



Local bus services an opportunity to have your say – November 2009

Introduction

Hampshire County Council is preparing to retender its supported bus services in the Lymington, Lyndhurst, New Milton and Ringwood areas of the New Forest, with new four-year contracts expected to commence in April 2010. We are now inviting suggestions from your council or organisation to ensure that our finite funds are best targeted in the award of the new contracts.

Costs within the bus industry – principally driver wages, fuel prices and insurance - continue to rise more steeply than local authority funding. This puts pressure on the County Council's bus subsidy budget through rising tender prices, both at the time of planned retendering exercises and when operators unexpectedly terminate contracts early. Against such a background the opportunities for service enhancements are often limited.

While the majority of the present New Forest contracts commenced in January 2007, it was necessary to tender some services again in 2008 when the bus company terminated the contracts after only a year. This resulted in changes to the timetables for town services in Lymington and Ringwood in order to manage costs within the budget available.

Meanwhile, the contract for Service 35 between Ringwood, Burley and Lyndhurst/Southampton has been terminated twice by operators since 2007, resulting in two changes of timetable in this period. However, Bournemouth-based Travelguest, trading as Dorset Sprinter, has recently started a commercial service, numbered X5/X55, which has introduced more links between Bournemouth, Ringwood and Southampton.

We are keeping all these developments and previous dialogue in mind as we prepare the new tenders but would also welcome fresh input from you now.

What to consider...

Please think about all groups in the community: people getting to work, families going shopping, schoolchildren and teenagers, the elderly, the disabled. How convenient do they find current services and what improvements could we look at? Importantly too, look at your own needs and use of the different services, how do they measure up?

Bus services form only a part of the overall transport provision. Solutions may include alternative services such as Call & Go, community bus, voluntary car schemes and taxi-share schemes, as well as scheduled bus – both commercial and supported services.

Please remember that only around 28% of bus services in Hampshire operate under a subsidy agreement with the County Council and it is on these supported services we are seeking your views now; please see the list of services overleaf. The majority of bus services are provided commercially and have to return a profit for the bus companies. We have little jurisdiction over the routes and timetables of commercial services except, for example, where we buy season tickets for entitled scholars.

Fact finding so far

We have been surveying all County-subsidised journeys in the area and, with the agreement of the bus companies, some commercial journeys too. Our roving surveyors have been noting patronage along each route at all times of day to see how services are being used. We want to take into account local views on why particular services are important, and what alternative transport might be available. This is why we are giving you this opportunity to comment, if you wish.



Supported bus services in the New Forest area as at 26 October 2009

Service	Route	Days	Contracted parts
X12	Lymington – Hordle/Milford -New Milton – Christchurch – Bournemouth	Daily	Partly contracted, generally the Hampshire section, but including some complete journeys early mornings, late afternoons and on Sundays. Evening journeys contracted on behalf of Dorset County Council and Bournemouth Borough Council.
35	Ringwood – Burley – Lyndhurst/Southampton	Mon to Sat	Entirely contracted
41	Cranborne – Fordingbridge – Godshill – Salisbury	Mon to Sat	Parts of commuter journeys to/from Salisbury
49	Parsonage Park – Whitsbury – Salisbury	Tue only	Entirely contracted
56/ 56A	Lymington – Brockenhurst – Lyndhurst - Southampton	Daily	Most journeys contracted
112	Lymington – Beaulieu – Hythe	Mon to Sat	Most journeys contracted
118	Lymington – New Milton – Bransgore – Ringwood	Wed only	Entirely contracted
119	Lymington – Pennington – Lymington	Mon to Sat	Entirely contracted
136/ 137	Ringwood – Poulner – Ringwood	Mon to Sat	Entirely contracted
175/ 176	Ringwood – Bransgore – Christchurch	Mon to Sat	Partly contracted
191	New Milton – Tiptoe – Bashley – Chatsworth – New Milton	Mon to Sat	Entirely contracted
192	New Milton – Hordle – New Milton	Mon to Sat	Entirely contracted
194/ 195	New Milton – Barton on Sea – New Milton	Mon to Sat	Entirely contracted
301	Sandleheath – Martin, Drove End	Tue only	This section of through journeys to/from Salisbury

When you've completed your deliberations, please return your comments either by letter or by e-mail, ideally by 26 November 2009. We will provide you with an update at the next meeting of the New Forest Transport Forum, which is expected to be in January.

Thank you very much for your interest.

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