

Wednesday 11 January 2023

Dear Mr Knight,

We thought at the beginning of the year, and with the introduction of the £2 single fare cap, this was a good time to write to you, as Exeter's Green Party councillors, to share our thoughts and suggestions relating to bus services in Exeter.

Firstly, welcome to Exeter and the South West! We look forward to hearing about your plans for bus services in the city and beyond.

As Green councillors we are fully committed to public transport and see a shift from private vehicle use to buses (and active travel) as key to tackling congestion, air pollution and carbon emissions in Exeter. So we would like to share some ideas on how we believe Stagecoach can help encourage modal shift.

While we welcome the government's £2 single fare cap, the three month limit on this is totally inadequate. At an estimated cost of £60 million, the subsidy for this cap is small change, especially when compared to the £27bn road building programme. We think this three month offer could and should be extended indefinitely. However, we believe that Stagecoach must use this as an opportunity to build back trust in Exeter - which I am sure you will acknowledge has been severely dented in recent months - and increase bus patronage back to and beyond pre-pandemic levels.

While the £2 cap on single bus fares is a particularly welcome incentive to encourage people onto buses who are travelling longer distances into and out of Exeter, it is of limited value to passengers within the city. The recent cuts in services and shortening bus routes means that a journey across the city, which would originally involve just one bus, now often requires two or more services. This will mean a £4+ journey under the £2 single cap. We therefore call on Stagecoach to allow **a single ticket to be valid for an hour** so it can be used on multiple services. We also think **the cost of the dayrider should be reduced to £4** to match the cost of two single fares. We acknowledge that tickets bought on the Stagecoach app can offer great value for money, but these generally only serve regular and committed bus users; we need 'walk on' incentives to attract people onto buses.

With the company now over the worst of its recruitment problems, we also believe it is time for Stagecoach to increase its services. We'd like to see **every city bus stop served by a bus at least every 20 minutes during weekdays** and at least **every 30 minutes in the evenings**. We also want to see **Sunday services increased from hourly to every 30 minutes**; the hourly service on Sundays is completely inadequate. We would also like to see Stagecoach honour its previous promise and **roll-out electric buses**.

We also call on Stagecoach to **maintain the £2 cap on single fares beyond three months** and to introduce other incentives. Whether this cap should extend beyond urban areas is a matter for debate, but it should certainly apply to Exeter, Torbay and North Devon services. We would like to see the **reintroduction of the £1 child add-on fare** too, where anyone under 16 travelling with a fare paying adult is charged just £1 for a single journey. This is

something the Green Party successfully fought for and won a number of years ago before it was scrapped.

The £2 cap on single fares is an opportunity for Stagecoach to put the brakes on a spiral of decline in Exeter and build back trust with the travelling public. If the company is genuinely committed to communities in Exeter - and to tackling congestion, air pollution and carbon emissions - it will take the series of additional common sense steps the Green Party is proposing.

Finally, we would be very pleased to meet with you and discuss these proposals and hear from you on any ideas and plans you have for the future.

With best wishes,

Cllr Amy Sparling (member of HATOC)

Cllr Diana Moore

Cllr Catherine Rees

Cllr Carol Bennett

Cllr Tess Read