

Melksham & District Link

Annual Report

2024-25

Melksham and District Link Scheme – AGM



Thursday 16th October - Riverside Centre, 7pm start

Link Schemes have existed in Wiltshire since 1979 and can be found in most rural and urban communities.

These 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 2024/2025

Trustees

Chair	Liz Rowley
Treasurer	Richard Clark
Secretary	Flis Hislop

Officers

Volunteer Recruitment	Richard Lamprell
Health & Safety	Liz Rowley
Webmaster	Ian Argyle

Transport Co-ordinators

Ron Walby
John Rowley
Helen Romaine
Gillean MacDonald
Sue Pollitt
Mandy Belgium

DBS Officer **Flis Hislop**

Safeguarding **Liz Rowley**

Assistant Treasurers **Tina Melville**
Liz Lumley

Reports

Chair

Another year seems to have passed by very quickly and Melksham Link has, yet again, been doing a fantastic job in supporting our community. I hope you all like the new ID badges and lanyards. They do make us look 'more professional'. We are currently in the process of sourcing polo shirts and fleeces – with our logo - for all our drivers who wish to have them.

In January every volunteer received a printed copy of the up-to-date Driver's Handbook. I do suggest you keep this in your car and have a quick read from time to time. We hope that it covers most issues and answers your questions.

This year, I was proud that our longest-serving driver and Treasurer, Richard Clark, received a Civic Award at the Mayor's Ball in early 2025. I'm sure you will all agree he does a great job of ensuring we all get our expenses on time, and he also is a very busy driver. This year he has been helped by Tina Melville and Liz Lumley, and we are extremely grateful for their help in counting and checking all the donations and expenses on a monthly basis.

Data suggests that the number of trips this year (since January) is actually slightly down on the previous year but that doesn't mean we haven't been very busy and somewhat stretched at times. Our Co-ordinators do a fantastic job of trying to provide support for everyone who asks and many of our volunteer drivers go above and beyond to help.

Sadly, we have struggled to attract new volunteers. We are not alone – all the Wiltshire Link Schemes are reporting the same issues as are other charities in Melksham. Recruitment for us all has become challenging. A post covid slump perhaps?

Having said that the new volunteers we have recruited this past year have been excellent additions to our team.

When recruiting we always try to stress the flexibility of our volunteering roles – no one is committed to a particular time or day. I'm sure I'm not alone when I say that I personally find the role as a driver very satisfying because I know I am truly helping someone, and I often meet the most amazing people with interesting life stories.



As Chair I regularly meet up with the Chairs of all the other 41 Link Schemes in Wiltshire where we share issues and information. We all operate under the umbrella of Community First – who give us best practice guidance and advice.

I also attend meetings of the Melksham and District Health and Well Being Board which I find very interesting. There is a lot of help and advice in Melksham for our more vulnerable clients via the Melksham Community Support Team. If you have a client who appears to have a problem with which they need help, firstly ask them if they would like help and then either let me know or they could get in touch with melksham@ageukwiltshire.org.uk or phone 01225 09265.

One issue that regularly arises at Link meetings and in discussions with you is parking – particularly at RUH. Both Community First and I, regularly talk to the parking team, SABA, at RUH but, to be perfectly frank, they really do not want to give us free parking at all, so it is a constant battle. Please be assured we try to do our best to fight our corner.

Parking regulations at various medical locations often change. Please remember it is your responsibility to check the current regulations at every site. In several places this may involve going inside the building to log into their system. We try to keep parking details up to date on our website Melkshamlink.com

Another issue that often arises is when clients appear to give very low donations for drives. However, we are a charity, and we clearly state that clients can give what they can afford. We have no way of assessing this. As volunteer drivers we must not concern ourselves with what the client pays. At the end of each month, we have more than enough money to pay all our expenses.

In July this year we had a lovely summer party in Liz and Henry Lumley's beautiful garden. This was a great opportunity to get to know other volunteers and thanks go to everyone who helped organise this very special occasion.

Late summer also saw our stall at the River and Food Festival on both days. We spoke to quite a few people and collected the details of a few potential volunteers. These are being followed up as I write. Often the best method of recruitment is when volunteers talk to people about their role and recommend it to their friends. So please do spread the word.

This year long standing volunteer, Peter Simmonds, had to step down from all his duties both as a driver and as a support officer. Fortunately, our Secretary Flis Hislop has taken on much of his role particularly arranging DBS checks and Drivers Assessments and ensuring our hospital parking lists up to date.

Ruth King also stepped down from her role as Safeguarding Officer. As Chair I have taken on this responsibility.

Driver Peter Smith has joined the Committee and has already proved a very useful asset. However, we really do need some more support on the Committee to help with various things. None of them are very onerous but it would help to spread the load if some of you would consider taking on some very small but important tasks.

It is my intention to step down as Chairman in October 2026 when I will have completed nearly 3 years. It is therefore very important that we get some new blood onto the Committee to ensure continuity and the smooth running of our vitally important charity.

Finally, I have to say a huge thank you for all the support you all give to Melksham & District Link and to me personally. The complaints books is empty but the thank you and compliments folder is overflowing. Well done everyone.

Elizabeth Rowley



Treasurer

As this is my third 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 amounts that take time to reconcile. It was felt that the accounts this year should be independently checked by someone not associated with Melksham Link. Last year we arranged a private independent examiner who did a very good job in checking and agreeing our accounts. Unfortunately, he is not available in 2026 so we are looking for a person to carry out this role.

When I took over the role, I created a spreadsheet which quickly adds up both the monthly figures and contributes to the 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 are still retaining both sets of accounts which certainly helps during the time when the annual accounts are being put together.

We have two bank accounts, one with Santander, our current account, and another with the Coventry Building Society which is 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 33.

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

I would particularly like to thank our Assistant Treasurers Liz Lumley and Tina Melville who assist me in emptying the envelopes at the beginning of each month, preparing the money to be banked and helping to pay all the drivers. This is accompanied by both cake and coffee to help us carry out the work.

Finally, I would like to thank the independent checker who 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 large amount of cash.

The balance sheet shows Melksham & District Link remains in a healthy financial position.

Richard Clark



Income over Expenditure Year Ending 31 March 2025

This Year 2024-25		Last Year 2023-24	
Income		Income	
Client Envelopes	£42,839.4	Client Envelopes	£40,435.2
Donations Received	£1,764.45	Donations Received	£838.25
Driver Donations	£66.65	Driver Donations	£52.27
Interest Received	£1,075.26	Interest Received	£530.9
Miscellaneous Income	£0	Miscellaneous Income	£0
	£45,745.76		£41,856.62
Expenditure		Expenditure	
Travel Cost	£34,808.6	Travel Cost	£35,086.85
Administration	£727.57	Administration	£370.15
Parking	£83.5	Parking	£129.8
Refreshments	£568.93	Refreshments	£249.4
Equipment	£1,702.89	Equipment	£1,231.96
Phone	£164.08	Phone	£185.68
Insurance	£254.3	Insurance	£254.3
Link Donations	£51	Link Donations	0.00
Printed Stationery	£805.4	Printed Stationery	£613.4
Web Design	£188	Web Design	£0
Donation Marlborough Link/ Online database	£100	Donation Marlborough Link/ Online database	£75
Riverside Hire	£45.5	Riverside Hire	£58.5
Community First	£0	Community First	£0
Ribbonworks	£364.68	Ribbonworks	£0
Wiltshire Publications Ltd.	£88	Wiltshire Publications Ltd.,	£0
Other Costs (glasses)	0.00	Other Costs (glasses)	£30
Miscellaneous Cost	£0.23	Miscellaneous Cost	£13.47
	£39,952.68		£38,298.51
Income over expenditure	£5,793.08	Income over expenditure	£3,558.11

Balance Sheet				
Opening Balance	£32,7541.88		Coventry - Balance	£35,001.1
Income	£45,745.76		Sanatander - Balance	£3,543.86
Expenses	£39,952.68			
TOTAL	£38,544.96		TOTAL	£38,544.96

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

Richard Clark

Treasurer

Dated

2/4/2025

Gary Gale-Sides

Independent Examiner

Date accounts signed off

2 April 2025.

Volunteer Recruitment Officer

It has been a strange year for recruitment with our best new recruits coming from accidental introductions rather than 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 cannot do it forever. We did have a disappointment with the lower than expected response at the Food & River Festival. A big thank you to all who helped this year. I will be retiring from this post at the AGM but continuing driving.

Richard Lamprell

Webmaster

The last year has seen a healthy increase in member registrations, following a vigorous campaign by the committee, now standing at fifty six; however under the terms and conditions of our Hosting Agreement it has not been possible to monitor how active our members have been. In any case the website remains active and ready to accept content in all sections.

Ian Argyle

Health & Safety

There were no reported incidents during the year to date. However, drivers must remember that they should not be expected to lift heavy items such as walkers or wheelchairs into or out of a car. Nor should they be asked to push wheelchairs. Drivers must tell the Duty Co-ordinator if a client fails to inform us that they need this help.

Three clients have been informed that their mobility has declined to such an extent that we are no longer the most suitable form of transport for them. Currently the Chairman is acting as Health and Safety Officer. It would be better if another volunteer stepped forward to take on this role.

Elizabeth Rowley

Welfare/Safeguarding


Ruth King stepped down as Safeguarding officer during the year and the role had to be taken on by the Chair. The task of DBS checks for Volunteers has been taken on by the Secretary, Flis Hislop.

There have been no safeguarding issues reported this year. On two occasions drivers have reported being unable to contact a client when going to pick them up. This was immediately reported to the Duty Co-ordinator who contacted the

client's emergency contact to ascertain the safety of the client. In both cases the client had been admitted to hospital at short notice.

Any possible concern reported about a client to the Safeguarding Officer is shared with the Melksham Link Chair and Wiltshire County Council.



Elizabeth Rowley



Melksham & District
LINK
Registered Charity: 1044337

**VOLUNTEER
DRIVERS NEEDED**

*Your mileage paid - You choose the
times and hours to fit your lifestyle*



Interested? Contact
07979 129052
or email
Melkshamlink@gmail.com



Melksham & District
LINK
Registered Charity: 1044337



made **2,874** journeys
for **580** clients to
107 health destinations
clocking **78,364** miles
in **2024**



Numbers that Matter

Could you join our
team of Volunteers to
help meet the growing
demand for our vital service
and make a difference in
Melksham?

Interested? Ring
07979 129052
or email
Melkshamlink@gmail.com



Appendix - Data

September 2024 - August 2025

Trends

Demand for Link's service has levelled off with some months dipping below the figures for last year. For this Report we take a snapshot of where we are currently. Comparison with official data provided to Community First is not directly comparable; it aggregates all Link Schemes and covers the period January - December. For this report we are looking at the period September 2024 - August 2025. Wherever possible the overall figures in this analysis are for this 12 month period. Some data is for the 8 months of 2025 because of the way the online database calculates totals.

At the end of August 2025 we had made **2719** drives in the 12 months. The busiest month during that period was October 2024 with **288** drives. Demand was at its lowest in August 2025 with **181** drives. In this 12 month period Link completed **72** less drives, a decrease of 2.5%.

Possible reasons for this dip in demand may be related to a drop in the number of regular clients. For example the number of drives to the Spencers Leg Clinic and to Trowbridge Alzheimers have significantly decreased.

Clients

We currently have **1055** active clients in the online database. **658** are female (62%) **397** are male (37%). **463** clients used us in 2025 to attend **1934** appointments. We attracted **208** new clients which is roughly **17** on average each month. In the year we were asked to go to **92** separate destinations. As usual the most requested destination is the Royal United Hospital in Bath.

39.7% of our clients make only 1 return journey with Link; **2.16%** of our clients make 21 or more drives with Link. The average number of drives for each client is 4. **32%** of our clients use our services between 1- 4 times. **63%** use our service between 1-10 times.

	1 drive only	2	3-4	5-6	7-10	11-20	21	Totals
Clients	184	75	80	39	39	24	10	463
Actual Drives	184	150	277	283	322	323	395	1934
%	9.5%	7.75%	14.3%	14.6%	16.65%	16.7%	20.42%	99.92%

Drivers

We currently have **45** drivers. Our busiest 10 drivers have made **890** journeys between them, which is 47% of all drives.

We were joined in the year by 6 new drivers; Andrew Foskett, Iain Houghton, Simon Gould, Andrew Ritchie, Gillean MacDonald and Helen Romaine.

Co-ordinators

We currently have a team of **6** Co-ordinators. 4 co-ordinators are also drivers. During the year Ruth King retired as a co-ordinator but continues to drive. The team was joined by Sue Pollitt and Mandy Belgium.

Destinations

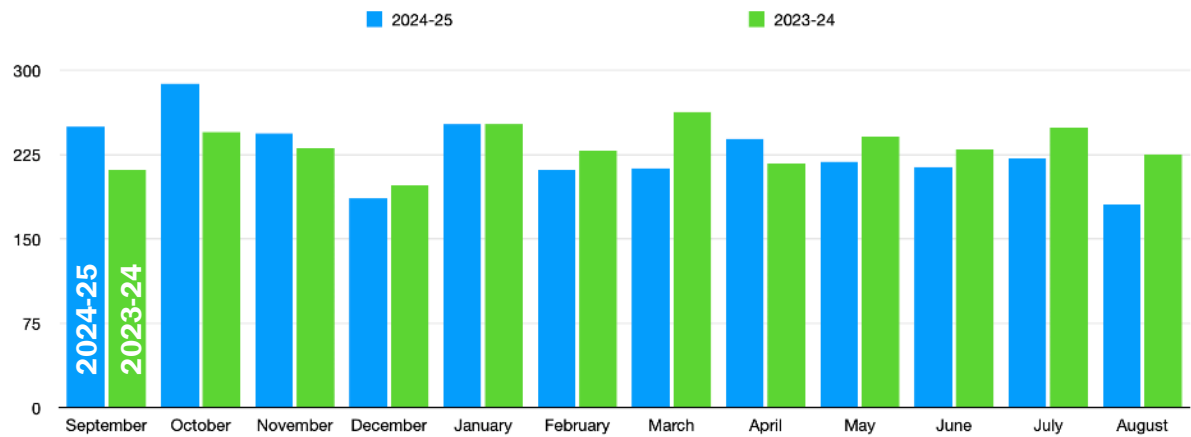
The top 10 destinations were as follows - January - August 2025

		This Year Drives	Last Year's position	
1	Bath - Royal United Hospital	860	1st	
2	Melksham - Community Campus	133	2nd	Local
3	Melksham - Spa Medical Centre	98	4th	Local
4	Melksham Community Hospital	86	7th	Local
5	Bath - Sulis Hospital	77	9th	
6	Melksham - Spencers Leg Clinic	68	3rd	Local
7	Melksham - Gifford Surgery	61	6th	Local
8	Chippenham Community Hospital	52	8th	
9	Trowbridge Alzheimers	46	5th	
10	Bristol Eye Hospital	39	New entry	

Total Drives to Top Ten Destinations **1560** of **1751** all drives in period. Of the top 10 Destinations **446** were local (29%) and **1074** were distance journeys (71%)

There were **78** journeys to Bristol, of which the Eye Hospital had the majority with 39, followed by Southmead with 17. There were also 11 journeys to the Bristol Royal Infirmary and 8 to the Bristol Heart Institute. There were single drives to Emerson's Green, South Community Hospital, & St Michaels.

Monthly Drives



Comparison of drives per month - Last year & current

COMPARISON	Last Year 2023/24	This Year 2024/20025	Difference
September	211	250	39
October	245	288	43
November	231	244	13
December	198	186	-12
January	252	252	0
February	229	211	-18
March	263	213	-50
April	217	239	22
May	241	219	-22
June	230	214	-16
July	249	222	-27
August	225	181	-44
	2791	2719	-72