



**The Way
Ahead**



This booklet accompanies a PowerPoint presentation that was created for the Public Transport Review meeting held on Thursday, 14 April, 2016 at County Hall, Trowbridge, Wiltshire.

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Background

The shape of public transport in Wiltshire

Wiltshire’s public passenger transport network comprises rail and road services; both are necessary and significant to the economy and well-being of the county, with more journeys made by bus than train, but a higher mileage covered in passenger journeys by train than by bus.

Around half of the bus services operated in the county are commercial – they receive no support or subsidy from Wiltshire Council, although they do receive payments from Wiltshire Council for journeys made by holders of English

National Concessionary Fares Scheme (ENCTS) cards.

The remaining bus services are subsidised or supported. Wiltshire Council makes a payment to bus companies to operate these services because no commercial company has chosen to operate the service without support. Additionally, payments are made to the operators under the ENCTS scheme.

The legal framework under which commercial and supported buses operate is complex. Bus companies are limited in how they can interact with one another on commercial routes to co-ordinate services due to the risk that they might be forming (intentionally or otherwise) a cartel that places barriers to other operators. On similar lines, supported buses cannot duplicate provisions made by commercial services due to the consideration of supported services encroaching with public subsidy onto commercial ventures.

The net outcome is a series of transport services that aren’t well joined up, with uncoordinated bus services, “cherry picking” of profitable runs by companies, a lack of common or through ticketing and information, poor or

non-existent connections between operators, and irregular services where different operators share a flow or route group. Competition is for the individual passenger, and as some services are predominantly used by ENCTS card holders, travel costs may not be a decider for the most

passengers, and fares can rise to a higher level than would be expected with price competition.

Commercial operators may change their routes and schedules at 56 days’ notice, and will do so for strategic reasons because a route has

slipped into viability, or to better their competitive position with other operators. Such commercial changes are typically confidential until the 56-day cut-off, allowing little time for responses without leaving service gaps. And where a commercial service is withdrawn as no longer commercial, it’s likely to be a prime candidate for emergency and un-budgeted council support. Such support may well be justified, but best value and best network is difficult even for the excellent Wiltshire officers to achieve when they have only a handful of days to get a service specified, sourced and registered.

The net result is a system that’s not making optimum use of the resources it employs, costs the council more than it should, is unstable and difficult to follow and to use, and does not encourage growth. Consultation and proper consideration of the necessary service network, and support and marketing of the resultant whole network, are luxuries that are hard to deliver in this climate.



Objectives

Wiltshire Council are required to save half of the money they're spending on bus support in coming years, reducing the £5.1 million to £2.6 million.

Although many people have suggested to us that additional income could be generated to fill the funding gap by charging for ENCTS cards reducing the fare for ENCTS holders, that is not allowed within the law and must be excluded as an option in the current term.

Public transport is both a lifeline for many users, and a significant economic driver for the locations served, and should continue to be provided.

Cutting the ability to travel would have a considerable negative effect on the lifestyles of many – the young, the elderly, those unable to afford a car (or the insurance on a car), those whose family car is with their partner, those unable to drive for medical reasons, and also for those who choose to travel by public transport, such as tourists and business visitors to the area, and those who merely find it more convenient for them. And people have varying requirements in addition to their daytime routines, such as getting home after working late, or making use of sport, leisure and entertainment venues.

The above two objectives to be sustainable in following years

Some solutions that could be considered will simply shift expenditure and apply pressure on other budgets, thus providing short-term relief in one area but moving issues elsewhere or to later years.

There is a natural turnover of public transport users over a period of years, with the elderly ceasing to be



able to use the bus, and with children becoming car-owning adults. At the same time there is a large potential user base, some of whom will have little option than to rely on public transport in the future, but others for whom it will be a choice. And if that choice is made to use a bus that's operating for those who have no choice anyway, that becomes a more sustainable route for the future and not a downward spiral.

A graphic tilted at an angle. It features a photograph of two women standing together. The woman on the left is younger, wearing a blue top and brown boots. The woman on the right is older, wearing a light-colored top and trousers, and is pointing upwards with her right hand. To the right of the photo, the word "Objectives" is written in a bold, sans-serif font. Below it, three lines of text are listed:

- Reduce bus support from £5.1m p.a. to £2.6m p.a.
- Provide a public transport network that meets economic and social needs
- Above two objectives to be sustainable in following years

Option 247 team and experience

Your team at this presentation

Lee Fletcher

Lee was a Personal Travel Planner team leader under phase 1 of LSTF in Wiltshire. He has a road and rail background, having managed roadside facilities and been instrumental in rail promotion and partnership, and now in Option 24/7 where he is one of the key researchers. Lee currently works in a child protecting admin role for Wiltshire Council in Chippenham.



Graham Ellis

Graham owns and runs an IT training business with delegate and hotel accommodation in Melksham, and got involved with public transport when he noted that over half of the delegates attending his courses arrived in the town by public transport. The "Save the train" campaign, launched by Graham and Lee, metamorphosed into the founding framework of the TransWilts Community Rail Partnership, now part of TransWilts CIC that partners with the council during (and post) "Local Sustainable Transport Fund" and Great Western Railway. Graham is also President of the Melksham Chamber of Commerce, and a board member of TravelWatch SouthWest. Graham lives near Bowerhill in Melksham.



Natacha Tagholm

Natacha was formerly the Regional Customer Service Manager with First Bus South West and South Wales, then Deputy Director of Bus Users where she got out and met the passengers and wrote (amongst others) the Bus User response to the Wiltshire Supported Bus consultation which is attached to this document as an appendix. Natacha lives in Chippenham.



Peter Blackburn

Peter is former chair of the Wiltshire Conservatives and also undertook many other roles for the party such as election agent. He was a member of the Tucc (Transport Users Consultative Committee) for 11 years, and has been involved with the development and support of train services to, from and through Melksham within the community. Peter is President of the TransWilts Community Interest Company, the parent of the TransWilts Community Rail Partnership. He lives near Atworth on the route of the 272 bus.



Other Team members include ...

- Bob Morrison
- John Hamley
- Paul Johnson
- Pat Aves
- Lisa Ellis
- Kevin Gaskin
- Jim Lynch
- Dawn Wilson
- Phil McMullen
- Andrew Hinchcliffe and many others

This group is comprised of admin experts, business operators, bus users, project managers, retired civil servants, Community Area representatives, town and unitary councillors,

graphic artists, scientists, the former chair of the LEP and of the Rail Industry Association, all with a great deal more diverse but relevant experience. We're convinced that a forward-looking partnership involving community, council and operators will provide an excellent,

Option 247 team and experience

- Core members from Save the Train and TransWilts
- Business and community experience
- Council experience
- Bus company experience
- Travel Planning experience
- Forward plan - Campaign to Partnership under TransWilts
- Proven and here for the duration!





<http://option247.uk/>
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/option247>

positive and popular way of meeting Wiltshire's objectives.

The group gets wider as we look at those involved in our briefings and publicity (*above*), those on our discussion groups (*Facebook members, right*), and our reach to visitors to our web site (*below*).



Option 24/7 launched in January, in answer to the public consultation which many of our team was aware of due to the earlier steps in the process dating back to Spring 2015. We encouraged the public to take a look at the alternatives

to the cutting subsidy by sector options offered in the consultation, and suggested that a very serious consideration be given to a network-wide contracting or franchise system, elements of which are already in play in both supported bus and rail operation contracts or franchises (there being no open access rail operations in Wiltshire at present)

With a campaign element, Option 24/7 hasn't been part of TransWilts, very much like "Save the Train" was an independent campaign group. However, Save the Train rolled into the Community Rail Partnership and the new co-operation between operator, community and council has resulted in a rise from 18,000 passenger journeys a year in / to / through the Chippenham to Trowbridge line (year to 12.2013) to around 230,000 (year to 12.2015) with the addition of a single extra carriage. The Department for Transport consultation on service designation for the line closed on 6th April, and if designation is confirmed, that will offer opportunities between bus and train that we'll look at later.

The TransWilts CIC looks forward to the bus work undertaken by Option 24/7 progressing to a partnership between council, operators and community, and would very much welcome the opportunity to be the community partner. Not only does it have the structure in place, it also has the people with the track record, and the survey and marketing data that illustrates how combined connecting journeys include both rail and road can form a future strength.

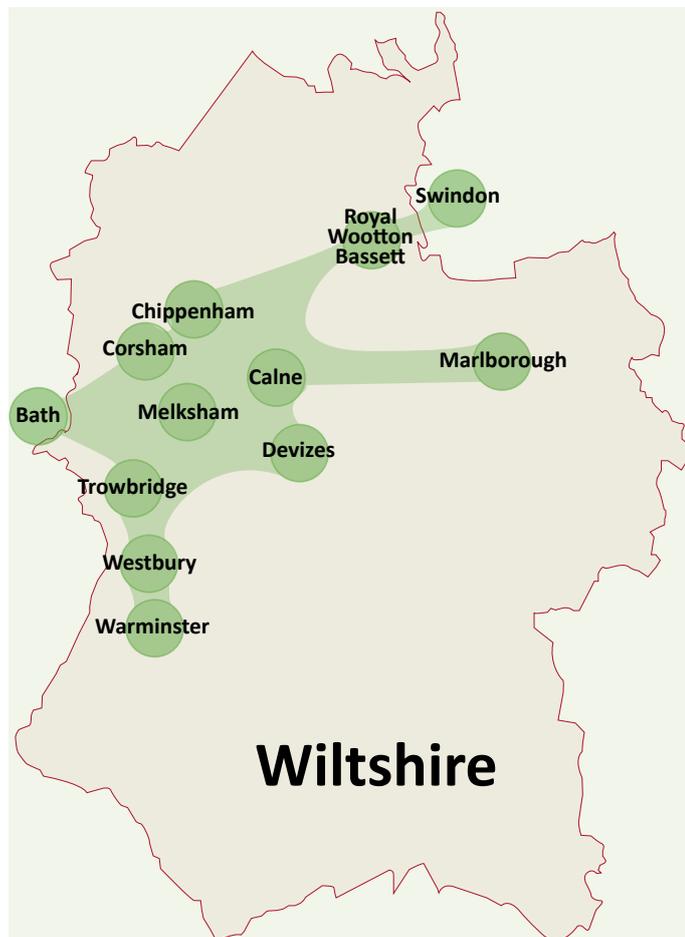


Network techniques



The bus current network suffers from being specified, operated, marketed and promoted in disjoint little bits in many places. In some cases there are examples of good practice, but no matter how much you fine-tune the individual sections, if the whole doesn't add up, you're not achieving what you might.

We took an example of service groups mostly to the south of the M4, and including West Wiltshire, and services across into Bath. Within that area, we counted 59 bus diagrams.¹ By applying techniques as described, the number of vehicles can be reduced between 12.5% and 17.5% and still maintain a perfectly adequate (and in many cases, superior) service to that running at present.



Fanning

Where multiple buses per hour run between towns, smaller communities along the way have significantly more services than they might need.² These services are not always helpful, as many vehicles don't always mean evenly spaced services.³ By alternating and splitting services between different inter-town routes, less frequent services on the back roads can be withdrawn, yet leave a better service to those areas, and with additional through facilities, rather than just to the nearby town.

Talking with a small sample of potentially affected users in the villages with reducing services, they've pointed out that the current erratic service really doesn't do much, and if they can have service issues outside the "pensioner's day" sorted, that would be more than compensation. (Pensioner's day services refer to those which start as late as 10 a.m., or have their last service before 3 p.m.)

Town and Country running

Buses as they run in, out and through towns should cover more town bus services. The practice has been partially implemented in places,⁴ but there are significant savings to be made by running more through services via residential areas. Residents are often looking to travel to neighbouring towns rather than their own, and this practice makes for through services. Some 38% to 46% of potential rail passengers are lost if a change of train is necessary, and the bus figures would probably reflect this tendency as well.

Issues raised include reliability of service and ability to distant congestion, but removing the competition for speed on the interurban commercial runs would alleviate this. There is still a balance to be struck. There are also some housing areas where the larger buses can't get in, and many two-vehicle town bus services will become one-vehicle, with the door-to-door service remaining a town or small-vehicle rural run.

¹ Using timetables from 25th April 2016, and not counting extra vehicles that will, from that date, come into the area only in the evening

² Referring to these services: 10, x34, 272/x72, 69

³ We have old examples of two buses at three- and 57-minute intervals

Connecting

Services which used to run through often no longer do so, with different operators uncoordinated so that connection is, at best, random, and at worst, spiteful.⁵ Through running has become easier with the 50-km rule having an ability to work around.

Integrating

Total passenger journeys are door to door. Home to office, home to shop. Services should be planned for a total journey. At present, too many services look at the main flows and are dis-incentivised from integrating on to other transport which may be run by a competing operator. It's been common to see an hourly bus pull away from a station as the hourly train arrives, on time.⁶ And the Trans-Wilts leaflet for this Saturday's forum shows a train in the station while a bus goes over the road bridge (included, right). It's useless for connections either way!

Rail timetable changes happen on the second Sundays of May and December; bus changes are published at all sorts of times. A standardisation would be a huge relief as connections currently slip in and out. And through ticketing would benefit greatly – more PlusBus zones are needed, and for them to cover the whole station area network, not just one or two services.

New opportunities; Better opportunities

If the bus is running with seats available, USE IT! We're in a tourist county, a green county and there are lots of visitors who would rather not drive in unfamiliar territory. Try to take a day out from London to visit the National Trust at Lacock and Holt? You must be joking! But in the proposed



plans, a fanned x37 runs from Chippenham Station to Lacock to Melksham to Holt to Trowbridge every hour.

Easier and more welcoming to use

Even for those of us who are internet-aware, finding routes and times can be a nightmare. Try searching for current timetables for certain routes and you're likely to get out-of-date results. Try journey planners, and if you don't know the area, you won't realise they've given you some bizarre results. Oh, they might save a minute or two, but they will cost a lot more than necessary because of an operator switch, or having you make an extra change (potentially with a third operator!) to get you from Dorchester Street to the Bus Station in Bath, which is all of 20 yards.

With integrated transport, stops and ticketing, many of the planning issues are resolved, and it becomes much easier to travel. Common timetable changes make for stability of a total service; ticketing becomes simpler and less frightening for the novice public transportation user. Common bus maps ... I could go on...⁷

⁴ Referring to these services: x72, 1a, 1c; 272, 14; x34, 15; x31, 44

⁵ Referring to these services: x72, 2; 14, train; train, 271

⁶ Referring to these services: x72 to (Bath) 14; Train (MKM) to 271; Chippenham

⁷ Referring to these services: 1a and 1c; 271, 272. No map showing country buses from Bath

The changing legal framework and on the ground

Quality Bus Contracts specify services required and contract their commercial provision. They have been available for a decade, but have been hard to use. The forthcoming bus bill removes those barriers and allows the passenger transport authority to choose this route upon consultation, should it consider it to be appropriate for its area.

London's bus services operate on a contracted basis, but we must be careful what lessons we can learn and what we can't from that experience. Housing densities in West Wiltshire and rapid growth from there up to Chippenham push us into a more urban and denser county, with more travel needs and more crowded roads, so that we can end up learning more lessons than we could have a few years ago. The Salisbury area too has heavy housing density and some frequent routes.

BaNES and Bristol headed "Metro Mayor" route to include contracts

Wiltshire looks out in many directions – to South Gloucestershire and Bath, and North East Somerset, with Bristol as a part of our natural travel to work area. Bath is building for employment, Trowbridge is building a lot of housing, and the towns of West Wiltshire and Chippenham look naturally to that greater Bristol area. The area is headed toward devolution – a Metro Mayor and transport system work under a contract system

along the lines (and perhaps beyond) what we're suggesting. But it would be natural, logical, and more straightforward for Wiltshire to adopt a similar approach to our neighbours.

Wiltshire may find that around 15 routes that run between the county and the new metropolitan area have to be included or considered in some way within the Bristol area scheme; even if Option 24/7 is not selected at this point, there may be little choice later.

Government Policy has signalled support for this approach, and MP Michelle Donelan has written her agreement¹ with our ideas.

We will help along the way

We talk with Michelle Donelan and other MPs from time to time, and the approach recommended is government and local MP direction.

There is public support for people who want integrated tickets and an end to 'sillies'.

And our team is ready and willing to shout that to the public, and to remind people through marketing literature, campaigning and talking with them during passenger counts.

The alternative is bus cuts with diminishing council and other income and shorter term stability.



¹ See letter to Baroness Scott from Michelle Donelan in the appendix of this booklet

Designation



A "designated community rail service" is one in which a local Community Rail Partnership has input to the structure and operation of the service over and above (or below) the National Standards. There are currently around 30 designated lines, and about 10 designated services.

From Department for Transport:

Service Designation: changes the approach to franchise management, with more freedom given to the train operator working with the local community rail partnership. Service designation would include relevant stations, i.e. stations that are exclusive to the designated service and generally local in character. Lines and services designated to date can be seen in Community Rail routes.

Designated Community Rail Development Fund: The Department for Transport, Network Rail and the Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP) have established a fund to help to support initiatives on designated community rail routes. The fund is administered by ACoRP¹ and applications should be made by Community Rail Partnership Officers responsible for officially Designated Community Rail routes.

The TransWilts CRP has been assisting the Department for Transport in the consultation, and all indications are that our service will be designated in the near future.² The application includes Melksham and Chippenham Stations.³

Designation allows agreement on fare changes outside the national norms; this has been done in the Southwest on the line to Barnstaple to build up a development fund that leads to service increases to hourly. It has also been done on the Severn Beach line to give a simpler and more attractive fare structure.

Fare proposal

The train fare from Chippenham to Trowbridge is £6.20 day return (£5.20 off peak) via TransWilts; £9.30 any time

via Bath Spa. We suggest a 50p supplement on fares to and from, via the TransWilts, as the basis for a fund to support the naturally connecting town buses at the designated stations.

PlusBus (a facility to allow bus connections to be taken to and from the station) to be extended to cover all operator services in Chippenham, and in Melksham, at a rate of £2.40 (Chippenham) and £1.90 (Melksham) per day.

Journey numbers to and from Melksham were 58,000 in the year to last April, and we estimate that will rise to around 75,000 in the year just completed; journeys to and from, or via, Melksham are around 230,000. Realistic income is around £90,000, or would have been for the year just gone.

Next month we get an additional train, next year longer trains, and the year after that will see higher capacity trains. We would anticipate passenger growth for a number of years to come, with little resistance to the 50p increase and significant uptake of the (one) remaining town bus vehicle, after savings described earlier.

Bradford-on-Avon, Trowbridge and Westbury are also designated service stations⁴ and the possibility of similar funding should be considered. Their overall passenger numbers are far higher, but growing at a steady, but much lower, rate. Dilton Marsh, Warminster and the future station at Wilton (also serving Stonehenge) will naturally fall into a TransWilts extension.

Avoncliff is also designated, but has no bus service. Tisbury is part of a planned new CRP which may in due course look for line-of-service designation, and Salisbury and Dean are part of Three Rivers which is not designated. Pewsey and Bedwyn have no rail partnerships, but Bedwyn has a very active group and is a railhead for Marlborough buses, which are supported services, and part of the review, and potential for PlusBus growth treatment to reduce support needed.

¹ contact them at www.acorp.uk.com

² TransWilts Rail Designation Consultation closed 6 April, 2016

³ one of the team presenting today (Graham Ellis) is the Partnership Officer referred to above

⁴ Heart of Wessex CRP, chaired by Eric Eggar of Wiltshire Council

Elephants

People aren't going to suddenly stop using buses, and affordability and scalability are built in to the system. The risk of emergency interventions with financial implications, such as a commercial route being withdrawn, are reduced. And the council is better placed to handle future change, such as extended school hours, and ENCTS and BSOG changes in coming years which could change travel patterns and requirements.

There is huge expertise in the bus operator world, and our proposals are designed to make best use of, nurture and grow that expertise. We need it for the future. We note that, although bus operators have asked questions and expressed concerns thus far due to early information being still in development, none has stated they wouldn't wish to be involved. Option 24/7 offers an ongoing bus sector, rather than a vestigial supported sector with a loss to the operators of the best part of £10 million in revenue per annum.¹

We foresee a much less volatile environment which will allow operators an ability to plan much further ahead, with contracts that motivate revenue collection and co-operation in a sector that's no longer threatened with things like the current 50% funding cut. And in such an environment, commercial temptation to raise school fares by 33% (Jan 2016 example) or 9% in 2015 followed by another 11% on 25th April 2016 (Corsham to Hospital).

Newcastle (Nexus) looked at a scheme along the lines of Option 24/7 using QCS under the current law, and needing to pass a majority of tests through the QCS board. Reading the papers, just two of the five tests were passed, so the application just failed. It was noted that much of the work done by Nexus was pioneering with estimated data; the option 24/7 case has the benefit of learning from the experience, and has far more detailed data and figures; much thanks is due to Wiltshire Council for the information supporting the stakeholder and public consultation for that.

The QCS board is to be abolished under the upcoming bus bill, with the decision being in the hands of the coun-

cil after consultation. There's also a new hybrid scheme where revenue is shared, and that may provide the best of both worlds – with motivational business for the bus companies, and network-wide specification for the council. This needs further work; we want to avoid the worst of both worlds, or needless extra complexity.

Bus operators talk of considerable value in their businesses and may suggest compensation due for loss of business. Yet at the same time, commercial services are cut back and there's an increasing requirement for support for services that have previously run commercially. Cynics comment that bus companies cream off profits from "Cash Cow" services at present, then get the icing on the cake from support subsidies from marginal services, including those such as evening ones which are getting people home after they have made their outward journey on a daytime cash cow.

We're taking care not to suggest approaches that could cause conflict. It's unlikely that bus companies will want to challenge the approach that is their livelihood, nor to challenge an approach that provides the prospect of a serious stable-to-growth future rather than the alternative proposals which would result in a reduction (support, ENCTS, BSOG) of between £3.5 and £7.5 million in the first year, and potentially more in following years.

Being ahead of the game (but Wiltshire has a window)

Comment made earlier on the Newcastle experience, and there is Manchester and London experience from which we can learn as well. We have also learned² that service growth and community support here in Wiltshire boosts traffic; further examples can be found on 49 and 55 bus routes. We may be "leading edge" with our suggestions, but not "bleeding edge".

With central political support, the timing is right. We're right in line with government policy, and with a high-

¹ support + proportion of ENCTS from lost services + BSOG reduction

² see TransWilts and Devizes Passenger data in appendixes

er profile approach, we're on a welcoming road. Early soundings with DfT and DfT (Rail) indicate the scale of work to be done, but also that it can be done on both the bus and rail designation elements.

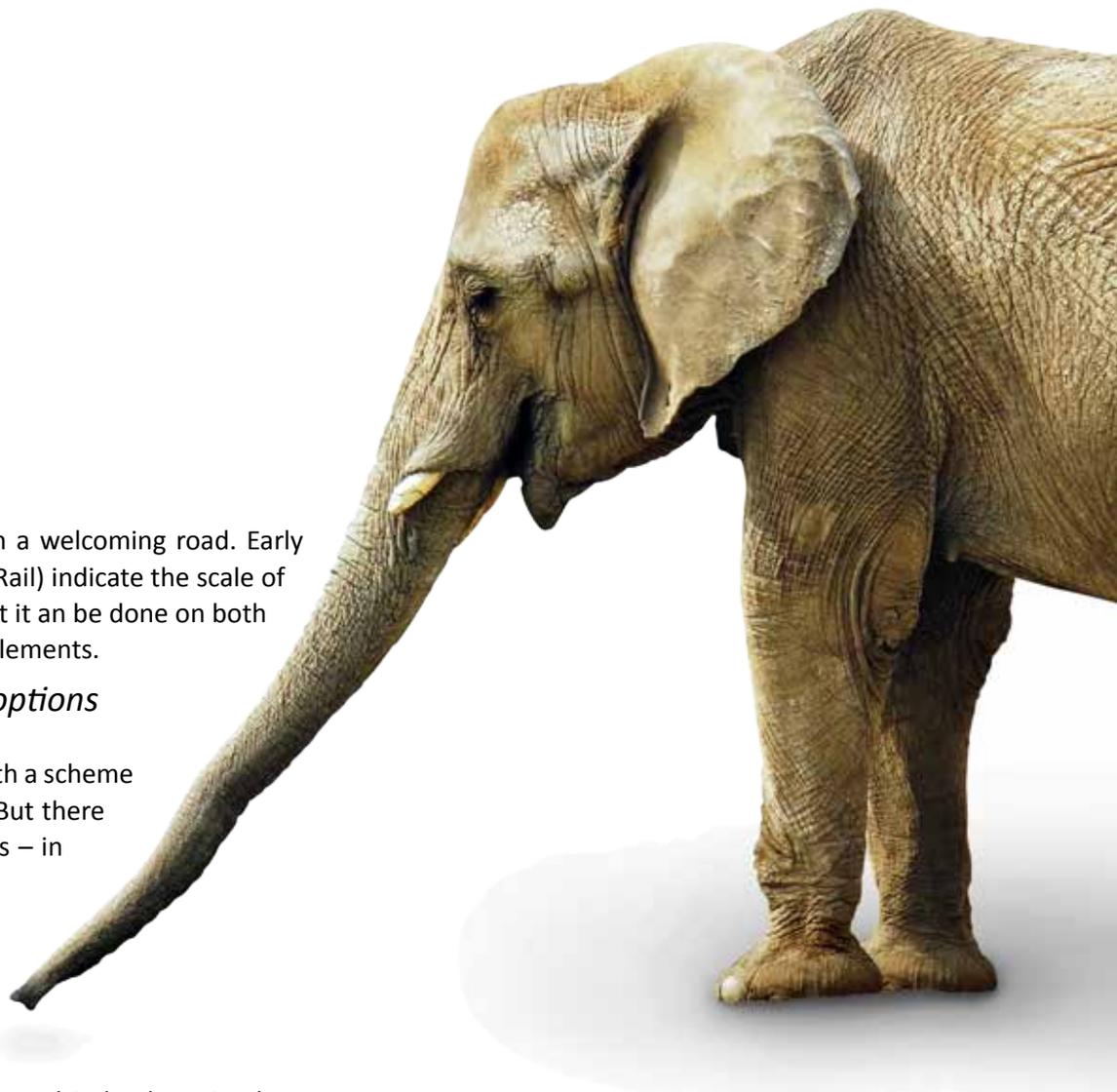
Risk of choosing other options

There ARE risks in going with a scheme along the Option 24/7 lines. But there are risks – perhaps more risks – in the other options too.

We have not seen consultation results yet, but indications from our discussions are that the majority of people want to see supported bus services retained, and indeed retained at a useful and sustained level. We are aware of considerable publicity and comment suggesting that services should be retained at the current support level, and very little comment suggesting that there will be a high uptake of Option 6 to cut almost all support.

The consultation inputs are huge, so decisions will be in the public eye and subject to public, press and ballot box comment, with residents whose service is lost or potentially lost being especially negative if it's not clear to them that every effort has been made to explore all options.

- A saving of less than £10 per resident per year on council tax achieved by cutting all bus support has to be balanced against the very real anguish and hardships those cuts would cause, let alone damage to the economy and the effect on other council, governmental and personal budgets of the cuts.
- Saving £5 (calculated from the requirements of the council) by cutting as described in Options 1 to 5 inclusive would slash use and usability of the bus network; little research has been provided that's Wiltshire-specific to indicate the effect on people; some of that may come from the consultation results, or rather, what people think will happen, but educated comments suggest that service cuts to half of the current



- Retaining support and supported services "as is" continues a system that's on a gentle downward spiral. At times it's perverse, hard to use, or not as useful as it could be for the price. It's not always easy to find out about what's available. Nor is this a system that fully encourages the attraction of new business to the transport network. It's also contrary to the council's stated aims, and an ongoing revenue funding requirement with continued upward pressures. This option might, however, be very popular with the public over the next 18 months.

Set against the issues of adopting any of the options offered in the consultation, or indeed of the *status quo*, Option 24/7 looks rather attractive as an affordable, scalable route to the future.

Future service specification

Local Area recommendations

Local people and their representatives know their own areas and journeys. So do bus drivers and companies providing the services, though they may not be aware of new opportunities and potential improvements being rather more aware of operational issues with existing services.

At present, local communities feel they have little input into the bus services that are available to them, with first indication of any changes often being just days or weeks ahead after there's any chance of making constructive suggestions (and indeed in recent cases when a bus failed to turn up, and where a significant fare rise hadn't reached people).

Wiltshire Council did an excellent job in consulting on the Zigzag bus a couple of years ago ... but then withdrew the supported evening services between Chippenham and Trowbridge without asking the public at all. Local input leads to local 'ownership'. Taking the Association of Community Rail Partnerships (ACoRP) figures, an investment in community of £1 leads to an economic gain of £4.20, and there should be a similar trend on buses and "Community Bus Partnerships" though they would need a different name to separate them from Community Buses.

However, care needs to be taken to ensure that issues between communities are fairly and properly handled. By their nature, buses run between communities, and cross border co-operation and consideration is uniquely important with regards to transport.

Furthermore, there are tendencies for people to look at their own specific journey in isolation, and for the more vocal to be heard at a higher volume than the equally important others.

We are minded to suggest that Wiltshire's Area Boards and CATG might take a role in local recommendations, but this is something which is very much open to detailed thought and discussion. Local teams that clean bus stops, check timetables, etc., can do more than that – they can make the bus a friendly place, they can pass back issues, and they can promote use.

Bus experts working out practicalities and with final say

Bus scheduling is complex with so many factors to consider. Length of route, driver rotas, clockface v congestion, where to serve, how much layover time to allow, which connections to make and which to break, which vehicles will fit through which roads, are just some of the factors. And what looks like a great idea on paper might turn out to be very expensive because an extra driver is needed, or because a large vehicle runs a long route due to crowding for just the first mile.

The final service timetables need be informed by and reflect input, but also be cost-effective and work well operationally and for the customer base. And that places final decisions with the experts. Care needs to be taken here about political influence on where services are specified and where not. There's a well known suggestion from many years back of a railway line that survived the "Beeching Axe" because it went through six marginal constituencies.



*Priority - economic or social
(but we can do both at present)*

Where funding is limited, priorities need to be set.

We would suggest that finance is key in this review; the service must be affordable, and that at times that's over and above timekeeping of timetable convenience. "If the service is late sometimes, at least we have a service". There clearly comes to be a tipping point in these decisions. We want to keep a happy service with motivated operators and drivers and that isn't going to be the case if the service is too patchy.

Mobile information technology helps inform people far better than in the past, where it was hard to know what was going on when a bus was overdue. With Option 24/7 bringing services and information together, and with mobile phone technology much improved, we're in a position that dynamic information should be available, Bus stops already have unique codes, though they're not commonly displayed, and these advances together mitigate the de-

lay issue by providing better, joined up information, and potentially in directing passengers to alternatives.

It has been asked whether economic, social, medical or leisure uses of buses should be supported against a limited budget background. If we move forward with the current services and adopt to Option 24/7, we believe we can give good support to all of these; that will not be the case if the service cuts as suggested in Options 1 to 5 are made, and then we decide to give an Option 24/7 scheme a go after all, a year or two later.

Most bus services convey passengers for mixed travel reasons, and most journeys are round-trip returns. On that basis, prioritising one sector over another will tend to lose traffic, even on the journeys run primarily for one group. There's a watershed between services run for a specific market and services run for a particular journey flow.

Ensuring everyone matters equally



Financial model



Under the Option 24/7 proposals, income from bus fares is passed to Wiltshire Council as the local transport authority that contracts operators to provide vehicles and drivers.

The success of baskets of services¹ will be reflected back in a profit-share scheme to encourage revenue collection and quality provision.

Initial provision and contracts will be based on those currently available and those with short-term anticipated availability, with vehicle replacement (capital or lease) to specific standards to legal and specified minimum standards. Over time, facilities and technologies which are rare, or not yet seen on our buses, will become common place.

There is currently said to be a shortage of bus drivers in our area, and our model looks to ensure a continuity of operation for current companies, vehicles and drivers in the first place. With a reduction in diagrams, it may be that fewer drivers are needed, but if current trends continue for the next two years, natural wastage is likely to mean there's still a requirement to recruit.

This movement onward of vehicles and staff is much more positive than Wiltshire Council's proposed Option 6 in their consultation, which would pull £5.1 million plus fares, BSOG and ENCTS incomes from supported services. Our estimate is that would mean a reduction in turnover of around £10 million per annum for the Wiltshire bus industry.

Bus companies would remain commercial, as do the contracts; there is no reason that new entrants to the market couldn't bid for contracts, and indeed over time such new blood would refresh.

ENCTS income simply goes directly to Wiltshire Council, with no requirement to negotiate pass-on rates; there may be an element of reward for numbers carried. This alleviates the fare-setting distortions caused by current ENCTS systems, and allows the adjustment of fares for the market being approached without affecting the other market.

Rather than consider the bus network as a single oper-

ating unit, we're proposing splitting them into groups as discussed earlier. These groups will have specific characteristics for operating and marketing.

Commercial and designated groups are services that include inter-town services and services within towns that are served by rail, with town buses supported initially via designation funding.

Commercial groups are existing services, but also take in other towns, fanning, new road services. Without designation income, the proportion of services needing support in these groups is reduced.

Explorer groups serve some of the longer and more remote routes between population centres, and are structured and marketed to benefit all travellers – "total travel" including tourist traffic in our beautiful county to help those services. Services can be joined together; mention is made of this, as an example, in the Devizes Passengers Response³ to the consultation for Westbury and Trowbridge to Devizes services, and possible links onwards to the east of Devizes.

Supported groups are services which are unlikely to make money, and do not logically form part of a commercial group or would push such a commercial group into support territory.

Community services are those services that would logically be better operated by a community transport group. With age limitations on the pool of volunteer drivers, and vehicle capacity constraints, volunteer-driven buses are best suited to the occasional services rather than daily employment runs.

Commercial groups - no additional support needed

Explorer group - first year budget £860k

Supported group - first year budget £1640k

Community support - first year budget £76k

Total support - £2.576 million

¹ typically with 10 to 15 daily diagrams in a basket, and with 2 or 3 operators

² new companies, or operators currently not in the county

³ See Devizes Passengers Response in the appendix of this booklet

Stability, scalability and affordability

Option 24/7 offers a solution that's affordable, and we're suggesting the same net support for the following four years with the prospect of the network-wide system working at net break even beyond that point.

Option 24/7 offers a system that's stable, where businesses, residents, operators and visitors can plan around

the services offered for the medium term rather than for 56 days.

Option 24/7 offers a scalable solution where additional services can be procured should it work well, and where a controlled reduction (without emergency measures) could be implemented if need be.



Next steps

Time scale

- Business case and consultation – 6 months
- Initial decide and plan services – 3 months
- New Plusbus zones to be implemented December 2016
- Bus Bill passing at about this point
- Prepare for new services – 8 months
- Amend fares for designation in September 2017
- First service changes to start on 10th December 2017

The suggestion has been made of a trial area. That feeds our preliminary work titled "update 7.4.2016",¹ hence "First service changes".

Way Forward

The PowerPoint presentation to which these backup notes apply was only able to introduce the subject; the information contained in this booklet goes a little deeper, and we have further backup material in appendixes and elsewhere. But there remains a great deal of work to be done. The Department for Transport confirm, "The authority would need to develop a business case, consult on that case, design their procurement processes, initiate and complete procurement, build in contingency for dealing with challenges etc. Moving to a new delivery model is a big change, and one that cannot easily be reversed."

But Option 24/7 offers an affordable, scalable, sustainable and positive way forward for public transport for the people of Wiltshire, our visitors, well-being, communities and economy. The alternatives are a downward spiral of services, or an upward spiral of costs or even both.



¹ See report in appendix for full details

Appendix

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Bus services in Wiltshire

Where is the future?

29th March 2016 / for Wiltshire Council meeting

This set prepared with data from the Option 247 team – <http://option247.uk>

GE / 20160330_07:15 / 1.2; presentation inputs / thanks to LF, KG, PJ, PA, JL, NT, LE, TH. Also to all team members helping along the way

Background

1. Wiltshire Council required to save 2.6 million from a 5.2 million spend on bus support
2. Bus services provide vital economic, social and personal connections.

Option 247 offers a window of opportunity to provide a public transport network well set for the future, whilst making the require savings from council funds.

Before we look at the "option 247" suggestions, let's consider the current system and it's continued operation with cuts to meet the budgetary needs

Current Services

Around a half of the services in Wiltshire run without council support
These are "**commercial services**"

"**Supported services**" are run to a specification laid down by Wiltshire Council and receive at least some council financial help

Commercial services are run to a specification laid down by the operator

Services are run subject to a wide range of structure / rules / laws

Current support cuts

- * Removing bus support from a service will in most cases result in services being withdrawn
- * Reducing bus support will in most cases result in the service being reduced
- * Removing or reducing bus subsidy on a supported service resulting in that service being removed or reduced may also cause linked commercial services to be withdrawn

Examples

- 234 bus at 18:35 (commercial, Chippenham to Trowbridge) no longer runs; withdrawn at the time that funding was withdrawn for later evening services. No longer viable.
- 271 bus at 21:30 from Bath to Melksham appears dependent on supported 20:05 bus from Devizes to Bath.

Current Service Changes



* Commercial services may cease or change at 56 days notice by the operator (or with immediate effect if the operator ceases trading). Where such a change results in significant gaps in provision, Wiltshire Council has the option of contracting for a supported service.

* Council interventions at such times are typically emergency in nature without proper time to analyse, plan, consult or tender but can set the scene for medium to long term provision.

Examples

- Bodmans ceased trading
- 231 ceases on 24th April. Daytime services covered by FareSaver; commercial evening services Bath to Chippenham now to be provided under a support contract where previously they were commercial
- 234 early evening buses

Current Service Issues



- * Cherry Picking
- * Operational Convenience
- * Business targets rather than customer targets are the no. 1 priority
- * Competitive rather than co-operative
- * Ticket interchangeability or lack thereof
- * Joined up information, network, timetable or lack thereof
- * Income maximisation by raising fares (distorted further by ENCTS mechanism)
- * Need for shortterm-ism in a competitive market
- * Additional laws and regulations and higher expectations increase cost per seat provision

Wider financial picture



Bus support - £5.1 million **but don't forget**

- BSOG (Bus Service Operator's Grant)
- ENCTS (English National Concessionary Travel Scheme) payments
- Central staff costs - team of six dedicated plus management

and you're talking more than twice that £5.1 million

Wider still, and wider



School transport and social transport

- do costs increase if supported buses using the same vehicles are withdrawn?
- are extra costs incurred where a supported bus that was used is withdrawn?

Wider still ... if services are reduced ... health and employment budgets

- how will people get to doctors and hospital?
- how will people get out to do their shopping?
- will people become less healthy / more homebound and need support?
- will people still be able to get to work and back?
- will more car parking need to be provided / further environmental cost (e.g. Devises and B-o-A)

Would people use less buses?



What would the wider effect of the bus cuts be on the current user base?

* We can't be sure - no follow up information was available when we asked for follow up data on the cuts to / withdrawal of the Melksham Rail Link bus and the evening 234 service. Qualitative comments indicate hardships causes but no quantitative data is available.

* Reducing town buses to a frequency of just a handful a day (Pewsham experiment) resulted in the new service being unused, but it would be equally possible in areas where there's no practical alternative that the few remaining services would be full.

Frequency effects use



* It's probable that a service that drops from every 2 hours to every four will lose traffic per bus - people not being prepared to wait for the longer period, nor will they want 4 hours at destination to do their shopping.

* Increased frequency to a "turn up any time" service where the passenger flows will stand it results in a change of ethos and significant switch towards bus.

We congratulate Stagecoach on running every 20 minutes from Swindon to Chippenham, and Faresaver on moving up to a 20 minute frequency on the x31 from 24th April.

Conclusion (1)



* **Cutting services as suggested** as a route to save money as suggested by all options offered in the current Wiltshire Council consultation will result in a significant loss of bus traffic / will be one step in a downward spiral where each pound spent from the reduced budget will itself buy less, thus encouraging further cuts in following years. Further costs will also be incurred in other budgets, as well as potential short term costs such as redundancy payments.

Conclusion (2)



* **Maintaining subsidy as it stands** will result in further pressures as the issues described above continue, indeed with pressure to increase subsidy as operator costs increase, BSOG reduces, the population ages giving rise to more council-paid journeys under ENCTS, existing money will buy less and there will be upward pressure. Maintaining subsidy would also be contrary to the council's stated objective of saving money.

Conclusion (3)



* We see little evidence that a **withdrawal of all support** as canvassed under option 6 would result in the provision of replacement commercial services to any significant degree.

"where that's been tried in the past, it has proven to be a very short lived experiment"

A wider picture



* Devolution / devolvement is encouraging us to take more local responsibility for local services.

* Government direction (such as the bus bill) is facilitating bus service to be competed for at a "per contract" rather than a "per passenger" level; that ability is already present, but significant practical obstacles to its widespread adoption are being removed. Ref: Andrew Jones, Minister at Department for Transport, Michelle Donelan, MP for Chippenham.

* 'West of England' are moving along this bus contract route, seeing its benefits, and services that cross the boundary into their area may have to be part of their contracts or subject to exemption certificates and then requiring funding and viability purely on the Wiltshire element of their operation. (x31, 41, x72, x76, x83, x86, 94, 114, 232, 271, 272, 228, 265 and 635 - list may not be complete due to fragmented information available under current system!)

So we should ...



- Look at all public transport services as a network / system - not just some buses
- Meet passenger requirements more efficiently
- Follow along government, MP and neighbouring authority directions
- Have public input into network shape
- Remove need for expensive emergency interventions
- Have a system that looks to the future
- Look at total journeys
- Encourage operators to work for a common goal
- Co-ordinate timetable and network changes
- Encourage new traffic not just service existing users
- Remove distortions caused by ENCTS / reduce ENCTS journey proportions
- Provide stability for operators
- Remove expense from operators of competing per passenger and frequent changes



We believe that we can get very close to meeting all of these objectives, within a 2.5 million pound support budget for each of the next 5 years.

We believe we have identified the "elephants in the room" which would cause issues, and have identified approaches which would clear them.

Who are “we”?



We are the community people who formed the basis of the "Save the Train" campaign which pressed for appropriate rail services on the TransWilts line, together with a nucleus of around a dozen other key and very fully informed supporters, and wider support too.

Now that line has a better service, "Save the Train" members are consistent long term supporters of the TransWilts Community Rail Partnership, and continue to work for the success of the total service - a combination of what existed prior (which now works with practical return options on additional trains) and what's been added (which is also working).

We assisted in bringing external funding for the initial trial period, and in working with others to ensure that the service has a stable, long term future without the need for council revenue funding, either directly or through ENCTS.



As a partnership of train operator, council and community elements, it's not been TransWilts' mandate to campaign for a different bus solution to the ones suggested by Wiltshire Council in their consultation. However, if and as we move towards a community and council partnership / agreement to consider other options which include the supported bus network, the partnership would almost certainly be on board and active for the long term.

Community Rail Partnerships bring £4.20 of local benefit for every £1 spent on them according to ACoRP - that's a general figure across the UK, and it's suggested that the benefit of the TransWilts may be greater. At the recent GW community rail conference, the most heavily attended seminar / discussion was the one on road / rail working together, and consensus is that there are significant benefits to be gained from community and volunteer involvement.

There is also significant support from outside the rail group - the majority of the dozen nucleus referred to earlier falls into this category.

Headlines



- All public buses operated by commercial companies
- Initially same companies as at present
- But these may change over time, again as at present

- Network / routes and timetables to be set by the local transport authority (LTA)
- Contracts / franchises to be bid for to provide drivers and vehicles and run services
- Local transport committees to recommend routes / timetables

- Minimum vehicle facilities and standards to be set
- Interim arrangements to ensure continuity and fair opportunity for existing operators
- fares to be collected by bus operators for LTA (can't do a "London" and go cashless?)
- Contracts to include bonus payments for exceeding performance targets

- Contracts to run for 7 to 10 years
- Service changes to be planned well in advance / in line with rail industry timings

Elephants!



Elephant - Risk



Financial risk in terms of farebox income shifts to the Council. However, buses need to run / carry people and with extra services requiring clearance certificates, the risk for a competitive service is significantly reduced. Whilst plans are to co-ordinate all public transport changes to 2nd Sunday in December and 2nd Sunday in May, minor changes 1st Sunday in September, it will remain possible to take action at any point at 56 days notice.

Although ENCTS is not up for review in current legislation, it's possible that it may over coming years. Risk is alleviated at that point if service specification is with the LTA directly rather than indirectly.

Risks from the current system (such as the need for emergency provision when a commercial route is withdrawn) are reduced - so risk isn't a one-way street.

We also note government plans to extend school days; again the risk can be reduced by the ability to amend services and patterns should the new school day not be covered by a single driver shift any longer, or evening school ending coincide with evening work ending times.

Elephants - Operators



Operators feel that a change in the system will reduce the value of their investment / put their livelihood at risk. However, you'll note steps to alleviate that concern / provide a shift over during current vehicle life - and if the alternative of cuts goes ahead, chances are they'll end up worse off with no supported services to run and the commercial side withered.

Concern has been expressed that at Council level experts are required to handle these issues, but with a team of six staff currently in the Public Transport team, including contracts experts, and a legal department, the resources is already in place and will be redeployed.

Elephants - Political



Public Transport has been quoted to us as a "poisoned chalice" portfolio at Council - and the current consultation and strong objection to any cuts is targeted against Wiltshire Council. Under the new scheme, responsibility partially lies with the local transport committee, but credit for being slightly ahead of the game and introducing it goes to the politicians.

As benefits such as better journey times (due to better connections), through services where previously changes were needed, and more people being able to use the bus ... lower adult fares, better ticketing options, higher quality vehicles ... come on-stream, the decision makers at a political level can again look at the key positive decision they've taken to move this approach forward.

Do the figures add up?
Will it gain public support?



Yes - the figures do add up.

With some new money (NOT from council budgets - see following), with an informed campaign to ensure the public's aware of the 'meltdown' alternative that's been averted, and with new opportunities offered, we believe that public sentiment will be on side. Many more winners than losers, and the losers will only lose a little!

Option 247



Option 24/7 is a working title ... looking at public transport requirements and requests all day, every day.

None of the specific examples quoted should be considered to be 'set in stone' as it's up to local transport groups / committees (LTCs) to balance their needs and for the local transport authority (LTA) to review and balance those needs on a wider basis, and include them within service specifications to the contracted operators.

Option 24/7 looks at requests over the whole 24 hour period, but it's unlikely that much will run in the middle of the night; some requirements may need to be met with alternatives, and some requests may not be met.

Although option 24/7 has only emerged as a title alongside the current consultation, preliminary work and studies were undertaken in the preceding 12 months. And it is very much hoped that the climate will be such that the work can continue alongside and in partnership with the Local Transport Authority into the future.

Some detail (1)



Town and Country

- * Linking town services in with interurban services such that they run together.
- * Saving vehicle termination / turn around time
- * Encouraging new traffic onto town and interurban buses too
- * Not 'new buses' - just updated ones (and saves some town bus vehicles)
- * Example - Devizes town bus runs into x72

Some detail (2)



Rail Connection

- * Ensuring that timings and stops make for good total journey connections
- * Not 'new buses' - just updated ones
- * Extra revenue via designation support - see later
- * Example - Melksham Town bus (14 / 15)

Some detail (3)



Full day services

- * Providing journey to and from work, including those who's commute gives them a long day
- * Not 'new buses' - just extended day ones

Some detail (4)

**Fanning**

- * Alternate routes between towns so that different village groups are served
- * Not 'new buses' - updated ones (saves some local bus vehicles)
- * Example - alternate Bath to Melksham via Corsham, Melksham to Trowbridge via Holt - replacing 68 and 69
- * Example - 265 to fan through Westbury (already does 'Town and Country' in Warminster)

Some detail (5)

**Plusbus**

- * Already available in Chippenham (but no longer frequent town bus e.g. Pewsham) and Salisbury
- * Adds bus to train for total journey
- * To be encouraged for other town - Trowbridge & Melksham first candidates
- * Also Westbury, Warminster and Bradford-on-Avon
- * Possible extension of Chippenham to Lacock?
- * No change to buses beyond those covered in rail connection element

Some detail (6)

**Explorer**

- * Services joined up across towns to provide through transport too
- * Not 'new buses' - more attractive use of existing ones!
- * Example - Yate - Malmesbury - Swindon

Some detail (7)

**Regularise services**

- * Co-ordinate different routes that share a common section
- * Not 'new buses' - just updated ones (and may save fill in vehicles)
- * Example - 87 and 2 south of Devizes to provide Lavington services

Some detail (8)

**Serve tourist markets and journeys**

- * Not 'new buses' - more attractive use of existing ones!
- * Example - no. 2 via both Devizes museum and Stonehenge Visitors Centre

Some detail (9)

**Serve new roads and changing needs**

- * Not 'new buses' - more attractive use of existing ones!
- * Example - Melksham Town runs via Portal Way and Bowerhill Industry

Some detail (10)



Community

- * Encourage Community Transport where it's best suited - probably on irregular services
- * Not 'new buses' - may save vehicles used for occasional runs at present though few in number
- * Examples - Lacock to Corsham, Warminster to Devizes via Chitterne

All through the county



- * **Combined / interchangeable ticketing**
- * **Minimum quality of vehicle provision**
- * **Link ups timetables and information**
- * **Lots more through services**
- * **Planned connections including to rail for longer journeys**

On finance



Currently support is as follows (from WC consultation)

- Go Ahead - Over £1m
- Frome Minibuses - Around £565k
- Stagecoach - Over £550k
- APL Travel - Around £540k
- Wheelers - Around £410k
- Coachstyle - Around £380k
- Thamesdown - Around £375k
- First - Around £280k
- Faresaver - Around £280k

Designation Support



Assuming TransWilts service designation passes

- Initial sums for Chippenham and Melksham (14, 15, 44, perhaps 10)
- **Rail service designation allows local amendment of fares**
 - Experience / Severn beach line
 - Fares "via Melksham" undercut buses and are very low
 - Supplement 50p per ticketed journey sold at these fares
 - Plusbus to be priced at 50p x 2 below local bus fare
 - extra income provides around 50k of support over 2 towns
 - explored informally with DfT - supported if clearly a local initiative

Building on designation



- Heart of Wessex CRP services are already designated
- Potential for Bradford-on-Avon, Trowbridge, Westbury buses

- TransWilts extension to Salisbury
- Potential for Warminster buses

Avoncliff and Dilton Marsh potential too. No designation at Pewsey or Bedwyn; Tisbury in the future.

Basketing of routes/fares



- Profitable trunk routes and town services that need support are merged
- Overall baskets remain commercially viable
 - Operator income can be increased by encouraging network use
 - Station connections encourage transfer from bus to train reducing ENCTS use

Potential services (1)



COMMERCIAL GROUP

R1 + R2 + R3/PR3 + R4 + R5 + R6 + R8 + 12, 14 + City + Hosp
 51 + 53
 TOTAL COMMERCIAL GROUP SUBSIDY REQUIREMENT - £0

Potential Services (2)



COMMERCIAL + DESIGNATED GROUP

X31 + 10 + 44
 271/2 + X72 + X34 + 1, 1a, 1c + 14, 15 + 68 + DTWW + DTRG + 69
 55 + 33/X33 + 40 + WBTB + 42/43 + 55A
 265 + 50, 54, 57 + 58 + 65, 66, 67 + 98 + 94 + 60
 COMMERCIAL + DESIGNATED GROUP SUBSIDY REQUIREMENT - £0

Potential services (3)



EXPLORER GROUP

X3 + 44
 X5 + Actv8 + 66/67 + 5
 X7 + X7R
 49 (£39499.96 Subsidy)
 2 (£216995.01 Subsidy)
 X12 (£14568.18 Subsidy)
 31 + 41 (£165374.15 Subsidy)
 58 + 77, 85, 87 + C2W (£423911.77 Subsidy)
 TOTAL EXPLORER GROUP SUBSIDY REQUIREMENT - £860349.07

Potential services(4)



SUBSIDISED GROUP

80 + 217 + 19, 20, 21, 22 + 46/48 + 70A (£515838.21 Subsidy)
 92 + 30 + 35 + 635 + 91 (£277511.86)
 25, 26, 27 + 29 + 158 + Mere TB (£519849.35 Subsidy)
 37 (£86963.48 Subsidy)
 52 (£55160 Subsidy)
 53 (£48199.46 Subsidy)
 66 (£14688.48 Subsidy)
 87 (£44621.14 Subsidy)
 93 (£53341.99 Subsidy)
 228 (£10000.08 Subsidy)
 BAV (£14000.63 Subsidy)
 TOTAL SUBSIDISED GROUP SUBSIDY REQUIREMENT - £1640174.68

Potential services (5)



COMMUNITY BUS POT - £76248.92

Financial totals



TOTAL WILTSHIRE COUNCIL SUBSIDY REQUIREMENT - £2,576,772.67
 CURRENT WILTSHIRE SUBSIDY REQUIREMENT - £5,076,772.67

TOTAL SAVING - £2,500,000

Community and Council



We note that Wiltshire Council hasn't bid for the 'Sustainable Travel Transition Year Fund' for the forthcoming financial year, but **is looking to bid for the access fund** for the following year which may provide some transition help.

"Wiltshire Council has considered making a bid to the Government's £20 million 'Sustainable Travel Transition Year 2016/17 Fund'. However, given the very tight timescales, the requirements of the bid, limited resources and the failure of the Council's 2015/16 Local Sustainable Transport Fund bid extension, it has been decided that the Council's efforts are better targeted at making a bid to the £560 million Access Fund which the Dept. for Transport is to launch later in 2016 for commencement in 2017/18. As part of this process, the Council will engage with relevant key partners and community groups to seek to develop the best bid possible" (Facebook, 16th March)

We look forward to engaging - hopefully you consider us a key partner, but at least as a community group.

Small print



The figures quoted in the latter sections of this document are from currently available figures, and work on the assumption of similar services within the groups. In practise, work from PTCs and the PTA and changes would lead to amendments - potentially both downwards and upwards.

The examples / historic data are just that, and the elements will require public and local expert input across the county to ensure we get the best results.

Timeline



- * Decide and specify services from summer 2016 to year end
- * New Plusbus zones to be implemented December 2016
- * Prepare for new services during 2017 in detail
- * Amend fares for designation in September 2017
- * Most service changes to start on 10th December 2017

Conclusions



Wiltshire has a window of opportunity to save support money from buses, while providing a better overall service for the future that will improve the quality of life and use for many people, help the environment and the economy, ensure the medium term survival of a viable bus service using companies and skills available in the county, and be popular amongst the public too.

The authors of this presentation are ready and willing to support the approaches outlined, or tuned approaches along the same lines, in the medium term - just as some of them have done with rail services from Swindon and Chippenham to Westbury.

We look forward to working further with you for the mutual benefit of the people of Wiltshire, visitors, and all the parties involved.

Update note – 7.4.16



4th April 2016



Updated presentation to Wiltshire Council technical team 29.3.2016 - [link]

[See our \[Home Page\] for update upon closure of consultation](#)

PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN WILTSHIRE - THE WAY FORWARD

The "live consultation" has now closed (4 April 2016 at 17:00). A big THANK YOU to everyone who responded, whether or not you supported the option 247 proposals on this web site. We understand there have been over 10,000 responses, confirming how important public transport is to people.

If you missed the consultation, don't worry. There have been sufficient inputs to ensure that Option 247 is carefully considered over the next weeks, with the option 247 team looking to assist Wiltshire Council in the evaluation. Please feel free to join the option247 facebook group, or to sign up via Twitter or page.

We're not calling on you to shout your support for Option 247 this month. We don't want you to get "campaign fatigue". We want you to keep fresh so that you can help us later on. Wiltshire Council has a positive mindset of opportunity as it reviews and expands the public transport provision in the county - and is very interested in helping them do so in a way that's positive for us all.



Can we conclude?

- Buses are very important to people
- There is a wide desire to find a cost effective way forward
- There is a wide acceptance that the current network is not optimum in places
- There are widespread desires to improve attractiveness to new customers

Trial Network Areas



- North Wilts (south of M4) and West Wilts
- Currently 59 daily diagrams
- Split into four zones

* indicates potential vehicle saving

Area 1



Bath - Chippenham Corridor

8 vehicles X31

1 vehicle 10

2* vehicles 44

(as from 25th April 2016)

Area 2



Melksham Cross

2 vehicles 272
 4* vehicles x72
 6 vehicles x34
 2* vehicles 1,1C
 2* vehicles 14,15
 1* vehicle 68
 1* vehicle 69
 (taxibus)

Area 3



East from Chippenham

9 vehicles 55/A
 2 vehicles 33,x33,40
 2 vehicles 42,43

Area 4



Bath - Salisbury corridor

10 vehicles 265
 2 vehicles 50, 54, 57
 1* vehicle 58
 1 vehicle 65,66,67
 1 vehicle 98
 1 vehicle 94
 1* vehicle 60

Current diag by op



APL 0 0 4 0 =4
 Libra 0 0 0 1 =1
 Frome 0 3 0 5 =8
 FareS 11 11 0 1 =23
 First 0 2 0 10 =12
 StageC 0 2 9 0 =11

Changed diagram count

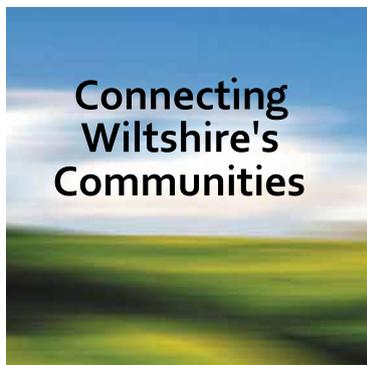
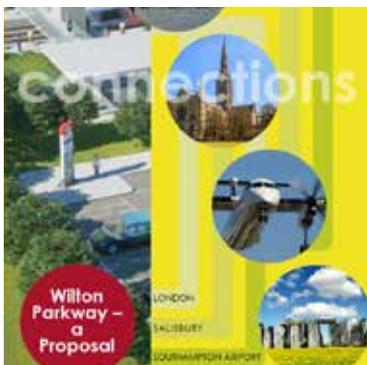


1. 11 -> 10
 2. 18 -> 13
 3. 13 -> 13 (maybe 12 / rearrange)
 4. 17 -> 15 (poss 14)
 overall 59 -> 51 or 49



- Need local knowledge for detail
- Need to ensure appropriate weight to views
- Border issues between zones
- Note Devizes (area 5?) 77/85/87

Highlights and Progress in 2015



Passenger Growth

The ORR passenger growth report for 2014-2015 showed, for the second year, a 117% growth in passenger traffic at Melksham. The 7th highest growth in the country.

Melksham Station passengers have grown from the pre-service total of 12,080 in 2012-2013 to 51,858 in 2014-2015. A growth of 329% in two years.

Our own passenger survey indicates line numbers growing to 235,000. A 28% increase over last year and a 1,200% increase over the pre-service level of 18,000 in 2012-2013.

An innovative approach has been introduced to timetable publications. Mini-Guides, which fit in branded travel wallets, were issued for the December 2015 timetable. The guide contains both rail and bus timetables for our travel corridor.

CIC formation

This is the first Annual Report since the formation of the CIC in January 2015.

We are grateful for the financial contribution from our Stakeholder Partners GWR and Wiltshire Council, whilst SWT are an important Corporate Sponsor.

The CIC has invested in a comprehensive web site which facilitates support in both Rail and Bus public transport community issues.

The Coffee Shop remains an important forum for those interested in transport issues.

We have started to seek commercial sponsors, in particular to support station adoption and engagement with employers in our transport corridor.

We are taking a hard look at our priorities and resources for 2016.

Friends and Community

A new initiative in 2015 was the introduction of Friends membership, both individual and corporate.

Our Friends Secretary is supporting with newsletters and adding expertise and humour to our news articles. We were therefore delighted that Bob was recognised by winning the individual volunteer in the RailFuture Awards 2015.

In addition we won three other RailFuture Awards, these were for "Best Social Media Promotion", "Best Campaign" and "Best Website". Our volunteer Lee Fletcher received national recognition as an ACoRP Finalist.

The Weymouth Wizard was a great success running on the TransWilt's Line because of electrification works, but averaging more than 300 passengers per train. An 'extra carriage' Santa Special was again operated on a Sunday in December.

Strong passenger growth underpins five-year plans

Prospectus “Network 2020” for TransWilts Line 2015-2019

We seek to facilitate improved outputs for the railway and particularly the communities and businesses that are served by the Swindon to Westbury line.

Improvements for local communities are provided by **increased accessibility to public transport**, connectivity between rural market towns and principal centres, access to employment, education and public services.

Development and improvement of the local stations, as community gateways, with a more modern and prosperous railway image.

Sharing the Wiltshire Council Transport Plan Strategy 2011-2026 Vision “To develop **a transport system which helps support economic growth across Wiltshire’s communities.**”

“Increase rail connectivity through the provision of bus/ rail links and assist with the **implementation of some new stations.**”

“Support the function of **rail stations as transport hubs** and proactively work with partners to introduce services and **corridor improvements particularly**

between Chippenham, Westbury, Trowbridge and Salisbury.”

Our **application for Service Designation** if successful will substantially assist the TransWilts CRP in playing a significant role in delivering our aspirations.

Our **“Network 2020”** policy 2015-2019 sets out the future direction within the following priorities:

More community involvement with stations and the railway.

Improve stations; Melksham and Chippenham, acting as a shop windows for the town both as an inward gateway to the local community and as an outward gateway to the wider UK community using the national rail network.

Local rail service improvements supporting the rapid growth in passenger volumes since the service was restored in 2013. Extend Melksham platform to three-car length.

Overcrowding is becoming a problem on some trains. Two car units included in GWR franchise 2016 will better suit commuter timetables.

There is a need for a **more frequent hourly service and better timetable connectivity** to meet the rapidly growing community demands, particularly at Westbury.

Revenue collection improvements as overcrowded trains restrict on train ticket sales.

Wiltshire’s Local Transport Plan objectives are supported by **reducing the need to travel by car and promoting our sustainable transport alternative.**

To **enhance the journey experience of transport users.**

To **engage and communicate with Friends of TransWilts both individual and corporate** in activities such as station adoption.

Promoting special events such as Santa Train and Weymouth Wizard.





4 April 2016

Response to Wiltshire Council's consultation on the proposed removal of subsidy for buses.

Summary of main points of the response:

- Bus travel accounts for nearly two thirds of public transport journeys but does not receive a proportionate public sector investment¹
- Bus Services are essential to enable people to access education, employment and vital services
- Home to school transport costs could be cut by the provision of appropriate bus services
- Avoidance of social exclusion reduces the burden on local health and social services and buses are key to this
- Disabled people will be particularly badly affected by the proposals, even more than other vulnerable groups in the county
- Community Transport (in various forms) will not be able to bridge the gaps which would be caused
- The effect on the local economy, congestion and integrated transport options should not be underestimated
- The contribution of the bus to the working of the economy and society is multi-faceted. The bus is not simply a transport mode – it is more than that.

Bus Users has carried out a series of public consultation events across Wiltshire and would be happy to share this research with Wiltshire Council officers and offer some advice on how best to mitigate the effects of any cuts that are proposed for 2018.

Whilst Bus Users is aware that Wiltshire Council has used this consultation to plan for the future, we hope that the local authority will be conscious of any changes to the commercial network in the interim period (the recent deregistration of service 231 being a point in case). Furthermore, changes to schools admissions procedures, permissions granted for new developments, changes to hospital specialisms etc will all need to factor in transport option. Residents have told us that they are concerned that commercial changes coupled with cuts to subsidies may leave many areas without a service.

Who we are

Bus Users UK champions the interests of bus and coach passengers throughout Britain and is the official body to oversee bus users' complaints in England (outside London) Wales and Scotland under the EU Passenger Rights Regulations.

Passengers understand that Wiltshire Council, like every local authority, is required to make substantial savings in the current climate. However, it should be noted that bus travel accounts for

¹ Transport Statistics Great Britain

nearly two thirds of public transport journeys but does not receive a proportionate public sector investment².

Prioritising savings is always going to be a difficult job. But when deciding those priorities it needs to be considered that bus services are not simply a dispensable luxury. Bus services are essential to enable people, including those on low incomes and with disabilities, to:

- Access employment
- Access education
- Access health services
- Get to shops
- Avoid isolation and social exclusion
- Enjoy a greater degree of well-being

The first three of those requirements are always at the top of local authority spending priorities, and removing bus services risks people losing access to those essential services.

Bus services can access shopping centres in an environmentally-friendly and more effective way than the private car, and bus users contribute to the high street economy in a way which is often underestimated. Removing access to bus services and thereby denying access to local retail centres to people without private transport is likely to stifle economic growth.

Avoidance of social exclusion and encouragement of well-being can often reduce the burden on local health and social services and enable more active citizenship.

Even for those able to afford to run a car, bus services can provide an alternative which is sustainable and can provide better access to town centres, alleviating congestion at peak times and on minor or busy roads.

Impact of proposals on access to Education & Employment

Feedback from our events shows a large reliance on taxis for home to school transport in communities which could benefit from a bus service. Home to school transport is one of the biggest parts of a local authority's transport budget and many of these costs could be avoided by providing an adequate bus service. Getting children and young people onto a local bus service increases their self-reliance and independence, gets them used to travelling by bus, increases activity levels (which decreases childhood obesity thereby decreasing the impact on the NHS), reduces congestion and encourages young people to think about the bus as a sustainable future source of transport. Bus Users UK would urge the council to consider the requirements of Section 63 of the Transport Act 1985 to provide 'socially necessary' buses by reallocating a proportion of this budget to subsidise bus services in order to meet this need.

Unfortunately there is little evidence to show that reducing or withdrawing subsidies would result in the provision of replacement commercial services.

In 2014, research showed that the average education cost per pupil in the UK was £807. This does not include children with Special Educational Needs for whom the cost was £4366 per pupil.³

As many schools and colleges become specialised academies, an increasing trend, students need to be able to travel to different sites in order to study their field of interest (e.g. young people travelling

² Transport Statistics Great Britain

³ 2014 ATCO Benchmarking Survey

from the north of the county to Salisbury UTC). The removal of subsidy for bus services forces students to accept whatever course is available at their local educational establishment rather than allowing them to develop their specific interests and skills into possible career paths. There was concern in the feedback Bus Users received about the access to these specialist educational establishments given that students have already made their choices (and received confirmation of them) for September. Many students have been responsible in choosing schools and colleges that they can access by public transport, thereby negating the need for parental or their own private transport. It would be in all our interests to encourage these young people to see public transport as a long term solution. Furthermore, it should be remembered that many sixth form or college students do not follow usual school day patterns and whilst Wiltshire Council may consider retaining some school journeys, the authority should consider how such students will be accessing their education.

Parents and carers of young people at St John's in Marlborough are concerned because there are many students who rely on service buses, e.g. those from out of catchment, sixth formers and all those who take part in after-school clubs use the school coach services. St John's is one of the many schools in Wiltshire which is increasingly getting students from out of catchment because of its reputation. This is a consistent concern across the county.

Young people reliant on home to school transport cannot take part in extra-curricular activities and cannot therefore broaden their horizons as easily as their urban counterparts. These extra-curricular activities will often make a difference to an employer when noted on a personal statement or CV.

In the recent elections for Members of the Youth Parliament in Wiltshire, some of the candidates highlighted the lack of bus services and also the cost via their manifestos. This is clearly a concern for the young people of the county. One candidate, in particular, campaigned for transport to school to be free until 18 (given that the mandatory education has risen). He is also campaigning for the adult age on public transport to be raised to 18. Others mentioned climate change and the impact of pollution in their manifestos

Access to opportunities for work experience also decreases and puts young people based in suburban and rural areas at a distinct disadvantage to their peers living in urban areas. Wiltshire's Children and Young Peoples' Plan should recognise the importance of providing access for young people to further education and employment along with independent access to social and recreational activities.

Entry level jobs tend to involve unsocial hours and weekend travel so anything which would impact on people's ability to access employment needs careful consideration if it is not to have a deleterious impact on the ability of employers to find and retain local staff. Wiltshire has a big tourist industry but this, too, is a sector which often involves unsociable hours and low pay. If cuts are made to services, many of these employees will have to change their jobs or become unemployed.

Job seekers in Marlborough, for example, have to go to Devizes or Swindon as do young people looking for further education.

Should the plans to amend Sunday trading laws go forward, this will result in extended opening hours but staff will not be able to access their places of employment if further cuts are made to bus services.⁴

Many of the local schools use the buses to access other services. For example, the primary school at Ogbourne St George uses service buses once or twice a week for days out to Marlborough or Swindon, including visits to the library and to their secondary school, St John's. This is a good example of encouraging children from an early age to think about sustainable travel solutions.

Impact of proposals on access to Health and Social Care services

Decreasing access to buses will increase the burden on other parts of the council's budgets such as social services who will have to deal with more cases of depression and anxiety, adding to the workload of the NHS. Access to community groups provides help and support upon which the NHS and social services currently rely and the removal of that access would cause additional burdens on child and adult social care budgets.

If the proposals were to proceed as suggested, many residents of Wiltshire would not be able to attend morning or late afternoon medical appointments due to the lack of appropriate bus services. This would have a knock-on effect on consultants' appointments, potentially affect surgery and theatre availability and putting more stress on the shift patterns of doctors and ancillary staff. Many of Wiltshire's residents are sent to out of county hospitals for NHS services (e.g. Bath and Swindon hospitals). Residents feel that reducing the frequency on the Devizes town service from every half an hour to two or three services a day will cause major problems for those wishing to access the treatment centre, the psychiatric unit and the X-ray centre which are all along this route.

As the UK's population ages, the requirement for care staff to visit clients' homes will increase. Without bus services to support these vital care-givers, clients will be forced into a care home system which is already straining at the seams

The "Later life in rural England"⁵ report by Age UK is a wide ranging assessment of the challenges facing older people living in rural areas, with lack of transport identified as a major issue given that 35% of older households do not have access to a car. The transport chapter highlights the importance of regular, convenient and reliable bus services to the lives of older people in rural areas, and identifies reductions in service as a serious concern, impacting on all aspects of their lives. It calls on local authorities to recognise the wider value of bus services in preventing social isolation and to base funding decisions on impact assessments and not just costs and the number of people using a service.

Wiltshire Council has forecast a growth in population over the next 10 years of 7.2%⁶. There will be a 35% increase in the population over 70 between 2016 and 2026 with those over 70 representing 18% of the population by 2026. A bus network will provide a cost-effective way to support these demographic changes.

Many community transport options are limited by eligibility criteria, range, times and availability of volunteers. While they can make a valuable contribution to the overall transport plan, it cannot be

⁴ <http://www.theguardian.com/business/2016/feb/02/government-plans-amend-sunday-trading-laws?>

⁵ www.ageuk.org.uk/herefordshireandworcestershires/campaigns-and-events/after-life-in-rural-england

⁶ <http://www.intelligenzenetwork.org.uk/population-and-census/>

expected to meet all the needs of residents, whether to make an onward travel connection, to get to a large town or city, to visit relatives in care or to attend a medical appointment.

Impact on housing

The additional erosion of rural communities if public transport is decreased should also be noted in the wake of closures of libraries, post offices, GP surgeries and in some cases, local schools as a result of centralisation. Many people moved to these rural areas on the basis that there was a bus service to access hospitals, shops etc. as they became less able to drive. If transport links are cut, there will be an inevitable movement of people towards urban centres. Given the lack of social housing in urban environments in the county, this shift will add to the workload of the housing departments in local authorities and increase the burden on housing associations.

Planning permission has been granted for a number of social housing and warden assisted developments in the more rural areas of Wiltshire (e.g. on the Burbage/Salisbury Road and in Barton Park just outside Marlborough) but there seems no clear indication of how the residents are to access that housing and related facilities. Bus Users would urge local authorities to investigate the use of funding such as the Community Infrastructure Levy to support new bus services to these areas and to encourage home owners to think about the bus as a sustainable and reliable source of transport. Without early attention to public transport options, every development of 1,000 homes could lead to up to 4,000 additional cars on the road, adding to the congestion problem on smaller roads.

Impact of proposals on disabled residents

As of January 1st 2016, all single decker buses must be DDA compliant, and this means that passengers with a disability can have confidence that, for the most part, their end-to-end journey will be accessible. This should mean that their opportunities have significantly increased, but if there is no bus service where they live, the accessibility changes are meaningless.

The DWP has set up centres around the county which specialise in disability work exemption assessments. Many of these centres rely on their clients being able to access their services by public transport as many of these people, by nature of their disability, will not be able to drive

It may also be worth noting that independent research by Scope suggests that 2 out of 3 wheelchair users have been overcharged by taxis because of having a wheelchair.

Impact of proposals on local economy

In many parts of the county, market days are important trading days for those communities. To reduce the number of customers available to these market traders will have a far-reaching effect on the economies of those communities but also the livelihood of the traders. Devizes has the biggest market in Wiltshire and traders are very concerned at the impact of cuts to bus subsidises. As over 90% of Marlborough's bus services are subsidised, the traders there are understandably anxious.

Removing bus services will also prevent people from attending cultural social events. The impact on theatres and cinemas in smaller communities and even city centre environments such as Salisbury, Swindon and Bath will be far-reaching. Many residents have stated that, whilst they may be able to get to evening events, they will not be able to get home and the cost of a taxi makes the evening prohibitively expensive.

High street shops already struggle to compete and removing the shopping option from a significant proportion of the county's residents will inevitably have a damaging effect on the local economy.

Many of the more rural areas of Wiltshire are home to tourist attractions (Longleat), countryside and canal walks (Caen Lock), caravan parks and historic sites (such as the White Horses, Stonehenge and Avebury). These are vital both to the economy of the county and its reputational value as a holiday destination.

Highlights from the “Buses and the Economy II”⁷ report written by the Institute for Transport Studies, University of Leeds in July 2014 and commissioned by Greener Journeys and the DfT, show:

- There is a significant relationship between accessibility by bus and employment.
- People in urban areas who are currently unemployed and seeking work depend heavily on the bus for access to employment.
- The bus is a vital artery for shopping trips. Bus has the largest market share (one third) of retail/expenditure trips to city centres.
- The bus has an important social insurance dimension. This is the value of having the option available of using the bus, plus any social or community value buses have on behalf of others.

Environmental impact

The National Planning Policy Framework⁸ states that transport policies have an important role to play in facilitating sustainable development but also in contributing to wider sustainability and health objectives. The transport system needs to be balanced in favour of sustainable transport modes, giving people a real choice about how they travel. Encouragement should be given to solutions which support reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and reduce congestion.

The “Creating Growth, Cutting Carbon”⁹ white paper recommends offering people sustainable transport choices, that will stimulate behavioural change.

The Door to Door Strategy¹⁰ builds on the “Creating Growth, Cutting Carbon” white paper by setting out the Government’s vision for an integrated transport system that works for everyone and making journeys by a sustainable means an attractive option. The benefits of the strategy’s approach are:

- Protecting the environment- by increasing the use of sustainable transport to help cut carbon emissions and improve air quality.
- Boosting economic growth – by improving connectivity and interchange and cutting congestion to help link businesses and markets
- Supporting society – by providing a well-connected and accessible transport system that is safe and secure to help improve public health and the quality of life
- Deliver a good deal for the traveller - by integrating the door-to-door journey as a whole to help make travel more reliable and affordable.

Buses offer a clean, green, flexible, accessible and affordable means of making the county’s transport plan sustainable and environmentally-friendly and could aid the achievement of environmental targets if placed at the heart of Wiltshire’s transport policy.

Reliance on Community Transport

⁷ www.greenerjourneys.com/2014/07/buses-economy-ii

⁸ www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2

⁹ www.gov.uk/government/publications/creating-growth-cutting-carbon-making-sustainable-local-transport-happen

¹⁰ www.gov.uk/government/publications/door-to-door-strategy

Solutions involving community transport, or using taxis, demand-responsive transport and so on to reduce the cost of individual journeys to more remote locations, can be non-inclusive. Many of the community transport schemes already in use across the country operate under Section 19 permits which limits their use just to members of the scheme. Use of Section 22 permits enables community transport to benefit the whole community and to enable people to make journeys spontaneously. This may well reduce the cost savings somewhat but will give greater benefit. Greater value could also be attached to bus services in some parts of the county by effective marketing; many of the routes affected are scenic and could be attractive for leisure travel if properly marketed.

Our research suggests that more people would like to see more money provided to local bus routes rather than encouraging reliance on community transport which is perceived as far less convenient and does not go where people necessarily want to be. Community Transport removes the 'impulse purchase' element of bus services and implies that everyone is able to plan their lives at least 24 hours ahead (in some cases three days in advance). This particularly impacts on those living with or caring for someone with progressive illnesses or mental health issues whose ability to go out cannot be taken for granted from one day to the next. There are also concerns that, should more bus services be removed, Community Transport services would not be able to deal with the demands.

Passengers with learning disabilities or dementia will struggle to remember to book a service ahead. Removing regular bus services is taking away that routine which many people have come to learn as part of travel training. All the money spent on travel training Wiltshire residents to enable an independent life will be wasted

Many of the people who can give up their time for driving duties are of a certain age and unsure as to how long they will be able to drive. There are concerns over insurance, DBS formalities and the burden of the responsibility of carrying people who are not known to them. Many volunteers, just by the nature of the person they are, already have many other volunteering commitments.

Local Authorities are increasingly relying on third sector organisations to provide services, using a combination of staff and volunteers to do so. Cutting bus services could mean that many volunteers will no longer be able to undertake those duties.

Impact of proposals on integrated travel

The proposed cessation of subsidised bus routes would have a serious impact on those areas without a rail network or where the bus is heavily relied upon as part of an integrated transport solution. This would represent a very real loss of public transport availability and connectivity.

For example, connections to Bedwyn, Hungerford, Salisbury and Swindon would be affected. Marlborough is a town which relies heavily on the rail links at Bedwyn, Hungerford and Swindon. Services to Bedwyn and Hungerford are already few and far between and services to Chippenham, which also has a train station, no longer exist. The east to west bus offerings in the county are also very poor.

Many Wiltshire towns serve as hubs for onward travel. If Wiltshire Council is minded to change the frequency of services, Bus Users suggests that priority is given to transport interchanges in order to minimise the inconvenience to the passengers and ensure that frequencies do not drop to a level which makes the whole journey unachievable.

Marlborough, in particular, suffers with a lack of links to other strategic towns in Wiltshire such as Chippenham and Devizes. There are bus options involving a change but these take three to four times the time that it takes in a car. Whilst bus passengers expect the bus to be slower, making it four times that of the car will not make it attractive to car users.

There is a fear that making some links even harder will encourage people to use their cars. For example, the bus from Tisbury to Shaftesbury involves two or three buses via Salisbury. The bus from Tisbury is at 10:36 and passengers arrive home at 18:45 having only spent two hours in Shaftesbury, despite it being less than 10 miles each way.

Impact of proposals on the future sustainable growth of public transport

Bus use is highest amongst those aged 17-20 and 60+ and bus use in the South West has actually increased.¹¹

Bus Users UK would like to see young people wanting to continue to use the bus longer term rather than automatically considering a driving licence as soon as they can. Furthermore, Bus Users UK would like to encourage local authorities to implement schemes to encourage young people to use the bus, such as the Welsh Government's young person's discount¹² and discounts for those in full time education.

The Equality Act 2010

From 5 April 2011, s.149 of the Equality Act 2010 extended the duty of authorities in respect of people suffering any of the "protected characteristics" of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation - to any "public authority".

The Act requires that every public authority must, in the exercise of its functions, have due regard to the need to "remove or minimise disadvantages suffered by people who share a relevant protected characteristic" where the disadvantage is connected to that characteristic, to the need to "meet the needs of people who share a relevant protected characteristic" where those needs are different from the needs of people who do not share the characteristic, and to the need to "encourage people who share a relevant protected characteristic to participate in public life or in any other activity in which participation by such people is disproportionately low".

It would be difficult to see how the removal of bus service subsidies would not contradict the requirements of this Act.

The consultation

Bus Users UK would like to commend Wiltshire Council on engaging with Bus Users UK from the start of the consultation and also meeting the Sedley criteria, i.e. the four basic requirements which are essential if the consultation process is to have a sensible content. We look forward to an ongoing engagement with Wiltshire Council with regards to the provision of bus services.

- i. ***Be undertaken at a time when proposals are still in a formative stage.***
Wiltshire Council has advised that the changes are planned for 2018 and therefore this consultation is part of that forward plan.
- ii. ***Include sufficient reasons for particular proposals to allow those consulted to give intelligent consideration and an intelligent response.***

¹¹ DfT Local Bus Statistics 2014/15

¹² <https://mytravelpass.gov.wales/en/>

The consultation document was very descriptive about where the current costs lie and the various options it is considering. One criticism from some consultees was that the document was perhaps too detailed and made heavy reading.

iii. ***Adequate time must be given for consideration and response.***

The consultation ran from 11 January to 4 April – a total of 12 weeks. The time and publicity given to the consultation has resulted in over 10,000 questionnaires being returned, representing a 2.5% response rate of the population over 15. There have been some comments about certain bus services not having the notices on board and certain stops having information about services in a different area of the county.

iv. ***The product of consultation must be conscientiously taken into account in finalising any proposals.***

The Cabinet meeting is not planned until the summer of 2016 giving officers and councillors the opportunity to digest the information which has been gathered. We would like to extend the thanks of residents in both Dorset and Wiltshire to Wiltshire Council for their intervention with the possible removal of the cross-county X12 service from Blandford Forum to Salisbury. This intervention has resulted in the new service 20 meaning that people do not have to change jobs, schools and hospitals etc.

Residents have requested that any money raised from an increase in council tax to fund bus subsidies as mooted in Question 22 of the consultation suggesting it should be ring-fenced for that purpose.

We note that Wiltshire Council hasn't bid for the Sustainable Travel Transition Year Fund for the forthcoming financial year¹³, but is looking to bid for the access fund for the following year which may provide some help in resolving some of the issues in providing bus services across the county.

Some comments from the Your Bus Matters events (held across Wiltshire in January, February and March 2016). These are comments recorded from your residents and do not represent the view of Bus Users UK.

- The proposal to stop the X12 which would have life changing implications for a lot of people.
- Cuts to the service such as are being suggested have the potential to cause untold damage to the quality of life for the people who live in Chiseldon.
- These cuts will add to the congestion and pollution in Swindon and other places.
- People need to get to work.
- Bus services are essential to a civilised world.
- Bus cuts will remove contact with the outside world.
- Council tax increased in Wiltshire but services have decreased.
- Villages will only be for those with cars.

¹³ "Wiltshire Council has considered making a bid to the Government's £20 million 'Sustainable Travel Transition Year 2016/17 Fund'. However, given the very tight timescales, the requirements of the bid, limited resources and the failure of the Council's 2015/16 Local Sustainable Transport Fund bid extension, it has been decided that the Council's efforts are better targeted at making a bid to the £560 million Access Fund which the Dept. for Transport is to launch later in 2016 for commencement in 2017/18. As part of this process, the Council will engage with relevant key partners and community groups to seek to develop the best bid possible" (Facebook, 16th March)

- Services need to be hourly at least in order to make it an attractive proposition.
- Need to think about onward travel to Salisbury and Swindon.
- Devizes will become more polluted that it already is.
- My daughter would have to give up work as I wouldn't be able to provide her childcare.
- The Saturday morning town bus in Marlborough is really important as it's market day and the bus is a community event.
- We need buses to meet the later trains at Bedwyn.
- Please don't cut the 70A or 72A back from Swindon – they are so important to us.
- Two hourly services would affect people going to the hospital.
- I love my buses.

PLEASE NOTE: Bus Users has carried out a series of public consultation events across Wiltshire in the last couple of weeks and would be happy to share this research with Wiltshire Council officers and offer some advice on how best to mitigate the effects of any cuts that do go ahead.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Bus Users UK – www.bususers.org

Chief Executive Officer – Claire Walters

Director for England – Dawn Badminton-Capps

Email: enquiries@bususers.org

Telephone: 0300 111 0001



Please reply to:
Wayside Farm
Etchilhampton
Devizes
Wiltshire SN10 3JT



Please reply to:
2 Great Western Close
Devizes
Wiltshire SN10 1AQ

Wiltshire Council Review of Passenger Transport: Joint response to public consultation 2016

Context and process

1. The Public Transport survey is a very welcome public opportunity to engage with bus services. The number of respondents, in excess of 10,000 reported to date, is testimony to the value placed on our bus network by everyone: users and non users alike. Wiltshire Council's survey has raised awareness of the bus network's value socially, environmentally and economically. For that reason alone, this is a highly valuable exercise for which we congratulate the Council.
2. The financial constraints and forecasts projected by Wiltshire Council are well understood. Less clear to us is whether objections have been made by Wiltshire Council to Central Government on behalf of its electorate about the impact that these strictures are about to cause.
3. We have objected to Government about the lack of support for buses and suggested ways forward. Likewise we would like to see Wiltshire Council publicly campaign for central government support to develop our bus network instead of seeing it diminished.
4. The current consultation largely relies on a widely distributed paper and online survey with six options asking people how they would be affected by cuts to services at different times of the day or week. But it does not ask which particular services the respondent is thinking about. It will not be valid to compare the numbers supporting the different options if there is no information about the routes they are referring to. The survey focuses purely on the negative option of cuts (incidentally creating scaremongering rumours about massive reductions), and makes no attempt to look systematically at ways of making services more attractive and less wasteful of subsidy (see sections 19 – 33 below). We would have welcomed an opportunity for the community to respond to area wide proposals for improvements. In its stead, Bus Users UK has given people a modest say through several drop in events across Wiltshire attended by a number of your members, staff and operators, but these have generated only anecdotal evidence.
5. By contrast, the bus review being carried out in our twin town of Mayenne in France has appointed a student preparing for his master's degree in public transport planning to consult different sectors about their needs, supported by on bus surveys conducted by students in exchange for pocket money. This will lead to a revised timetable in September 2017. Perhaps Wiltshire Council has this sort of activity in mind in due course.
6. The current 2.5 million annual passenger journeys by bus in Wiltshire represent an average of 5 annual journeys per resident. The size of response to this consultation indicates that there is scope for a dramatic increase in level of usage of subsidised buses if awareness can be raised.

7. Because of inadequacies in the bus network we are also aware that
- a. any cuts are likely to fall disproportionately on areas such as Devizes where 90% of the bus network relies on a subsidy;
 - b. those least able to afford taxis have to use this most expensive form of transport;
 - c. generous offers of lifts to those without cars undermine people's sense of independence;
 - d. many journeys are made by car instead of by bus from village or suburbs to the town centre, aggravating congestion and raising further the already illegal levels of air pollution;
 - e. many journeys are simply not made, to the disadvantage of businesses and individuals.
- 8. We therefore wish to see a bus network that leads to better use of public transport investment and makes it easier for people to travel without a car.**

Bus Survey

9. The objective for this survey is to save money. However the calculations are difficult to believe without more information. In Option 4, for instance, it is claimed that £1.19 million a year will be saved by reducing rural bus services to 2 – 3 a day with some exceptions. These services are currently serving 960,000 passenger journeys. If they were all cut then £1.24 per passenger would be saved. On that basis it could be suggested that if fares were increased by £1.24 those services could be salvaged. However we do not know how much ridership will be lost by making the service less convenient. The Trans Wilts rail service project has demonstrated this effect in reverse: when there were only a few trains a day, they were hardly used; now there is a regular, more frequent and well publicised service and the trains are overcrowded. So these calculations are probably not valid.
10. For Option 6, the 'nuclear option' i.e. to remove all subsidised services, the per passenger saving would be £2.04. The questions to help us make sense of the calculations are:
- a. What would be a viable level of fare increases for the reduced services in Options 1 - 5?
 - b. Would the addition of £2.04 to all fares save our bus services from Option 6? If not why not?
 - c. To what extent would passengers and local councils be prepared to make up the financial shortfall rather than lose their services? Has this been market tested?
 - d. Are there other options worth pursuing or testing?

Our objections to bus cuts

11. There are two main reasons why we wish to object to all six options proposed in the Bus Survey:
- First on the grounds that sustainable transport policies are subsumed by affordability;
 - Second, these proposals for salami slicing reduced services lead to a spiral of decline and represent poor value for money.
12. Other options should be tested first and, if subsequently rejected, robust justifications given.

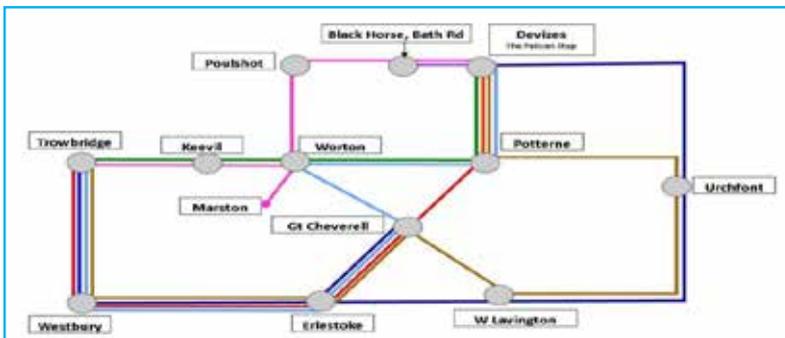
Land Use and Transport Policy objections

13. We not long ago participated in a thorough Transport Study by Mott MacDonald leading to a Devizes Transport Strategy adopted by Wiltshire Council in 2012 as part of the county's Core Strategy. We gained useful insights into the causes of traffic and transport problems and created a framework for future decisions about transport affecting Devizes.
14. The Bus Review survey does not fit with Core Strategy objectives finally adopted in 2015 after years of forensic work and consultations. This is a legally binding land use planning document that informs all planning applications to 2026. These objectives and policies have taken considerable collective effort by officers, other professionals and the public who participated in good faith.
15. The Devizes Community Area Plan (2012) produced by DCAP (a local, independent and non-political body) identified some of the main transport issues as a "need to implement travel plans at major employment sites" and "the need to improve local bus services and provide additional bus information".
16. The overarching principle of the Devizes Transport Strategy is to "provide for the most sustainable pattern of development that minimises the need to travel and maximises the potential to use sustainable transport," [2.3.1] further translated as
Strategic Objective 1: Delivering a thriving economy;
Strategic Objective 2: Addressing climate change;
Strategic Objective 3: Providing everyone with access to a decent, affordable home;
Strategic Objective 4: Helping to build resilient communities;
Strategic Objective 5: Protecting and enhancing the natural, historic and built environment; and
Strategic Objective 6: Ensuring that adequate infrastructure is in place to support our communities.
17. In line with the above objectives housing in Devizes has been granted permission on the basis that sustainable transport measures will be taken to mitigate traffic impacts.
18. We would therefore like to know:
 - a. **In what way cutting bus services meets the policy objectives for promoting sustainable transport, reducing carbon emissions, contributing to economic growth and equality of opportunity?**
 - b. **If services were provided because they were deemed socially necessary what is the social justification for removing them now?**
 - c. **How can development proceed if a bus service that existed at the time of permission being granted is reduced or withdrawn?**

Spiral of decline objection

19. This objection could also be called 'death by a thousand cuts'. We find that proposals for wholesale cuts at certain times of the day or days of the week, or 50%, 75% or 100% reductions, is a crude approach that cannot replace sound research and development such as the work undertaken by Devizes Passengers for the review of the Devizes Town Bus, which found that evening services would meet a significant unmet demand.

20. Without a deeper understanding of performance, how can financial outcomes be forecast? In some cases it might be that a day time service could be removed without affecting the performance of the whole service. On the other hand, increasing the service in the evening might increase the viability of the whole service during the day. For others, removal of a Sunday service forces people to use their car for their outward journey, particularly if they are linking to longer distance rail travel, and so not use the bus on their return journey. In other words, this approach of wholesale cutting across the network leads to a spiral of decline.
21. Efficiency of outcome needs to be the key driver for route design. Whilst some villages are lucky enough to be on a direct bus route, serving them usually compromises interurban bus services. Some of the most chaotic routes serving Devizes area are those to the South West (i.e. routes 77, 85 and 87). They follow different routes according to the time of day and are run by a cohort of different operators (see illustration below) making them impossible to market sensibly.



KEY: The colour of the lines in the route diagram above matches the times listed below.

TIME	No.	ROUTE	OPERATOR
0727	87	Devizes—Urchfont—West Lavington—Erlestoke—Westbury— Trowbridge	Faresaver
0740	77	Devizes—Potterne—Worton—Keevil—Trowbridge	Faresaver
0848	87	Devizes—Potterne—Urchfont—West Lavington—Great Cheverell—Erlestoke—Westbury—Trowbridge	Faresaver
0945	77	Devizes—Potterne—Worton—Keevil—Trowbridge	Frome Minibus
1050	85	Devizes—Black Horse (returns from Mayenne Place)	Libra
1120	85	Devizes—Poulshot—Worton—Marston—Keevil—Trowbridge	Libra
11.23	87	Devizes—Potterne—Great Cheverell—Erlestoke—Westbury—Trowbridge	Faresaver
1320	85	Devizes—Poulshot—Worton—Marston—Keevil—Trowbridge	Libra
1325	87	Devizes—Potterne—Great Cheverell—Erlestoke—Westbury—Trowbridge	Faresaver
1520	87	Devizes—Potterne—Worton—Great Cheverell - Erlestoke - Westbury - Trowbridge	Faresaver
1650	77	Devizes—Potterne—Worton—Keevil—Trowbridge	Libra
1745	87	Devizes—Potterne - Worton - Great Cheverell - Erlestoke - Westbury	Frome Minibus

22. Since Trowbridge/Devizes is well served by service 49, the purpose of this service should be for
- villages east and south east of Trowbridge,
 - villages west and south west of Devizes, and
 - linking Devizes to Westbury Station.

- 23. Despite unfavourable financial prospects, Wiltshire Council has taken up the rural challenge to develop and support a pilot for better integration of rail and primary route bus services for the villages in the Pewsey Vale. In partnership with Pewsey and Devizes Community Areas, the Connect2Wiltshire (C2W) Pewsey Vale routes were redesigned and piloted to test the viability of quasi fixed routes. This approach was developed to avoid unnecessary empty mileage between Devizes and Pewsey, and the timetable includes rail connections.
- 24. This has so far received a favourable response from users, and has the potential to develop further with a local call centre, more reliable buses, and better marketing.
- 25. This pilot is a valuable model that could be deployed where there are similar settlement patterns or intermittent suburban demand, including the Devizes Town Bus, where a review in 2012 paid for by Wiltshire Council and with a major voluntary input from DCAP and Devizes Passengers, was shelved when Bodmans/Hatts/Wiltshire Buses went into liquidation and the service was taken over by Stagecoach.
- 26. However, to mature, the C2W pilot needs longer than the 12 months granted for monitoring and review. The cheaper call centre, or texting method have not yet been trialled.

Marketing and the Bus Bill

- 27. The table below compares the proportion of subsidised mileage in Wiltshire with those elsewhere in the more sparsely populated south west counties:

Somerset	23%
Dorset	24%
Cornwall	26%
Gloucestershire	30%
Devon	31%
Wiltshire	44%

Source: TravelWatch South West

- 28. The lower subsidised mileage might be due to reduced access by bus compared to Wiltshire. However, that there is more commercial bus activity in all five South West counties might not be a coincidence but an indication that the approach to network planning is more market led than historically has been the case in Wiltshire, which has a higher level of bus subsidy.
- 29. We have identified routes in the Devizes area that could be considered wasted effort and others where there are glaring gaps. In the former are traditional market day bus links from Bradford on Avon and Warminster to Devizes, and the anachronistic route 85 journey along the Bath Road, out to the Black Horse and back from Mayenne Place, which almost coincides with runs on routes 49 and X72. Tourist links from Devizes to Stonehenge and Marlborough (via Silbury and West Kennet Long Barrow) fit with the latter group.
- 30. While the Swindon to Devizes bus 49 via Avebury is simple, direct and famously attractive, it is extraordinary that tourists are expected to travel the 15 miles from Devizes to Stonehenge via a roundabout route to Salisbury, then change at Salisbury station to come back to Stonehenge on the Tour Bus, totalling 35 miles each way. The return journey by bus would take 4 hours and 29 minutes compared to 55 minutes return by car!

31. The Stonehenge/Devizes bus link is an ideal candidate
 - a. for a quasi commercial partnership in years 1 and 2;
 - b. for replacing the Salisbury village links with a quasi fixed route;
 - c. for tourist packages covering bus fares and admission to Stonehenge, Wiltshire Museum in Devizes, and the museums and manor house at Avebury.

32. It has been argued by Wiltshire Council that bus revenue from passenger growth is insufficient to achieve the desired level of savings. We argue that growing the market has a double financial benefit:
 - a. more efficient/cheaper routes to maintain, and
 - b. increased revenue whilst delivering on its core commitments.

33. The Bus Bill that is currently going through parliament is granting new powers to local authorities, which is likely to include bus registration, strategies with teeth for bus network planning, minimum standards and multi operator ticketing.

34. By combining these new powers (that come into force in 2018) with better marketing and modern bus stop information Wiltshire could look forward to a bus renaissance.

35. The choice has been starkly put by a transport professional: *Cutting services is contributing to the downward spiral in bus usage, forcing bus users to stop exercising their choice to travel by bus and creating a climate of failure, reinforcing a negative perception of users.*

Conclusions

36. The key objective of Wiltshire's bus network should be to lead to better use of public transport investment that makes it easier for people to travel without a car.

37. Wiltshire Council needs to target the non-bus user population that is prepared to travel by bus (this is generally considered to be around 20%).

38. We therefore believe the aim of the next stage of the review should be to
 - a. plan a network for bus growth for each Community Area and:
 - (i) grow the market by simplifying routes, and ensure there is a budget for marketing;
 - (ii) improve links to rail heads;
 - (iii) encourage people to have an evening out without the car;
 - (iv) ensure that people who do not have easy access to a car still have their transport needs met;
 - (v) support and embrace the policies in the Core Strategy and Devizes Transport Strategy, and
 - b. reduce subsidies on the basis of improved performance and negotiate hard with operators using the new powers afforded by the Bus Bill.

39. It is unacceptable to lead policy makers into believing that they are doing something good when they are not. Instead the approach of policies 'if affordable' is leading to a culture of decline.



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Cllr Jane Scott OBE
Wiltshire Council
County Hall
Bythesea Road
Trowbridge
Wiltshire
BA14 8JN

8th September 2015

Dear Jane,

As we discussed at our recent meeting, there has been considerable concern from my constituents, especially those living in Pewsham, about the recent changes to the local bus service.

I would like to confirm that Wiltshire Council is open to investigating whether another private firm might be interested in running a bus service to include the 'Pewsham' element of the route, perhaps with additional links to other parts of Chippenham which are currently less well served by public transport.

On the wider issue of Wiltshire's bus service, I do not believe that it should be a function of Local Authorities to subsidise uneconomical local bus services at huge cost to the tax payer. As you know there is no obligation on a council to subsidise the service and it is absolutely right that these subsidised services are regularly reviewed to ensure value for taxpayer funds. Alternatively commercial services will not in themselves provide many rural bus services that many of Wiltshire's residents rely on.

I have looked at how other areas have reconciled this and have spoken with local transport experts and colleagues from other areas of the country and believe that Wiltshire should consider adopting a Quality Bus Contract to serve the county.

By way of further explanation, I enclose a copy of an article I have written on this and I would welcome your thoughts on this matter.

Best wishes,

Michelle

Michelle Donelan - Member of Parliament
c.c. Councillor Philip Whitehead, Wiltshire Council Cabinet Member for Transport
Councillor Teresa Hutton, Town Councillor for Pewsham
Transwilt Community Rail Partnership

Quality Bus Contracts

An MP's mailbag is always varied and interesting and can often be an indication of the strength of feeling on local or national issues. One of the subjects that has dominated the correspondence I have received recently has been local bus services, where there have been changes to some local routes.

You have heard me talk about jobs and support for businesses. Rural Transportation plays a big part in Economic Growth. Most jobs are created outside residential areas; they are important sources of income for those who would otherwise have limited opportunities as lack of transportation is a definite barrier to work for many families. For some it is the only feasible means of meeting medical and other professional appointments, taking up employment, attending job interviews, dropping off at school or nursery, and going to college.

Many local people believe that some of the changes to bus services are to the detriment of public service provision, could lead to less people using the bus, more traffic and congestion, but most significantly, reducing the potential for older and disabled residents' to maintain their independence in accessing town centres and shops.

There are currently two ways of running bus services, commercially and by subsidy. Both have flaws. Subsidised services are used when it is not economically viable for a commercial operator to run a local service that Wiltshire Council believe is needed. There is no obligation on a council to subsidise the service and it is absolutely right that these subsidised services are regularly reviewed to ensure value for taxpayer funds – some of these services are run at huge cost.

In commercial services a bus operator can charge what they like, run when they like and taxpayer funding is limited to paying for those with a concessionary pass. Free market capitalism, yes, but it will not in itself provide many rural bus services that some rely on. There are bus routes that generate millions of pounds of profit and others that don't and never will. It is quite understandable that a company's focus is on those profitable routes and not investment in running less profitable services. If a service starts to fall below the company's profit benchmark there is an almost instant gap in the service and local residents are left without a bus service.

So, what would I suggest as an alternative? I have been speaking with local transport experts and colleagues from other areas of the country and believe we need a radical re-think: Quality Bus Contracts work very well in London and Cornwall are coming to Manchester soon. Could this be the answer for us? I believe so.

In a Quality Bus Contract the services are still operated by private companies but the contracts are to run specific services as set out by a Local Transport Board, which could bring together the councils, residents associations and industry experts. Under this scheme, buses are still run by commercial operators but they are expected to run services to the specifications laid down by the Local Transport Board. Fares are set in the contract as are the routes they will run for the duration of the contract. The hugely profitable elements of the service simply subsidise the less profitable routes. The commercial company will still be able to make a profit, but it would mean that local people would have more of a say in local bus routes.

I believe that a Quality Bus Contract is a win/win. It reduces the need for bus subsidy (big tick from the local authority), it means a more thought through service, involves the community and has simple, affordable prices (big tick from those who use the buses) and helps encourage the use of public transport. I have more meetings and discussions planned soon and I intend to explore this in more detail. I believe it's a 'no brainer' but hope to encourage others to agree. What do you think? Let me know on michelle.donelan.mp@parliament.uk or write to me at 61 New Road, Chippenham, SN15 1ES.