

Bus Consultation - check list of salient points

Almost certainly you will have heard by now of the significant loss of bus services proposed for the Hastings area. **The proposal is currently out for consultation until September 28th**, but as in similar exercises my concerns are around the **media that are used as channels of communication**, will they reach everyone who is affected ?, and do they clearly indicate the consequences to those residents and businesses whose future will be affected ?. I fear not, and as such we will be addressing the **Chamber of Commerce, the Federation of Small Businesses, the various Resident's Associations, the Senior's Forum, disabled groups, and anyone else who will be affected including colleges, interfaith forums, the voluntary sector and various groups of small traders**. This is not a negative reaction to change because I believe that there is another way that can address the needs of all the stakeholders that would be affected by these proposals. Quite simply **why should we allow private operators to "cherry pick" the profitable bus routes, whilst the public purse picks up that which is deemed as commercially not viable**. No company can expect a business of all good customers, no one has a right to a utopian scenario where they can cherry pick as to where and when they provide their services. It has to be a partnership, where an **honest profit can be taken from a mixture of the rough with the smooth**, all businesses by implication have to work on this basis, why should bus operators be any different A **Voluntary Partnership Agreement** would ensure that it is private gain from the profitable routes that is used to **subsidise those services that place a heavy burden on the county's budget**. This can be made to work and the note below expresses my fears over this proposal if it is allowed to go forward without considering an alternative solution.

Let everyone have the opportunity to fully **understand the implications of these draconian cuts to public transport, without understanding what value does consultation have ?**. Please share your knowledge with the elderly or the infirm, who rely on public transport, but cannot always access sources of information especially the internet. One day public transport, trains and buses, will provide a real alternative to the motor car, its consequential and expensive problems of parking, and **deliver a green and truly effective means of facilitating everyday life**. But it will never become a service to humanity all the time it is driven only on the **basis of profit**, remember this should be a **true service just like the NHS and the Post Office, services should be this nation's birthright not pawns in a political game of monopoly**. Basically our arguments revolve around the fact that this consultation is based upon an unqualified statement that these are the **proposals for a new bus service,**

unaccompanied by the analysis of who, (resident or business) is affected. Many people will not be able to interpret the complexities of a network, many people won't even have access to the internet. Businesses need consulting, as do resident's associations, community hubs, friends of hospitals, every person who has come to rely upon a public transport service for their life style. Ordinary people, jobs, businesses, public servants, those who need a hospital, are just regarded as so much collateral damage on the way to delivering this unwanted and flawed philosophy of austerity. Our approach is to break down these barriers of denial that enable this administration in Lewes to keep reality at bay. I am deeply concerned that 60% of all, significant cuts affect Hastings, once again this is disproportionate. An economy in convalescence cannot stand more restrictions placed upon it. As a Town we cannot afford the loss of footfall that strives to keep our evening economy afloat. Housebound wives, mothers, and carers must not be denied the opportunity of employment at weekends and evenings, this proposal is divisive as it clearly affects only the have not's, whilst those who have, once again escape unscathed. Let us not forget those who wish simply to attend their church on a Sunday, or the elderly who are defeated by the many hills of Hastings, when they just want to move around their Town. Another "industry" that will take a hit will be tourism, holiday lets, and caravan parks. Places such as Winchelsea Beach which has a number of significant sites, and where the campers rely upon a bus service to visit the towns such as Hastings and Rye will suffer badly. Hastings Country Park, with its plans for a new interpretative centre, will be badly affected by the loss of Sunday services. The point was also made by many employers who have opened businesses on the small trading parks in the outlying villages, how do my staff get home in the evenings or work on Sundays, another unwanted dilemma.

The Team has addressed several significant gatherings, surely indicating the broad spectrum of the community affected by this draconian proposal, and their deep rooted concerns towards its consequences. During these meetings we learnt of the many different ways in which the loss of a bus service will affect individuals within a community that has a strong bias towards the elderly. Many are communities that doesn't boast a high private car ownership, and merely seek only the flexibility to be connected by public transport with the Town Centre and their local hospital, just the essentials of life. How can they be denied so little? especially when there is another way of delivering the outcomes that ESCC seek.

Our intention is to **build a case against these proposals**, where every aspect of the implications for the general public is considered, the views of every individual who comes forward with the loss that they will suffer, and the implications for each business, service, and institution, together with their employees will be placed before ESCC. **The arguments for these proposals are based in economics, therefore I would ask every one whose business or life will suffer some form of financial loss as a consequence of these cuts to let me know such that I can put together an economic case in response.** This will show the iniquity of expecting a town, whose own financial health, which can most charitably be described as being in economic convalescence, to absorb the needless government driven cuts that could be found in another direction. I would ask you all to respond to the ESCC consultation form found at <https://consultation.eastsussex.gov.uk/economy-transport-environment/organisationsbuschanges> Alternatively sign one of our petitions.

How about the Government's own flexible hours working directive, introduced just recently to recognise that not everyone can work around a day time job, or the convenience of the bus operators, this could strangle a progressive piece of legislation at birth. **Other authorities are considering effective partnership working, why can't East Sussex** (the Newcastle on Tyne case study is available). This is the one way sustainability will work, ESCC's proposal is just cut and slash, fares go up.....**next round of cut and slash and further fare increases.....until there is no effective public transport scheme left. A strategic solution is desperately needed that puts people first.**

Argument to the bus companies

I append below one of my arguments which touches on an alternative way forward. I will be meeting with bus operators and looking for their co-operation, as buses in the garage do not earn revenue, but they still depreciate which hits the company's P&L every year. They will also be faced with the costs of redundancies, and the loss of advertising revenue as a function of both frequency and square footage presented to the public, from the buses that today resemble travelling hoardings. Please remember also that "dial-a-ride" offers no alternative as the proposal is to cut this service from 5 to 2 days per week, another all round loss. I am currently building an economic argument that I hope will persuade all sides that this is not the way forward, there is a better one. With regards to the reduction in the availability of the concessionary bus pass, I fought that to a standstill, as once again equalities were not adequately evaluated, and the loss of the half hour

very often amounted to considerably more on the basis of phasing, and as such it put pressure on doctors and the NHS by creating a day that is considerably condensed.

John Hodges