

12th July 2020

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Melksham

rail user group

Dear Members and Supporters,

Melksham Rail User Group newsletter

Issue 4 - July 2020



We encourage you to start making more use of public transport again

Welcome to the July edition of the Melksham Rail User Group newsletter. A big "thank you" to all our readers who kept clear of limited public transport unless they were making key worker or essential journeys and had no alternative.

But times are changing; trains and buses are running to almost complete timetables, infection rates are very low indeed, and changes made to what we do and how transport works **now make public transport safe and have enough capacity for journeys you'll want to make over this summer.**

From Faresaver Buses, who run most of Melksham's buses:

"With regards to passengers returning to buses I would encourage them to use any service they wish."

From First Group, who run all of Melksham's trains:

"FirstGroup chief executive Matthew Gregory said it is time to 'move away' from appealing to passengers not to use trains and buses for non-essential journeys."

An advert from the TransDev Bus Company:



Page

Article

- 1 – We're travelling again!
- 2 – We have an opportunity
- 3 – Trip ideas, Lacock, B-o-A
- 4 – More local trip ideas
- 5 – Travel safe guidelines
- 6 – The Melksham Hub
- 7 – Bus routes 271/2/3
- 8 – Train Timetables
- 9 – Neighbourhood Plan

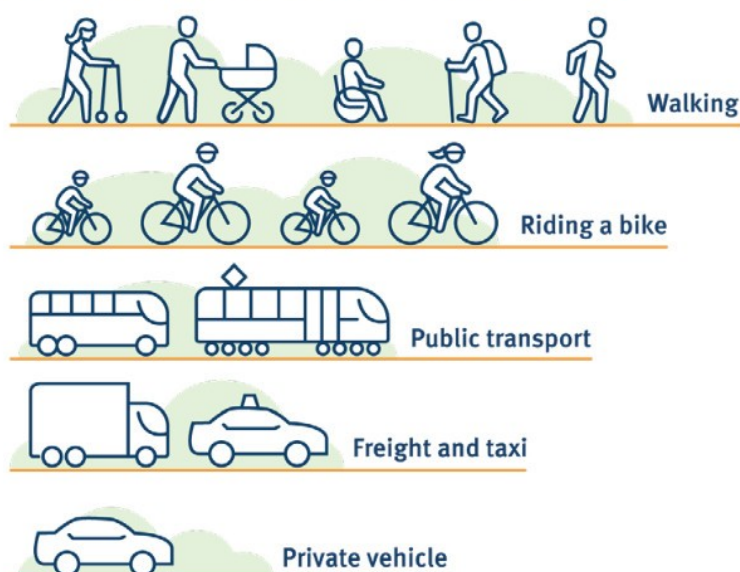
Please look inside this newsletter for updates on what's running from 12th July 2020 (it's almost everything!) and for some ideas for your first journeys back on public transport

We have an opportunity



We have enjoyed clean air for the past 3 months, and a lack of congestion. A bonus that we don't need to lose. Much of that bonus comes from the lack of private vehicles emitting both CO₂ and particulates, often stuck in traffic jams or slow moving queues, and a move across to better use of public transport will allow us to keep the bonus.

Sustainable transport hierarchy



Now is the time for you to make the move to more sustainable travel.

If readers think that Coronavirus has been a huge shock to the system, just note how it could be just a precursor to the massive shocks brought by continued climate change.

We have lost 40,000 lives in the UK to Coronavirus. We loose 40,000 *every year* because of dirty air.

Some ideas ... trips out from Melksham by public transport

All selected for late July and August 2020 trips to places where there is plenty of fresh air and space!

By Bus to Bradford-on-Avon

Bus no. 69 from Melksham
at 10:33, arriving at 10:52, Mon to Fri
at 10:23 or 12:33 on Saturday

Returning from Bradford-on-Avon
at 11:22, 13:22 or 14:22, Mon to Fri
at 13:22 or 15:46 on Saturday

No Sunday service



By Bus to Lacock

Bus no. x34 from Melksham
every 30 minutes from 09:28,
Mon to Fri

09:08, 10:35 and then hourly
on Sat.

No Sunday service



Return from Lacock at half hourly to
13:37, less frequent until last bus at
17:50 on Monday to Friday to Fri

hourly to 14:07, then 15:42, 16:42
and 17:47 on Saturday

No Sunday service



Images on these "idea" pages were taken prior to Coronavirus lockdown by members of Melksham Rail User Group. Please see page 5 for current (12.7.2020) advice on how to travel by bus and train.

By Bus to Caen Hill and Devizes

Bus 272 or 273 from Melksham
09:25 and hourly on Mon-Sat
09:50 and every 2 hours on Sunday

Return journeys Monday to Saturday
from Devizes at :32 after each hour
until late afternoon, and there are
some evening services.



Return at 09:12 and every 2
hours to 19:12 on Sunday

(note - the 19:12 only runs for
passengers from Devizes, so no
promise it will pick up at Caen
Hill)

By Train to Chippenham

From Melksham Station at

Monday to Friday at 05:32, 07:51, 10:00, 12:31, 14:31, 16:40 and 18:54

Saturday at 07:52, 10:20, 12:20, 14:22, 16:51 and 18:50

Sunday at 08:37, 11:00, 15:02, 17:06, 18:51 and 20:34

Return from Chippenham Station

Monday to Friday at 06:26, 08:58, 11:19, 13:28, 15:28, 17:50 and 20:59

Saturday at 08:49, 11:21, 13:21, 15:22, 17:48, and 19:47

Sunday at 09:27, 11:56, 15:54, 18:00, 19:42 and 21:25



When you are using public transport ...

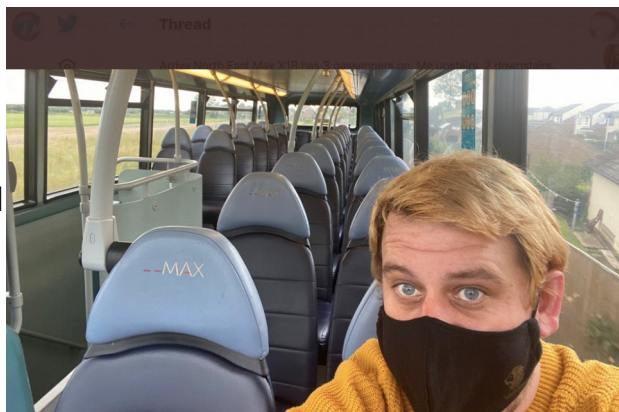
You are now required to wear a facemask on public transport.

Infection is low in Wiltshire anyway, and we are told that if everyone wears a facemask, the chance of getting infected is reduced 66 times over.

There are exceptions for young children, and for people for whom wearing a mask would cause medical issues.

You are also asked to socially distance – one person or family group per row, please, and sit by the window please. Please pay by contactless means if you can – cash only as a last resort.

Research from France and Japan has found no evidence of transmission on public transport journeys, and countries like Belgium are giving residents free train journeys to encourage domestic tourism.



Every Last Station
@every_station

Any concerns around social distancing on public transport on this trip were unnecessary.

Arriva North East Max X18 has 3 passengers on. Me upstairs, 2 downstairs.

The public transport message needs to change, public transport is safe!

7:14 PM · Jul 8, 2020 · Twitter for iPhone

Buses and train operators are requiring social distancing while you travel, but that still leaves plenty of space in Wiltshire.

General advice for train travel from GWR:

(no reservations and no peak issues to or from Melksham)



Use mobile and smart tickets



Check before you travel



Travel off peak where possible



Allow extra time to make your journey by train



You must wear a face covering



Carry hand sanitiser and wash your hands before and after travelling



Don't travel if unwell or have any symptoms



If available, make a reservation in advance

The Melksham Hub

Announced 1st July 2020 by Wiltshire Council that the TransWilts Community Interest Company has signed a lease for the car park area on Station Approach, Melksham and the adjacent land (opposite the station) which was formerly a builder's yard.

Image – Paul Johnson of TransWilts unlocks the new transport hub opportunity



TransWilts will continue to offer car parking for rail users previously offered by Wiltshire Council.

They plan to extend the car park, and parking will now be generally available rather than just on rail business. Rapid electric car charging points (on a national

system) will be available and cycle and (free) motor cycle areas. They plan a toilet, cafe and Piazza which are planned for late autumn. Access across to the station will be improved, where there will be additional disabled parking spaces and short term (30 minute) free parking.

The Chair and Vice Chair of the Melksham Rail User Group were briefed on plan details on 30th June. **MRUG welcomes continued improvement of facilities at Melksham Station and looks forward to working with TransWilts for further improvements.** Passenger numbers have risen from 3,000 to 75,000 per annum in a decade, and should rise to 250,000 in the next decade. The improvements that the lease announced allows are just one step in a process that will enable the station to handle this further considerable traffic rise for the good of the economy of Melksham and the surrounding area.

A TransWilts web site with up to date information for the Melksham Hub is at <https://www.melkshamhub.co.uk/> . Press releases from Wiltshire Council are at <http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/news/articles/melksham-station-hub> and <https://transwilts.org>

The TransWilts web site asks: "Are you a Café Operator who would be interested in running this venue? If so contact Paul Johnson email: pauljohnson@transwilts.org"

Buses to and from Bath and Devizes – from 13th July 2020

As from 13th July 2020, the new Faresaver routes 271, 272 and 273 from Bath to Melksham, with 272 and 273 continuing to Devizes, are in full operation.

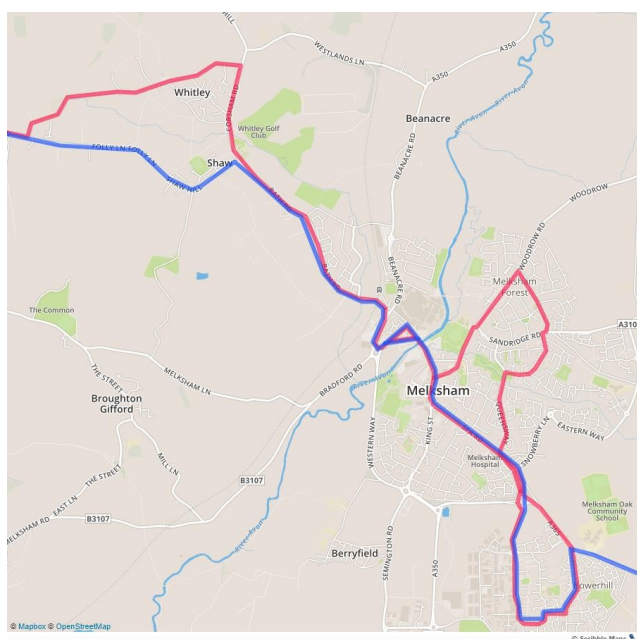
During the day, Monday to Saturday, buses on routes 271 and 272 each leave Bath Bus Station every hour, giving a combined 30 minute service.

The 271 runs via Kingsdown, Atworth and Whitley to Melksham, then via Melksham Forest, Queensway, and a Bowerhill loop before returning to the Town Centre along Spa Road and heading back into Bath.

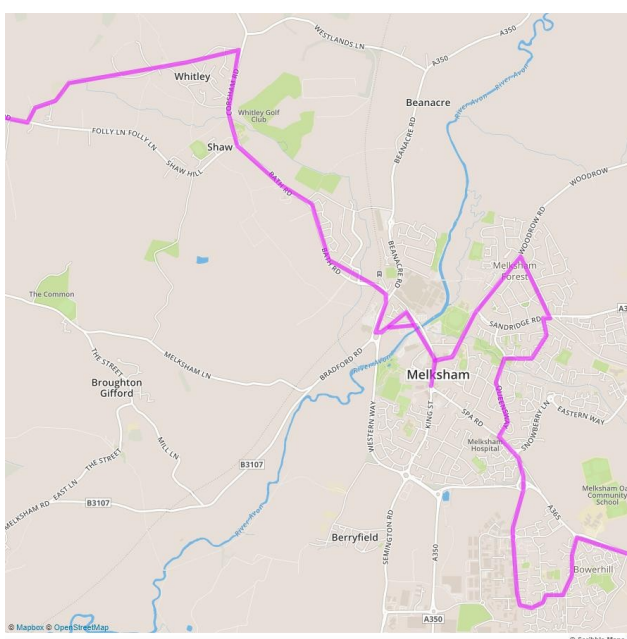
The 272 runs via Box, Atworth and Shaw Hill to Melksham, then directly along Spa Road before running through Bowerhill and on to Sells Green and Devizes.

In combination, the 271 and 272 also provide a service every 30 minutes from Melksham Market Place back into Bath.

In the evening and on Sundays, bus route 273 runs via Box, Atworth, Whitley, Melksham Town Centre, Melksham Forest, Queensway, Bowerhill and Sells Green to Devizes. When running, service 273 is about every 2 hours.



Service 271 (red) and 272 (blue)
271 runs clockwise around Melksham



Service 273 (Magenta)

Note that while road works are taking place in the centre of Melksham (ongoing as of 12th July), service 272 towards Devizes will not serve Coronation Road or Melksham Community Hospital, and will pick up at the Market Place and not the King's Arms.

Timetables for Faresaver buses are at <http://www.faresaver.co.uk> or call 01249 444444

All Melksham Public Transport timetables are at <http://www.mrug.org.uk/timetable.html>

Our current train service at Melksham

During the Coronavirus shutdown, train services were cut back – in many places much more severely than at Melksham, where the service was thin to start with. At the lowest point, we lost all of our Sunday trains and a few during the week.

As from Sunday 12th July, most Sunday trains return and a just few gaps remain on other days of the week.

Trains leave for Chippenham and Swindon at

Monday to Friday – 05:33, 07:53, 10:02, 12:32, 14:32, 16:41 and 18:55

Saturdays - 07:53, 10:21, 12:21, 14:23, 16:52 and 18:51

Sunday – 08:37, 11:00, 15:03, 17:06, 18:51 and 20:34

If you are returning from Westbury or Trowbridge, these trains leave Westbury 17 minutes and Trowbridge 10 minutes before they call at Melksham

Trains leave for Trowbridge and Westbury at

Monday to Friday – 06:36, 09:09, 11:30, 13:39, 15:39, 18:01 and 21:10

Saturday – 09:00, 11:31, 13:31, 15:33, 17:59 and 19:59

Sunday – 09:37, 12:06, 16:04, 18:10, 19:52 and 21:35

If you are returning from Swindon or Chippenham, these trains leave Swindon 27 minutes and Chippenham 10 minutes before they call at Melksham.

Looking further ahead

Plans are that the remaining missing trains will be restored in September.

Trains will be replaced by buses due to engineering works on 5th and 6th September, and again on 3 Sundays in October. We will have bus details in a future edition of this newsletter

We understand that the “Direct Award 3” to First Group to run services for 3 years from 1st April 2020, which is currently suspended due to special measures, requires First to provide two extra services a day starting within that 3 years, including a **late service back from Swindon to Melksham** that fills the gap we have been campaigning to fill for a number of years.

Prior to the emergency timetable, an **extra Saturday evening train** was scheduled to run from Westbury to Swindon starting in May 2020. This would have been a through service from Weymouth; the 09:00 Melksham to Westbury was also to be extended to Weymouth, giving day out opportunities. We are asking for this service to run all year from starting May 2021.

Medium and long term plans are for services to be **increased to hourly** each way and to be **extended from Westbury to Salisbury and Southampton**. It is good to see this under consideration in Network Rail’s continuous modular strategic planning document where they are looking at the long term capacity of Salisbury Station.

Melksham Neighbourhood plan

Melksham Town Council and Melksham Without Parish Council are consulting on a draft Neighbourhood Plan for a period of 8 weeks between 1st June - 27th July (Note: extension). See <https://www.melkshamneighbourhoodplan.org> . We commented on this in our previous newsletter (http://www.mrug.org.uk/mrugnews_202006.pdf pages 4 and 5) and encourage readers to write in to support.

"This policy helps meet objective 9: Supporting improved transport infrastructure for the increasing Melksham population. ...and objective 10: Encouraging journeys by rail together with improving cycle and walking routes thus reducing the need to travel by car."

Draft Policy 11: Sustainable Transport and Active Travel

All developments must be planned in line with the Sustainable Transport Hierarchy. Applications for major development must demonstrate through an active travel plan how sustainable transport modes in the Plan area are maximised and that safe and suitable access can be achieved for all people.

Further improvements to the accessibility and to the quality of Melksham Railway Station environment, as a key element in our sustainable transport network, will be strongly supported

and also

The railway line is an important sustainable transport link that enables residents and visitors to make sustainable transport choices and promotes an alternative to the private car. The railway station has car and cycle parking, but is currently poorly served by local bus routes. Additional funding for local bus routes was announced in March 2020 and the Melksham Rail User Group have put forward proposals for improvement to bus services in the Plan area.



Many of our bus proposals have been described in previous newsletters, and there will be a full update in the next edition. At this time, it's important to support the neighbourhood plan, and the immediate return of confidence in passengers to return to the use of public transport.

Peter Blackburn - Chair
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Graham Ellis – Vice Chair
Secretary – secretary@mrug.org.uk