



Melksham Bus User Group (MBUG)

Seeking a positive future for bus services to, from, within and through Melksham

Bus services for Melksham - the future

Supported bus services around Wiltshire are all being re-contracted soon, with Melksham, Devizes, Trowbridge, Bradford-on-Avon, Westbury and Warminster areas first. (May be others early too - list is from verbal discussion)

Melksham's services are due for specification over the next few weeks, contract award targeted for the end of August, with new contracts running from late January 2018.

There are options for what's to be bid against:

1. **Existing services** to continue much as they are, though with the probability that they'll decrease as operating costs go up, subsidy goes down, and passengers trickle away over the years
2. **Significant cuts from existing services** "if the bids come in too high for us to otherwise afford". As two vehicles are needed in Melksham to meet statutory school transport needs, and cuts made to public services are in danger of making small savings for big service reductions, perhaps leaving a vehicle parked up all day.
3. We (from the option 24/7 and TransWilts teams) have been invited to submit an **alternative proposal** for bus operators to bid against, together with a memorandum of explanation as to the background.

In recent weeks and months, we have spoken with a considerable number of organisations - listed later - and gained a great deal of support. We have travelled and learned a very great deal about the technical issues involved, and what everyone wants or needs to get out of the winning bid - people who are travelling (existing and potential), transport operators, bus drivers, the councils, businesses in the area, sports and social clubs and other destinations, community bus and link scheme organisers, other motorists and residents. And we have learned of the risks involved in changing routes and systems, as well as the risks of a downward spiral if it continues "as is" while affordable, and the very real hardship that can be caused to individual(s) who lose their lifeline.

Proposal for option 3 - let's call it the "community option"

Headline service

* Two buses an hour from Melksham Station / ASDA / Sainsbury's / Town Centre to Melksham Forest and the Forrester's Arms. One bus to continue back into Melksham and the other via Blackmore Road and Queensway to Spa Road and Snowberry Lane corner, then back into the town and to the same start points.

* The two buses will run with a 20 and 40 minute gap, allowing commercial service 272 to provide a 20 minute service in combination. We have no control over 272, but we may have some influence. From Blackmore Road onwards, the 272 together with the town bus will provide 2 services per hour from The Forest to the surgery area, and one bus an hour to the Bowerhill area.

The above services account for one vehicle

* One bus an hour Melksham Station / ASDA / Sainsbury's / Town Centre to Semington Road, Berryfield, Bowerhill Commercial area, The Spa, surgery area, Snowberry Lane, Eastern Way, Skylark Road, Sandridge Road, and back to Melksham and the starting points. Service to run in the opposite direction after lunchtime.

* That service continuing once an hour to Granville Road, Avon Road, and Southbrook Road areas before returning to the station and carrying on with the route listed in the previous paragraph.

The above services also account for one vehicle.

Notes

A Sketch map showing the routes proposed, and other routes that operate regularly, after this report

The community option (option 3), like the current service (option 1) allows for both vehicles to be available to run modified routes to cover statutory school traffic. We anticipate that operating costs of option 3 will be similar to the operating costs of option one, but will offer opportunities for additional revenue for the operator, better vehicle loading rates, and increased marketing opportunities, some of which may have some external funding available.

Saturday services with a single vehicle running an hourly cycle. From the station and town through Semington Road, Bowerhill Industry, Eastern Way, then around Melksham Forest residential areas. Short cycle north of Melksham Station as on weekdays. Five morning runs, hour for lunch, five afternoon runs in the opposite direction. Blackmore Road and Queensway served by 272. Saturday and Sunday bus maps in our 23rd May discussion document - link at base of page

Both vehicles are specified for single driver operation for the day, with driver hour limits and breaks taken into account. Current operators in the Melksham Community Area are AD Rains, Faresaver, First Bus, Frome Minibuses, Go Ahead, Libra Travel, Melksham Community Bus, National Express, Seend Shuttle and Stagecoach. Other operators such as Beeline of Warminster run none-scheduled private services in(to) the town, and operators such as Coachstyle, Wessex Bus and RATP run services within 10 miles. Option 3 does not seek to impose any constraints which would prevent any of these organisations from bidding.

Technical papers including draft timetables, and detail elements that would be subject to further discussion and arrangement, will be available under separate cover, as will our community estimates of traffic opportunities and loadings. Further papers including support offers and mechanisms for ongoing community marketing support and structures also under separate cover. Notes on options considered and excluded also under separate cover - this is at present an introductory proposal.

The TransWilts team has a track record of success with public transport, a reputation for promoting viable schemes, and to looking forward to the longer term as well as the short term with solutions offered. In the last year, we have assisted with promoting the fastest growing rail service in the South West, and won marketing awards for traffic generation and for individual achievement of campaigning goals. Trains that were once empty are now well loaded, and trains that didn't even run 4 years ago are now full and standing into Melksham. Option 3 will be taken on by TransWilts (a CIC and designated community rail service at the Department for Transport) at the point that the Melksham Bus proposals move from being a proposal to being something where a long term partnership is the right way forward - and that could be within months or even weeks.

Service highlights ...

* Provide service to and from Melksham Station, where there are 60,000 public transport arrivals or departures a year

(compared to around 3,000 in 2012).

- * Provide service to and from businesses such as G Plan, Avon Protection, Herman Miller, Knorr Bremse, Superior Graphics, Christie Miller, Boomerang, the Wiltshire School of Gymnastics and many others - at times suitable for employees as well as during the day
- * Provide commuter services from Melksham Forest and Eastern Way to the Town Centre, connections to Bath and Trowbridge, and to the Station for Chippenham and Swindon
- * Provide services on Saturday afternoon for leisure users
- * Improve Berryfield services, including buses to employment areas, surgery area and station.
- * Provide through services from the Police Station to the main residential areas of Melksham
- * Morning and afternoon services to /from the station timed to arrive before a train calls, the bus then to service the residential areas within easy walking distance of the station prior to returning there to collect passengers who have got off the train that just called.
- * Provide service to Pathfinder Way and Snowberry Lane / Eastern Way areas where new planning approvals have been given
- * Provide service to the Travelodge (approved 60 room hotel) and Milk Churn

Noting ...

- * Reduction from 3 to 2 buses per hour / Blackmore Road and Queensway
- * Possible re-routing in North Melksham areas
- * Service reduction over lunchtime while each driver takes a well-earned break!

This proposal does not look at supported services 271 (First), 271 (Go Ahead), x76 (AD Rains) and 68 / 69 (Faresaver) which we are assuming will carry on broadly as at present. One exception - we suggest rerouting the 271 (Go Ahead) service as it comes into Melksham via Snowberry Lane, Eastern Way, Sandridge Road and to the Station rather than routing via Bowerhill and Spa Road. This will eliminate the duplicate services around Bowerhill on Sundays, and give a 7 day service to the new estates off Eastern Way, with rail connections to the edge of Bowerhill, Sells Green, Devizes and the villages on a Sunday. Bath connection at Broughton Road or at Bath Road.

This proposal is set up to work. We understand that Wiltshire Council plans to bring in the new contracts in January 2018, with limited marketing material printed; tuning and adjustment for the April timetable change including at that point further marketing. The next milestone in Melksham's supported bus services is in 2020, where developer's contributions run out (CIL / 106) - by that time, the buses should not require support to the same level that this funding was intended to seed.

Enhances Partnership Scheme for marketing

Two of the big stumbling blocks on attracting new users to buses are fare and timetable information, including real time and integrated information. We are also proposing (but not linked to this contract) an enhanced partnership or equivalent scheme which would allow the provision of Melksham Area Wide fares (that's including the natural Melksham shopping area - so out to Bromham, Sells Green, Semington, Holt, Atworth, Gastard and Lacock). Again - separate documentation. Also uniform bus stop information to be printed and applied locally / central base at TIC, with whom this has already been discussed. And timetabling information including whole-journey connectional.

There is some further detail of this proposal in our 23rd May discussion document - link at base of this page

How do we progress the development of these suggestions?

"Melksham Bus User Group" is a working title for this co-ordinated effort; requires TransWilts co-ordination
Posted 28th May 2017

To be discussed at TransWilts board on 30th May 2017

Further postings of additional data by 4th June 2017.

To be included in information packs at Area Board on 7th June.

Likely further short term discussions. Meetings to look / learn from interested parties starting 6th June

Public discussions and inputs after Area Board

Ideally, wider consultation exercise but timescales unsuitable; will rely on 11th March et sequ.

Team very much available to discuss, and encourages ongoing discussions to inform and tune the option as more papers are published. Comments and suggestions very welcome indeed via ... info@mbug.org.uk, [facebook page](#) or [our option 24/7 discussion](#). I will also be posting at [the Coffee Shop](#) under a "Melksham Buses 2018" banner. *Prepared and presented by Graham Ellis - graham@wellho.net - this is version 0.91 of 28th May 2017.*

Discussion document of 23rd May (8 pages)

See [\[here\]](#)

Draft map showing some ideas / options. Other regular bus routes also shown.

