Swindon to Oxford by about ten minutes and remove the need to change at Didcot Parkway.

**Spring engineering work**

The line through Melksham will be closed until 12 noon on Sunday 26th April with replacement buses running between Swindon and Westbury while on Sunday 24th May the first round trip will see a bus running to and from Chippenham.

From Good Friday evening until the end of Easter Sunday trains to and from the West Country will be diverted via Swindon with buses providing a connection to Pewsey. The following two Sundays will also be affected.

During the early May Bank Holiday weekend the lines between Bath Spa and both Chippenham and Westbury will be closed.

Finally the 30th May and 8th June the Severn Tunnel will be closed with bus shuttling between Bristol Parkway and Newport.

For full details check GWR.com and journey planners.

**Direct Saturday TransWilts train to Weymouth returns**

GWR is once again providing a through train from Swindon to Weymouth on Saturdays this summer. As before it will call at Chippenham, Melksham, Trowbridge and Westbury. From the 23rd May it will leave at 08:44 and return at 19:38.

The train will run each week until mid-September.

Check GWR.com for latest fare information.

**Big improvement in reliability.**

The first two months of 2026 have seen a big improvement compared with the tail end of last year in the reliability of TransWilts services. In the first eight weeks of the year there were 25 cancellations and 10 of them were on the first two days of January.

Where trains have been cancelled it has been due to staff or rolling stock issues or the need to divert long distance trains along the single line due to problems elsewhere. It is good to note that where cancellations have occurred road replacement transport has been arranged and been advertised. In addition where long distance trains have displaced the local service they are increasingly making additional calls at TransWilts stations, including – for the first time – in the westbound direction.

It is difficult to make a comparison between the last two months and the equivalent period in past years. In 2025 Westbury was closed for nearly the whole of January and in 2024 there were also some engineering work to skew the figures. However GWR have issued a note of caution. MD Mark Hopwood told a recent meeting of TravelWatch SouthWest that the issue of staff working at weekends had still not been resolved. This is likely to be felt most once we reach the summer holiday season.

**Date for your diary – TransWilts Annual Meeting.**

Our 2026 Annual Meeting will be held on Wednesday 29th July at the Old Town Hall in Trowbridge.

After the formal part of the meeting there will be speakers from GWR and updates on plans for a fourth platform at Westbury, a loop on the Melksham single line and on the campaigns for new stations at Corsham and Devizes Parkway.

The meeting will start at 10.30am. Official invitations will be sent nearer the time.

**Car crashes on to line near Melksham**

Train services through Melksham were cancelled until lunchtime on the 17th March after a car ended up on the line near the site of the former station at Holt.

It was reported the car was being followed by police when it went through the boundary fence and ended up stranded on the rails around 2.30am. An approaching freight train was stopped by signallers before it could collide with the wreckage.

Specialist recovery equipment had to be brought in to clear the line and check for damage to the infrastructure. Throughout the morning trains between Westbury and Swindon were diverted via Bath Spa not calling at Melksham, where replacement road transport was provided.

Trains resumed with the 13:15 from Swindon.

Police say three teenagers, a woman and two men, have been arrested and enquiries are continuing.

*(picture courtesy of Wiltshire999s)*

**Rail fares frozen**

The cost of train tickets will remain unchanged following the government's decision to hold regulated fares at 2025 levels. This covers season tickets, peak hour journeys and many off peak returns. In addition most train operating companies have followed suit with the fares they control.

There will also be more resources put into tacking fare evasion which currently sees around £40 million lost to the railway each year.

As part of those measures there will be changes to refund conditions for unused tickets. In most cases you will only be able to claim your money back if you surrender the ticket before it becomes valid.