

## APPENDIX 2A / 2B

May 2013

Passenger Transport Unit  
County Hall  
Bythesea Road  
Trowbridge  
Wiltshire  
BA14 8JN

Our ref: IW/PTB302

Dear Consultee

### **Proposed changes to the Connect2 Wiltshire Taxibuzz services in the Shrewton, Amesbury and Woodford Valley areas**

The Council is currently reviewing the Connect2 Wiltshire Taxibuzz service. I am writing to ask for your views on the proposed changes, which it is intended will be introduced in January 2014.

This is one of an ongoing series of reviews which are looking at poorly-used transport services that require a relatively high level of council funding in relation to the number of passengers they carry. 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.

However, although there is a need to make financial savings, the reviews are also a part of an ongoing re-assessment of the public transport network in the county, which aims to identify the most cost-effective means of meeting local access needs in a way that can be financially sustainable in the longer term. The help of the area boards and community area partnerships is being sought to identify local needs and priorities, and possible ways of meeting these in an affordable way. This could include local initiatives to develop community and voluntary transport, or car sharing.

In this context, Wiltshire Council has been allocated some one-off funding by central government to assist with expanding and setting up community transport schemes. Part of this has been used in association with Community First to set up a 'Development Fund', to which groups are able to bid for help with setting up or expanding alternative transport schemes to meet local needs.

## The proposals

The existing Taxibuzz services are relatively costly to operate and are poorly used. The council is, therefore, looking for a more cost-effective way of providing a service that meets the needs of the area at an affordable cost to the council. A possible timetable is suggested that we believe will meet the majority of these needs, while reducing the cost of operation. **An information sheet is attached** which summarises the use made of the current services and sets out the proposed revised timetable.

Your views are sought on these proposals and in particular your answers to the following two questions;

1. **Are you aware of any significant hardship** that would be caused if these proposals were implemented? If so, please could you let us know what specific journeys could no longer be made and, if possible, give an indication of how many people you think would be affected.
2. **Do you have any suggestions for alternative proposals** that would achieve a similar level of financial saving with less impact? (We are aware that there may be other ways of meeting some of the needs of the area in other ways, for example by community or voluntary transport.)

The consultation will close on **2 August 2013**. Responses can be sent by post to the Passenger Transport Unit, Wiltshire Council, County Hall, Trowbridge BA14 8JN (attention of Ian White); or by email to [buses@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:buses@wiltshire.gov.uk).

This consultation letter has been sent to town and parish councils and their transport representatives; councillors and Area Boards; user and community groups and transport operators, including community transport. Questionnaires will also be sent to users of the Taxibuzz so that they are able to comment on the proposals. Copies of the user questionnaire will also be available shortly on the council's website, or can be requested from the address above.

Yours sincerely



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**Wiltshire Council Bus Service Reviews 2013/14**  
**Consultation on initial options**  
**Information sheet**

**Shrewton and Amesbury Taxi Buzz services (Connect 2 Wiltshire)**

**Summary of proposed service change**

To reduce the cost of providing the Amesbury area Taxi Buzz services, by re-organising the timetables so that they can be operated by one vehicle and driver, whilst still providing opportunities for travel to and from Amesbury and Salisbury from all of the places currently served but with a reduced frequency of service.

**Current service information**

Service provided

All of the services are flexibly routed, running at specific times but only when booked in advance, from anywhere within the areas referred to below, to and from a destination town (Salisbury or Amesbury).

**Shrewton service** – runs between Amesbury and anywhere in the Shrewton area (including Shrewton village, Berwick St James, Winterbourne Stoke, Rolleston Caravan Park, Bustard Hotel and Stonehenge). Currently provides 4 journey opportunities a day in each direction (Mondays –Saturdays) between the hours of 0900 and 1600.

**Woodford Valley service** – runs from anywhere in the Woodford Valley to and from Salisbury and Amesbury. Currently provides 4 or 5 journey opportunities a day in each direction (Mondays –Saturdays) between the hours of 0900 and 1800.

**Countess Road and Strangways service** – provides 8 journey opportunities a day (Mondays – Saturdays between the hours of 0900 and 1640) between Amesbury, and Countess Road and the Strangways and Steel Houses areas of Larkhill.

**Bourne Valley service** – provides 2 journey opportunities a day (Mondays – Saturdays) into Amesbury from Cholderton and the Bourne Valley villages (from Newton Toney down to the Winterbournes).

Funding	The whole service is funded by Wiltshire Council, at a cost of £81,000 per annum. This figure excludes the cost of providing transport for students who are entitled to free or assisted transport.
Usage	The services in total carry around 5,600 passenger journeys per annum, equivalent to approximately 20 per day in total. These figures do not include students who are entitled to free or assisted transport, who make a further 5,000 passenger journeys a year.

## Service assessment

### Purpose of services

**Shrewton service** – this provides the main public transport link from Shrewton, Winterbourne Stoke and Berwick St James to and from Amesbury, and is the only public transport serving Rollestone Camp and the Bustard Inn.

**Woodford valley service** – this service provides the main public transport link from the Woodford valley villages to Salisbury and Amesbury (*supplemented by morning work / college journeys into Salisbury on bus service 12, and the Tuesdays and Fridays only shoppers bus service 201, both of which will continue to operate*).

**Countess Road and Strangways service** – this service provides the only public transport to Countess Road, and also from the Strangways and Steel Houses areas of Larkhill between the hours of 0900 and 1635, although there are frequent buses to Amesbury and Salisbury from the centre of Larkhill (half a mile away).

**Bourne Valley services** – the Bourne Valley villages have a regular bus service to Salisbury with some journeys to Tidworth, but the Taxibuzz provides the only direct service to Amesbury.

## Usage of the service

The following analysis is based on passenger data for August / September 2011 and March / April 2013;

### Shrewton service

The Shrewton area service carries on average 6-7 passenger journeys a day, travelling to or returning from Amesbury from either Rolleston Caravan Park or Shrewton. Over 90% of the passengers are older persons' bus pass holders, and most journeys are made for shopping, personal business or social purposes. Most passengers travel in on the two morning journeys, but return trips are more evenly spread across the day, with the 1115 and 1315 journeys being generally the most popular. The number of passengers carried per day is relatively consistent, with no particular days standing out as being more popular than others.

### Woodford valley service

- (a) To Salisbury; the service carries 4-5 passenger journeys a day from the villages along the valley to or from Salisbury, almost all of whom are older persons' bus pass holders travelling for shopping, personal business or leisure purposes; and 3-4 farepaying child passenger journeys a day returning from school in Salisbury to the villages on the later afternoon journeys (1605, 1715 and 1805).
- (b) To Amesbury; the service carries 2-3 passenger journeys a day between the villages and Amesbury, again almost all older persons' bus pass holders;

Passenger use is spread across all journeys and days of the week, with none standing out as being consistently more or less popular than others.

### Countess Road and Strangways service

This service carries on average 4-5 passenger journeys a day, spread out across 8 return taxi journeys, from Countess Road, Strangways and Steel Houses to or from Amesbury. Nearly all are older persons' bus pass holders. The morning journeys are generally the most popular, with three quarters of all trips being made before 1300.

### Bourne valley service

This service carries on average only 2-3 passenger journeys a day, spread across the two return taxi journeys. Around two thirds of these are travelling to / from Cholderton, with the remainder (on average 4 – 5 single journeys a week) mainly from Winterbourne and Gomeldon.

## Financial assessment

The cost of the service is very high in relation to the number of passengers carried, and is well in excess of the maximum subsidy guideline of £3.50 per passenger trip set out in the 'Guidelines for funding of supported services'. However, significant economies in providing the service could be made by reducing the number of journeys operated and amending the timetables so that all three services could be provided using a single vehicle and driver.

## Conclusion and options for future service provision

The service is very expensive to provide in relation to the number of passengers using it, and the current level of subsidy can not be justified, particularly in view of the growing pressures on local authority spending. Use of the service is low; however, there are no public transport alternatives for many of the journeys that are being made. Rather than complete withdrawal of the service, it is therefore proposed to seek economies in the way it is provided so that the cost to the Council is reduced while continuing as far as possible to meet the needs of the existing users.

The main aim of this consultation is to identify possible ways of providing a cost-effective service that meets the needs of the existing users at an affordable cost to the council.

A possible timetable is shown below that we believe will meet the majority of these needs whilst significantly reducing the cost of operation by allowing the service to be operated using just one vehicle.

There may be other ways of providing a cost-effective service that still meets local needs, and if you have any suggestions about how this might be done, we would be pleased to receive them.

## Proposed timetable

### Shrewton service

*(calling on demand anywhere in the current operating area, including Shrewton, Berwick St James, Winterbourne Stoke, Rolleston Caravan park, Bustard Inn and Stonehenge)*

On Mondays to Saturdays;

Taxi Buzz will arrive in Amesbury at; 0925 1155 1450

Returning from Amesbury at; 1105 1400

**Woodford valley service**

*(calling on demand anywhere in the current operating area, including Wilsford, Lake, Great and Little Durnford, Netton, Upper, Middle and Lower Woodford)*

**(a) Service to Salisbury**

Taxi Buzz will arrive in Salisbury at; 0820 1005 1240 1655 1805 1855  
*(note that on schooldays the 0820 journey will be operated by a bus as at present)*

Returning from Salisbury at; 1005 1320 1605 1715 1805

*Bus service 201 will continue to run on Tuesdays and Fridays, arriving in Salisbury at 1033 and returning at 1240)*

**(b) Service to Amesbury**

Taxi Buzz will arrive in Amesbury at; 1045 1400

Returning from Amesbury at; 1200

**Countess Road and Strangways service**

*Countess Road, Strangways and Steel Houses will be included in the operating area for the Shrewton Taxi Buzz. The times to and from Amesbury will therefore be the same as those shown above for the Shrewton service;*

Taxi Buzz will arrive in Amesbury at; 0925 1155 1450

Returning from Amesbury at; 1105 1400

**Bourne Valley service**

The Bourne Valley Taxibuzz service is very poorly used, and there are regular buses from all of the villages to Salisbury, plus some to Tidworth as well. It is therefore proposed to withdraw the Taxibuzz service to Amesbury from the Winterbournes, Gomeldon, Porton, and Allington.

Another Connect2 Wiltshire service will however be amended to provide a service from Cholderton (from where the majority of the existing passengers originate) to Amesbury at similar times on Mondays to Fridays. There will be no Saturday service.

May 2013

**APPENDIX 2C / 2D**

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County Hall  
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Trowbridge  
Wiltshire  
BA14 8JN

Our ref: IW/PTB302

Dear Consultee

**Proposed changes to the Connect2 Wiltshire Taxibuzz services in the Mere area**

The Council is currently reviewing the Connect2 Wiltshire Taxibuzz service. I am writing to ask for your views on the proposed changes, which it is intended will be introduced in January 2014.

This is one of an ongoing series of reviews which are looking at poorly-used transport services that require a relatively high level of council funding in relation to the number of passengers they carry. 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.

However, although there is a need to make financial savings, the reviews are also a part of an ongoing re-assessment of the public transport network in the county, which aims to identify the most cost-effective means of meeting local access needs in a way that can be financially sustainable in the longer term. The help of the area boards and community area partnerships is being sought to identify local needs and priorities, and possible ways of meeting these in an affordable way. This could include local initiatives to develop community and voluntary transport, or car sharing.

In this context, Wiltshire Council has been allocated some one-off funding by central government to assist with expanding and setting up community transport schemes. Part of this has been used in association with Community First to set up a 'Development Fund', to which groups are able to bid for help with setting up or expanding alternative transport schemes to meet local needs.



## The proposals

The existing Taxibuzz services are relatively costly to operate and are poorly used. The council is, therefore, looking for a more cost-effective way of providing a service that meets the needs of the area at an affordable cost to the council. A possible timetable is suggested that we believe will meet the majority of these needs, while reducing the cost of operation. **An information sheet is attached** which summarises the use made of the current services and sets out the proposed revised timetable.

Your views are sought on these proposals and in particular your answers to the following two questions;

1. **Are you aware of any significant hardship** that would be caused if these proposals were implemented? If so, please could you let us know what specific journeys could no longer be made and, if possible, give an indication of how many people you think would be affected.
2. **Do you have any suggestions for alternative proposals** that would achieve a similar level of financial saving with less impact? (We are aware that there may be other ways of meeting some of the needs of the area in other ways, for example by community or voluntary transport.)

The consultation will close on **2 August 2013**. Responses can be sent by post to the Passenger Transport Unit, Wiltshire Council, County Hall, Trowbridge BA14 8JN (attention of Ian White); or by email to [buses@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:buses@wiltshire.gov.uk).

This consultation letter has been sent to town and parish councils and their transport representatives; councillors and Area Boards; user and community groups and transport operators, including community transport. Questionnaires will also be made available to users of the Taxibuzz so that they are able to comment on the proposals. Copies of the user questionnaire will also be available shortly on the council's website, or can be requested from the address above.

Yours sincerely



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Head of Service Passenger Transport

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**Mere and District Taxi Buzz service (Connect 2 Wiltshire)**

**Summary of proposed service change**

To reduce the cost of providing the Mere Taxi Buzz services, by;

- withdrawing the Saturday service;
- reducing the period of operation of the bookable service on Mondays to Fridays so that the service ends at 1500 (instead of 1800 as at present);
- withdrawing the early morning and late afternoon journeys that connect with trains at Gillingham Rail Station;
- withdrawing the advertised connections to Stourhead from Hindon and Gillingham;
- using only one vehicle to provide the service on Mondays to Fridays;
- introducing a charge for concessionary bus pass holders.

**Current service information**

Service provided	<p><b>Mere and District Monday to Friday Connect2 service</b> – by advance booking only, will carry passengers between any two points within the advertised operating area (which includes Mere, West and East Knoyle, Hindon, Zeals, Stourton, Stourhead, Kilmington, Maiden Bradley, Horningsham, The Deverills, Semley, Ludwell, Charlton), and to / from the following places outside of the operating area; Shaftesbury, Gillingham and Warminster town centres. Will connect (on demand) at Hindon with buses to and from Salisbury. Operates between 0900 and 1800 on Mondays to Fridays.</p> <p><b>Saturday service</b> – three journeys in each direction to Warminster and Shaftesbury, calling on request at Donhead St Mary, Semley, Sedgell, East Knoyle, West Knoyle, Mere, the Deverills, Zeals, Stourton, Kilmington, Maiden Bradley and Horningsham.</p> <p><b>Gillingham Rail Link</b> – on Monday to Friday mornings, from anywhere in the operating area and by advance booking only, to Gillingham Rail station arriving at 7.30am; with a return journey from Gillingham at 5.25pm.</p> <p><b>Links to Stourhead</b> – by advance booking only, journeys to / from Hindon to connect with specified buses to Salisbury (one in each direction, Mon - Fri), and to / from Gillingham Rail station for specified trains (one in each direction, Mon - Sat)</p>
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Funding	The whole service is funded by Wiltshire Council, at a cost of £66,000 per annum. This figure excludes the cost of providing transport for students who are entitled to free or assisted transport.
Usage	The service is used to make approximately 6,000 passenger journeys per annum, an average of about 25 per day of operation. These figures do not include students who are entitled to free school transport (who account for a further 1,500 passenger journeys a year)

## Service assessment

### Purpose of services

The Taxi Buzz was originally introduced as an experimental service, supported by central government grant, to supplement the existing bus services in the area and in particular to provide;

- Daily opportunities for travel within the area and to surrounding towns for residents of the smaller villages and hamlets that did not previously have a daily bus service (including East and West Knoyle, Semley, Sedgehill, outlying parts of Mere, Stourton, Kilmington, Maiden Bradley and Horningsham)
- Connections from places within the area to other bus and train services, at Hindon (for Salisbury), Gillingham station (for Salisbury, London and Yeovil), and Warminster (for Bath and Bristol).
- Advertised connections from Hindon and Gillingham station for visitors to Stourhead house and gardens.

The service was also designed as a test of whether a flexible demand responsive service could provide an affordable means of expanding the range of travel opportunities available to residents of rural areas.

## Usage of the service

The following analysis is based on bookings data for the periods August – October 2012 and March - April 2013.

### **Mere and District Connect2 service (Monday – Friday)**

The Monday – Friday bookable service is used for around 20 single passenger journeys a day. Nearly 90% of the passengers are older persons' bus pass holders. Around half of all the trips made are short local journeys within Mere itself or journeys to / from the surrounding hamlets. These include a group of regular users who travel every Monday and Friday to and from Lynch Close day centre, and other passengers throughout the week travelling into Mere to the local shops and surgery. Most of the other users are travelling from Mere and its surrounds to Gillingham, Shaftesbury or Warminster for a variety of purposes, and there are a small group of regular users from East Knoyle.

### **Gillingham Rail Link**

The rail link service was until recently used for 2-3 single passenger journeys a day. However, there is now only one regular user who travels daily from Zeals to Gillingham to work in the supermarket and who may be able to use another bus service.

### **Saturday service**

The Saturday service carries on average between 10 and 15 single passenger journeys each Saturday (i.e. around 5-8 individuals making return trips). Around 80% of the passengers are older persons' bus pass holders. Around two thirds of users are travelling to Warminster and back from Mere or Horningsham, and most of the remaining third travel to Shaftesbury and back, from Warminster, Longbridge Deverill or Mere, with occasional users from Warminster or Gillingham to Stourhead. There appear to be three or four regular users who travel once a month or more, and a larger group of users who travel less regularly. Use of the service is variable, on some weeks carrying up to 10 or 11 return passengers but on others with only 2 or 3 people using the service.

### **Links to Stourhead**

The advertised weekday connections between Hindon or Gillingham and Stourhead are rarely used, with only 8 passenger journeys booked in the period August – October 2012.

## Financial assessment

The cost of the service is high in relation to the number of passengers carried, and is well in excess of the Council's maximum subsidy guideline of £3.50 per passenger trip set out in the 'Guidelines for funding of supported services'. However, a number of ways have been identified of reducing the cost to the council while retaining a service that it is hoped will continue to meet the needs of the majority of users.

## Conclusion and options for future service provision

Use of the current services is low, and they are very expensive to provide in relation to the number of passengers using them. Although most of the places served have other bus services, these do not provide the same range of journey opportunities as the flexible Connect2 service, and in some cases they only run on certain days of the week (*a list of these other bus services is attached as an appendix to this note*).

The option of complete withdrawal of the Taxi Buzz has been considered, but as this would leave some places without a daily public transport service, it is proposed instead to make a number of changes designed to reduce the operating costs and increase fares income. These are described below. It is hoped that these will reduce the overall subsidy and improve the cost-effectiveness of the service so that it becomes financially sustainable, although this will need to be kept under review.

There may be other ways of providing a cost-effective service that still meets local needs, for example by the establishment of a local community transport scheme, and if you have any suggestions about how this might be done, we would be pleased to discuss these with you.

## Proposed changes to the Taxi Buzz service

The following changes are proposed to the service in order to reduce operating costs and increase fares income;

### **Withdraw the Saturday service**

This will achieve a significant reduction in the overall operating cost of the service. The analysis of use (above) suggests that the current service is used by a small but variable number of passengers, mainly travelling from Mere and Horningsham to Warminster, and from Warminster, Longbridge Deverill and Mere to Shaftesbury. Although it would no longer be possible to make these journeys on a Saturday, there are alternative Saturday buses to other towns, as shown on the list of services in the appendix to this note;

- from Zeals and Mere to Wincanton, Gillingham and Shaftesbury
- from Mere, Zeals, Kilmington, Maiden Bradley and Horningsham to Frome and Bath
- from Zeals, Mere and Hindon to Salisbury
- from the Deverill villages to Warminster
- from East Knoyle, Semley and Donhead St Mary to Salisbury.

### **Reduce the hours of operation of the Monday to Friday bookable service such that the service ceases at 1500, and withdraw the Rail Link service to Gillingham station**

This will also achieve a significant reduction in operating cost as the hours of operation of the service as a whole will be reduced. Overall there are few users of the service in the late afternoon after the regular school run (which would continue to operate), except on certain days when it is used by people returning home from the day centre at Lynch Court. It may be

possible to provide specific journeys on one or two days a week for this group of users. The rail link service now only has one regular user, who travels from Zeals to Gillingham to work and who may be able to use bus service 158 instead.

#### **Withdraw the advertised connections to Stourhead from Hindon and Gillingham**

This will achieve a relatively small reduction in operating cost. However, use of the facility is extremely low and its withdrawal will enable the vehicle to undertake more journeys for local residents.

#### **Use only one vehicle to provide the service**

At present a second vehicle is sometimes used to support the main bus, and this makes it easier to accommodate passengers' journey requests if two people want to travel to different places at the same time. Removing the second vehicle would reduce operating costs, but would make it more likely that a booking might have to be refused, or an alternative and possibly less convenient time offered. Given the low use of the service overall however, this should not affect a large number of booking requests.

#### **Introduce a charge for concessionary bus pass holders**

A high proportion of users have older persons' bus passes and currently travel free of charge. However, pass holders often tell us that they would be prepared to pay a small contribution for their journey if this would help to keep their transport service running. It is therefore proposed to introduce a flat rate charge for passholders of 50p per single trip for journeys entirely within one town or village, and £1 per single trip for longer journeys. This will help to make the service more financially sustainable. Unlike normal bus services where free travel has to be offered, the Taxi Buzz is operated under different legislation and concessionary bus passes do not have to be accepted. The charge for passholders will still be considerably less than the standard fares charged to other passengers.

# Bus Services in the Mere, Zeals, Knole and Donhead areas

as at May 2013

## Buses serving Zeals and Mere

- 158 - to Wincanton and Gillingham/Shafesbury (6 journeys per day in each direction)
- 25/28 - to Hindon and Salisbury (2-3 journeys per day in each direction  
with additional journeys from Hindon to Salisbury).
- 80 - to Frome (2 journeys in each direction on Wednesdays and Saturdays - also runs to Bath on Sats)
- 89 - to Frome and Trowbridge (1 journey in each direction on Thursdays)
- 82/136 - to Warminster (1 journey in each direction on Thursdays and Fridays)
- No services through Mere and Zeals on Sundays or Public holidays

## Buses serving Stourton, Kilmington, Maiden Bradley & Horningsham

- 80 - to Frome (2 journeys in each direction on Wednesdays and Saturdays - also runs to Bath on Sats)
- 89 - to Frome and Trowbridge (1 journey in each direction on Thursdays)
- 82 - to Warminster (1 journey in each direction on Fridays)
- 83 - to Salisbury (1 journey in each direction on Tuesdays)
- No services through these villages on Sundays or Mondays

## Buses serving The Deverills

- 57 - to Warminster (3 journeys per day in each direction - not Sundays)
- 83 - From Longbridge Deverill to Salisbury (1 journey in each direction on Tuesdays)
- No services through the Deverills on Sundays or Public holidays

## Buses serving East Knole and Semley

- 84 - to Salisbury (1 journey on Tuesdays and Saturdays)
- 86 - to Shaftesbury (1 journey on Thursdays)
- No services through these villages on other days

## Buses serving Charlton, Ludwell and Donhead St.Mary

- 26/27/29 - From bus stops along the A30 to Shaftesbury and Salisbury (8-9 journeys per day in  
each direction - not Sundays)
- 86 - From Donhead St.Mary village to Shaftesbury (1 journey on Thursdays)
- No services through these villages on Sundays or Public holidays