

# CT NEWS

**AUTUMN 2007**

**WILTSHIRE & SWINDON COMMUNITY TRANSPORT NEWS**

## NEW SHUTTLE AND COMMUNITY BUS WELCOMED

A new shuttle bus service between Amesbury town centre and Solstice Park was officially launched at the Holiday Inn Salisbury-Stonehenge, on Monday 12th November 2007, by the Mayor of Amesbury, Fred Westmoreland.

Having been provided with support from Community First to develop the service, local Community Transport Group COMTRANS South Wiltshire will be running the 'Solstice Shuttle' - a free, dedicated and efficient service for workers at Solstice Park during the morning and evening commute. The shuttle runs in conjunction with Wilts and Dorset and Stagecoach services with arrivals and departures from Amesbury Bus Station (Stand E) with the kind permission of Wilts and Dorset.

Jim Bell, Depot Manager for Wilts and Dorset commented "we are pleased to provide interchange between our regular bus services and the shuttle at Amesbury bus station".

Alexandra Spencer, Marketing Executive for Solstice Park said "the initiative is funded by our Green Travel account, to encourage workers to use more sustainable transport options rather than their car, to help reduce vehicle congestion and pollution.

Alexandra added, as well as providing a valuable service for employees at Solstice Park, a unique collaboration has been formed with COMTRANS SW to make the bus available to community groups outside the peak travel periods, in evenings and at weekends. This new opportunity

means that COMTRANS SW can build on the service they already provide to help people with limited mobility get out and about".

Chair of COMTRANS SW, Elizabeth Piner said "by working with Solstice Park to provide the shuttle service, we will also be able to make the bus available to all community groups in Amesbury to provide for instance, a regular service for individual people

dependence on the car. For instance, as a Council, we are taking steps to vastly expand and develop concessionary fares.

I am therefore delighted with this new service. It would be good to see similar initiatives, elsewhere in the District, to encourage workers to choose sustainable transport options, rather than the private car. The great news about this service is that the whole community will benefit".

Ms. Spencer, said "we are delighted to be launching a service that we believe will be an attractive travel option for employees at Solstice Park and are equally thrilled to be working with the community by providing Amesbury and the surrounding area with a 16-seater minibus for local community to use".

Anyone wishing to enquire about the community bus should contact COMTRANS SW on: 01722 410123.



Liam Tatton-Bennett, Community First, Paul Sample Leader of SDC and Tanya Smith, Holiday Inn Salisbury - Stonehenge

with limited mobility to shop, socialise, or have days out. Thanks to Salisbury District Council we have a community bus stop in the central car park.

This is our first venture working with the commercial sector and we thank Solstice Park, Community First, Salisbury District Council and Amesbury Town Council, for their support in what we are sure will be a successful alliance".

Paul Sample, Leader of both Salisbury District Council and the Liberal Democrat group said "The new political administration at Bourne Hill is committed to improving access to public transport and to reducing

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## CARRYING WHEELCHAIRS AND ACCEPTABLE ACCESS

Following the risk assessment training that was run by Community First in September, issues were raised by some groups about ensuring acceptable access to emergency exits when wheelchairs are being carried.

Firstly, to ensure that there is sufficient space for wheelchair users (and other passengers) to manoeuvre freely in case of an emergency, it is important that there is sufficient room for wheelchair users to pass through vehicle exits and for them to move through the vehicle easily.

Starting with loading wheelchair passengers onto minibuses, the Community Transport Association (CTA) recommend that doorways for use by wheelchair passengers should have a width of 75cm or above and headroom in the centre of the doorway of 1.5m or above. (This size of vehicle doorway is recommended to allow wheelchair passengers and their assistants to exit vehicles easily in case of emergency).



Once wheelchair passengers have been assisted through vehicle doorways, it is important to consider the issue of gangway space because all passengers will need to access vehicle exits easily in case of emergency.

Where several wheelchair passengers can be picked up in random order on a journey, (e.g. on a large bus) it is recommended that a shape the size of the recommended door aperture (i.e. 75cm wide X 1.5m high) should be capable of passing down the gangway.

On a smaller minibus where the first wheelchair passenger to board is the last out, the gangway size can be reduced to a minimum of 30cm **provided that it remains possible for able-bodied passengers to obtain access from every passenger seat to at least two exit doors** (one of which is on the nearside and the

other is on the offside or at the rear of the vehicle).

It is also recommended that wheelchairs are not positioned in the centre of minibuses unless there is sufficient access to the vehicle exits (as outlined in the previous paragraph).

Once positioned inside vehicles, it is recommended that wheelchair users have a space measuring 90cm X 50cm wide with 1.4m headroom over that space. This allows a wheelchair user to manoeuvre without catching their feet or chair wheels and provides a reasonable amount of space for the passenger during the journey.

**Passengers must not be carried in wheelchairs facing sideways** as most wheelchairs have little lateral strength and would buckle easily on impact.

It is also important to remember to **keep all vehicle exit doors unlocked** when carrying passengers so as to enable a quick exit in case of emergency.

For more information or enquiries about this article, please contact Liam Tatton-Bennett on 01380 722475 or



**Wheelchair accessible vehicle available to help people with mobility difficulties.**

**For further information, contact:  
Liam Tatton-Bennett on  
(01380) 722475 ext. 243**

## PASSENGER ASSISTANCE

The Community First Community Transport (CFCT) team often receive enquiries from groups about assisting passengers on and off and to and from vehicles.

The CFCT have put together the following advice having consulted the CTA and leading CT insurers.

When assisting passengers on/off vehicles, community minibus groups in particular should be aware of the following:

- 1 Making passengers aware of handrails, steps etc.
- 2 Carrying out risk assessments if particularly frail or vulnerable passengers are to be assisted (e.g. if a person is particularly unsteady on their feet or is visually impaired).  
(More information about risk assessments is available from Liam)

When assisting passengers to and from vehicles, groups should ensure that:

- 1 Drivers do not 'pull' passengers along with them
- 2 Drivers stand on the side of the passenger away from any walking aid they may have.
- 3 Risk assessments should be carried out if particularly frail or vulnerable passengers are to be assisted.

In relation to this area, Community Transport groups should be aware that public liability insurance provided under a motor vehicle policy is restricted to incidents involving passengers on the vehicle only (this includes boarding and alighting).

However if a driver escorts a passenger to or from a vehicle to their home, for example, then there is no public liability cover in place. This represents a significant gap in the insurance protection and an exposure to a liability claim.

Against this background, BJK Insurance Brokers Ltd have negotiated a specialist facility with a leading insurer that provides Public Liability insurance with a limit of indemnity of either £5,000,000 or £10,000,000. (More

information about this insurance and other relevant Community Transport insurance is available on 01271 345005).

It is also recognised that it can sometimes be awkward to ask a passenger if they would like assistance to and from vehicles or on or off vehicles, especially if other passengers are present.

To overcome this situation, when passengers sign up as members of your service it might be worth considering asking them to state in confidence whether they currently use walking aids etc. and whether they would be comfortable receiving any assistance and what type of assistance they would need.

This procedure could also apply to passengers who have a medical condition or take prescribed medication which could adversely affect their welfare whilst in the care of community transport groups.

With regard to appropriate handling when assisting passengers, it is important that drivers actions are not perceived in ways which could be misconstrued. In addition, it may be worth asking passengers whether they are comfortable with drivers assisting them (e.g. with seatbelts for instance) or whether they are happy to be independent.

In all these areas of course it is recommended that drivers receive appropriate training.

Suitable training about assisting passengers can be provided by the CTA's Passenger Assistant Training scheme (PATS) (for more information about PATS contact 01962 846983 - the SOLVE grants fund may also be able to help with costs here – contact Liam at Community First

about SOLVE.)

In addition, it is worth bearing in mind that professional staff may be able to assist with passengers (e.g. nurses, care home staff etc.) but if this help is not available, it may worth be considering training or recruiting a designated passenger assistant for your service. Similarly, passenger assistants are usually provided by local authorities if contract work is undertaken and vulnerable people are carried.



## NEW VEHICLES UPDATE

A number of local community minibus groups have taken delivery of new vehicles recently (and some not so recently!)

Tisbury and District Community Minibus Limited (Tisbus) recently received £11,500 from the Big Lottery Fund's Reaching Communities programme which they matched with their own funding and other funding sources to purchase a new minibus.

The group will use their new minibus to continue and expand their vital community transport service in the Tisbury area. The new vehicle, complete with wheelchair access, will offer isolated residents a better and more reliable service to nearby towns such as Salisbury and Shaftesbury and help increase confidence amongst older and disabled passengers providing the independence to shop and socialise. The new bus will also be made available to local organisations to help raise cash to keep the service up and running.

Trustee, Director and Hon Secretary Vivian Longland said: "TISBUS provides a low cost and convenient transport link for hundreds of people in the south-west region of Wiltshire. It provides an acknowledged lifeline to everyday activity. The introduction of the new minibus aided by the Big Lottery Fund's grant ensures that this service will improve in terms of passenger comfort, reliability, safety and economy."



A number of other community minibus groups have also taken delivery of new vehicles over the course of the year, including Chippenham and District Transport for the Disabled, Three Villages Minibus and Swindon Dial-a-Ride. In addition the Combine Community Bus and Holt Community Bus are in the process of ordering new vehicles. These developments are great news for people without access to transport across Wiltshire and Swindon.

## OUTINGS & SECTION 19 PERMITS

Many local community bus groups who have purchased new vehicles recently have reported an increase in interest from communities wanting to use the vehicles for outings because of increased comfort.

Although these developments are very encouraging, community minibus groups operating under Section 19 Permits need to be sure that these outings are undertaken within the boundaries of the Permit.

This is mainly because a vehicle operated under a Section 19 Permit cannot be used to carry the general public. According to the CTA, instead the passengers on Section 19 services must have a particular connection with community transport organisations in **two** ways. Firstly, the passengers must fit within the classes of passenger specified in the Permit (and whose letter category codes ranging from A to E) appear on the Permit and Permit disc. Secondly the fact that they are travelling on the service must reflect the concerns of the organisation which makes it eligible to hold a Permit.

In summary, general advertising of outings, without making it clear that only certain groups of people can travel (i.e. those allowed to be carried by the Permit) is not acceptable under Section 19 Permit legislation.

Please be aware that under a Section 19 Permit it is perfectly acceptable to carry passengers on trips who do not own a car (or other form of private transport) or do not have frequent and convenient access to one. Similarly it is acceptable to carry most non-profit community groups and organisations on trips using a Section 19 Permit.

If community transport groups wish to offer trips to the general public they will need to apply for a Section 22 Community Bus Permit. If you would like more information or have any queries about issues raised by this article, please contact Liam at Community First on (01380) 722475.

**Liam Tatton-Bennett** Community Transport Manager  
Tel: 01380 722475

Information, contact details and news for operators and users of community transport in Wiltshire and Swindon visit [www.wiltshirecommunitytransport.org.uk](http://www.wiltshirecommunitytransport.org.uk)

Phone: 01380 722475  
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