

Bus Users relaunches its election manifesto

The bus passenger lobby group has re-issued its 10-point manifesto for buses, warning that the situation for the mode is reaching 'crisis point'

ELECTION 2017

▶ Passenger lobby group Bus Users has re-issued a 10-point manifesto calling on the next government to recognise Britain's buses as a transport lifeline.

The document was originally launched ahead of 2015's general election, but according to Claire Walters, chief executive of Bus Users, the situation for UK buses is reaching "crisis point", leading to the decision to re-issue it.

"Since we first launched our manifesto there have been significant changes in central and local government and within the Department for Transport, and last month the long-awaited Bus Services Act was finally passed by parliament," she explained.

"Yet between 2016/17 funding for buses was cut by £30m and over 500 bus routes were reduced or cut

completely. Without buses people can't access work, education, training or essential services, and in the long term this will cost central and local government far more than they save."

The 10-point manifesto contains a number of suggestions, but above all, Bus Users says it "wants to see buses given the resources and the recognition they deserve". ■

BUS USERS' 10-POINT MANIFESTO

- ▶ Enhanced bus priority measures in town and city centres to improve reliability and journey times;
- ▶ Accessible bus stops closer to shopping and business centres with better facilities and information;
- ▶ Fully funded concessions made available to unemployed people and those on low incomes;
- ▶ Widespread on-board audio visual information, phone charging and Wi-Fi;
- ▶ Better timetable coordination with schools, colleges and employment;
- ▶ Improved integration across all transport modes;
- ▶ Mandatory driver training to improve communication and awareness of disabilities;
- ▶ Measures to improve the passenger experience;
- ▶ More late and weekend services to reflect changing working patterns;
- ▶ A simplified fares system across all transport operating modes.

IoD back buses in infrastructure report

Institute calls for bus speed targets and more bus priority

▶ The Institute of Directors has called for the government to bring in speed targets for buses and "repurpose roads to better suit space-friendly buses" as one of its three recommendations for investment in UK infrastructure.

In a new report, *Future-proofing Infrastructure*, the IoD says that

buses matter to business because they are vital to the economy.

"Buses carry more commuters than all other forms of public transport combined," says the IoD. "Every day, 2.5 million people commute to work by bus. They are however falling in average speed, reducing their use, despite their great space efficiency.

"We see the need for local

governments to set increased speed targets for buses and use this as a method to repurpose roads to enable faster speeds."

The IoD also calls for a big push on reducing bus stop dwell times. "This requires a shift to full cashless and contactless payment that takes only 0.7 seconds to process compared to nine seconds for a passenger requiring change," it adds.

It also suggests pushing ahead with additional rail electrification, Crossrail 2 and the proposed HS3 project. ■



BORDERS BUS TOUR LAUNCHED

Expansion for recently launched bus business

TOURISM

▶ Borders Buses, the West Coast Motors subsidiary that recently acquired First's bus operations in the Scottish Borders, has launched a new hop-on, hop-off sightseeing bus tour using the City Sightseeing brand. The tour, which uses an open top single deck vehicle, connects Galashiels Transport Interchange with a number of local tourist hotspots. West Coast says it has worked closely with local businesses and stakeholders to launch the new venture. ■

FIVE YEARS AGO

▶ FirstGroup was in crisis after a slump in profits across the group, mainly fuelled by the group's UK bus division. Poor trading in Scotland and the north of England were blamed for the difficulties.

▶ Jeroen Weimar, Transport for London's former policing chief, was appointed as chief operating officer at First's UK bus division in a bid to get the operation back on track after a slump in profits.

▶ Transport minister Norman Baker finally approved plans for a tram-train trial in South Yorkshire and announced approval for £58m in funding. It was hoped that services would commence in 2015.