

**BUS PASSES:  
THE FULL EXPLANATION  
RESPONSE TO QUERY FROM  
MARCHAM PARISH COUNCIL**

The national statutory scheme has always had a weekday start time of 9:30 am. The Vale, like many councils chose to provide a discretionary scheme in addition to the statutory scheme. The Vale's discretionary scheme provided, among other things, a 9.00 am start, travel to specified destinations outside the district including Oxford, Didcot, Newbury, as well as travel within the entirety of Oxford City district. These additions have been very popular with pass holders, leading to an escalation in costs to a predicted £1.4m this year. This is by far the highest cost of any rural district in Oxfordshire and most other counties. The cost of the discretionary scheme falls entirely on the Vale council tax payer and is not funded by the Government. The Vale is a relatively small district, trying to provide a broad range of local services, with limited resources and very acute financial pressures, having the ninth lowest council tax charge in the country. We could not afford to sustain such a scheme. The decision was therefore taken last summer to restrict the scheme to what was affordable. At the same time the Council decided that from 1 April 2008, it would provide a minimal discretionary scheme alongside the new national bus pass scheme, which will allow free local bus travel anywhere in the country. The reasoning for this was twofold - affordability (as explained above) and strategic positioning. The latter is explained below.

Due to the Government's complex grant formula for funding local government, it is not possible to calculate how much Government money the Vale receives in respect of the bus pass scheme. Our continuing fear is that the statutory scheme is under-funded, meaning that the Vale tax payer is still subsidising it. In anticipation of continuing lobbying of the Government over this issue, it was felt important to restrict the scheme to the statutory scheme only. This will make it simpler to compare actual costs to actual funding, once we can get the Government to explain the funding. Any council operating a discretionary scheme will find it more difficult to lobby the Government on funding, as the Government could assert any funding deficit is entirely due to the local discretionary scheme. By restricting the Vale's scheme to the statutory scheme only (including a 9:30 am start time) we believe we will strengthen our case in this endeavour.

**ANNUAL MEETING FOR ELECTORS IN THE PARISH**  
This meeting is not a Council meeting, but is a public meeting of Local Government electors in Marcham and an opportunity for electors in the parish to raise any items relating to parish matters.  
This parish meeting may, by law, discuss all parish affairs and pass resolutions about them.  
**Guest Speaker:** Mr. G. Gough Emergency Planning Officer, Vale of White Horse District Council. Mr. Gough will speak about his role at the District Council and particularly in connection with the flooding in Marcham

This meeting will be held on  
**Wednesday 28th May, at 7.30 p.m.**  
in the school hall at  
Marcham Primary School, Morland Road  
*You are invited to take part*  
*Light refreshments will be served*

The only discretionary element which will be retained from 1 April 2008 is the provision of free bus passes to the companions and carers of disabled residents, but the cost impact of this element is relatively minor and should not undermine our case. In conclusion, it is deeply unfortunate that this change has caused you and other bus pass holders disruption. However, the Council recognised this would be an unfortunate consequence at the time it took the decision. On balance, it was felt this was justified given the broader benefits of the changes to the local council tax payer. I hope this letter clarifies the point raised in your email, but I acknowledge your dissatisfaction with the Council's actions. Once again, thank you for your comments. We have checked with our contractors who assure us that passes will be dispatched today, 26 March and should be received by 1st April. However, we have already asked our travel providers to continue accepting the old passes for a short time in case there is any delay in people receiving their new passes.

**VALE OF THE WHITE HORSE DC**

Dear Editor  
We would like to give our sincere thanks to the staff and governors of Marcham School and to all others involved in making the decision to allow the admission from September of all Marcham children who applied. We realise that it is no small matter to accommodate eight more children than was originally planned for. The staff and governors have clearly worked hard so that our village children and families should not be disappointed. We support this and believe that this decision is in the best long-term interests of the school and of Marcham.

**DENISE AND JIM ASHER**

**THE LATE  
PHYLLIS WRIGHT**  
Cliff, Barbara, John and Family would like to thank most sincerely everyone for their prayers and cards of condolence on the death of the much loved Mother and Nan. The donations for Ward 1, Abingdon Hospital raised **£428.90**  
*Many thanks to all who contributed.*

**Marcham School PTA**  
**Fri 6 June: Bingo**  
Arrive 6.30pm Eyes Down 7pm  
Refreshments available  
**Sat 14 June Car Wash**  
10am-12.30pm (weather permitting)  
£4 per standard car

**WATER RESOURCES  
MANAGEMENT PLAN**  
Thames Water is launching a draft Water Resources Management Plan on 7 May 2008. There will be public consultation exhibitions at the following venues locally:



**Abingdon Guildhall** (Roissey Room)  
Tuesday 13 May 9am - 6pm  
Monday 19 May 12 - 9pm  
Saturday 24 May 9am - 5pm

**Marcham School**  
Saturday 31 May 9am - 6pm  
**East Hanney War Memorial Hall**  
Friday 23 May 12-9pm  
Friday 6 June 12-9pm  
Saturday 7 June 9am - 6pm

More about the PLAN can be found at  
[www.thameswater.co.uk/wrmp](http://www.thameswater.co.uk/wrmp)  
More about the RESERVOIR can be found at  
[www.thameswater.co.uk/utmrld](http://www.thameswater.co.uk/utmrld)  
or call 0845 9200 800.