

County Councillor update October 2023 Debo.sellis@devin.gov.uk 07765103316

Local buses update - I have received comments from 8 residents who have been affected by the changes in the number 89 bus. Clearly it is very concerning that these users are adversely affected, and I have asked DCC officers if help can be offered. Devon County Council continues to support the **Ring and Ride** which affected residents might find useful, I hope.

We have seen the reports in the local press and apparently there is a petition of over 250 people (I don't know if they are users and residents) who wish the bus route along Whitchurch Road to be re-instated during the afternoon. The **number 86** bus has taken over from the **no 89** and there is a no buses along Whitchurch Road in the afternoon. There is an explanation below.

Revised town services in Tavistock and the reduced services to the Plymouth Grammar schools.

89/86 bus changes:

- DCC needed to enhance the bus services in Tavistock town so that they served the new housing developments, at a regular frequency, to comply with the S106 funding requirements.
- There was limited opportunity with the local bus operators to take this additional work on without incurring very high and unsustainable cost.
- There was redundant capacity in the existing town bus network, in the way of very low patronage.

Plymouth Grammar Schools. Plymouth High School for Boys ? Girls.

- Plymouth City Bus pulled out of operating the 104 & 105 bus services to PHSB & PHSG.
- **DCC does not have a policy or budget to fund transport from Tavistock to these schools.** We are only able support mainstream transport to Tavistock College.
- Despite the above, transport officers offered to assist the grammar schools with technical support in finding a cost-effective replacement service.
- PHSB have subsequently commissioned an additional bus that operates along the Tavistock corridor.

The detail behind these bullet points is as follows.

There are three S.106 arrangements from Embden Grange, The Tors and Broadleigh Park developments, which are funding the provision of a new bus service for The Tors and Embden Grange and an improved service for Broadleigh Park. To maintain an hourly service for these developments fully occupies one bus, operating from The Tors to Embden Grange via the Town Centre, Broadleigh Park and Courtlands. The service operates between 0645 and 1855, a longer day than the previous 89 service. The developer funding is sufficient to sustain the 89 service at the present level for around eight years.

As the 89 bus is fully occupied during the day, it does not have time to serve Whitchurch and Tiddybrook Meadow. To achieve this would require the frequency to

be reduced to ninety-minutes on all sections of the route, which does not meet the requirement for an improved service for the developments.

It may be useful to detail the present position regarding bus services generally.

- Overall passenger numbers are still below pre-pandemic levels. The amount varies from route to route, with some more severely impacted.
- Concessionary passengers remain much reduced.
- Operating costs have increased significantly.
- Increased cost of fuel and parts.
- increase pay rates to recruit staff and address shortages has resulted in an increase in tender prices and many formerly commercial services being de-registered. At present D.C.C has been able to maintain most of the network because of additional temporary funding from Government but is still having to review all service replacements.
- Service 89 has been impacted by reduced passenger numbers, with Concessionary trips down by 26% and all journeys by 17%, compared to 2018-19.

Approximately one-third of the total passengers were on the Whitchurch and Tiddybrook Meadows section, around 40 per day. Based on this level of patronage it was not possible to fund a second stand-alone bus purely to operate an all-day service 86.

To maintain the total cost within the amount D.C.C previously spent on service 89, the 86 service utilises an existing bus which operates a Cornwall Council school contract to Launceston school and uses the spare time available between the school journeys and after it has operated the afternoon school trip.

To revert to a half-hourly service through to 1655 would still require an additional bus with a considerable increase in costs. To clarify, the **reduced timetable is to enable the service to be provided within the existing funding amount, not to achieve savings**. To revert to an all-day service would require additional funding. As service 86 is entirely funded by D.C.C and the school contract by Cornwall Council, these will have no impact on the period covered by the S.106 funding.

Services 104 and 105 were operated commercially by Plymouth Citybus, i.e., without financial support from D.C.C. Reducing numbers using them and increased costs meant that Plymouth Citybus no longer wished to continue operating the services and gave notice to withdraw one and operate the other entirely within Plymouth. The remaining service from Roborough remains commercially operated and is not subsidised by Plymouth City Council. Although it is D.C.C policy not to financially support journeys for children travelling to Grammar Schools, we did approach both schools to offer to assist them in setting up a new arrangement. Subsequently the Boys Grammar School has gone ahead and commissioned their own journey.

Based on the number of passengers and costs involved, it is not possible to revert to a full timetable across the afternoon.

DCC will examine if it is **feasible to provide an additional afternoon journey in the 1355 – 1655 period at low cost**, based around a Tavistock School vehicle. There could be **further mitigation through the community transport ring**

& ride services if passengers are unable to access the wider bus network. Here are the links to those services.

<https://devoncc.sharepoint.com/sites/PublicDocs/Transport/Travel/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FPublicDocs%2FTransport%2FTravel%2FCommunity%20Transport%2FTavistock%20R%26R%20Leaflet%2031%2E7%2E19%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2FPublicDocs%2FTransport%2FTravel%2FCommunity%20Transport&p=true&ga=1>

<https://tavistockcountrybus.co.uk/> DCC has continued to support the Ring and Ride.

Highways: We all remain very dissatisfied and frustrated with some areas on our local roads.

There has been significant work done in Gulworthy parish on the Callington Road. Tavistock has works programmed, however, I haven't been given specific dates for work around Drake's Statue. Logistically this area will need special attention and I believe there may be some patching done. We can all see that it needs resurfacing, and we are to wait.

Our local MP Sir Geoffrey Cox KC is lobbying government for further funding, and I am grateful that he listens to my concerns which I share on your behalf.

There are lots of utility companies, gas, water, and Broadband taking place as we can all see.

Tavistock Health and Wellbeing Alliance Event

The event which was organised by the WDCVS at Butcher's Hall 6th October was visited by over 500 people. The feedback was positive, and many residents were able to access support. Hopefully we attracted some more volunteers too.

It was useful for me as I was able to listen to some disabled residents and check to see if they had any issues. Fortunately, there was only one issue which I was told about, and I hope to get that sorted. I went around Tavistock many years ago with a disabled person and mums with prams, we were able to sort out lots of access into shops and the like, so, hopefully Tavistock is accessible for disabled.

Many thanks to the CVS and all the statutory and volunteers who shared their excellent work. I was happy to support the event using £1000 from my Locality budget. It was tax payers' money well spent! 😊

As ever if you have any issues which you need help with, please email me.

Debo Sellis