

Motion submitted by Councillor Scott Patient under Council Procedure Rule 14

Save Calderdale's Bus Routes

This council notes that:

- Bus services are a critical element of an effective and interconnected public transport system. As a universal, accessible, and affordable means of transport they are vital to supporting economic growth and tackling the climate emergency.
- The privatisation of bus services has been a failure. The Conservative Government introduced legislation in 2017 banning local authority ownership of bus services. Since then, services have been run into the ground by private companies who prioritise making maximum profit.
- Routes which are important for communities but deliver lower levels of revenue are frequently cut. Since 2010 1,969 bus routes have been lost in the North East of England (including West Yorkshire), a loss of 50%. This reflects the national picture, with 8,613 or 50% of bus routes lost in the same period.
- Bus companies receive government subsidies to help maintain services including the Bus Service Operators Grant. Following the Covid pandemic the Bus Recovery Grant was also available as passenger numbers gradually recovered. That funding was withdrawn by the Government at the end of June 2023, and a lower level of support is now offered through the Bus Services Operators Grant Plus.
- In the last 12 months bus operators in Calderdale have cut or reduced vital routes to Northowram, Shelf, Rishworth and North Halifax, in addition to earlier cuts to services to West Vale. Some of these areas now have a bus service just once an hour; no evening service; only two buses a day on weekdays; or no service at all.
- Deprived areas in North Halifax are being worst hit by bus cuts. Essential public services such as the NHS and social care are needed 24/7, and it will now be more difficult to recruit and retain staff in these areas. It will also reduce employment and leisure opportunities for some of the poorest residents of the borough.

This Council believes that:

- Decent and reliable buses are a cornerstone of any public transport network. In Calderdale they act as a lifeline to communities where they are the only form of public transport. The loss of bus services makes life more isolated for residents who do not have access to private cars, particularly in rural areas.

- Reliable buses are needed to connect our villages and hill-top communities with rail services, as well as giving access to health services and local businesses.
- Buses allow people a means to access work and vital public services. They also support leisure and the night-time economy, providing a safe way for all to get home. Cuts to early and late-night bus services have a negative impact on care workers and those in the hospitality industry.
- Bus services are being cut at a time when we are encouraging people to reduce their reliance on the car. It is critical we do this for the sake of our physical health, the quality of the air we breathe, and to reduce the impact on climate change locally and globally.
- The government needs to start viewing public transport as a service rather than a business, with services that we can all rely upon. Under the current model infrequent and unreliable services negatively impact passenger numbers, leading to a loss of fares and routes eventually being lost. This profit-driven vicious spiral of decline will not stop without a bold change in approach.

This Council resolves:

- To build on work by the Mayor of West Yorkshire, Tracy Brabin, and West Yorkshire Combined Authority (WYCA) to secure long-term improvements to bus services in Calderdale.
- To ensure that in the forthcoming mass transit planning process in West Yorkshire the importance of buses to Calderdale is highlighted at every opportunity.
- To ask the Chief Executive of the Council to write to the Mayor of West Yorkshire urging her to press bus operators to collate and share route-specific reliability data under the current 'enhanced partnership' arrangement. This data should include not just punctuality but also cancellation of scheduled services. These insights will allow more effective analysis around the potential causes of declining passenger numbers.
- To fight for a decent bus network in Calderdale at every opportunity.

Motion seconded by Councillor Colin Hutchinson