

Nippybus Replacement Bus Services

As you may recall in October 2017 Nippybus ceased trading and as a result the N6 Demand Responsive bus service operated by Nippybus in the Ilminster area ceased operation and we stepped in to provide a replacement by increasing the coverage and resources of the Chard & Ilminster Slinky Bus operated by SSVCA. This was a temporary measure whilst we looked to put more appropriate transport in place in line with demand. Due to the sudden nature of the withdrawal by Nippybus we were unable to ascertain journey patterns from the outlying villages into Ilminster, but in order to address this SSVCA have been monitoring use of the service since October and have built up a clear picture of the pattern of use that has enabled us to develop a timetabled service, which will not require pre-booking. We are also taking into account the request made by the everybody get on board campaign to provide a scheduled service in the Ilminster Area.

The information provided by SSVCA has clearly identified almost every journey being made on the Slinky replacement service takes place between 0900 and 1400. This information also shows where all the users live (as they have had to register to use the service). This information has allowed us to design a small network of routes in the area which cover the villages where current users live and provides journeys within the times they are currently travelling.

The intention therefore is to introduce a timetable bus service from Monday 3 September 2018 to be known as the Ilminster Shuttle following three basic routes:

S1 Ashill – Broadway – Horton – Ilminster

S2 Shepton Beauchamp – Barrington, - Puckington – Stocklinch – Whitelackington – Ilminster

S3 Ilton – Ilminster

All three services will operate Monday to Friday and will be provided by the Somerset County Council in house fleet using one of our low floor accessible minibuses delivered in 2017. English National Concessionary Bus Passes will be accepted and due to the first journeys commencing on or just after 9am, we will allow residents to use these passes before the statutory 0930 start time. The fares charged will match those currently being charged on the replacement service provided by SSVCA.

The previous N6 service operated by Nippybus offered connections for onward travel to Taunton via their N10 service and we are looking to replicate this facility by connecting to the 30 service operated by Buses of Somerset to and from Taunton. We cannot do this for all three services every day of the week but we can link the Shepton Beauchamp route to the 30 on Monday/Wednesday/Friday and Ashill route on Tuesday/Thursday, whilst providing this link for Ilton residents every day Monday to Friday. The timetable will provide all villages served at least one return journey each day Monday to Friday to access local services in Ilminster and in the case of Ilton, which has the largest number of current users three return journeys each day Monday to Friday.

We would appreciate the support of Parish Councils served by the new timetabled service with the promotion of the new services, so that residents are made aware that the new routes will start from 3 September 2018.

Finally, these changes have no effect on the Chard & Ilminster Slinky Bus which will continue operating as now. It is likely that most if not all of the small number of journeys currently taking place on the N6 replacement service after 1400 will be accommodated by the Chard & Ilminster Slinky but this cannot be guaranteed.

I have attached the new timetable for this service for information.

Kim Hawes

Public Transport Manager
Transporting Somerset