

Bus survey summary

Steve Smith, Wool Parish Clerk, November 2023

Background

In 2021, Wool Parish clerk started investigating the possibility of re-establishing bus services in the parish in response to informal feedback from residents, particularly from the residents of the Cologne Road area who have no facilities close by, and comments in the neighbourhood plan survey carried out in 2019. Initial interactions with Dorset Council representatives on the subject informed the clerk that 'evidence of need' was required as a first step, so a survey was carried out in early 2022.

What did we ask?

In 2022, Wool Parish Council delivered a survey to every household in the parish asking about the journeys parishioners currently make, and whether they would use a bus instead, should buses be made available. Information was gathered about the journeys e.g., destination, reason, and frequency, also anonymously about the person making the journey e.g., age group and whether they were prepared to pay more Council Tax for a bus service. The survey form, which was also available online, is shown below.



BUS SURVEY

YOUR CHANCE TO TELL US WHAT BUSES YOU NEED

SURVEY continued

Are there any journeys you can't currently make that a bus would make possible? **Yes** **No**

Please provide details of the journeys you would like to be able to make

Are you prepared to pay more in Council Tax in order to provide a bus service? **Yes** **No**

Use the box below to provide any additional comments

Additional comments box

Your personal information

Your age: 16 - 19 20 - 29 30 - 39
40 - 49 50 - 59 60 - 69
70 - 79 80 - 89 90+

Are you: disabled able bodied

Your street name: _____

This survey can be completed as an household or as an individual.

Complete online here: www.woolparishcouncil.com/bussurvey

If you require more paper copies you can request them from Wool Parish Council on woolparishcouncil@gmail.com or **01929 460054**



BUS SURVEY

YOUR CHANCE TO TELL US WHAT BUSES YOU NEED

Wool Parish Council is working with Dorset County Council on improving bus services in the parish as part of central government's Bus Back Better scheme. Details can be found here:

www.gov.uk/government/publications/bus-back-better

Please complete this survey to enable Wool Parish Council to understand how buses would be used.

DEADLINE: 30 APRIL 2022

HOW TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY

The survey can be completed online here:

www.woolparishcouncil.com/bussurvey

Alternatively, this paper copy can be completed and returned to one of the locations listed overleaf. If you need more room please use and attach additional sheets.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

All responses will be analysed by Wool Parish Council and the results of the survey will be published to residents. Wool Parish Council will then give the information to Dorset County Council to inform their bid for funding from central government.

Completed surveys can be returned to the following locations:

Wool Parish Council office,

The D'Uberville Centre, Colliers Lane, Wool BH20 6DL

Cologne Road Community Room, Cologne Road, Bovington BH20 6NT

Bovington HIVE, King George V Road, Bovington BH20 6JA

Journey purpose Provide a brief description	Where to and how many times a month? eg: Dorchester, 4 times	How do you currently make this journey? eg: car	Do you travel at peak times? Peak times are: 7 - 9am and/or 4.30 - 6.30pm, Monday - Friday	Would you use a bus for this journey instead?
Food shopping				
Other shopping				
Accessing services (Post Office, library etc)				
Medical (for people and animals)				
Work				
Education				
Social (visiting friends/family, going out)				
Recreation (visiting a location, the gym etc)				
Other (please describe)				

SURVEY continues overleaf...

What was the level of response?

191 households responded (roughly half online and half on paper) which equates to just over 9% of households in the parish. We now have details of over 8,000 journeys taken per month (if you assume every journey is a round trip), which equates to 65,000 miles. The data cannot be claimed to represent the travel needs/habits of the entire parish (we can't just 'scale up' the results from 9% to 100% for several reasons), but it does give us the data for those who felt strongly enough to respond, and trends/patterns can be identified.

Analysing the responses

Before giving an overview of the results, Wool Parish Council would like to thank local resident, Trevor Hayles, who helped the clerk analyse the data. Some of the data required sensible assumptions to be made. Trevor and the clerk are more than happy to make their assumptions and the raw data available to anyone who wants to verify their work. The data is stored in a spreadsheet and can be interrogated for a variety of travel-related purposes (e.g., where do people go for their shopping?) but to 'establish need', very simple queries were developed such as what are the most frequent journeys that could be replaced with a bus?

What are the headlines?

Theme	Evidence
There is a genuine need/desire for buses in the parish.	Only 36% of the people who responded said that they would not be prepared to pay more Council Tax for a bus service. The remaining 64% either said yes (38.5%) or left the question blank (25.5%). This is significant, if you ask someone whether they want something for free they will almost certainly say yes whereas if they indicate they are prepared to pay that demonstrates a genuine need/desire.
A lot of journeys would be made by bus instead of car.	Of the 65,000 miles worth of journeys, people indicated that about 57,000 of those miles would be done via bus instead (or left the question blank). There is a significant environmental benefit to this, particularly if an electric bus service were to be introduced. A lot of seniors no longer feel confident, or safe, driving but they are currently forced to drive due to a lack of public transport.
Bovington and Cologne Road must be connected to Wool by a regular bus.	Over 3,000 journeys per month (over 18,000 miles) either start or end at Bovington and Cologne Road. The need for a bus to/from Bovington was highlighted in the neighbourhood plan surveys and the bus survey data backs this up, as does the Beryl Bike usage data.
Wool needs to be connected to Dorchester by a regular bus.	Dorchester was the most popular destination which isn't currently serviced by a direct bus from Wool. Over 800 trips per month equating to over 18,000 miles.

Further evidence of need

The data collected by the survey has, in the opinion of Wool Parish Council, provided the required 'evidence of need' but there is additional evidence which further strengthens the case.

Wool is categorised by Dorset Council as a 'Key Service Village', providing facilities for surrounding villages. There are limited services in Bovington and no services in Cologne Road so the residents must rely on their Key Service Village. According to the 2021 census, 23.3% of households had no cars or vans. There is no specific data for the parish but if the national average applies, around 1 in 4 households must walk or cycle from Bovington and Cologne Road to get to the key services. A bus service connecting Bovington to Wool would enable the residents to access the 'hub' of Wool train station and travel onto more destinations. There is limited parking at Wool station if you drive there you are not guaranteed to be able to park.

The usage statistics for the recently introduced Beryl Bikes scheme also confirm the need. Bovington Memorial Hall and Cologne Road are consistently the second and third most popular destination (Wool station always being first). Beryl Bikes only caters for a part of the community. The current Beryl Bike scheme is limited to 10 pedal bikes which are only suitable for the 'fitter' parishioners, especially when you consider the gradient of Tout Hill.

Since the survey was carried out, the 'cost of living' and 'fuel' crises have undoubtedly increased the likelihood of a bus being used over a car.

By the end of 2023, Bovington Garrison will have de-registered 600 family members of serving soldiers from the Military Medical Facilities and these individuals will have to travel to Wool (or Bere Regis) to access medical services. These numbers are not included in the survey and further strengthen the need for public transport

Finally, a word from 'the man in the street'

As well as the comments from the survey, the following quotes are typical of the feelings of local residents...

"They can put buses on in the summer for the tourists but not for the residents who pay council tax".

"Buses should not have to make a profit. Pensioners should have access to subsidised public transport".

"Military personal pay council tax as well but we feel as though we are forgotten about".

"Whenever I see a bus in Bovington it is never in service. The area is used to train bus drivers. It feels like I'm on an episode of Bullseye where Jim Bowen says 'let's see what you could have won...'"