

## Changes to WSCC Financial Support for the Non Commercial Bus Network 13/06/2011

<b>Response on behalf of Slaugham Parish Council and Warninglid Residents Society</b>	
<b>Affected route:</b> 89 Horsham – Haywards Heath - Withdrawal of Saturday service	
Author: Chris Hinchey, BSc(Hons)	The author is a longstanding member of Slaugham Parish Council (SPC) and Chair of Warninglid Residents Society (WRS).
Validity and responsibility	<p>Consultation has been carried out with residents of Warninglid and with the WRS Committee.</p> <p>This report is a reflection of the residents and the author's views and it is felt appropriate to combine the report as representing both organisations (SPC and WRS)</p>

### Discussion

WSCC promise to "engage" with customers and carry out a "Customer Focus Appraisal". Disabled passengers will be considered as part of this process, as well as elderly people and those living in rural areas.

The purpose of the engagement is to allow for a more informed decision to be made with respect to the timing of individual route changes to WSCC support for the non-commercial bus network.

A decision on phase 1 is timetabled for the week commencing 20<sup>th</sup> June 2011.

### Response

The following are points raised in the "Impact Assessment Consultation" issued by WSCC and have been paraphrased for brevity

<b>WSCC Statement</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>WSCC currently invests £4.7m into the bus network that supports bus routes that are not viable commercially.</li> </ul>	<p>Non-commercially viable routes are an essential and vital transport requirement for rural areas. Both the Council and the operator have a duty to provide a SERVICE</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Council is looking to save £79m to take account of reduced national funding overall.</li> <li>Part of this saving will come from financial support for the non-commercial bus network which will reduce by £2m over 3 years.</li> </ul>	<p>When privatisation was implemented one of the assurances was that non-commercial routes would be protected!</p> <p>The operating company has a duty to provide a <b>transport network</b> and cannot have it both ways. They must provide the lower profit routes as well as the profitable ones</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This figure accounts for around 2m of the 24m journeys made on the bus network each year.</li> </ul>	<p>Doesn't make sense. So the reduction of £2m over 3 years = <math>1/12^{\text{th}} = 8\%</math> of annual journeys? Why is this relevant, are 8% of journeys being cut or 8% over 3 years?</p> <p>If the former this is a large cut with inevitable detriment to transport viability and community sustainability.</p> <p>If over 3 years surely these levels of funding can be absorbed by the operator as they are easily achievable by commercial efficiency savings?</p> <p>Is the council looking to cut £2m out of £4.7m?</p> <p><b><i>This is 43% of spend that is already identified as essential support.</i></b></p>
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The reductions in financial support are phased over 3 years – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Phase 1 - £0.5m - 2011/12</li> <li>Phase 2 - £1m - 2012/13</li> <li>Phase 3 - £0.5m - 2013/14</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p>These services under consideration comprise:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Those routes which carry people that we have a legal duty to transport e.g. eligible school children</li> <li>Those routes which serve isolated rural communities</li> <li>Those routes where there are no alternatives</li> <li>Those routes which help to maintain access to key services such as hospitals, shopping and work at appropriate times of day.</li> </ul>	<p>N/A for Saturday service</p> <p>Warninglid is isolated with no other transport network The bus provides travel for the village hall users</p> <p>Elderly and those without transport rely on the bus</p>
<p>Phase 1 covers reduced financial support for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Those that provide Sunday and evening services after 6.30pm</li> <li>Those primarily aimed at non-eligible school children travelling to school</li> <li>Those where a reduction in frequency of service is possible</li> <li>Those services which carry relatively few passengers</li> </ul>	<p>N/A</p> <p>N/A for Saturday service</p> <p>Not possible for 89 Warninglid service without detrimental effect</p> <p>Still an essential service – see above</p>

## **Comments**

- Losing the 89 is a Step Change for Warninglid
- Many residents who do not drive and rely on the bus for transport.
- It is an **essential service** - without it the community is isolated and cut-off.
- There are no shops in Warninglid
- Is this not the "thin end of the wedge"
- Once removed it will never return and with increasing fuel costs meaning people are starting to use more buses, it is the wrong time and inappropriate to be imposing cuts in a service which has energy efficiencies and assists UK meeting it's climate change targets
- The age of residents is increasing - **this is a service for the future that we need to be retained, not depleted.**