

POLICY PROPOSAL

TITLE: COOPERATIVE SOLUTIONS TO OUR BUS NIGHTMARE

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REASON FOR CHANGE

Considering that...

1. There are many successful cooperative bus services operating already in the UK, operating on behalf of the local community rather than for private shareholders.
2. The HCT Group, formerly Hackney Community Transport, provides mainstream bus services in London and is used by 20 million passengers each year and reinvests profits from their commercial work into their services or local community projects.¹
3. West Oxfordshire Community Transport is another local cooperative bus service that operates two low-margin routes in Witney, Oxfordshire.²
4. The cost of tickets has substantially increased this year³. The cost of a single has increased from £1.50 to £1.80 for a student ticket, and has increased to £2.50 for a non-student ticket. A pack of ten singles has increased from £10 to £12.50 and First has also removed the twenty-journey ticket from circulation. The academic year pass has increased from £279 to £299. These are the mTicket costs, and don't account for the additional costs for tickets purchased in person.
5. Especially poor provision of bus services by First has resulted in longer queues than in previous years, buses running irregularly with no regard to the timetable and students often being late to lectures.
6. Since June, the Students' Union has been raising concerns with First over the new routes, specifically regarding accessibility, safety and the concentration of queues it would create.
7. Disabled students have been particularly negatively affected by First's changes to the University bus routes.

PROPOSAL

1. The SU Bath should lobby the University of Bath and Bath & North East Somerset Council to explore the creation of a cooperative bus service, owned and run in the interests of the students, staff and local residents that use the service every day.

¹ <https://party.coop/publication/peoples-buses-campaign-pack/>

² <https://party.coop/2017/01/30/campaign-win-all-aboard-the-peoples-bus-service-in-witney/>

³ <https://www.firstgroup.com/bristol-bath-and-west/news-and-service-updates/news/first-announces-university-bath-fares-201819>

2. The SU Bath should lobby the Mayor for the West of England to franchise the university bus routes.

RATIONALE

1. The SU's mission is "promoting the interests and welfare of students at the University of Bath during their course of study". Students are the main users of the university bus routes currently operated by First and so have the most to gain in terms of their personal welfare from a cooperative bus service.
2. The Students' Union is committed to being the "the recognised representative channel between students and the University of Bath and any other external bodies" and so is perfectly placed to encourage this.
3. A key Students Union value is to be "be student led in all we do" these democratic and participatory values would be reflected in a cooperative bus service – with student customers being equal members with an equal democratic say in its operation.
4. Buses is a key campaign of the Students' Union already this year⁴

IMPLICATIONS

1. This policy may result in some tensions with First and may affect their operation of existing routes.
2. Effective campaigning will place additional demands on SU staff and Officers' time, which will have to be offset with less time being spent on other commitments.
3. The campaign will have a cost burden on the SU, but this is unlikely to exceed existing funds reserved for SU campaigns.

⁴ <https://www.thesubath.com/campaigns/buses/>