

2020-02-07 Special Meeting

Buses – Melksham - Future

D3 and x72

Bath – Melksham – Devizes – Urchfont

14 and 15

Melksham Community Area services

<http://www.mrug.org.uk/20200207.pdf>

Melksham
rail user group



Coffee Shop
gwr.passenger.chat

Agenda for this evening

1. Introduction
2. What has been happening
3. Statements – First, Faresaver, Wilts Council
4. Short term options
5. The bus market (may skip some slides in presenting)
6. Long term options
7. Resolutions
8. What Next?

MRUG / 20200207

Peter Blackburn

- Melksham Rail User Group and TransWilts President

Graham Ellis

- First Bus Customer Panel, Coffee Shop forum, TravelWatch SouthWest

Horace Prickett

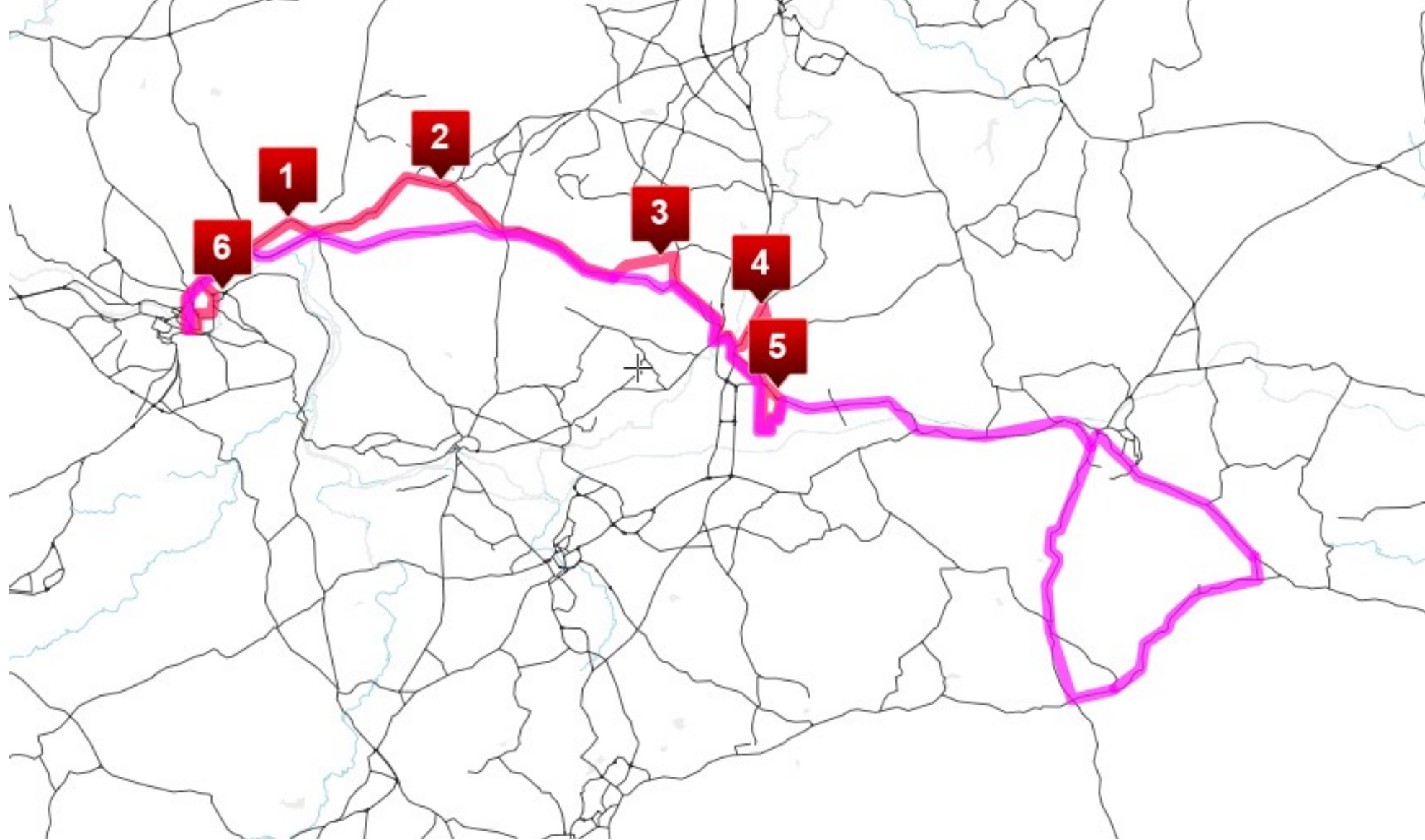
- Wiltshire Councillor for public transport, Transwilts director

Statement from First - James Freeman

Statement from Faresaver - Daniel Pickford

2

What has been happening?



• • •

- these journeys are financially supported by Wiltshire Council

[illegible]

X72

Mondays to Fridays except bank holidays

Mondays to Fridays

Bath Bus Station Bay 6				0840	0910	0940	1024	1040	1124	1140	1224	1240	1340		1440	1600	1624	1710	1740	
Bathford High Street				0857	0927	0957	1041	1057	1141	1157	1241	1257	1357		1457	1620	1644	1733	1800	
Kingsdown The Swan				0859	0929	0959	1043	1059	1143	1159	1243	1259	1359		1459	1622	1646	1735	1802	
Atworth Post Office Lane				0906	0936	1006	1050	1106	1150	1206	1250	1306	1406		1506	1629	1653	1742	1809	
Shaw Church Farm				0909	0939	1009	1053	1109	1153	1209	1253	1309	1409		1509	1632	1656	1745	1812	
Melksham Market Place	0720	0820	0920		0950	1020	1107	1120	1207	1220	1307	1320	1420		1520	1645	1707	1756	1823	
Bowerhill Mitchell Drive	0726	0826	0926		0956	1026	1113	1126	1213	1226	1313	1326	1426		1526	1651	1713	1802	1829	
Sells Green Three Magpies	0731	0831			1001	1031		1131		1231		1331	1431		1531	1656	1718	1807	1834	
Devizes Market Place arrive	0739	0846			1009	1039		1139		1239		1339	1439		1539	1704	1726	1815	1842	
	▼	▼					C	C	C	C			▼		C					
Devizes Market Place depart	0740	0848	0948		1048		1148		1248		1348		1515	1548		1708				
Nursteed Road Marshall Road	0745	0852	0952		▼		▼		▼		1352		▼	▼		▼				
Potterne Porch House							1055		1155		1255			1522	1555		1715			
West Lavington Crossroads							1102		1202		1302			1529L	1602		1722			
Market Lavington High Street							1105		1205		1305			1540	1605		1725			
Urchfont The Croft	0645	0754	0900	1000		▼	▼		▼		1400									
Easterton Royal Oak	0649	0759	0905	1005	1108	1208		1308		1405		1543	1608		1728					
Urchfont The Croft	▼	▼	▼	▼	1113	1213		1313		▼		1548	1613		1733					
Market Lavington High Street	0651	0802L	0908	1008							1408									
West Lavington Crossroads	0654	0811	0911	1011							1411									
Potterne Porch House	0701	0818	0918	1018							1418									
Devizes Market Place dep	0710	0830	0930	1030	1130	1230		1330	1400	1430		1600B	1630	1705	1746					
Sells Green Three Magpies	0717	0837	0937	1037	1137	1237		1337	1407	1437		1607	1637	1712	1753					
Bowerhill Mitchell Drive	0655	0723	0748	0843	0926	0943	1043	1113	1143	1213	1243	1313	1343	1413	1443	1513	1613	1643	1718	1759
Melksham Market Place	0703	0733	0758	0853	0933	0953	1053	1123	1153	1223	1253	1323	1353	1423	1453	1523	1623	1653	1724	1805
Shaw Church Farm	0710	0741	0806	0901	0941	1001	1101	1131	1201	1231	1301	1331	1401	1431	1501	1531	1631	1701		
Atworth Post Office Lane	0713	0744	0809	0904	0944	1004	1104	1134	1204	1234	1304	1334	1404	1434	1504	1534	1634	1704		
Kingsdown The Swan	0720	0751	0816	0911	0951	1011	1111	1141	1211	1241	1311	1341	1411	1441	1511	1541	1641	1711		
Bathford High Street	0722	0753	0818	0913	0953	1013	1113	1143	1213	1243	1313	1343	1413	1443	1513	1543	1643	1713		
Bath Bus Station	0740	0815	0840	0930	1010	1030	1130	1200	1230	1300	1330	1400	1430	1500	1530	1600	1700	1730		

D3 / x72 Timeline

Middle of last week (28.1.2020) - First Bus announced that they will cease operation of their D3 route (Bath to Melksham and onward services, evenings and Sundays to Devizes and Urchfont) **from 5th April 2020.**

Friday - a week ago today (31.1.2020) - Faresaver issued a press release telling us that they were working on a fresh timetable for their x72 service which has also been linking Bath to Melksham and Devizes in recent years.

Any bus company looking to change a commercial service has to register well in advance (there are various **deadlines 42 to 70 days ahead**) and whilst this ensures reasonable notice for passengers, it does put a timeline verging on "emergency" on a bus company looking to step in and fill a gap.

D3 / X72 passenger choice

Where there are two competing services on a corridor, which go different ways between places, people will choose to use one of the other because:

1. It runs on their route (serves their stop)
2. It runs at the time they want to travel
3. Some other factor (quicker, nicer buses, politer drivers, lower fares)

Let's look forward

Right route?

1. Faresaver have said "We need to try and ensure that we provide a bus service to all stops on the route currently covered if they are adequately used." Read as a pedant, that suggests consideration for

Stops only covered by the D3 and no other bus:

- a) Between Fiveways and Box
- b) Mallory Place, Melksham

Stops not covered by any other Faresaver buses:

- a) Melksham Forest / Tower Road / Queensway
- b) Bathwick, Holbourne Museum area

Stops covered by other Faresaver routes already, which do not lie within Faresaver's promise to look, but which I really hope they are taking a look at are:

- a) Batheaston and Box (already on x31, 228)
- b) Purlpit and Whitley (already on 68, 69)

D3 / x72 Right Time?

2a. Current Faresaver services run six days a week, with a last bus Melksham to Bath at 16:53 and a last bus Bath to Melksham at 17:40. First Bus run at 17:30 from Melksham and at 18:00, 18:35 and 21:30 from Bath commercially. Also at 19:30, 20:30 and 22:30 Melksham to Bath with Wiltshire council support, and at 20:00 and 23:20 from Bath also with support.

* The first D3 bus into Bath in the morning - at 06:37 is earlier than the first Faresaver at 07:03. The first D3 leaves Bath at 07:40 and the second at 08:25. The first Faresaver leaves at 08:40, (the first Devizes service at 09:10)

* Faresaver have not competed to date on these "shoulder" services and we await their new commercial timetable to see whether it includes any buses earlier than their currernt first or later than their current last bus.

* Once any commercial service changes are registered, the local council(s) takes a look at any gaps which are left ... more on that mechanism in a couple of pages.

D3 / x72 Right Time Sunday

2b. Only First run on a Sunday at present, and those services are supported by Wiltshire Council

- * It is improbable but not impossible that Faresaver will register a Sunday service.
- * Once any commercial service changes are registered, the local council(s) takes a look at any gaps which are left ... more on that mechanism in a couple of pages.

Summary - doubtful. There are two precedents - 2014 where Wiltshire Council did NOT step in to save the previously supported contract with First to run a Chippenham to Trowbridge via Melksham evening service, and more recently where they DID step in, transferring support from First to Faresaver on the Chippenham to Bath evening service.

The Village Bus too



D3 / x72 other comparators

3. It is almost entirely up to the operators of commercial services to provide other elements of their service as they see fit. The only way to influence this is by asking the operator.

It will be natural for operators to provide elements their customer base will appreciate, whilst at the same time looking to maximise their income and minimise their costs

On monopoly routes

- Fares may tend to rise (no regulated fares as there are on trains)
- Fewer bigger buses may be used - saves on drivers, saves on Bath's clean air charges.
- Buses may serve more wiggly bits (but not so much that extra vehicles are needed)
- Odd services may drop from "Clockface" for (example) afternoon school runs

Often use the 23.20 from bath service, it's always full why stop it ? What's the point of buses which dont offer a service

We need more buses to get cars off the roads not less..crazy idea

It's not just Melksham. Devizes can feel isolated enough at the best of times. This is our only late bus.

Government asks us to cut the use of cars then cut public transport, if I have to replace my car trust me my next car will be a diesel.

Our villages need regular public transport to/from Bath for work and study and to help reduce Bath's carbon footprint.

Many people old and young rely on this bus, without it many people would be stranded without an alternative - shopping, school's

Because its the only way I can visit my husband in hospital late nights and Sundays

Its so convenient when getting the bus to bath from melksham forest

This bus I rely on heavily! Being a stay at home mum, I don't always have cash on me, so being able to pay by card is a massive priority! Living in Atworth, the only other bus would be Faresaver's X72, which is a cash only service, and I have always found a better experience using First buses than any other company!

How can they turn the tables on Melksham after having put the service up to every half hour and then cut it down again at less busy times. The discovery service was only introduced with some fanfare a couple of years ago!! This is a ridiculous U-turn that makes no sense to the many customers who use this bus. Not just in Melksham, but in the outlying areas and villages; Bowerhill, Shaw, Atworth, Whitley, Beanacre, it keeps us all with a lifeline service not only to bath but into Melksham. If you have to reduce the service then do so, but taking it away completely will severely disadvantage many who already may have difficulties getting around due to lack of their own transport.

I work in bath, its a vital service to those that dont drive that also need access to the ruh on a regular basis

I used this bus for work

As a family we all use the D3 on occasions from Shopping Trips to evenings out and the late night bus home on a Saturday night. Closing this route is not exactly forward thinking in this climate change era.

The loss of D3 service will have huge impact, hope agreement can be reached. X72 is a good service but 2 routes working together enables many people to get to Bath for work, college, hospital as well as shopping. Also cuts down on number of cars!

Its a backwards step for the environment and its a way home from bath on a saturday eve when you've had a few!

This service, which covers weekends and evenings, is essential. People need it for jobs and education it's loss will be terrible for people in Wiltshire towns.

This bus takes people pretty much to there homes all around Melksham from visiting Devizes and Bath, it makes such a difference. Would be ridiculous to stop running the D3 completely.

This bus helps keep me in touch with my Bath based family and provides me with independence to travel freely. The other buses that are currently going from Melksham to Bath stop their daily services too early for me to rely on them to visit my mum in the evenings. This bus is vital to far too many people for this service to be cut.

I don't drive and I need this service. I also know on elderly friends that rely on this service

Ira a viral service for those living in villages i.e Whitley. My son uses this bus for Bath College as other bus provider doesnt come back late enough. I know this is true for many.

This bus is vital in the evenings and on Sundays, when Faresaver does not run any buses to Bath.

My daughter needs this service to get to uni and back

Why? Why? Why? We need more public transport not less!!!! I thought we were trying to save the planet???

That late bus is vital. It's the only way that anyone can get in to Devizes late at night other than on the London coach. Losing that bus would be disastrous. As it stands if you can get into Bath on a train from wherever you can get back to town late so the loss of this service has implications for both leisure and employment. We don't all have cars or are in a position to afford taxis.

This would be a disaster, especially if you get held up at the RUH, plus no evening visiting.

Let's hope with the current proposed cuts that this isn't one of them. Got to love the Tories

3.

Statements

5th February 2020**Open Letter to the Melksham Bus Users' Meeting on Friday 7th February**

On behalf of First West of England Ltd I am writing to say how sad we are that after almost 100 years of continuous operation of local bus services between Melksham and Bath via Atworth and Box, we are having to give up. Nobody likes quitting in such circumstances but sometimes reality overtakes everything else – and that's the point that we have reached.

Some two years ago we invested heavily in better buses, with our new brand "discover", and an improved frequency. While we won ourselves quite a few new passengers and we say thank you to all of you, the growth in patronage has proved insufficient to cover the costs of operation.

People often believe that running buses is a licence to print money. It is not so. Providing interurban bus services in today's circumstances is very challenging financially and it is my belief that it is very difficult to sustain two operators on one corridor, as has been the case for quite a few years past in this route.

We have no more rights – and no more obligations – than any other operator. Although we may be a large company, our bills must be paid just like everybody else's. The transport authority is Wiltshire Council, not the bus companies. In the end, we must look to them.

It's worth reminding ourselves that local bus operations in Britain outside London operate under the terms of the 1985 Transport Act, as amended. This Act de-regulated local bus operation. Under these rules, any operator may operate any route at any time at any fare on giving 70 days' notice to the Traffic Commissioner. Withdrawal requires similar notice. The responsibility for guarding the network lies with the local authority (the Transport Authority), so in this case Wiltshire Council (although the route does also run into the BaNES area as well, of course).

These authorities have the power (but not the obligation) to consider the local bus network and procure replacement services, where they consider this to be in the public interest and representing good value for money. In this context, officers of Wiltshire Council will no doubt be considering right now how to deal with the short section of route through Whitley between Atworth and Melksham where the D3 and X72 cover different roads.

The evening and Sunday service is currently provided under contract to Wiltshire Council, who can be expected to re-tender these operations, to enable them to continue to operate as before.

We were invited to attend the meeting in person. We appreciate that courtesy. After careful consideration we have decided not to join you. There is no possibility that we will reverse the decision already made. This meeting, therefore, is not about us but what is to be done in the future, that will not involve us.

Good luck with your discussions and thanks to all the many generations of Melksham people who have been our customers, and those successively back in time of Badgerline, Bristol Omnibus Company, Bath Tramways Motor Company and the original Lavington & Devizes Motor Service way back in the 1920s.

Yours sincerely

James Freeman
Managing Director
First West of England

First West of England Limited

Registered in England and Wales number 00025088 Registered at: Enterprise House, Easton Road, Bristol, BS5 0DZ

Hello Graham

[5th February 2020 in reply to mine of 17.11.19, 3.2.20 and 5.2.20]

After speaking with Wiltshire Council we have become aware of work you have undertaken with regards to a review of bus services in Melksham which raises some concerns.

We can confirm that we have been working on a revised X72 timetable to come into effect from 6th April. Firstbus supplied Wiltshire Council with comprehensive loadings figures for each stop/trip over the past year which has assisted us greatly in identifying where passenger flows are and gives us an idea of capacity levels required on certain trips. The timetable is 90% complete but we are not able to publish details of this yet as they are subject to change given that the evening and Sunday elements of the service are currently out for tender. We then need to notify DVSA of the changes before they can be made public. In this draft timetable we have provision for the replacement of the evening service should we be the successful tenderer and filled many of the gaps which are currently served by the D3.

With regards to the evening/Sunday tender there is very little comment we can make about this in terms of service levels, who may be operating it etc etc. I would also make you aware that there is one piece of information which on which you are incorrect or have been misinformed. When First cancelled the 234 service in 2015 the evening and Sunday service never went out to tender. It was used as a cost saving exercise by Wiltshire Council. We have no issue running evening or Sunday services, as our recent introduction of the x31 evening and Sunday (commercial) service demonstrates, it is simply that Firstbus, in recent years have been awarded the contracts due to submitting the lowest prices. Why they continued to operate the x31 on Sundays commercially is a question we continue to ask ourselves to this day, but whilst they were operating it there certainly was no need for us to get involved. Given that the D3 evening/Sunday has at least been tendered I would take this as an indication that funding is available for replacing the lost evening/Sunday services unlike in 2015 with the 234/X34.

Further to the D3 evening services I understand you have also been working on redesigning the 68/69 service and Melksham Town services. Wiltshire Council have advised that any change to these timetables would involve a retendering process. With regards to the 68/69 service we currently operate this contract and it extends through to 2022. We have purchased vehicles for this contract and designed duties accordingly which also involves the Corsham Town service for the duration of this period. You do not appear to understand that with all the uncertainties surrounding bus funding at the moment the last thing operators would want is for their contracts to be cut short and retendered. I also suspect that the Council would be wary of carrying out such an exercise given the concerns about whether they could afford any new prices submitted and therefore finding that service levels may have to be reduced in order to become affordable.

Obviously you have not spoken to us about your plans. You will understand that whilst you may have spoken to 'key stakeholders' about your ideal bus network around Melksham you haven't made the key bus operator in Melksham aware of your plans which undermines any kind of working relationship which could develop. This reminds us of a similar issue we had with 'Transwits' 18 months ago when they gave wholehearted biased support to the D3 service at the expense of our x72 service. It seems that MRUG is now on its own agenda behind the backs of bus operators whilst suggesting to the public you are working for all concerned.

Regards

Daniel

Faresaver Buses
Vincients Road
Bumpers Farm Ind Est
Chippenham
Wilts, SN14 6QA

4

Short term options

Save the D3 bus!



Vanessa Fiorelli started this petition to First Group and 2 others

First Group have decided to cease operation of the ever popular and vitally needed D3 bus. This service provides a vital link for residents of Melksham and surrounding villages to get around. This decision by First Group is purely based on profit and no consideration has been made regarding the impact on the community. We are calling on First Group to continue this vital service for the people of Melksham and surrounding villages.

904 have signed. Let's get to 1,000!



Graham Ellis melksham, ENG, United...



I'm signing because... (optional)

☐ Do not display my name and comment on this petition

 **Sign this petition**

Future potential operators

It is impractical to suggest that the First D3 might carry on after all

- Instruction is from First's CEO in USA, against the wished of First West of England managers. Not a local decision.
- Registration has been submitted
- Staff have been told they'll be released from Westbury depot (though can transfer to Bath)
- Two bus operators running between same key points at same time is going to kill the business for both
- It's part of a pattern
- Customers already lost and lost faith in First

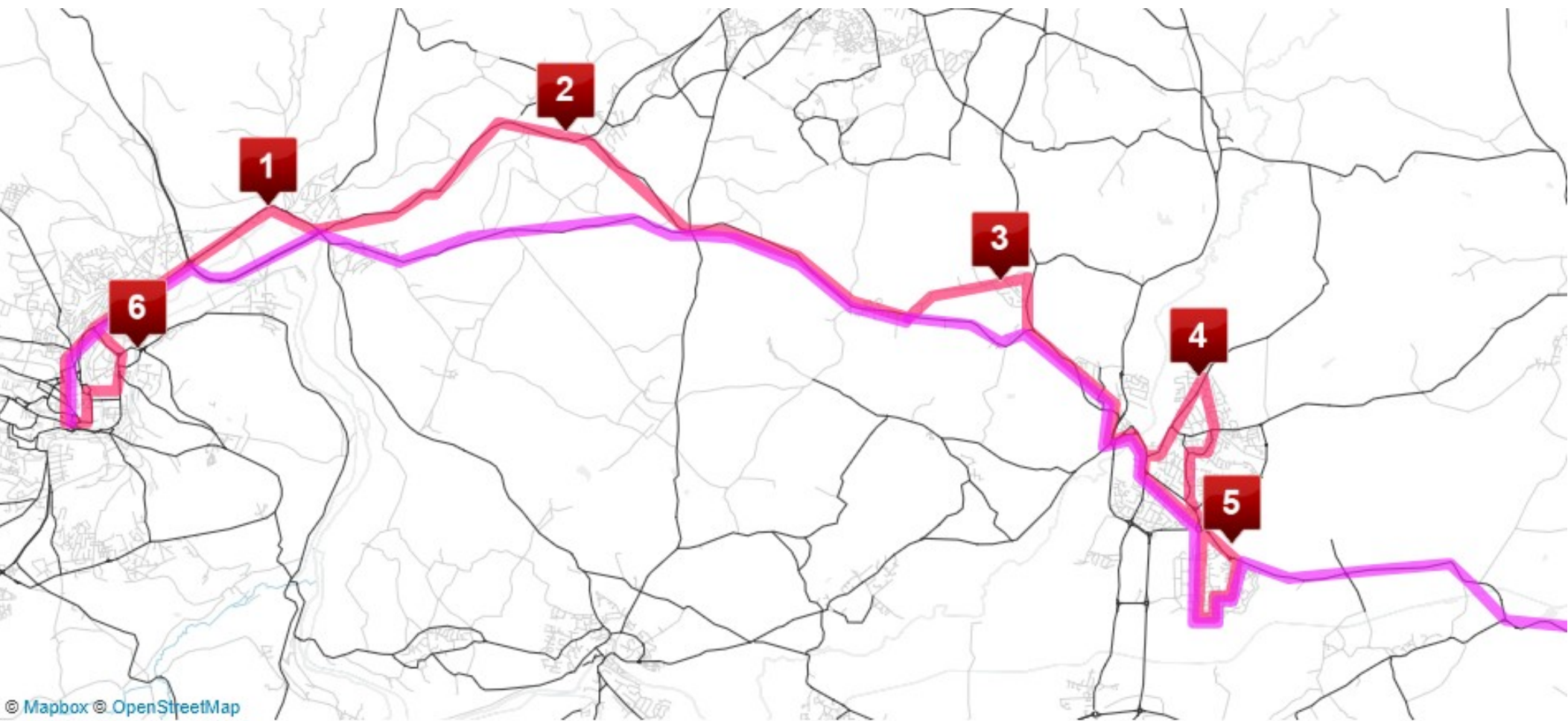
Best is for an alternative to pick up the just the none-competing runs that Faresaver do not want to run commercially

- Most logical operator would be the one already running a commercial service
- There are also two more operators with services / buses in Devizes, 2 in Bath and 1 in Melksham
- It is suggested that those five fancy are unlikely to fancy competing against Faresaver for a contract.

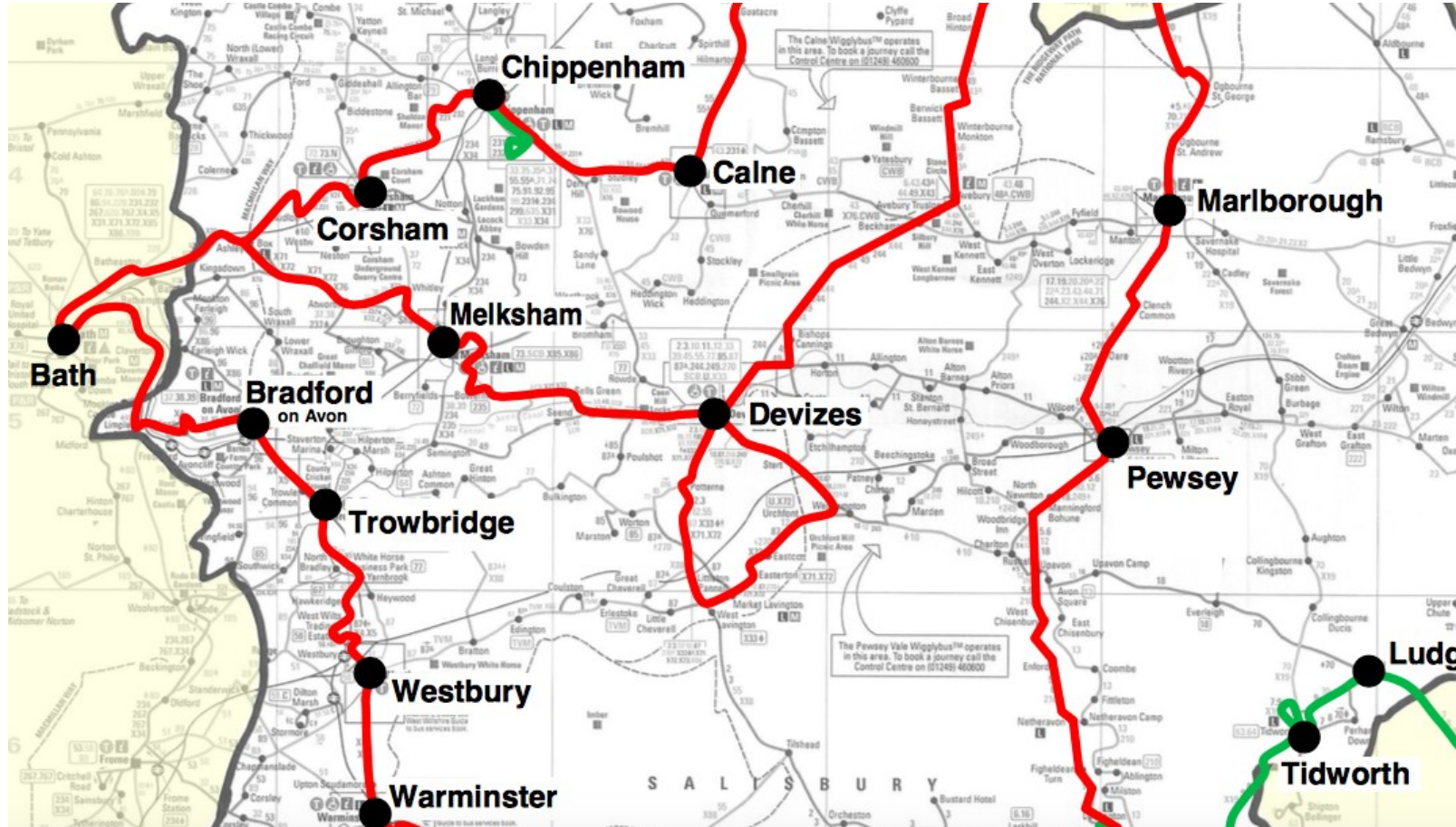
Mechanism to fill in service

Once any commercial service changes are registered, the local council takes a look at any gaps which are left and may invite bus operators to bid for contracts to provide subsidised ("supported") services.

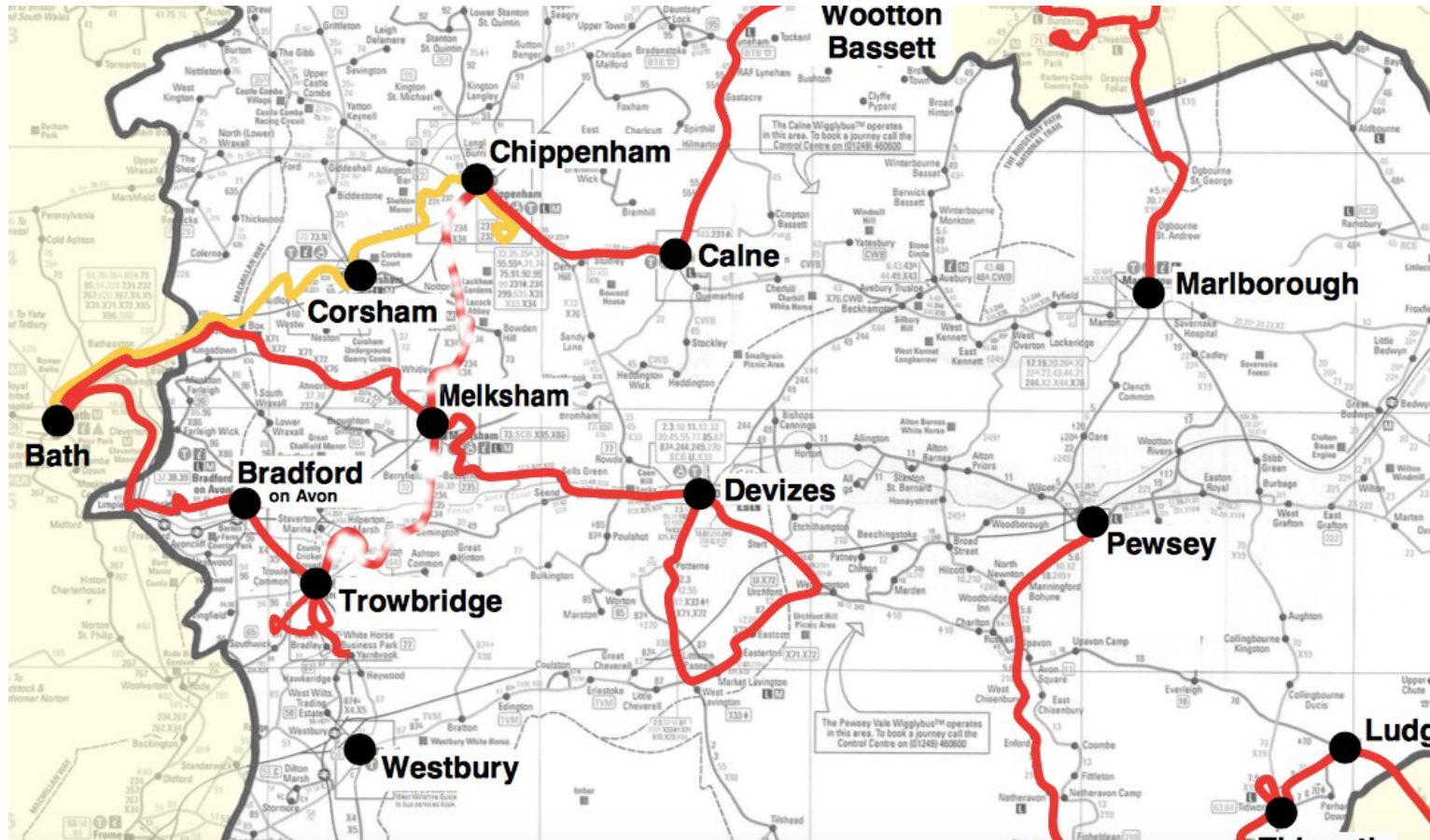
- * Even if they identify a gap, there is no obligation to invite bids. One or two counties have a "no supported services" policy and I am relieved to report that Wiltshire is NOT one of them.
- * Requests for bids will probably get one or more positive responses, and prices. Prior discussion with potential bidders helps this process.
- * Once bids are received, the council may talk with bidders to tune their offerings - often looking to reduce the price of one bid or another by tuning the requirement to make it operationally convenient for a particular operator
- * The council may then place a contract with one or other bidder, who will then do a late registration on that service to ensure there's no hole in services between one operator ending and another starting.



Sunday bus services



Evening Bus Services



Variables in a council contract

How long for?

For what service?

Revenue Arrangements?

- What tickets are accepted / prices charged?
- Who keeps the money / development motivation?
- Failure penalties?

Consultation?

Costs and use of supported bus services

	Cost to bus support budget (£pa)	Annual passenger journeys (2014/15)	Average cost per passenger journey (£)
Interurban (strategic network) routes – daytimes (10 contracts)	£788,650	464,551	£1.63 (note a)
Town / city services – daytimes (18 contracts)	£1,014,190	654,206	£1.55
Rural regular services (27 contracts)	£2,175,360	888,436	£2.42 (note a)
Rural infrequent services (25 contracts)	£294,310	75,969	£3.86 (note a)
Evening services (10 contracts)	£639,080	328,245	£1.95
Sunday services (7 contracts)	£165,180	144,783	£1.14
TOTALS	£5,076,770	2,556,190	£1.98 (note a)

Note (a) – adjusted for services where passenger data not available

Which Council

- **Wiltshire Council** (as it has been)
- Also provides service and economic boost to
 - **BaNES** – Bath and North East Somerset
 - BaNES responsibility transfers to **WECA** 1.4.2020
 - West of England Combine Authority / Mayoral system allows them additional powers to regulate buses
 - *Noting that D2 (Bath to Frome) has BaNES not Somerset or Mendip support even though most of route is in Mendip*

"A better deal for bus users" – DfT 6th February 2020

- <http://www.passenger.chat/22874>

Since January 2014, around £43 million of the grant is paid directly to local authorities, rather than bus operators, to support socially necessary bus services in their area that are not commercially viable. The government recognises the importance of these services which can provide vital connections to people in rural areas, or ensure that more frequent evening or Sunday services are available. To improve current bus services, or restore lost services where needed, the government will pay an extra £30 million to local authorities in 2020/21.

Looking to my own area - Wiltshire, and the Melksham area where some of the cards were throen in the air last week, a twentieth of the £671,161 would be an excellent seeding pot at just the right time to update services to suit changed needs. First *are* pulling out of their final route to the town in the face of stiff competition from Faresaver to whom I expect the majority of the traffic to transfer - and with a reduction from 14 to 10 vehicles in the pool used for services in the immediate area, the overall bottom line will be better. Never the less, it's an opportunity to revise - perhaps in two steps - towards the government's aim of driving patronage towards buses, and not merely making sure we provide an answer to current users who ask "where's my bus gone?"

My fear is that the extra £671,161 to Wiltshire Council to support bus services (and did you note the specific reference to Weekends and Sunday from the DfT?) will be added to the bus budget ... but then a similar amount of funding that's in that budget from other sources will be removed. I've already been told that support funding will be tight next year and at the very least I would like to see the 29% reduction in vehicles not being exceeded. First's choice to withdraw; I would not like to see anyone else forced to cut back on services, though I would like to see them tuned to meet changing needs.

Why are we worried?

- It'll be automatic to replace a departing operator with the same services from another, right?

WRONG – it is not guaranteed!

2006 – National Express replaced by First on **Melksham** Train service. 60% of services lost (Poor decision – regained 2013 and passenger numbers up from 3,000 to 75,000 with everyone including MRUG working together)

2014 – First withdrew from the 234 including the evening Chippenham to **Melksham** contract and the contract was not placed with any other operator. Last bus from Chippenham now 17:30 rather than 22:16.

Why are we worried?

2016 – consultation on bus support in Wiltshire asked how services should be cut back to save 50% (or 90%) of the council's expenditure. No options offered to retain current spending level. In the end, so may writeins that only 10% was cut

2020 – I am told by council officers that money is tight for the next financial year and they are looking at options for evening and Sunday that require less from them.

However ...

- Support has been given to Faresaver to take over the evening runs on x31 Chippenham to Corsham and Bath which First withdrew from at the end of last year.
- Government had in its manifesto funding to “restore rural buses that had been lost”. We are not totally rural, not yet lost, but funding was announced yesterday for Wiltshire. It may need a county-wide consultation to decide where to spend it though.
- Please - make it very clear to Wiltshire Councillors and officers just how important this service is for YOU. They are far more likely to buy something if they know it will be in line with desired used and public attitude. No more “but only 7 people responded to the consultation” which is where I started with the 2006 trains!

5

The Bus Market

Community input to services

- Rail – Community Rail Partnerships and station friends groups – typically work well with train operators. Set up locally, but can then gain official status
- Bus
 - some commercial operators have customer panels
 - other commercial operators may do surveys, listen to customers informally,etc

We have sympathy for public transport operators when they receive feed back that's impractical. Organised groups can, though, help explain issues and options to passengers and also help promote services.

Watchdogs

- Service Registration
- Transport Focus
- Bus Users UK
- Your council on supported services

50% or 90% cuts? No – 10%

1

Learn About Options

The Wiltshire Council subsidised bus consultation ran until **4th April 2016** and archive copies can be found on our links page. Read the government's proposal as it currently stands: **First draft**. Take a look at Michelle Donelan's thoughts on Option 24/7: **Chippenham MP's response**.

2

Our Recommended Action

If you support the suggestions from Michelle Donelan MP, from central government, and from ourselves, we suggested consultation responses that include your indication of that support in answer to question 25. Enough people did so (thank you) for our suggestion to come to the notice of the consultation team.

3

Let Us Know Your Interest

We want to hear from you too. Please fill in our form to let us know your thoughts, suggestions, and if you responded to the council's bus subsidy consultation. **Response Form**

4

Spread the Word

Please ask your friends, family, colleagues and fellow travellers to take an interest too! If you're in any doubt about something, please use the contact form to get in touch; we'll be happy to answer you by email, or on Facebook or Twitter. And if your question has common interest, we'll add it to our **Frequently Asked Questions**.

At a national level, the Campaign for Better Transport states that:

- 64% of jobseekers either have no access to a vehicle or cannot drive.
- Young people are amongst the biggest users of bus services, whilst 40% of people over 60 use the bus at least once a week.
- Passenger cars produce nearly 60% of all CO2 emissions from road transport in the UK, compared with just 5% from buses.
- If drivers switched just one in twenty five of their car journeys to bus or coach, it would mean one billion fewer car journeys per year.
- Every £1 of public investment in buses provides between £3 and £5 of wider benefits.
- Bus commuters generate £64 billion in economic output every year.

In Wiltshire, the most recent 'What matters to you survey' identified the following:

- 47.4% of respondents think that traffic volumes are one of the main threats to the environment in Wiltshire.
- 33.5% of respondents think the level of traffic congestion in their area needs improving.
- 28.6% of respondents think the level of public transport in their area needs improving.
- 24.2% of respondents think the level of public transport is one of the most important things in making somewhere a good place to live.
- 92.2% of respondents think the same (62.3%) or more (29.9%) should be spent on transport coordination and bus services.

6.

Longer term options

7.2.2020 - 19:00, Canberra, Spa Road Melksham - "Buses - Melksham, Future"

19.11.2019 - Still working for a network of public transport rather than disjoint provision

BUS CHANGES EFFECT PEOPLE'S LIVES

It's not about the buses - it's about the people who use the buses!

Mrs A can no longer drive. She relies on the bus to get her from her home into the town centre where she meets friends and does her shopping.

Mr B works in X. He's unable to drive for medical reasons, and commutes by bus every day; sometimes he has to work late and catch a bus back in the early evening.

The C family send their daughter to school in X - a journey of about 6 miles. It's not their nearest school, but it's the right one for her and she gets there by bus.

Miss D and her college friends want to meet up for a 'social' at the weekend or an evening; due to high insurance premiums none of them can afford a car, and in any case they want to be able to enjoy the evening without having to be awake (and sober) enough to drive safely home afterwards.



<http://option247.uk>

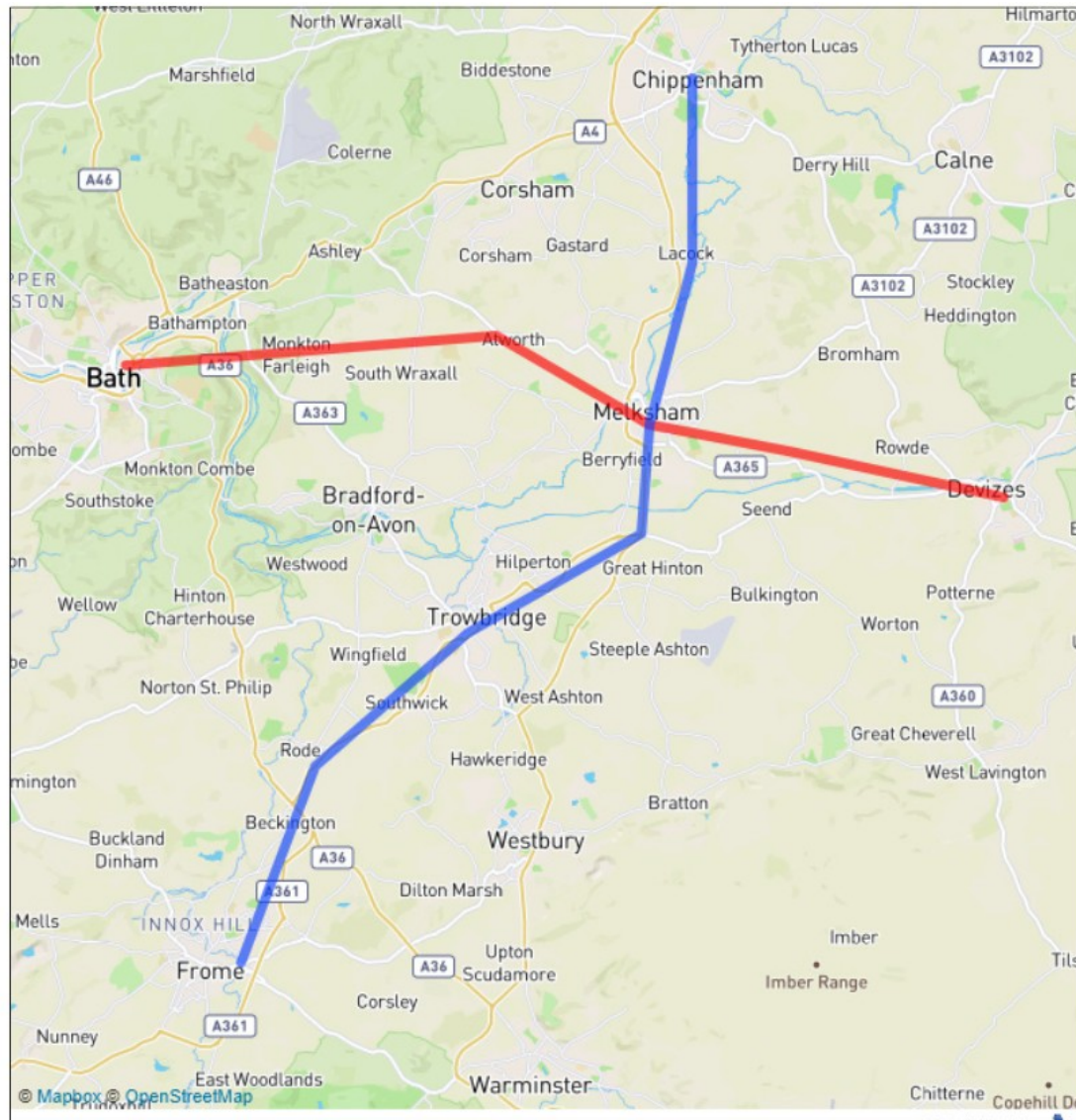
Mr E will be retiring in about 7 years - he's getting on a bit, shakey on his legs, and can no longer walk to the local railway station without it leaving him so tired he can't do his job properly.

Mrs F no longer has a bus to get to her doctors, so now she requires home visits.

Ms G had planned to go to college this September with a view to getting qualified and back into employment, but she's had to put these plans on hold because the bus that would get her home at the end of the college day doesn't run any more.

Mr H doesn't use the bus at all. But he can't get a car parking space in town / at work any longer as all the spaces are filled with people who used to use public transport, so he gets very frustrated and parks in residential streets to the annoyance of those residents.

Ms I is a health service / social services administrator, and she notices a severe strain on her 'customer transport' budget because she's now spending a lot of money (and organisation time) and arranging and paying for customers who used to use the bus.



Interurban Commercial Bus Map

Red Bath via Melksham-to-Devizes

Monday to Saturday, all day and evening

Sunday, daytime only

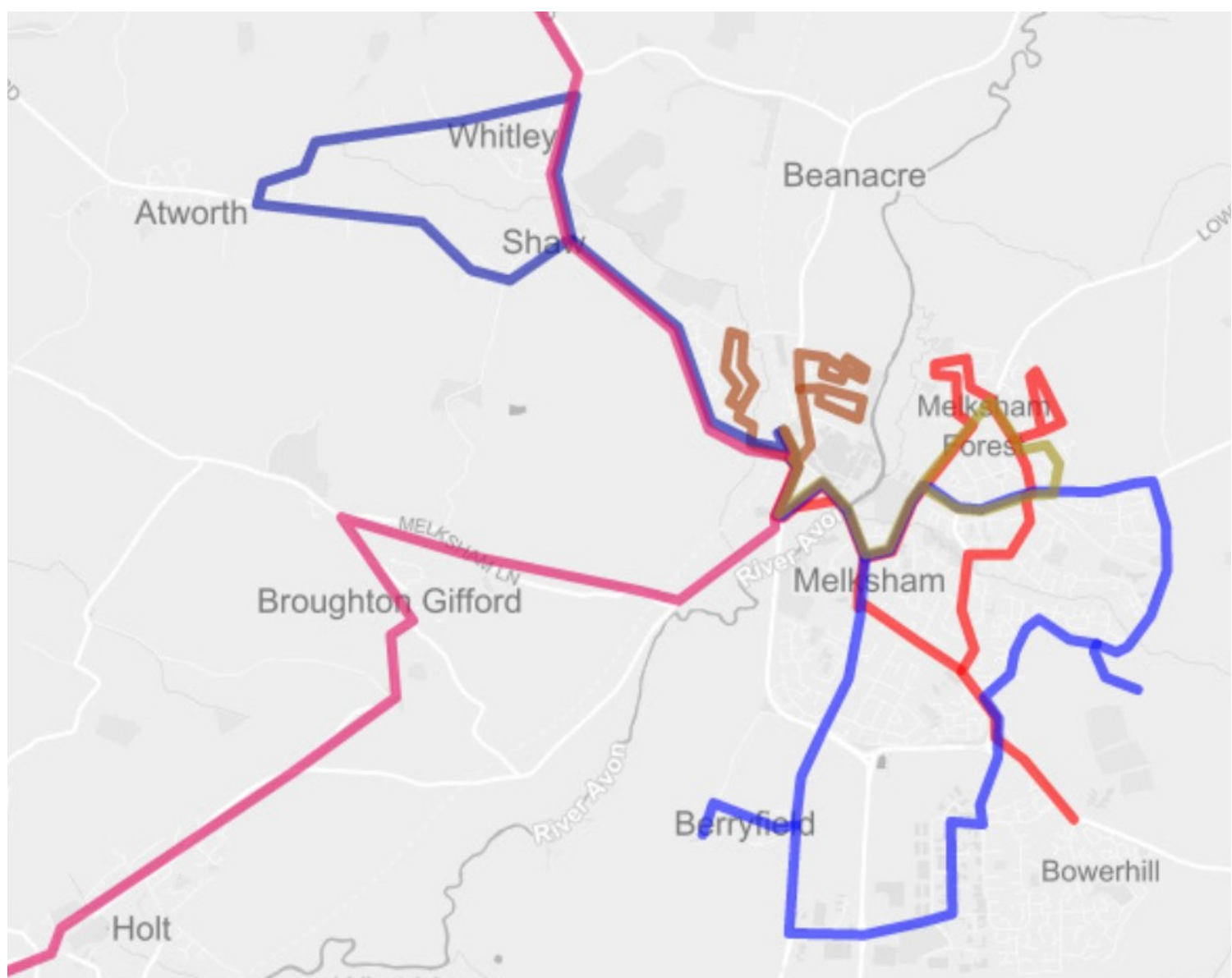
Blue Chippenham via Melksham-to-Trowbridge and Frome

Monday to Saturday, daytime only

No Sunday service

Sunday and evening Bath-to-Devizes services are supported and may be within the scope of these proposals.

Daytime (Monday to Saturday) are commercial and outside scope. They provide a different flow coverage into Melksham.



14a	at	17:50	from	Forest and Queensway	towards	Addison Road	(outbound)
15c	at	17:53	from	Bowerhill and Skylark	towards	Whitley	(outbound)
17c	at	17:56	from	Bradford-on-Avon	towards	Town Centre	(inbound)
Train	at	18:01	from	Swindon	towards	Westbury	(southbound)
16c	at	18:05	from	Town Centre	towards	Bath via Corsham	(outbound)
14a	at	18:10	from	Addison Road	towards	Forest and Queensway	(inbound)
15c	at	18:13	from	Whitley	towards	Bowerhill and Skylark	(inbound)

15c	at	18:50	arrival at station; completing its run				
Train	at	18:55	from	Westbury	towards	Swindon	(northbound)

Train	at	19:15	from	Swindon	towards	Southampton Central	(southbound)
18	at	19:20	from	Bath	towards	Devizes	(inbound)

18	at	20:15	from	Devizes	towards	Bath	(outbound)
Train	at	20:22	from	Westbury	towards	Cheltenham Spa	(northbound)

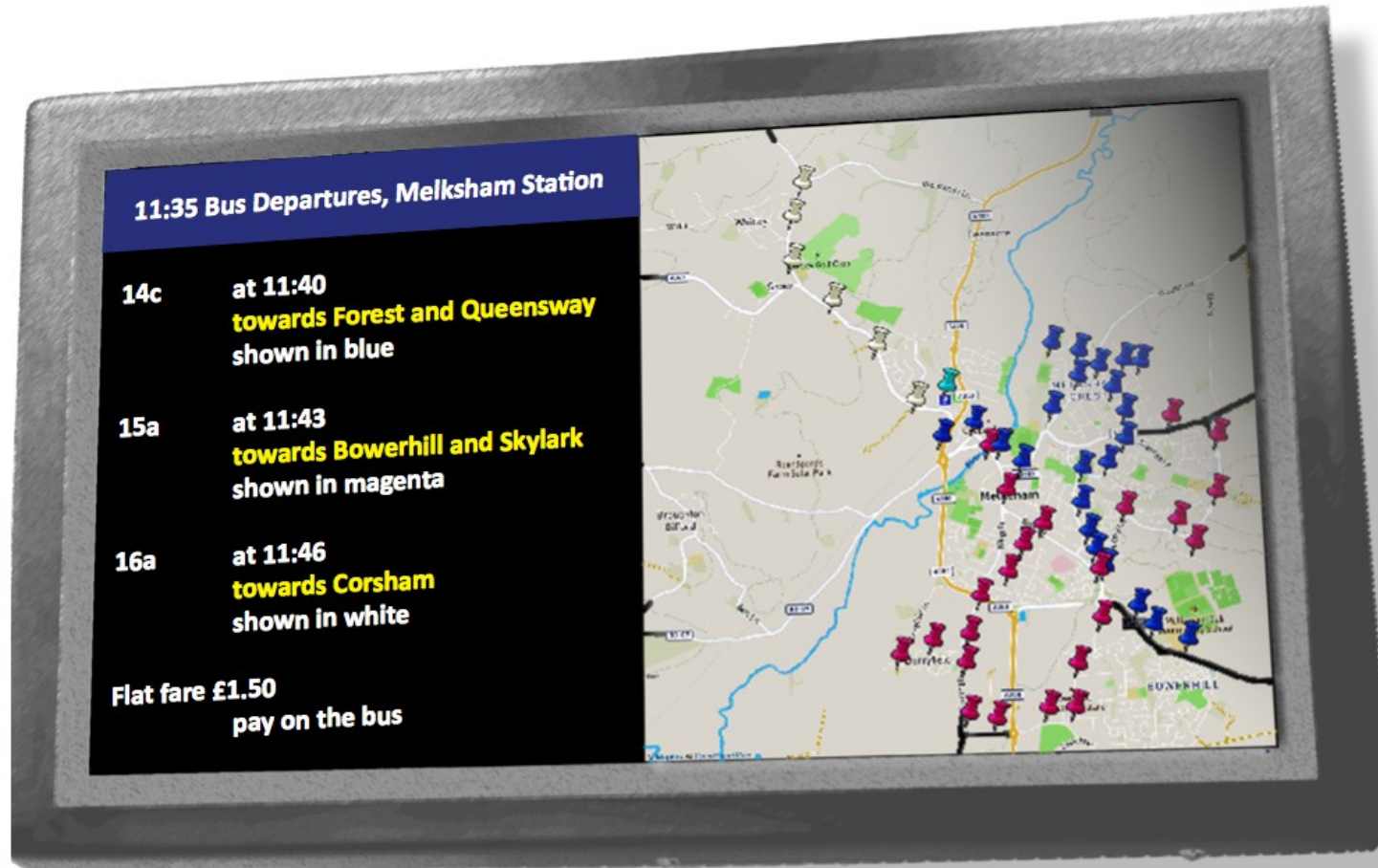
Train	at	21:10	from	Swindon	towards	Westbury	(southbound)
18	at	21:20	from	Bath	towards	Devizes	(inbound)

18	at	22:40	from	Devizes	towards	Bath	(outbound)
Train	at	22:50	from	Westbury (*)	towards	Swindon	(northbound)

Train	at	23:40	from	Swindon (*)	towards	Westbury	(southbound)
18	at	23:50	from	Bath	towards	Devizes	(inbound)

Proposed local bus network

Route 14	Route 15	Route 16	Route 17	Route 18
<i>Hourly</i>	<i>Hourly</i>	<i>Every 2 hours</i>	<i>Every 2 hours</i>	<i>Evenings only, every 2 hours</i>
Melksham Station	Melksham Station	Melksham Station	Melksham Station	Bath Bus Station
Melksham Town	Melksham Town	Melksham Town	Melksham Town	Bath Abbey
Methuen Avenue	Foresters	Melksham Forest	Melksham Forest	fast to Ashley
Melksham Forest	Water Meadow	Foresters	Foresters	(Northey Arms)
Sherwood Avenue	Rugby Ground	Melksham Town	Melksham Town	Atworth
Foresters	The Spa	Melksham Station	Melksham Station	Whitley
Queensway	Westinghouse Way	Shaw	Broughton Gifford	Melksham Station
The Spa	Semington Road	Gastard	Holt	Melksham Town
Melksham Oak	Berryfield	Corsham	Bradford-on-Avon	Foresters
Spa Road	Melksham Town	Gastard	Station	Water Meadow
Melksham Town	Melksham Station	Shaw	Holt	Rugby Corner
Melksham Station	Shaw	Melksham Station	Broughton Gifford	The Spa
Addison Road	Atworth		Melksham Station	Mitchell Drive
or Avon Road	Whitley			Melksham Oak
(alternating)	Melksham Station			Sells Green
Melksham Station				Devizes Market Place



Sample station real time display

The display can be anything that can be displayed on a computer monitor.

7

Resolutions

Resolution 1

- This meeting calls on Wiltshire Council to provide a supported evening bus service from Bath to Melksham and Devizes with a maximum gap of 2.5 hours between services and a final departure from Bath at or after 22:55 if such service is not provided by a commercial operator.

Resolution 2

- This meeting calls on Wiltshire Council to provide a supported **SUNDAY** bus service from Bath to Melksham and Devizes with a maximum gap of 2.5 hours between services (one gap 4 hours allowed) if such service is not provided by a commercial operator. First bus to arrive in Bath at or before 09:30, last bus to leave at or after 19:30

Resolution 3

- This meeting requests Faresaver to provide a minimum hourly service between all stops currently linked by commercial services on routes x72 and D3 for the duration of current hours served by either commercial service.

Resolution 4

- This meeting calls on all bus operators and Wiltshire Council to plan and implement public transport to encourage increased future use

8

What Next?

Time for radical bus rethink

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, and rural transportation plays a big part in economic growth.

Many local people believe that some of the changes to bus services are to the detriment of public service provision, could lead to fewer people using the bus, more traffic and congestion, and reduce the ability of 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 believes is needed.

There is no obligation on a



**MICHELLE
DONELAN**

MP for Melksham & Bradford

council to subsidise the service and it is 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. 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 to local transport experts and colleagues from other areas of the country and believe we need a radical rethink.

Quality Bus Contracts

work very well in London and Cornwall and are coming to Manchester soon.

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.

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, it means a more thought through service, involves the community and has simple, affordable prices and helps encourage the use of public transport.

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.

- **These are times of concern – but please help us by helping those who we're all going to be working with and taking a positive view**
- Please take all opportunities to remind people how public transport, and this public transport in particular, is important to you.
- These are times of great risk to services but also of great opportunities to build towards a busy integrated public transport network that's carbon neutral, congestion free, safe and affordable – that works for operators, for local and central government, for the planet and for you the passenger
- Long journeys comprise many small steps. Let's look to the longer strategy and the shorter tactics will be clear

2020-02-07 Special Meeting

Buses – Melksham - Future

D3 and x72 Bath – Melksham – Devizes – Urchfont
14 and 15 Melksham Community Area services

<http://www.mrug.org.uk/20200207.pdf>

<http://www.mrug.org.uk/resources.html>

* We will convey resolutions

* We will update via Facebook
via <http://www.passenger.chat/22836>
via email if we have yours

Next MRUG meeting - 18th March
Please pick up leaflet; please come along

Melksham
rail user group



Coffee Shop
gwr.passenger.chat