

Corsham Community Area Network & Transition Community Corsham



Bus Stop Audit 2009

Executive Summary

This paper contains the findings of a bus stop audit conducted by Transcoco on behalf of the Corsham Community Area Network. The audit reviewed bus stops in the Corsham Community Area and found:

- Information provided at bus stops is limited and in many cases non-existent, and other sources of timetable information are inconsistent and hard to use
- The physical facilities provided at many bus stops are of poor quality
- In a number of cases bus stops which appear on route maps do not actually exist on the ground.

These problems make it harder for people to use the bus services provided in the area. It is a clearly stated objective of Wiltshire Council, Corsham Town Council and others that public transport should be encouraged to reduce dependence on the private car, but as these findings reveal, we are failing to make this policy work in practice.

We therefore recommend that Transcoco and CCAN work in partnership with the relevant local authorities to implement actions which will improve this situation, specifically:

Short Term (6 months)

- Work in partnership with CCAN, Transcoco, Bus service providers, Town Parish and Unitary Authority councils to review findings from bus stop audit
- Identify all bus stop locations clearly
- Improve information at all bus stop locations
- Raise awareness of texting service
- Ensure all information is up to date and accurate on services and pricing

Long term (18 months)

- GPS location devices fitted to all buses with means for passengers to access this information, e.g. by mobile phone
- Set realistic passenger growth targets
- Consider more appropriate and attractive pricing structures
- Encourage bus providers to accept other bus providers return tickets
- Promote greater use of bus travel over car travel – safer, cheaper, quicker.

1. Introduction

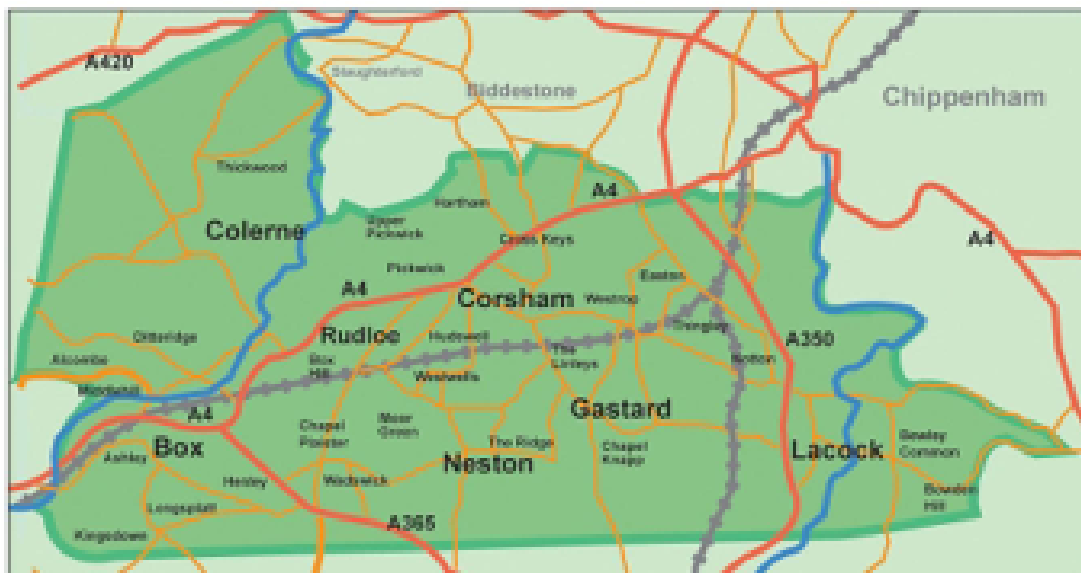
Corsham Community Area Network (CCAN) is the community partnership for the Corsham Community Area. As part of the research undertaken to update the community plan in 2008/9, transport issues, and in particular those relating to public transport emerged as the number one key issue for the Corsham Community Area.

In January 2009 Transition Community Corsham (Transcoco) was launched. We are an independent group with the aim of making a difference in our locality and the wider world as we confront the twin challenges of peak oil and climate change.

Transcoco has set up a number of interest groups, one of which is the Transport action group. One of the aims of this group is to encourage reductions car use for example by cycling, walking or using public transport.

Both CCAN and Transcoco share the same geographical boundary so the synergies in working together are obvious. Transcoco's Transport action group has therefore been adopted as one of CCAN's action groups to explore potential ways of addressing the issues and aspirations for transport in the updated Community Plan mentioned above.

One of the key issues of residents throughout the community area is a desire for better access to convenient, sustainable, affordable and safer public transport. Bus and coach services provide the main source of public transport within and through the community area. It was therefore decided to map the current level of provision across the community area.



2. Scope of the Audit

The actual routes, level and quality of service provided is outside the scope of this research, which is purely concerned with the availability of information regarding bus travel and the facilities available at each stop.

This research therefore aims to:

- Identify the bus and coach stops within the community area
- Identify the services which are provided from each stop
- Record the facilities available at each stop
- List the availability of information regarding bus and coach services in the Corsham Community Area.

3. Methodology

- Bus stops were identified through:
 - Timetables
 - Bus companies websites
 - TravelineSW website
 - Wiltshire Council website
- An audit form was produced to record the facilities and availability of information at each bus stop (see appendix 1)
- Each bus stop was visited by a Transcoco volunteer who recorded the information and photographed the bus stop
- The data was logged onto a spreadsheet (see appendix 2)
- The collective data was analysed to provide a breakdown
 - Across the whole community area
 - By town and parish
- A list of recommendations was then made.



4. Findings

4.1 Services

We believe that as of November 2009 the community area is currently served by six bus and coach operators providing 16 different services.

The routes with bus stops within and across the community area were identified following research in the field and through websites such as www.travelinesw.com and www.wiltshire.gov.uk

This aspect of the research threw up several anomalies. In particular, there are many inconsistencies in the information provided from the following sources:

- TravelineSW website,
- Wiltshire Council website
- Bus Companies websites
- Printed timetables
- Local knowledge
- Information at bus stops

These discrepancies include the following:

- The actual routes taken (eg No 72 and No 73)
- Whether some of the services are still running (eg No 37)
- the service providers (eg 10 A.10B & 10 C)
- The naming of the bus stops.

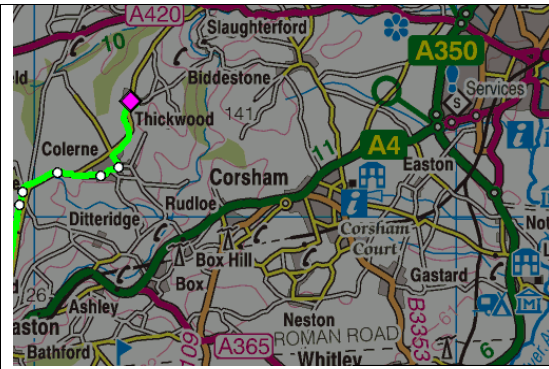
This has the combined effect of making it very difficult and confusing for the public to access the services provided.

Operator	Service	From	To	Notes
First	231	Bath	Chippenham	
"	232	Bath	Chippenham	
"	233	<i>Bath</i>	<i>Chippenham</i>	<i>Ceased 31 Oct 09</i>
"	272	Bath	Devizes	
"	273	Bath	Devizes	
"	228	Chippenham	Frome	
Faresaver	234	Bath	Colerne	
"	X31	Bath	Chippenham	
"	X34	Chippenham	Frome	Via Melksham
Bodmans	37	Bradford on Avon	Chippenham	Via Corsham ??
Coachstyle	36	Castle Combe	Chippenham	Via Colerne
Hatts / Bodmans	10A	Corsham	Corsham	Town Service
"	10B	Corsham	Corsham	Town Service
"	10C	Corsham	Corsham	Town Service
Bodmans	10D	Corsham	Corsham	Town Service
National Express	403	Bath	London	Coach Service
"	302	Bristol	Northampton	Coach Service

4.2 Bus Stop locations

Taken from the TravelineSW and Wiltshire Council website, the following shows the location of bus stops for each service. Note that some of these double up as some services share some or part of the same routes.

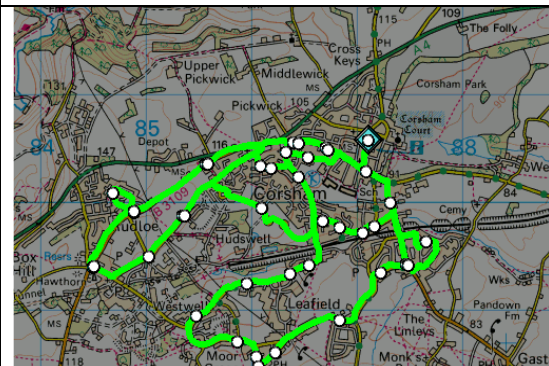
<p>Services 231/232/X31 Bath – Chippenham</p>	<p>Service 272/273 Bath – Devizes</p>
<p>Coach Service 403 Bath – London & 302 Bristol – Northampton</p>	<p>Service 72 Corsham – Melksham</p>
<p>Service 73 Corsham – Melksham</p>	<p>Service 234/X34 Chippenham – Melksham</p>



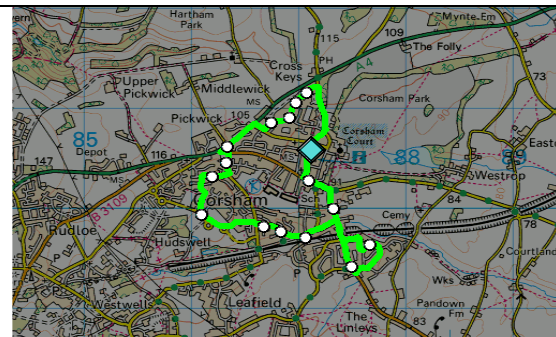
Service 228 Bath – Colerne



Corsham Town Services



Service 10A/10B/10C Corsham Town Service



Service 10D Corsham Town Service

There is some uncertainty in several areas as to where the bus stops are actually located. Some of these include:

- **Katherine Park** The roads in Katherine Park are yet to be adopted so although a bus service regularly travels along Freestone Way there are not yet any stops on the ground
- **Neston** In the Neston area many stops are shown on the town map and have Bus Stop codes (see below) but are not identified on the ground.
- **Faresaver routes** The Faresaver service is referring to itself as a 'hail and ride' service suggesting passengers can flag down or request to be set down anywhere safely along a given route.



4.3 Bus Stop Codes

Bus stops have been given a unique 8 character bus stop code for identification. These all begin **wil.....** This code can be texted to 84268 and a return text will give the times of the next three buses from that stop. This is timetabled information – not real time information. The buses would need to be equipped with GPS to offer that. There is also a charge of 25p per text.

However, many local authorities and service providers are investing in this sort of new technology by making this service more widely known and equipping buses with GPS to provide real time information for customers. There are clearly considerable benefits in offering this kind of information and at a fraction of the cost of installing real time information boards at each stop.

There are further discrepancies with the bus stop codes with some stops being missed out altogether – particularly where there is one stop serving buses in both directions (eg Corsham Primary School). The problem is further compounded by so called ‘ghost stops’ which appear on some websites and some of which have codes but for which it is unclear if a service calls.

Despite these uncertainties the bus stop codes have helped us to identify approximately **115 Bus Stops** across the community area. The total numbers of Bus Stops for the town and parish areas are therefore as follows:

	Box	Colerne	Corsham	Lacock	TOTAL
Number of Bus Stops	25	14	63	13	115

4.3 Bus Stop Facilities

Every bus stop in the community area was visited and the facilities available recorded using the form in Appendix 1.

Appendix 2 gives the detailed breakdown from each bus stop. These are grouped by town and parish. Comments have also been added where there are specific problems such as with damage or graffiti.

Sometimes a bus stop location may be given on both sides of the road but the sign and sometimes a shelter may appear on one side only with the notice ‘both directions’.

In some instances this task was made difficult by the lack of a bus stop sign or any other identification so the approximate location was judged from the available data.

4.4 Key Findings

The key findings from the research are as follows:

- 71% of the bus stops are identified with a bus stop sign
 - This means that nearly one third of bus stops are unidentified
 - In terms of public convenience and awareness this seems a low figure
 - There have been reports of some bus drivers refusing to stop at some 'official' stops as there is no sign
 - Some of these stops will 'share' a sign with a stop on the other side of the road going in the opposite direction.

- Only 33% of the bus stops have a timetable at the location
 - The timetables recorded were generally First services and occasionally Faresaver
 - However, this means that two thirds of bus stops have no timetable at all
 - This makes it very difficult for passengers and potential passengers to access the necessary information at the point of pick up.
 - Some of the stops had a blank notice board designed for timetables
 - Two different formats for the presentation of timetables are used: First use generic timetables for the whole route while Faresaver have a possibly more user friendly 'departures from this stop' style of list
 - No other information such as about fares, texting services or 'what to do if your bus does not turn up' is given.

- Only 18% of bus stops are identified with a name
 - Out of those with a sign only half have a name
 - The name may be on the sign or on the bus shelter
 - The name may not agree with the timetable, website or bus stop code name.

- 18% of bus stops are equipped with fibre optic cabling
 - This will be necessary for the installation of real time information such as in much of the former West Wiltshire district council area
 - Expensive to install, cabling only seems to be evident in new stops or along some of the A4 route have this facility
 - Newer technology may make this obsolete.

- Only 36% of bus stops have a raised pavement
 - Two thirds of the bus stops therefore do not enable safe and easy access for the less physically able or those with pushchairs

- Only 36% of bus stops are provided with a bus shelter
 - There is no protection from the rain at two thirds of the bus stops

- As many of the passengers are elderly or mothers with small children this makes bus travel a less attractive option
 - Only 25 of the bus shelters have light but many of these were not working at the time of the survey
 - Only 8 of these shelters have a no smoking sign. As bus stops are covered areas they come under the smoking ban legislation so should technically have a sign to remind people of this fact.
- 20% of bus stops have a lay-by for the buses to pull into
 - We have been given to understand this is no longer a recommendation for a stop as it can mean buses are 'trapped' if they cannot get back out into a flow of traffic
 - However it does mean that buses may cause more congestion by stopping a flow of traffic.
- 38% of bus stops have a seat provided
 - Many of these are provided by the parish or town council
 - As many of the passengers are more elderly the provision of a seat to wait for the bus is very important .
- 23% of bus stops have a bin
 - Less than a quarter of stops have a litter bin
 - Some of these were broken or had not been emptied for a while
 - Many of the bus stops were rather dirty and unpleasant places to wait for a bus.
- None of the bus stops referred to the 8 character texting code.
 - This is fairly new innovation to this area
 - This was noticed on an advert inside a bus.



5. Recommendations

5.1 Partnerships in bus provision

There is a sense that as buses are a deregulated service there is little that can be done to change the status quo. They are run by private companies on a profit making basis. Local authorities have only minimal influence on which routes are followed, the timetables offered or the prices charged. Local authorities may contribute to the cost of a service in the form of a subsidy if it is financially unviable for the bus company to run it profitably. However, finances are limited and need to be targeted in the most effective ways

However, bus services need to be viewed more as part of a partnership between bus providers, local councils and the communities which they serve. Local councils and communities can offer a valuable insight into the way in which services are run which can help make them more viable for the bus companies and consequently more valuable for local communities.

5.2 Policies and statements

In addition, local authorities are driven by their own internal and external policies which are helping to promote a keener interest in ensuring that local bus services best serve their communities and are well used. All of this is, of course also in the interests of the bus providers as it will lead to more profitable services.

Most recent policies and statements include a strong desire to reduce the dependence on the motor car as the primary source of transportation. These include:

- **Wiltshire Council LTP 3**

The third local transport plan (LTP) for Wiltshire will be published around March 2011 and will set out a future vision for sustainable transport across Wiltshire. It is being developed in response to the Government's 1998 White Paper on Transport, 'A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone', which introduced the concept of LTPs to steer the development of national transport policies at the local level. Reduction in the dependency on car use is a key aim of the LTP. Transcoco will be working alongside Wiltshire Council to help develop an implementation strategy for LTP3.

- **Corsham Town Transport plan**

Corsham Town Council has developed its own vision for transport in the town as part of its corporate plan. Town Transport Policy TP06 (Public Transport) monitors bus routes and support routes that serve the Town Centre at least quarterly by the amenities committee. The plan sets its aspirations to enable residents to have regular, affordable and easy access to bus services to and from the Town Centre and further afield.

Corsham Community Area Network

CCAN, the Community Area Partnership for the Corsham Area published its updated community plan in early 2009 following extensive research across the community area. This identified Transport, access and traffic as the top concern for people across the community area. This was identified as follows:

- a desire for better access to convenient, sustainable affordable safer public transport
- a concern regarding traffic management and control and safe access to schools
- a concern over links within community area and to neighbouring towns.

One of the responses to these findings from the community plan was to commission this bus stop audit in collaboration with Transcoco's transport action group.

5.3 Suggestions for improvement

Drawing these things together seems to hint at a common thread of their being a real desire to encourage more people to use public transport instead of the motor car. Clearly more research will need to be done to consider routes, fares, timetabling etc but initially to encourage more people to use the services currently available it seems reasonable that we need to ensure bus stops are informative, clean, safe and pleasant places to start or complete a bus journey.

The community partnership CCAN might consider working with each town and parish to consider ensuring all the stops within their remit are provided with basic facilities. If not, working in collaboration with Wiltshire Council and the bus providers to improve the situation.

As a basic checklist this could ensure all bus stops:

- are clearly identified
- are in a clean condition and in a generally good state of repair
- have some protection from inclement weather
- provide somewhere to sit
- provide information on what services are available at that stop, how to use them and what to do if things go wrong.

In terms of the information available to passengers there needs to be a review to ensure all information is up to date, accurate and accessible. Information needs to be more than just a timetable as it also needs to include information on fare structures, the texting service, and contact numbers for further information or problems. This all needs to be provided:

- at each bus stop in a simple easy to read format
- in print available free at 'public' buildings eg libraries and other
- On relevant websites.

5.4 Targets

We propose the following targets for action:

Short Term (6 months)

- Work in partnership with CCAN, Transcoco, Bus service providers, Town Parish and Unitary Authority councils to review findings from bus stop audit
- Identify all bus stop locations clearly
- Improve information at all bus stop locations
- Raise awareness of texting service
- Ensure all information is up to date and accurate on services and pricing

Long term (18 months)

- GPS location devices fitted to all buses with means for passengers to access this information, e.g. by mobile phone
- Set realistic passenger growth targets
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- Promote greater use of bus travel over car travel – safer, cheaper, quicker.



Transcoco transport action group

November 2009

Appendix 1: Audit Form

TransCoCo / CCAN Corsham Community Area Bus Stop Audit Autumn 2009

Name of Stop			
Location			
Stop code			
	✓	Comments	
Bus Stop Sign			
Shelter			
Seat			
Access			
Lighting			
Fibre optics			
Timetables First			
Timetables Faresaver			
Timetables Other			
Other information			
Any other comments			
Completed by			Date

Appendix 2: Data collection
(see excel sheets)