



Melksham & District Link

ANNUAL REPORT

2023/24



LINK SCHEMES have existed in Wiltshire since 1979 and can be found in most rural and urban communities. The Schemes are set up in response to local people recognising a need for the service. They provide a safety net for those unable to access services in other ways, such as public transport.

Services offered by
MELKSHAM & DISTRICT LINK

Include:

TRANSPORT

For appointments to Hospitals, Surgeries,
Dentists and other Medical appointments.

Charity Registration No. 1044337

**MELKSHAM & DISTRICT LINK
COMMITTEE
2023/2024**

TRUSTEES

Chair

Liz Rowley

Treasurer

Richard Clark

Secretary

Katherine Mills

OFFICERS

Volunteer Recruitment

Richard Lamprell

Welfare and Safeguarding

Ruth King

Webmaster

Ian Argyle

TRANSPORT CO-ORDINATORS

Jackie Hislop

(retired May 2024)

Ruth King

John Rowley

Ron Walby

Helen Romaine

Gilleen MacDonald

DBS OFFICER

Peter Simmonds

HEALTH & SAFETY

Liz Rowley

ASSISTANT TREASURER

Phil Davies

Chair

Another busy and rewarding year seems to have whizzed by. Melksham & District Link is now in its 30th Year of service to our local community. Inaugurated in April 1994 with a £500 grant from Melksham Town Council and with 33 volunteers we have expanded to being one of the largest Link schemes in Wiltshire. Despite many comings and goings, we maintain a core base of around 43 volunteer drivers and 5 coordinators. Demand for our service continues to grow but we manage (just about) to meet the demand, and we should all be very proud of what we do.

I must mention and say a particular thank you to some of our long-standing drivers.

Peter Simmonds joined Link in 2009 and although has recently, and reluctantly, had to give up his driving duties he remains as our DBS coordinator and is involved in maintaining other data for us.

Richard Clark our Treasurer and one of our busiest drivers joined us in 2010. Drivers Judith Blakeney (2013) Pat Graham (2014) and Annette Hucknall (2014) are all still active after 10 years. Ron Walby is our longest serving coordinator at 9 years plus.

It has been a tough challenge to attract new volunteers this year, but we are not alone in this. Speaking to other Chairs of Link Schemes in the County and other charities there does generally seem to be a dip in volunteering. However, we are constantly advertising and the recent Food and River Festival again proved to be quite successful in attracting interest.

Thank you to those who came and helped look after the stall. If you came to visit us, you may have noticed the rather swish new gazebo we have purchased which we aim to use at several future occasions.

The management Committee has continued to improve and invest in our publicity materials and give us a more professional look. New Melksham Link Lanyards and ID badges to make our name more visible are gradually being rolled out.



The best moment of the year for me was receiving a Civic Award, on your behalf, at the Mayor's Reception. It was given in recognition of the inspirational dedication to the Melksham Community given by Melksham & District Link. It was not the presentation itself that made me feel so proud but the response from the audience – people shaking my hand, patting my back and saying thank you as I walked up to receive the award. It was truly overwhelming.

As Chairman I regularly and frequently receive thanks and compliments about our service. I try to pass these onto individual drivers if they have been named. I can also tell you in the 18 months I have been Chairman I have not ever received a single complaint from a client! Amazing.

To maintain this high level of service I know every single volunteer gives their time and compassion to make it work. But there are also several people who add a bit extra by helping with all the tasks that need doing to keep a sizeable charity running. You know who you are – thank you for everything you do and for your support.

Looking after our money, upkeep of the database, handing out blue badges, doing DBS, interviewing new volunteers, publicity, running the website, general admin and safeguarding and welfare are all essential tasks. If anyone has any expertise or knowledge that they could share and help with these aspects, then please step forward and tell me. New ideas and new people would be very welcomed by the Committee.

Most volunteers have now registered to gain access to the volunteer's area of our website. The driver's handbook, newsletters, policies and all our documents can be accessed here. You can also print off expense forms from the website. The aim is to keep this up dated and relevant to all our volunteers so please do keep having a look at it. Again, if anyone has an interest in developing the site further then please do step forward.

So, in summary I would like to say to all of you be very proud of what you do because we really do follow through on our strapline - we are MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN MELKSHAM.

LIZ ROWLEY



Treasurer

This is my second year in the role of Treasurer. I continue to find the role interesting and rewarding. It is satisfying to know that the finances of the organisation are in good shape, and that all drivers are recompensed promptly with the money owed to them at the end of each month.

Like last year it took several attempts to precisely balance the end of year accounts. It is the small differences that take time to find and iron out.

When I took over the role, I created a spreadsheet which quickly adds up both the monthly figures and contributes to the end to end of year figures. This helps in providing data for the various returns that Link has to submit. However, I still retain the manual books which are completed each month. This makes it easier to detect anomalies, faults and differences when regularly comparing the two independent sets of figures, rather than just leaving it all to the end of the year. It also significantly helps the auditor at the end of a financial year.

We maintain two accounts, one with Santander, effectively our current account, and another with the Coventry Building Society which is essentially a savings account.

The amount of cash in the Santander account fluctuates depending on the donations received in client envelopes and the amount paid out in driver expenses. The amount in the Coventry Building Society has increased gradually throughout the year. On average the number of drivers submitting an expense claim form each month is approximately 31.

Income and Expenditure Year Ending 31 March 2024

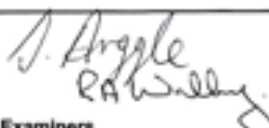
This Year		Last Year	
Income		Income	
Envelopes	40,435.20	Envelopes	30,613.90
Donation Received	838.25	Donation Received	297.77
Drivers Donations	52.27	Drivers Donations	70.70
Interest Received	530.90	Interest Received	321.58
Grant	0.00	Grant	0.00
	41856.62		31303.95
Expenditure		Expenditure	
Travel Cost	35,086.85	Travel Cost	27,695.94
Administration	370.15	Administration	702.48
Parking	129.80	Parking	113.65
Refreshments	249.40	Refreshments	443.63
Equipment	1231.96	Equipment	914.27
Phone	185.68	Phone	288.91
Insurance	254.30	Insurance	254.30
Link Donations	0.00	Link Donations	0.00
Printed Stationery	613.40	Printed Stationery	790.60
Web Design	0.00	Web Design	478.97
Donation to Marlborough Link	75.00	Donation to Marlborough Link	50.00
Riverside Hire	58.50	Riverside Hire	32.50
Community First	0.00	Community First	26.08
Other Costs (Glasses Hire)	30.00	Other Costs (Glasses Hire)	0.00
Miscellaneous Cost	13.47	Miscellaneous Cost	2.81
	38298.51		31794.14
Income over Expenditure	3558.11		-490.19
		Balance Sheet	
Opening Balance	29,193.77	Coventry - Balance	29,930.99
Income	41856.62	Santander - Balance	2820.89
Expenses	-38298.51		
	32751.88		32751.88

Examined with vouchers, Building Society and Bank Statement and found it to be correct

Richard Clark



Ian Argle



Ron Walby

Treasurer

Independent Examiners

Dated

3/6/24

Date accounts signed off

3/6/24

I would like to thank all the drivers who collected envelopes from clients and delivered them to either myself or the Assistant Treasurer each month. I would like to thank drivers who donated money to Link and clients who donate more than expected in the envelopes.

I would like to thank Phil Davies (Assistant Treasurer) who has assisted me in emptying the envelopes at the beginning of each month, preparing the money to be banked and helping to pay all the drivers.

Finally, I would like to thank Ian Argyle and Ron Walby who independently audited the end of year accounts.

It would help us if drivers regularly submit their envelopes and expense sheets on time, each and every month so that the amount of money held in the bank is sufficient to pay our drivers on time. When several months expenses are submitted together, it increases the overall amount needed to satisfy demands. It can also create issues with the banking of a larger amount of cash.

As the balance sheet shows, Melksham & District Link remains in a healthy financial position,

RICHARD CLARK

Auditor

Accounts were in good order and audit as follows:

1. Drivers' expenses/trips – 10% of all claims checked
2. Drivers' expenses paid – 100% x 4 months
3. Banking – Post Office, Santander, Coventry – 100%
4. Bills; Telephone, Insurance, Purchases - 100%

No issues were found during the audit and were signed off by both Auditors.

RON WALBY

Volunteer Recruitment

It has been a strange year for recruitment with our best new recruits coming from accidental introductions rather than resulting from the efforts of local advertising and exciting articles in the Melksham News. In gaining two or three new drivers we have had two or three moving away or retiring. Even the keenest of us can't do it for ever.

We did have two disappointments the first was at Asda supermarket trying to recruit and getting no response. The second was at the Food and River Festival where we got a lower than expected response for new volunteers. A big thank you to all who helped on those occasions.

RICHARD LAMPRELL

Welfare & Safeguarding

I continue to send cards to drivers who leave Link thanking them for their support and get well cards as required.

Any safeguarding concerns about a client continue to be raised with Adult Social Care in Wiltshire Council.

RUTH KING

Webmaster

During the last year membership has grown to 44 members. All components of the Melksham and District Link website have been updated to the current released level. The website represents our public internet window and a valuable place for volunteers to find current versions of forms, documents and newsletters.

IAN ARGYLE

Appendix 1 - Data

This gives some high-level statistics since the last AGM of the demand on the service and how the service has met that within in the last year.

September 2023 - August 2024

The demand for Link's Services in Melksham continues to grow. In the period since our last AGM we have made 2791 journeys in comparison with 2415 in the previous 12 months. This was an increase of 14%. For Community First we provide data for January to December, which we have used in our current recruitment leaflets.

Currently we are 8 months into 2024 and in comparison with the same 8 months last year we have continued to see this trend of increasing demand. At the end of August we had completed 1906 journeys in comparison with 1683 in 2022-3, an increase of 13%.

Pattern of Requests

Jan-August	20+ Requests	15-19 Requests	10-14 Requests	5-9 requests	4 or less
196 days	3	25	81	63	24
%	1.5%	12.7%	41.3%	32.1%	12.2%

Looking at request trends the days when requests exceeded 15 or more are those when our service can be stretched to the limit depending on Driver availability for that week. There were 28 days so far when this was the case (14%). The three busiest days this year were in March. Two were on Wednesday and the other was a Thursday. This bulge in the middle of the week has been a feature of 2024 as a whole. Typically, on average, Wednesdays are our busiest day with 15 requests or more and Thursdays the next busiest with 13 or more.

Weekend drives have dwindled. When vaccination programmes were in full swing we had many weekend requests but currently weekend drives have become few and far between.

Destinations

Destinations are dominated by journeys to Royal United Hospital in Bath. In the 8 months we have made 862 journeys to the RUH. The next busiest destination is the Melksham Campus which runs its stroke/balance classes on Monday to Wednesday. Third is Spencers leg clinic on Thursdays where we have quite a few regular clients who attend.

Top 10 Destinations - January-August 2024		
1	RUH - Bath	862
2	Campus - Melksham	174
3	Spencers - Leg Clinic Melksham	141
4	Spa Medical Centre Melksham GP Surgery	102
5	Trowbridge Alzheimers	96
6	Giffords Surgery Melksham GP	72
7	Melksham Community Hospital	64
8	Chippenham Community Hospital	49
9	Bath Sulis Hospital (was Circle)	45
10	Great Western Hospital Swindon	35
	Total	1640

Our top ten destinations accounted for 1640 journeys (86% of all drives) made by our drivers.

Though not a popular destination with some drivers we made 97 journeys to Bristol to various hospitals; 32 to Southmead, 20 to Bristol Eye Hospital, 17 to Bristol Royal Infirmary, and 15 to Bristol Haematology and Oncology Centre. 5 of the destinations in the top ten list are local drives in Melksham. Collectively these account for 553 journeys or 29% of all journeys

We have made 1 journey to each of the following - Oxford, Salisbury, Poole and Gloucester.

Drivers

Currently we have 41 drivers. Our 10 busiest Drivers have made 937 journeys between them which is 47% of all drives.

73% of all drives have pick up times between 9.00am and 2.00pm, 50% are between 9.00am and 12.00 midday.

	5.00- 7.00 am	7.00- 9.00 am	9.00- 10.00 am	10.00- 11.00 am	11.00- 12.00 am	12.00- 13.00 noon	13.00- 14.00 pm	14.00- 16.00 pm	16.00- later
Drives	18	175	432	325	239	192	257	306	40
%	0.85%	8.8%	21.8%	16.4%	12.0%	9.7%	13%	15.4%	1.95%

Clients

During this 8 month period 65% of our clients were female (313) while 34.7% were male (167). Nearly twice as many females use our service.

The clients who use us the most are unsurprisingly our regulars. In this period we have taken 481 individuals to their appointments. 79% have had 1 - 4 journeys.

We attract on average 18 new clients each month, and our client database has just over 1000 clients who have used our service in the past 3 years.

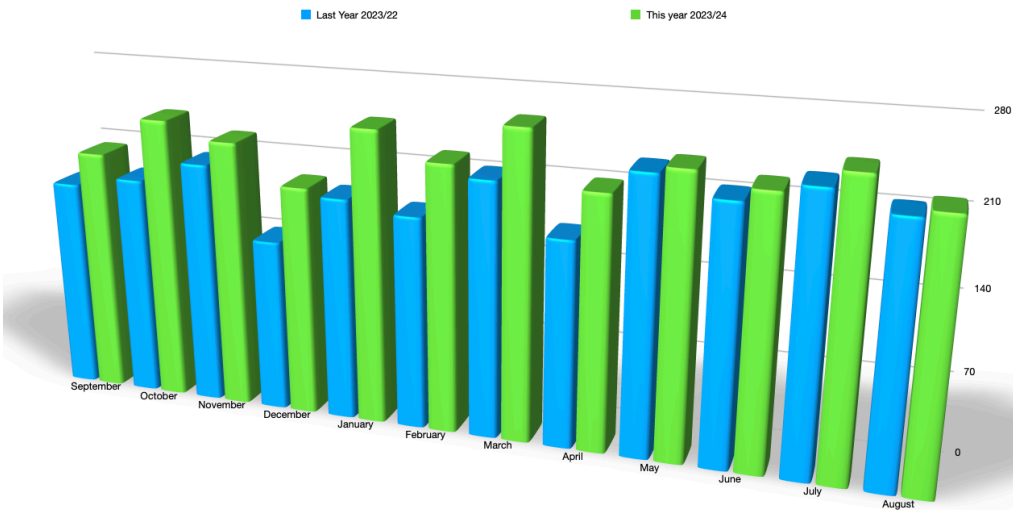
	1 journey	2-4 journeys	5-9 journeys	10-19 journeys	20 and above	
Clients	199	181	62	26	13	
%	41.4%	37.6%	12.9%	5.4%	2.6%	

Monthly Drives

In terms of drives per month each month has seen an increase on the same month last year. The first 4 months of 2024 this increase averaged over 20%. The period May-August saw the increase reduce to 3.5% on average.

COMPARISON		
	Last Year 2022/23	This year 2023/24
September	182	211
October	191	245
November	210	231
December	149	198
January	192	252
February	183	229
March	219	263
April	177	217
May	236	241
June	220	230
July	236	249
August	220	225
	2415	2791

Melksham & District Link
Journeys each Month - Comparison this year
(2023-4) with last (2022-3)





MISSION STATEMENT

WILTSHIRE LINK SCHEMES believe that local communities and volunteers can have a positive impact in maintaining the unique quality of life in rural areas.

Declining services and an increase in the population of older people and others, who need support, leave many people vulnerable and unable to access essential services and social activities that enable them to maintain an independent and enjoyable life style.

LINK SCHEMES draw on goodwill in communities to provide a voluntary good neighbour service, assisting to fill this gap.

Volunteering has many benefits for individuals and communities and vulnerable residents receive a much-valued service.

LINK SCHEMES provide a friendly, confidential service welcoming donations from their users. All donations are used in the provision of the service which is run entirely by volunteers.

Charity Registration No. 1044337