

## **Dacorum Environmental Forum: Response to Hertfordshire County Council Bus Consultation Questionnaire.**

Dacorum Environmental Forum would like to express its opposition to the proposed cuts to subsidies on bus routes after 7.30pm and on Sundays. These cuts will inevitably lead to a loss of some services altogether and a loss of many evening buses.

Dacorum Environmental Forum is particularly concerned about the impact that the loss of services will have on the large group of people without cars. This group includes low income families, older people, people with health issues which prevent them from driving and young people not yet able to drive or afford to drive. Many of these people will be deprived of access to rural areas and to and from town centres at certain times. There is also the issue of late evening and shift workers who may no longer be able to get home from work. The cost of taxis, with their much higher fares, is not an economically viable option for many low paid people. Evening businesses, including restaurants and pubs, might well suffer, and cutting out evening bus services sends out the wrong message when people are quite rightly being asked not to drink and drive.

Buses represent an excellent opportunity to reduce the number of vehicles on the road and reduce carbon and other emissions. Reducing the size and connectivity of the service will inevitably cause a continued downward spiral in its use and a further decline in revenues.

Far from reducing support for services, Hertfordshire County Council, in one of the wealthiest parts of the UK, should be looking to expand its support and encourage more people to use the system. Reliability is what people want from a service. Real time running information at bus stops across the network (as found in many other parts of England) would increase the number of customers, increase their confidence in the service, and perhaps in the long run decrease the need to subsidise routes as they become economically self-supporting.

Cutting support to the bus service will be a false economy and a disservice to many people in the county. Whilst those with higher incomes will be able to find alternatives many others will not and for some people reducing the service may well have a major impact on their lives and indeed their livelihoods. What is required is a concerted effort

to promote the bus system through better advertising, offers and travel deals, improved reliability and better connectivity. At the very least, a late evening bus should be available on all routes to allow people to get home. The Council needs to be more forward thinking and innovative in improving and not decreasing the bus service.

Regards

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