

Rural Services Network and SPARSE

Issues affecting rural buses

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First

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The new big issues

- Concessionary reimbursement
- BSOG
- Local Authority support
- The economy
- Planning policy
- EU burden

But also....

- Partnership, DDA, Better Bus Networks and Green Bus Fund

Concessionary Reimbursement

- The principle or “objective” remains the same: “No better and no worse off”, but.....
- New Department for Transport guidance and model
- Trend continues for these to reduce reimbursement
- Many authorities still pragmatic
- Can legally reach agreement with operator as long as the objective is met
- But authorities receiving less money from central government

Bus Service Operator Grant

- BSOG is being cut again, by 20% from 1 April
- Fuel cost is 16% of turnover; this increases it
- BSOG is already only a refund of 80% of fuel duty costs
- It was introduced in 1968 by Barbara Castle as a mechanism to keep fares low at a time of rising fuel costs
- Intent was to preserve rural accessibility!
- Rail industry pays very little fuel tax, airlines none
- Bus passengers pay most but least able to
- Industry now in dialogue with DfT on future

Local Authority funding

- Operators do not want to run services under contract to local authorities...
- ...they want to run them commercially!
- But it is a harsh fact that increased costs and falling patronage have taken their toll, particularly in rural areas
- So in many cases the entire network is supported
- It is illegal for operators to cross-subsidise
- So if budgets are cut, services will fail
- Maintain dialogue with operators: they want to maintain as much network as possible

Planning Policy

- Decentralisation of planning has potentially huge risk for public transport
- Bus services link areas of demand
- Best services have churn of passengers
- So need joined up development
- And need development that can be accessed safely and cost effectively
- Statutory neighbourhood planning may assist, but the risk is heightened

Planning Policy

- Town centre failure likely exacerbated by presumption in favour of development which will help retail parks
- Town centre regeneration study (Mary Portas) recommended more, free, easy to access parking
- Industry has raised with DfT and recommended to consult with DCLG and DEFRA

EU Burden

- Not against new legislation in principle, just the unintended consequences and costs
- Whilst UK trying to reduce regulatory burden, being offset by increase from mainland Europe
- Bus and Coach Passenger Rights (2013)
- TAP TSI
- Journey Planner
- Euro 6

Partnership, DDA and GBF

- Partnership working still strong; voluntary preferred to statutory
- DDA deadlines for full compliance 2015-2017 for bus
- Equality Act 2010: Reasonable Adjustments in advance of DDA deadlines
- Green Bus Fund: round 3 spring 2012
- Up to 80% of capital funding for hybrids
- If you can justify new buses, they can be greener locally and emit less carbon