TransWilts Connecting Wiltshire's Communities

incorporating TransWilts Community Rail Partnership

NEWSLETTER SIXTY FOUR – JUNE 2026

17:35 ex Swindon retimed

The TransWilts principle evening commuter service from Swindon now leaves ten minutes later since the new timetable came into effect last month.

The 17:35 from Swindon to Westbury is the busiest southbound service of the day calling at Chippenham, Melksham and Trowbridge on the way.

It now leaves at 17:45 and arrives in Westbury at 18:26. The move comes as part of the summer timetable which also see a Saturday through service to and from Weymouth.

Until mid-September it will leave Swindon at 08:44 and arrive on the coast at 11:08. Coming back it will leave at 19:38 and reach Swindon at 22:00. An earlier return is possible by changing en route.

The life of Horace

BBC Radio Wiltshire's Breakfast Show has run a fascinating mini-series on the life of long time rail campaigner Horace Prickett.

Over seven episodes, Ben Prater spoke to former TW director Horace about his life on and off the railways. From starting as an apprentice at the GWR works in Swindon, to travelling the world to learn more skills and eventually teaching children about engineering and the railways.

In all Horace talks for over 20 minutes about his life and work.

You can catch up on the interview on the news and events page of our website.

Passenger numbers up

Although passenger numbers have been known to fluctuate from month to month, the latest figures for Swindon to Westbury based on ticket sales shows levels above pre-pandemic levels for the first time.

Swindon - Westbury

20,892	17.7%	2.9%
Journeys	on Last Year	on pre-COVID

Shine Friendship Cafe tries Bingo on the Train

A group of adults with learning difficulties from Melksham's Shine Friendship Café has spent the day playing bingo whilst enjoying the Wiltshire countryside from their train seat thanks to TransWilts.

Fifteen adults, aided by support workers and volunteers, boarded the train at Melksham station for a fun tour of their local area. Along the way they played games of bingo, ably led by Great Western Railway (GWR) conductor, Henry-Arthur Freeman. They travelled to Swindon before heading to Westbury and then back to Melksham.

Melksham's Shine Friendship Café is a weekly social space for adults with learning difficulties and their support workers, offering a fun session full of bingo and karaoke, as well as a quiet session. Centre Manager for the café, Carolyn Fernandes, accompanied the group on their trip. She said: "It was a lovely day, very inclusive and everyone very much enjoyed the experience. They all enjoy bingo at Shine and so quickly got into the game, even helping Henry call the numbers. A couple of our members are transport enthusiasts and so were also very chuffed to be able to have a behind-the-scenes tour of the train.

"Everyone was very keen to take part in the fun and all the train staff were very pleasant and engaging. Now having been on the train in such a fun way, I think if any of the group needed to get another train for any reason it will have lessened their anxiety about travelling again. Having fun on the train is a great way to boost people's confidence in travelling this way again," explained Sophie Martin, TransWilts Community Partnership Manager. "By helping our local communities access Wiltshire's railways we can help take the worries away from travelling and hopefully next time they need to head somewhere, they might look at whether they could do it by train again."

Direct Bristol to Oxford trains return

After a gap of more than 20 years, direct trains from Bristol Temple Meads to Oxford have returned.

GWR is running a two hourly service, six days a week to and from Oxford. The service calls at Bath Spa, Chippenham and Swindon. By removing the need to change at Didcot Parkway, the journey is now quicker and more convenient.

Among those at Swindon to join the first Oxford bound train were Swindon South MP and Secretary of State for Transport Heidi Alexander, Mark Hopwood MD of GWR and Will Stone Swindon North MP.

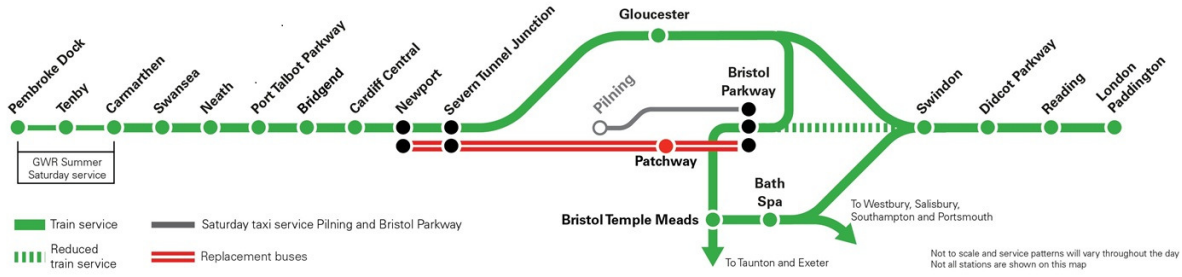
The first service to Oxford leaves Bristol at 07:14 and arrives at 08:32, while the last one back departs at 21:03 and reaches Bristol at 22:12 having called at Swindon at 21:36

The 17:12 departure from Temple Meads also gives a better connection for those travelling to Melksham, with a 20 minute change cross platform at Chippenham.

Engineering work disrupts journeys to Wales

Journeys to and from South Wales will be disrupted until the 9th June due to engineering work.

The Severn Tunnel between Bristol Parkway and Newport will be closed while Network Rail work on the overhead power supply and renew some track.



There will be hourly through trains from Swindon to South Wales but they will operate via Gloucester rather than Bristol Parkway and take just over half an hour longer. At peak times there will also be services from Swindon to Bristol Parkway – at other times you will need to travel to Temple Meads and change.

More details at GWR.com

TransWilts Annual Meeting

A reminder our Annual Meeting will take place at the Old Town Hall in Trowbridge on Wednesday 29th July. Formal invitations will be circulated in due course.

TW goes to Westminster

Local MPs have met Wiltshire stakeholders to discuss the future of rail in the county.

TransWilts directors Catherine Symington and Chris Johnson attended the GWR and Network Rail Drop In at the House of Commons as guests of MPs Brian Mathew and Sarah Gibson.

Helen Belcher, Wiltshire Council cabinet member was also present. The event was an opportunity to talk to key people about Trans Wilts priorities for Wiltshire – Westbury Platform 0, Melksham Passing Loop and in particular new stations for Devizes Parkway and Corsham.

Chris commented afterwards: “In the event useful conversations were held and some next steps agreed to move things forward – watch this space!”

June/July Engineering Work

On Sunday 5th July the first round trip between Westbury and Swindon will be replaced by a bus to and from Chippenham.

On the first two weekends in June the line through Pewsey will be closed with buses connecting with diverted trains at Swindon.

In addition to the Severn Tunnel closure mentioned on page three, work will also disrupt South Wales services from the 6th July to the 2nd August. On this occasion trains will be reduced to hourly and divert via Chippenham. This is to allow the drainage to be improved at Chipping Sodbury tunnel.

CRN Jools Townsend to leave

The chief executive of the Community Rail Network has announced she is leaving the organisation this month after nearly ten years at the helm.

Jools Townsend saw the transition from the Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP) to CRN in 2020 and it now represents over 75 Community Rail Partnerships and more than 1000 station adoption groups.