

Annual Parish Meeting 2021 Transport Report

The Service 20 between Blandford and Salisbury continues as per the advertised timetable with the appropriate Covid protections such as additional cleaning, the installation of hand sanitisers on board and the requirement to wear face masks unless exempt. The Service 20 has 4 journeys each way between Salisbury and Blandford with one additional return journey, between Pimperne and Blandford only, in the late morning.

Pimperne Parish Council's suggestion and request in December 2019 to Damory buses, Dorset Council and Wiltshire Council to extend the Service 20 to Salisbury rail station in pursuit of a more joined up public bus and rail transport network has not been forgotten. Given that the bus company and local authorities have been coping with the Covid pandemic it seemed not unreasonable to temporarily shelve this request. However this will be pursued again at the earliest reasonable opportunity.

In respect of contacting Damory about bus services the telephone number displayed on the Morebus website and the timetables attached to bus stops by the Parish Council still holds. It appears that the email address previously available has been replaced by a Contact form in the 'Customer Support' section of the Morebus website. Damory and Morebus are both owned by parent company GoSouthCoast; the quickest method of accessing timetables and information relating to the Damory services is via the Morebus website - www.morebus.co.uk

One parishioner has quite rightly pointed out that I have only mentioned the Service 20 in the Parish Newsletters while other opportunities do exist. There is the Dorset Community Transport (DCT) Plusbus service which starts from Gussage St Andrew and travels via Pimperne to Blandford. The service runs every Thursday on Market day and is primarily for those who are unable to access public transport for any reason, young or old, and including those with limited mobility. The service allows approximately two hours in Blandford before returning. Travellers must register with DCT in the first instance and book their place on the minibus prior to the day. There is currently a fixed return fare of £6.00, however, concessionary bus passes are accepted. This service can be contacted by telephone on 01258 287980 or via email on dorset@ectcharity.co.uk

NORDCAT is a community bus service providing a door-to-door demand responsive service which is open to anyone who has difficulty using public transport and anyone over 60. There is currently a service to Blandford on Mondays and Thursdays. To be able to use a NORDCAT bus you need to be registered and there is a £5 annual fee although if you have a Bus Pass you will be able to use it on all services. Nordcat can be contacted on 01258 473154 in order to book a seat. The driver will collect passengers from home and an approximate pick up time will be given when booking as times will vary each week depending on who is travelling on any particular day.

Despite the above I would like to remind all parishioners that for those who rely wholly or primarily on public transport any reduction in services is potentially very isolating. We will continue to monitor the services provided as it is likely that subsidies for public transport services will continue to be under constant review. On a more positive note it is heartening to see those making suggestions and campaigning to reverse the decline in the breadth and frequency of public transport services. The CPRE (Council for the Protection of Rural England), for instance, is arguing that their plan to have a comprehensive and frequent rural bus service is achievable if funds are transferred from the current road building budget.