

## Local Bus Services

From: John Richardson-Dawes (john.richardsondawes@devon.gov.uk)

To: john.richardsondawes@devon.gov.uk

Date: Wednesday, 25 March 2020, 09:12 GMT

Dear Clerk to the Council,

I hope this finds you well. I'm writing with two items.

First, the good news. The Government have made available new funding for local bus service support in 2020/2021 and each local authority is invited to apply for a pre-determined amount, to be spent on improving local bus services, which can include restoring services which have been recently lost.

Our application has to include a detailed outline of how we propose to spend the funds and over what timescale (this can be more than one year - the funding does not all have to be spent in 2020/2021). We are also asked to indicate what consultation we have undertaken, which is expected to include consultation of our Members of Parliament.

The deadline for submitting our application is 26th June, in preparation for which we are launching a public consultation now. The plan is to allow time for submission and consideration of responses, then the appropriate Cabinet approval prior to submission to Government. As well as this consultation, we will take into account previous consultation submissions as well as ongoing issues communicated to us.

The link to the consultation material and an explanation of our approach is here:  
<https://www.traveldevon.info/bus/dft-bus-funding-consultation-20-21/>

This funding is separate from the Rural Mobility Fund and Electric Town funds, which are subject to competitive bids from local authorities, with later application deadlines. It is also separate from the further £5 billion announcement, details of which we eagerly await.

We are very much aware that the implementation of these plans could be severely affected by the COVID-19 crisis, but at the time of writing the Department for Transport have confirmed that the submission deadline still stands. We are therefore having to continue with the preparation process.

This brings me to the second item. As a result of the COVID-19 situation, our bus companies are facing a very difficult situation as passenger numbers fall drastically alongside staffing issues and loss of income.

In response, bus companies are planning to reduce their services, inevitably with less than the usual notice period. They are doing this in discussion with the County Council and we are supporting them in obtaining short-notice authorization from the Traffic Commissioner. Some community transport groups have closed down, others have altered their services and some have been able to offer other assistance to people in need such as delivering essential items.

At present the best advice for anyone having to undertake essential travel is to check with their local bus company or community transport group before travelling.

Kind regards,

John Richardson-Dawes,  
Principal Transport Co-ordinating Officer,  
Transport Co-ordination Service,  
Devon County Council,  
County Hall, Exeter, Devon, EX2 4QD.

Tel. 01392 383000 (when prompted, ask for John Richardson-Dawes)

[john.richardsondawes@devon.gov.uk](mailto:john.richardsondawes@devon.gov.uk)

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