WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

UPPER MEON VALLEY WARD – PARISH UPDATE – JUNE 2026

Small Grants Window Opens

The window for applications to the Winchester Small Grants Scheme has now reopened and will remain open until January next year or until all the available funds have been allocated – so there is clear advantage to getting your applications in earlier rather than later. The maximum sum available is £700 and local voluntary and not-for-profit groups and organisations are eligible to apply. Recent successful applications have come from "greening" groups, sport clubs and village halls. As funds become ever scarcer, this is one of the few sources that remains, and has been very benevolent to this Ward in the past.

Meon Valley Bus

The team behind the Meon Valley Bus is trying hard to promote and improve both their scheduled bus services and the vehicle's availability for hire for group outings. Their website has been recently refreshed and is here: https://meonvalleybus.co.uk/

They are also pleased to announce that, for a trial period, they will be adding a stop at the Kilmeston bus shelter on the Friday morning run to Winchester for six-weeks starting Friday 17th July. We will ensure this is advertised in the July edition of the Upper Itchen 'Church and Village' magazine, but all encouragement to use the bus on any of its three weekly runs would be welcomed.

We have also been asked about the possibility of adding a stop on the Winchester run at the Millbury crossroads at Beauworth - we'll follow this up with the MVB team.

Hampshire Bus Action Group (HamBAG)

HamBAG has been formed by several action groups across the county, all of which represent communities who have recently lost their last surviving bus service. They have come together in the hope that their collective voice may be more effective in raising awareness of the effect on communities, and particularly their elder residents, of the practical and social cost of losing 'their' bus. The group, which has no political party alignment, has agreed a 'vision' statement (attached to this update) that it hopes to use to lobby all the Hampshire/Solent Mayoral candidates over the next two years and shape their approach to rural transport, acutely conscious that development of public transport strategy is one of the Mayor's devolved powers.

Your Parish Council may wish to consider whether to commit formally to support their vision, so lending their weight to the group's work.

David Ablitt
Jerry Pett
Winchester City Council Ward Members for Upper Meon Valley

10/2/26

VISION STATEMENT FROM HAMPSHIRE BUS ACTION GROUP

OUR VISION OF THE FUTURE

Our vision is of a bus service where:

Every community has access to public transport that's sufficiently frequent and affordable to meet people's needs.

Buses are so attractive, reliable and rapid that people choose to leave cars at home.

Public transport is run as a network, with convenient rail, bus, and ferry connections for journeys to work, shops, hospitals, education, leisure facilities and airports.

Public transport increases in line with development so new homes, workplaces and destinations are not car dependent.

WHY THIS VISION IS NEEDED

Nearly half of Hampshire's emissions come from transport, overwhelmingly from private cars[1]. A fully loaded double-decker bus removes up to 75 cars' worth of pollution and congestion from our roads.

Many parts of Hampshire are "bus deserts", either with no buses or a service too infrequent to be useful.

About a fifth of homes have no access to a car. The poorest fifth of households are twice as likely as the average to have no car.

Hampshire County Council's strategy on buses is fundamentally flawed because it focuses on supporting buses on a small number of routes which are already commercially viable and ignores the needs of scores of communities across the county.

Buses in Hampshire need to serve more people. Last year, HCC came 64th out of 89 authorities in a league table of bus trips per person, with only 18.4 trips per person, down from 24.1 a decade ago[2]. Many other authorities with similar population densities have significantly higher levels of bus usage.

[1] https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/uk-local-authority-and-regional-greenhouse-gas-emissions-statistics

[2] https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/bus-statistics-data-tables

HOW TO DELIVER OUR VISION

We will be asking candidates for local elections this May, and for the election of the new mayor of Hampshire and the Solent in 2028, to make improving public transport a top priority, taking full advantage of new powers to plan and franchise bus services as part of a wholly integrated transport system
The Mayoral Combined Authority should conduct comprehensive surveys to understand people's travel needs and ensure bus services are designed to meet them.
Public funding for buses will need to be sufficient to meet our vision.
Bus priority schemes should be established in many more places to make buses the most reliable and fastest travel option.

PRINCIPLES OF A GOOD BUS SERVICE
Buses need to be:

- Frequent enough to serve people's needs in every parish and neighbourhood to
    - Commute to work,
    - Get to public services like hospitals, schools, libraries, GP and social care facilities,
    - Get to shopping and leisure facilities
    - Reach other transport links (trains, ferries, trams, airports…)
- Easy walking distance from people's homes
- Fast enough to compete with car travel
    - Express buses covering longer distances with limited stops need to link with
    - Local services that get as close as possible to people's homes
    - Integrated with other services, timetables, stations and interchanges
- Reliable: delays and cancellations must be kept to a minimum and bus companies must be held accountable for them and keep passengers fully informed.
- Affordable: including free travel or heavily discounted travel for young people under 25 and 24/7 validity for disabled bus pass holders.
- A recognition that buses play a vital role in the lives of many elderly people, reducing isolation.
- Safe and secure so everyone can travel without fear.
- Tickets valid for a whole journey: pay only once even if changing buses. Integrated ticketing similar to London's Oyster system, with tap on/off payments and fare caps applying to all modes of public transport
- Tickets need to be flexible and affordable to attract families to use public transport
- Accessible for all (independent of age and levels of mobility)
- Bus punctuality and reliability data must be published regularly and consistently
- Bus stops must have decent shelters and real time information
- Buses must be zero emission, accessible, clean, and comfortable
- Passengers and local communities must be properly consulted about services and involved in key decisions, i.e. by actively involving parish councils and future unitary councils, user groups and doing user surveys.
- Demand-responsive minibuses can help smaller communities but frequent, scheduled bus services should be the norm for the vast majority of residents