

TRANSWILTSHIRE COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP ROUTE PROSPECTUS

COMMUNITY RAIL SERVICE DESIGNATION for the TransWiltshire Line

operating from
Swindon to Westbury via Melksham

TransWilts service leaving Chippenham Station



Background to Designated Service Route Prospectus

This Route Prospectus outlines the past progress and future aspirations for TransWilts line and services. Our plans for development of the line passenger services essentially align with Network Rail control periods in five year and ten year strategies. The five year plan focus 2015-2019 being around cooperation and community development with the current franchise operator GWR. A longer term ten year strategy, based upon local CRP aspirations, informing NR control period 6 2019 to 2024. Our “Network 2020” Regional policy has been prepared as a key part of the consultation to designate the TransWilts service as a community rail service.

The final prospectus will be published on the Department of Transport website following designation. Working with the DfT, TransWilts CRP has provided much of the content. This prospectus aims to set out ideas for the development of the local railway services and their stations.

Service designation excludes the track and signalling and is used if there are other services such as freight sharing the line or if the line is part of a ‘Trans European Network (TEN) route. The route prospectus is not the same as an action or project plan, which provides details of specific projects.

Service designation of the route would not preclude investment in the future to support economic development, nor would it hinder the use of the railway as a freight line, express or diversionary route.

Designation is intended to be a permanent arrangement, but it can be reviewed periodically to assess whether designation is still appropriate.

	Summary
Route	Swindon to Westbury via Melksham
Region and Locale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Western Region, County of Wiltshire
Stations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Swindon (bay platform 2) 0 miles • Chippenham 16.75 miles • Melksham 23 miles • Trowbridge 28.5 miles • Westbury 32.5 miles
Service Designation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For Passenger services between Swindon and Westbury • Including two stations on the route, Chippenham, Melksham • Excluding Swindon, Trowbridge and Westbury rail stations which fall outside the designation • Excluding infrastructure such as the track and signaling • Excluding those freight services which share the line
Journey Time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Typically 43 to 48 minutes one way, stopping at each station • Route length 32.5 miles with a single-track section between Thingley Junction and Bradford Junction. • The route section between Swindon and Thingley Junction shares the high-speed line London to Bristol.
Partnership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TransWilts CIC incorporating TransWilts Community Rail Partnership
Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Passenger growth as a regional connection • Putting stations at the heart of local communities • Better service frequency • Extend connectivity to Salisbury and Southampton Airport • Improving stations as community gateways • Tourism and sustainable access

Introduction

The TransWilts service is located in Wiltshire County, linking the principle towns in the north and west of Wiltshire to Swindon. The route links the Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership area.

Challenges in the region include linking rural market towns to the main economic and business centres. The regional railway service provides access to services, links market towns to the national rail network, links to the coast, hospitals, shopping, business, commuting, and connects market towns and the principle towns.

The TransWilts Community Rail Partnership

TransWilts CRP covers the service between Swindon and Westbury with a special focus on the stations at Chippenham and Melksham. A limited service trial over the route, operated by Wessex Trains ended in 2006. The service had little publicity and was unreliable in operation.

A campaign for re-establishing a train service to Melksham led to a consultant's report into the TransWilts business case in 2011, sponsored by Wessex Chamber of Commerce and the Melksham Rail Users Group. Following the successful LSTF application in 2012 the TransWilts CRP was founded to support the service launch and provide local publicity. The FGW service started in December 2013 for a three year trial period until December 2017. The initial three year service being underpinned by the Wiltshire Council LSTF funding grant.

A three year passenger growth target was set with the Partnership. With the active involvement of the CRP, and by learning lessons from the previous unsuccessful service, this target was exceeded in the first year of operation. Passenger numbers continue to grow. The new GWR franchise awarded in 2015, confirmed the TransWilts service continuity beyond the trial, with a commitment to 2 car trains from 2017 timetable plus ongoing financial support for the CRP. Wiltshire Council Unitary Authority provides the CRP with continuity funding beyond the initial LSTF payment period.

Our core funding partners are:

- Wiltshire Council UA
- GWR

Prospectus

This prospectus aims to set out ideas for the development of the local railway services and stations on the TransWilts line. The service designation will be used to facilitate improved outputs for the railway and particularly the communities and businesses that are served by the TransWilts Swindon to Westbury line. Improvements for local communities are provided by, increased accessibility to public transport, connectivity between rural market towns and principal centres, access to employment, education and public services. Development and improvement of the local stations, as community gateways, with a more modern and prosperous railway image.

Service designation excludes the track and signaling and is used where, as in this case, other services such as freight shares the line.

The Wiltshire Council Transport Plan -Strategy 2011-2026, Vision is "To develop a transport system which helps support economic growth across Wiltshire's communities, giving choice and opportunity for people to safely access essential services. Transport solutions will be sensitive to the built and natural environment, with a particular emphasis on the need to reduce carbon emissions."

Public Transport objectives include “ Increase rail connectivity through the provision of bus-rail links and assist with the implementation of some new stations. Support the function of rail stations as transport hubs and proactively work with partners to introduce services and corridor improvements particularly between Chippenham, Salisbury and Trowbridge. Cover the administrative costs of community rail partnerships and where appropriate and necessary, safeguard and purchase land for rail improvements”

Service Designation will substantially assist the TransWilts CRP in playing a significant role in delivering the objectives contained in this plan.

The CRP Regional Network 2020 five year policy sets out the future direction within the following priorities;

- More community involvement with stations and the railway
- Better community access to health provision and services - The major hospital services for Wiltshire residents are located at Swindon, Bath and Salisbury. The railway network gives access to all these major centres.
- Improved stations - A stations act as a shop window for the town and inward gateway to the local community plus an outward gateway to the wider community using the national rail network.
- Local Rail Service improvements - The passenger volumes have grown rapidly since the service was restored in 2013. The first year's numbers 183,400 exceeded the three year forecast and continue to grow. Overcrowding is becoming a problem on some trains - up to 117 passengers have been recorded on a 78 seat train. There is a need for a more frequent hourly service and better timetable connectivity to meet the rapidly growing community demands.
- Revenue collection improvements. Overcrowded trains prevent on train ticket sales, our ticket revenue can be improved with commissioning the TVM at Melksham.
- Incorporates many of Wiltshire's Local Transport Plan objectives;
 - reducing the need to travel by car
 - provide and promote a choice of sustainable transport alternatives
 - Improve sustainable access to a full range of opportunities particularly for those people without a car
 - To enhance the journey experience of transport users

Key Aspirations of Service Designation

TransWilts CIC, incorporating the TransWilts Community Rail Partnership, is seeking to achieve the following;

Short Term and Medium Term CRP Aspirations 2015 - 2019

- **An increase in local community involvement to improve stations, champion rail services, and organise volunteer programmes.** A continuous improvement programme of support and encouragement to volunteer and take active pride in the local rail facilities. Involve local businesses in volunteer programmes and station sponsorship.
- **Improved station environments through the production and implementation of the railway master plans, in particular Melksham and Chippenham.** Working in partnership with the local community, the train operating companies and Network Rail to deliver station improvements.
- **Improved train service between Swindon and Westbury.** Current timetable provides eight trains per day using a single car unit service between Swindon and Westbury. The service reached 183,000 passenger journeys in the first year and the second year run

rate is above 220,000 passenger journeys. The new GWR franchise includes the provision of two car units from 2016 timetable. The next stage in the line growth supports an hourly service, which will better meet the needs of commuters. There is also a need for a later train than the current Monday-Friday 20.12 service.

- **Promoting Charter and special trains.** The CRP supports various special trains for community groups throughout the year. Santa specials in December. The Weymouth Wizard, operating at weekends in August gives those without a car in land locked Wiltshire access to the coast and beach for the day. During the summer of 2015, the Bath engineering works meant the Weymouth Wizard operated successfully on the TransWilts line. An average of 322 train passengers disembarked at Weymouth with almost 50% travelling from Swindon.

Longer Term CRP Aspirations 2020 - 2024

- **Extension of the TransWilts service through Salisbury to Southampton Airport.** The original proposal for the TransWilts service envisaged a through service to Salisbury. The service to Westbury being the first phase launch service. Recently the Partnership reviewed the extension strategy and in the Network 2020 policy extended the aspiration beyond Salisbury to Southampton Airport railway station. This extended route does not require any infrastructure and can utilise existing diesel rolling stock in the GWR franchise and the Three Rivers CRP serving Salisbury, Romsey, Eastleigh and Southampton Central. Door to door travel times to Southampton Airport would be typically one hour forty minutes from Chippenham, one hour thirty minutes from Melksham, one hour twenty minutes from Trowbridge, one hour five minutes from Warminster. This service aspiration connects some 400,000 population and most of the major economic centres to an important regional airport connection.
- **Extended early and late train services to coincide with Airport's first departure times and last arrival times.** First departures are around 7 am with check in time require 6.15 am first train arrival, last arrival around 22.00 requires a 22.30 last departure service
- **Upgrade of Chippenham station 3rd platform to a regional platform.** In the longer term a regional service from Oxford to Bristol could call at Chippenham. It is envisaged that the 3rd platform could serve to separate regional services from IEP high speed services, providing line resilience and building on proposed heritage platform community initiatives.
- **Upgrade of Westbury platform 4** as improved service interchange capability for regional connectivity with mid-Wilts services.
- **Increase rolling stock to 3 car trains.** Based on continuing passenger growth
- **Adoption of Dilton Marsh as a designated station** The Halt is the first station south of Westbury; an extension of the TransWilts service route below Westbury would enable adoption.
- **Additional station at Wilton** There is an existing bus Park and Ride on the A36 alongside the railway line. The provision of an extended service route to Salisbury/Southampton Airport could facilitate a station at Wilton as a Parkway to Salisbury, London Waterloo, plus a sustainable gateway for visitors to Stonehenge. The new station could potentially be adopted as a community station.

Key Measures of Success

- Increasing levels of community involvement and engagement with the local railway
- Increasing passenger journeys and service revenue
- More train services and better passenger satisfaction
- Improved image and service provision at stations

- Safety of travelling passengers

Stations included in the Designation

The following stations are included in the designation

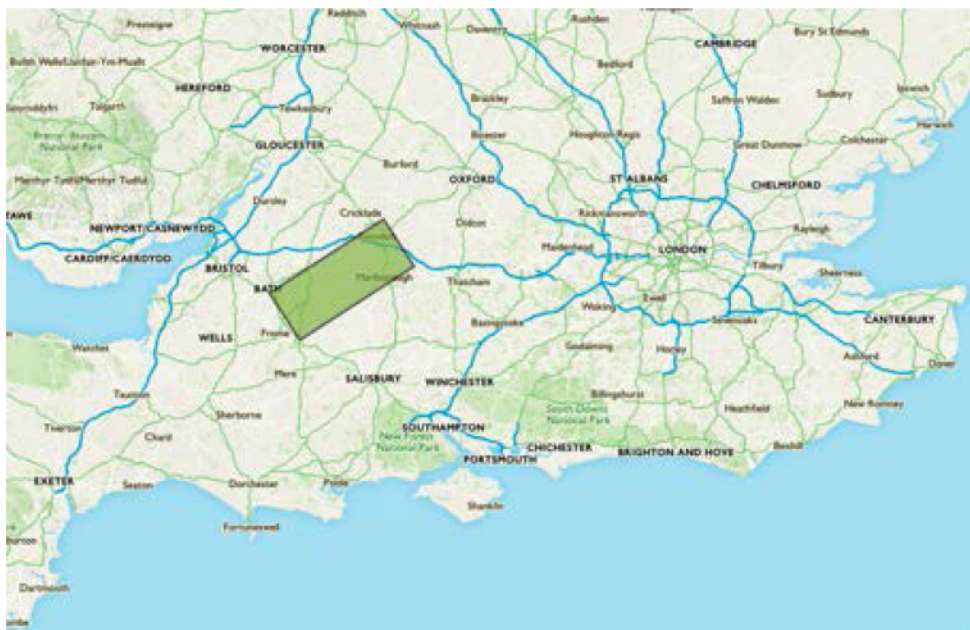
- Chippenham
- Melksham

Not in the service designation, but in the longer term if the route is extended beyond Westbury, the CRP envisages that the following stations could be in a future service designation:

- Dilton Marsh
- Warminster
- Wilton Parkway (for Stonehenge) A potential new station subject to consideration of the business case and the environmental case.

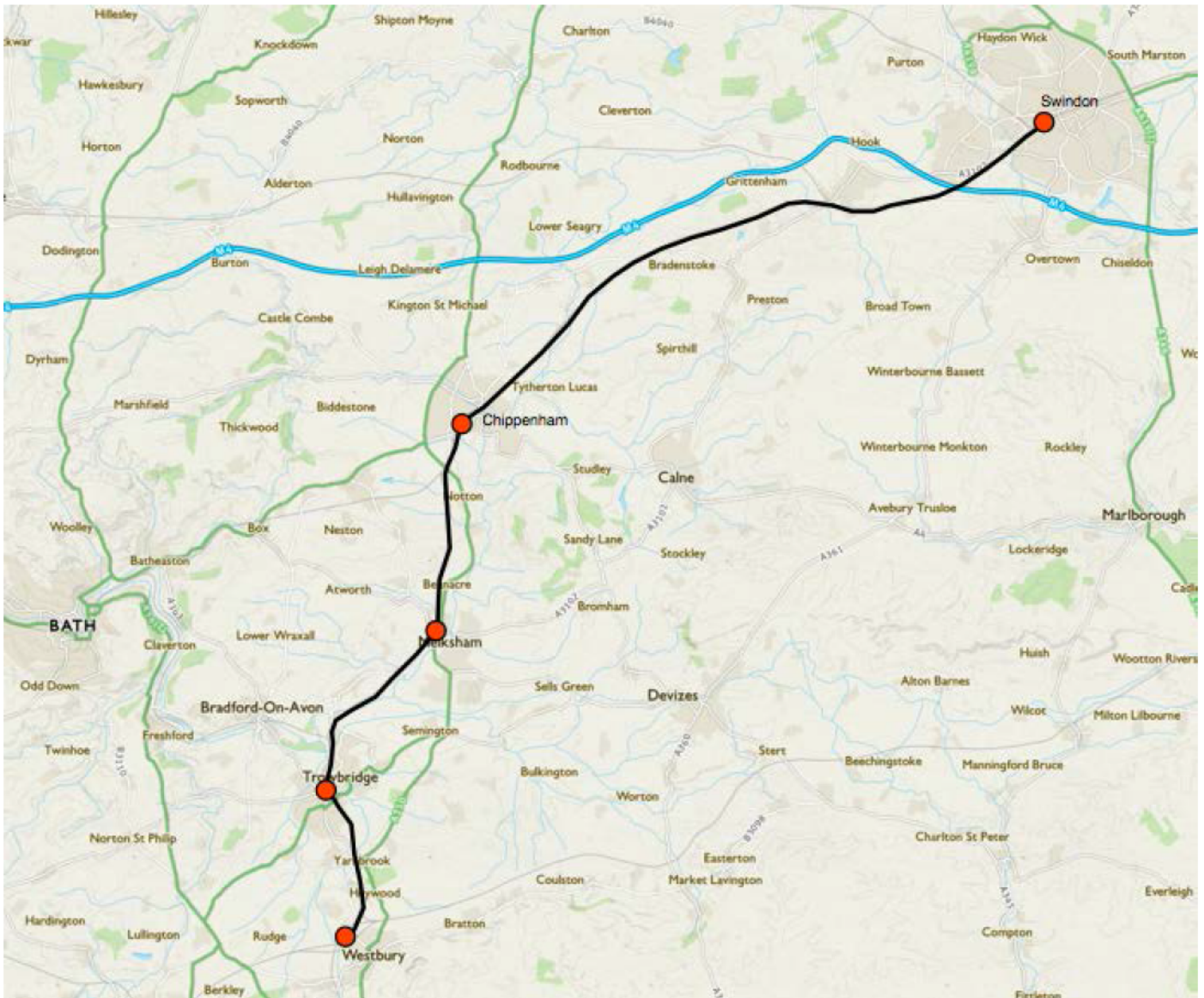
The route, between Westbury and Chippenham, carries regular but infrequent freight traffic mainly quarry stone. It is also a diversionary route and has had extensive use during the electrification engineering works blockade at Bath and Box tunnel, July and August 2015.

Service Designation is intended for the passenger services along the line. Timetabling studies do not suggest any immediate issues with freight traffic regarding capacity or conflicts on the single track Melksham section. In the future it may be appropriate to negotiate some local changes in daily freight train timetable to avoid any potential conflicts with passenger timetables.



Map Data: Google

Route Schematic



Map Data: Google



info@transwiltshire.org | www.transwiltshire.org | Registered address: 4 Wardour Place, Melksham, Wiltshire, SN12 6AY.
Community Interest Company (Company Number 9397959 registered in England and Wales)

