



Melksham & District Link
E-Newsletter
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AGM and Committee changes.

We were all disappointed that due to the very high Covid numbers in Wiltshire the AGM was switched at the last minute to a virtual AGM. It was great that so many of the newer drivers joined us online for the AGM. There were a few changes to the committee this year: Richard Clark is the new treasurer; Danny Holland takes over as webmaster and Dee Pesse has added recruitment to her list of responsibilities.

Message from the Chairman.

The best people to ask to volunteer for something are those that are already busy being volunteers, like yourselves. So here goes. Heather is due to end her 6 years as secretary at next year's AGM. We need to recruit an assistant secretary to learn the job and take over from Heather next October. Please contact either Heather or me to find out more.

It was with real regret that we felt it necessary to cancel the 'Live' AGM and Cheese & Wine because of the high number of Covid cases in the South-West. To make up for this the Committee are planning to host a cheese and wine evening for all Link volunteers and plus 1's on Thursday 10th March 2022. Please make a note of the date. More details to follow.

Recently one of our clients had a slight accident on the back seat of a volunteer's car. Whilst these occurrences are very rare, it is not a pleasant one if it does happen and can cause soiling to the car seat. To help prevent any soiling the Committee recommend that drivers fit a protective cover over their car seats. If you wish to purchase your own covers please claim the cost on your expense (Up to £25 for rear seats and £15 for the front). Alternatively let me know and Link will obtain covers for you.

A few of our clients suffering from cancer have been offered 'Free Trips' to hospital appointments, though drivers have not always been informed of the fact. To ensure you do know who is currently offered this concession I have added the words FREE TRIP to the relevant client details on our database. This will show up on the email confirmation sent to drivers, immediately after the client

address. Some, who have been offered this concession may still wish to donate and may well ask for a brown envelope. Going forwards only those clients with very frequent hospital appointments, such as daily for 6 weeks, will be offered free trips.

As we approach December, on behalf of all the Committee, I wish you and your families a very happy Christmas and peaceful New Year; plus, a huge thank you for volunteering with Melksham Link.

Kind regards, Richard

Thank You Pat Graham



Richard Bell recently presented our out-going treasurer Pat Graham with a thank you card and garden vouchers for her 7 years of dedicated service. Pat was thrown in at the deep end back in 2014 when sadly the then Link treasurer died suddenly.

I know that we will all miss Pat's smiling face and her friendly and very effective manner when dealing with all the volunteers claims. The good news is that Pat is staying on as a volunteer driver.

Richard Clark has kindly offered to be the new treasurer and was voted in at the AGM. Thank you Richard C for agreeing to become our new Treasurer.

New Expense Form & Drop Off Points

As many of you will know, our current Treasurer Pat Graham has retired from the role of Treasurer and Richard Clark, one of our drivers, has taken on the job. (Thank you Richard).

This, then, is an appropriate time to review and update some of our rules and practices, particularly relating to expenses and the committee have agreed the following changes, which we hope will make everyone's life a little simpler. The changes to the recording of hours below are for statistical purposes only and does not affect the actual claim in any way. The changes in recording mileage are

that it will make life easier not having to add up fractions of a mile and with no significant cost to Link

1. The 3 hours, £3 rule relating to refreshment is abolished and replaced by 'Volunteers may claim for reasonable expenses incurred for food and/or drink whilst on Link duties.'
2. The mileage incurred on journeys to be rounded up to the nearest whole mile for expense claims.
3. The time involved for each trip to be shown in whole hours, rounded down or up as appropriate.
4. You are asked to complete expense forms clearly and legibly, adding up the cost, time and miles columns and entering the totals.
5. Expenses claims forms should be submitted together with the relevant donation envelopes by the first Tuesday of the month. They can be delivered to either Richard Clark at 56 Bath Road, Atworth, SN12 8JY or Heather Newman at 61 Blackmore Road, Melksham SN12 7HT.
6. Please ensure that you show on donation envelopes the trip date, client name and destination name.
7. If you aren't claiming any or part of your expenses but donating to Link please still fill out an expenses form claim as usual and indicate in the appropriate field how much you are donating. (We still have to keep a record of hours, miles etc for statistical purposes and work out the donation amount.)
8. The drivers comments field can be used for information such as no donation given; double journey etc.

The expense claims form has been amended and has now been reprinted. The driver's handbook will also be updated to reflect these changes but please implement them straight away.

We will also provide some A5 envelopes for each driver to put their claim form and donation envelopes in to aid delivery. Please try and submit these monthly and on time so that payment can be completed in one session by the treasurer and assistant. Supplies of A5 envelopes, expense forms and brown envelopes are available from Heather Newman & Richard Clark when you drop off your expense's forms. Please phone first to ensure they are in for when you need to pick up any stationery; any problems just email Heather Newman or Richard Clark.

Free Rides

We have stopped giving 'Free Rides' to new clients with cancer unless they have to attend hospital on consecutive days over a period of time rather than ad hoc appointments. Coordinators will advise drivers of any future cases. Existing clients benefitting from 'Free Trips' will continue until their treatment ends.

Donations

There has been disappointment expressed by a number of drivers regarding the small amount of a donation made by some clients. We do understand that such things can be demotivating to say the least. Whilst we are a charity and it is a donation not a charge, we want to ensure that no client abuses your giving of time and vehicle use and to this end donation amounts will be monitored, and action taken in appropriate cases.

Cheese & Wine Evening (save the date)

We were all disappointed that the planned cheese and wine evening after the AGM had to be cancelled at the last minute due to the very high case numbers of Covid. The committee has agreed

that this social event shall now take place at the Riverside Club in the evening of Thursday 10th March 2022. Please save this date, more details to follow in the New Year.

Melksham Food & River Festival



We had a very successful recruitment drive at this year's Melksham Food and River Festival in the park. The committee wish to thank all those volunteers that kindly donated raffle prizes and gave their time up to tend the stand.

Lengthy Appointments

There have been a number of times recently when a client's appointment has overrun by a number of hours. Coordinators will try and get a realistic estimate of the length of an appointment and will include this, plus the department name being attended in the email sent to drivers. It is suggested that you ask each client to let you know if they discover during their appointment that it will overrun. You can then decide whether to wait or go home and return later; similarly for a planned lengthy appointment. If you do make two trips please remember to claim the whole mileage, though we don't expect the client to donate for two trips.

Coordinators will also aim to get an update from each client at booking time as to their current mobility so that you don't end up being asked to help in an unrealistic way, such as pushing a wheelchair. I know we all want to help clients, which is why we volunteer but the role of the driver is to drive to and from not be a porter.

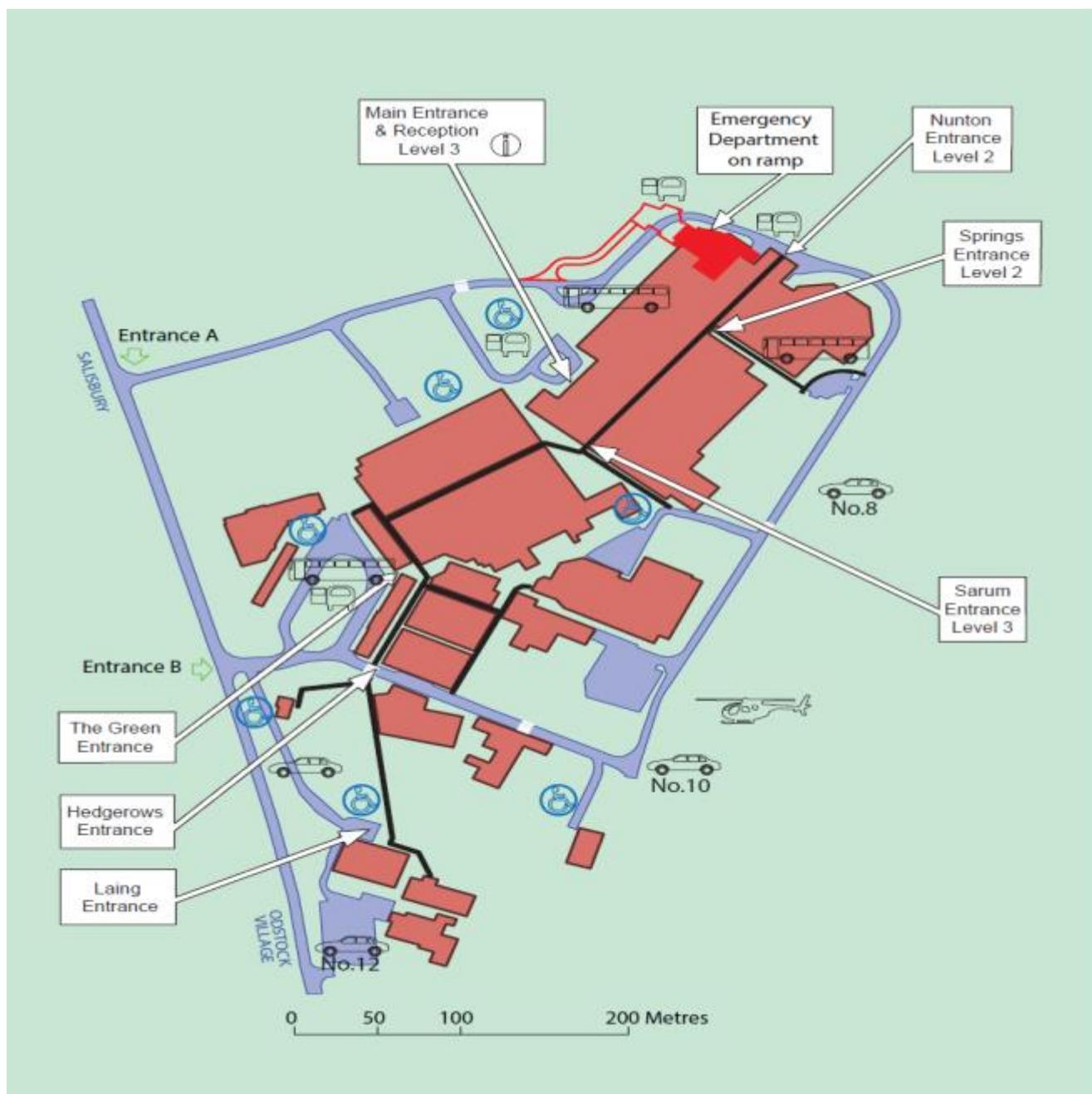
If you have any concerns or issues on any of the above please inform the duty coordinator if urgent or drop Richard Bell an email.

Parking at the Great Western Hospital, Swindon

The system for volunteer parking at GWH has changed again recently. Link drivers need to show their ID badge at reception so they can get a ticket to exit the car park.

Parking at Salisbury Hospital

This is the latest information received from Salisbury Hospital for all Link volunteer drivers.



- When visiting the Hospital with patients Link Scheme Drivers must display their Link Scheme badges on the dashboard of their vehicles.

- Link Scheme Drivers do not need to pay for parking when visiting the Hospital with Patients, but they must comply with all other parking terms and conditions as listed on appropriate signage in the car parks.
- There are a number of dedicated Link Scheme Driver bays in car parks 2 and 3. If these bays are full Link Scheme Drivers may park in other bays in these car parks (excluding disabled bays, see point 4) or in car park 8 situated at the rear of the hospital.
- If Link Scheme Drivers are transporting a patient who is disabled and has a disabled badge, then a disabled bay may be used providing the disabled badge and the Link Scheme Driver badge are displayed on the dashboard.
- If Link Scheme Drivers are using car park 8 the ticket taken on entry must be validated at the Reception Desk in the Main Entrance, Level 3 (ID will be required) to grant free exit

Wheelchairs at Salisbury Hospital

Wheelchairs can be found at the Main Entrance, Level 3 and the Nunton Entrance, Level 2. If none are available you may contact the Reception Desk at the Main Entrance, Level 3 to request one is brought to you (There may be a wait for this request)

Refreshments at Salisbury Hospital

Refreshments can be found in Hedgerows Coffee Lounge SDH Central, Springs Restaurant Level 2, and WH Smith Cafe Main Entrance, Level 3. There are also a number of vending machines situated in various locations in the Hospital. Link Scheme Drivers may purchase refreshments from Hedgerows Coffee Lounge, SDH Central and Springs Restaurant, Level 2 at staff rates if the Link Scheme Drivers Badge is presented at time of purchase.

Starters and Leavers

A big welcome and thanks to the following new volunteers who have started recently

- Richard Aylward – Driver
- Andy Cobley – Driver
- Jan Landon – Driver
- Sonia Lavenu - Driver
- Martin Matthews - Driver
- Iorwerth Mitchell – Driver
- David Smith – Driver
- Mike Smith - Driver

Farewell and thank you to these volunteers who have resigned recently.

- Maureen Vince – Driver
- Chris Hall – Driver
- Michelle Dyer - Driver
- Mary Hardwidge – Driver
- Jennifer Johnson – Driver
- Viv Feltham – Driver
- Lesley Ann Allen – Coordinator
- Sonia Lavenu - Driver
- John Rowley – Webmaster