

Pewsey Area Board, 12th May 2014

Update - Review of Connect2 Wiltshire services in the Pewsey Vale

Purpose of report

To update the meeting about the current consultation on proposed changes to the Connect2 Wiltshire service in the Pewsey Vale, and encourage responses before the closing date of 14 May.

Background

The review of the Connect2 Wiltshire services is one of an ongoing series of reviews across the county, that are looking at bus services funded by the Council which are poorly used or relatively expensive to provide. The reviews are being carried out in the context of the current pressures on public spending and the requirement of the Council's Financial Plan to make savings in funding for bus services. Letters explaining and inviting views on the proposed changes have been circulated via the Area Board managers, and questionnaires seeking the views of individual users (or potential users) are available on the buses and in local libraries. All of the consultation documents are also available on the council's website at;

<http://www.wiltshire.gov.uk/council/consultations.htm>

A consultation meeting is also being held at Woodborough Social Club on 7th May.

Update

At the time of writing (29 April), 90 responses had been received to the questionnaire, but only 8 written responses.

Of the respondents to the questionnaire;

- 44% use the service more than 3 times per week, and 35% once or twice per week
- The main reasons for wanting to travel are shopping (65%), medical appointments (32%), visiting (28%) and leisure (27%). Around 19% say they travel for work or to connect with train or bus services.
- 74% say the current service meets their main travel needs, and 54% say the proposed timetable would still meet their needs. 56% say the new timetable would encourage them to use the service more often.
- 64% were over 65, 25% between 46-64, and 17% considered themselves disabled

The main issues raised in the responses to date include the following;

- Issues with the timings of various journeys; less convenient for some individual users
- Places no longer served (Urchfont, Manningford, East Grafton)
- Some individuals no longer able to get to work at required time
- Withdrawal of the Night Bus, especially on Fridays for users of the SHAK, and also for older residents of Pewsey
- Pleased that service will be timetabled (but 1 says should remain demand responsive and another comment that it is a bad idea to mix bookings with hail and ride)
- Pleased with improved Pewsey – Devizes service (but 1 comment about loss of express journeys)
- Concern that changes will lead to collapse of the service
- Connections with X5 bus or trains from Pewsey to London need improving (wait is too short / too long)

Next steps

After the consultation closes on 14 May, all of the responses will be assessed and consideration given to ways in which the proposals might be modified, if this can be achieved at an affordable cost, to address the main concerns raised. Alternative ways of providing a service (for example through community transport) might also be considered if more appropriate. A contract for operating the revised service will be awarded during the summer, prior to implementation in October 2014.

Ian White
Head of Service Passenger Transport
ian.white@wiltshire.gov.uk
01225 713322