

7 and 7A Bus Service



East Woodhay Parish Council continues work to try and find a solution following Hampshire County Council's decision to cease funding contribution to enable the 7 and 7A bus services to run. By the time Spectrum is published, activities and communications will have progressed further but we wanted to provide a snapshot of the current situation.

The Parish Council is working on several fronts to publicly highlight the problem and also try to find a solution.

Both ITV Meridian and BBC South Today have featured the bus closure with the Parish Council coordinating interviewees for South Today. Local Highclere resident Diana Sketchley highlighted the impact from a Neighbourcare perspective. If you didn't manage to see these then you can find links to either the feature or main points on the community website www.wooltonhill.com and its associated Facebook site.

Hampshire Chronical and Newbury Weekly News (NWN) have featured the impact of losing these bus routes and Parish Council Chair, Paul Hurst was quoted.

We have sent email representations to Councillor Bowerman, the Hampshire County Council cabinet member responsible for the overall decision regarding the number 7 and 7A bus routes. Included in the first of these emails were the following points:

....East Woodhay Parish Council is not aware of any prior formal public engagement on the consequences of this closure.....

The published [Decision Report of 10 March 2020](#) states in its Executive Summary (§8) that:
"This paper seeks to propose a course of action to ensure that transport services continue to support access to work, education, retail, and health for the widest section of the

community, thereby supporting quality of life and wellbeing while achieving value for money”.

May we therefore seek your guidance, as Executive Member for Highways and Passenger Transport, as to how the removal of these 2 bus services has been assessed against the above stated objectives, and what remedial actions are intended to ensure that transport services continue to provide access in support of quality of life and wellbeing for the widest section of our local community.....

Included in the second email:

....We would assume that HCC recognises that such rural bus services are a lifeline, not a luxury and intends to fulfil its obligation to weigh their importance in its transport planning.

With schools now recommencing and the return to work for many from the summer holiday period, may I therefore ask that you provide, as a matter of some urgency, details of the alternative travel arrangements which will be made available at the point of cessation of the existing routes.

At the time of writing the Parish Council has not had a response from Cllr Bowerman to either of these emails and the Parish Council is therefore working on escalations, particularly involving MP, Kit Malthouse.

Looking at other options, the Parish Council is contacting the Newbury MP, Lee Dillon (who wrote about the problem in NWN) and also West Berks Council to see whether a solution can be found there by utilising some of the funds to be raised from the forthcoming building work at Watermill Bridge, (the building development at the north of East Woodhay and Highclere parishes where it borders Enborne).

We are aware of S106 funds allocated to West Berks, anticipated as a result of the granting of planning permission for the Watermill Bridge major development in our parish. We would hope some of these funds may be available to offset the service costs of maintaining at least one of these routes for those needing to access Newbury facilities.

Work will continue on all fronts.

There are others in the community also raising the profile of the problem via social media, particularly Facebook and also by writing to our Hampshire Councillor, Tom Thacker (tom.thacker@hants.gov.uk) and MP (kit.malthouse.mp@parliament.uk).

Please continue to do this and contact others you feel appropriate, as it helps to keep the situation visible to those with influence on finding a mitigation solution.