

WEALD BUS UPDATE (10 May 2018).

A massive **THANK YOU** to all those using the 435 service. Please keep up the good work and encourage others to travel by bus if you can.

A plea to Commuters!

Despite our bargain 10 Trip Ticket, the early morning and late evening 435 service to/from Sevenoaks Station is hardly used. We understand the problem may be because the last evening bus (18.26) leaves the station too early. If so we hope to persuade Go Coach to run the bus at a later time but first we need more information from you. If you are interested in the service please **email me at wealdvillagebus@gmail.com** with answers to the following questions **by 15 June**:

Would you use the 435 for commuting if the last bus back to Weald left the station later?

From which station do you make your evening departure?

What would be the best time for the evening bus to depart the station for you?

Please provide any other comments/suggestions that would encourage you to use the 435 to travel to and from the station.

Is the 435 service safe from cuts?

No and it won't be whilst it's subsidised. It's true Kent County Council are not making the drastic cuts they first proposed but they still plan to reduce subsidies. Every subsidised service will be reviewed. Some whole services may be withdrawn. In some cases they may reduce a service by removing one bus a day, a late evening bus, a service on a particular day or a Sunday service. Any reduction to our service lessens the chance of us making the 435 commercially viable. Our goal is to try and make the service commercially viable; it's our best chance of ensuring its long term future. If we can achieve that we hope to improve the service. Our cheap 10 Trip Ticket is a great incentive but it also means lower revenue so it may take us a little longer to achieve viability.

What about a Saturday service?

It would be nice but it's not possible at the moment. The 435 subsidy is only enough for a Monday to Friday service and, with Go Coach's help, we are stretching it to the limit. We hope to look at the possibility of a Saturday service once the weekday service is commercially viable.

What about the 401 Sunday service?

Despite newspaper stories only the 401 Sunday service is subsidised. The rest of the 401 service is commercially run and is not therefore threatened. The contract for the Sunday service is due for renewal in September. Unfortunately this service is not very well used so it is likely KCC will withdraw it. Go Coach will try to persuade KCC to renew the contract but we may lose the 401.

What about buses to arrive at Sevenoaks and Tonbridge just before 9am?

Sadly this is currently not possible with the 435 because of congestion. Congestion is a nationwide problem which is slowly killing off services. It slows buses down to the extent they cannot arrive at destinations in time to make a return journey. Timing issues caused by increased traffic on the roads are the reason we lost our 402 service. It is possible to arrive earlier.

Is travelling by bus much better for the environment?

Yes definitely. Despite living in a village we are effected by air pollution. You don't see nitrogen oxides and fine particulate matter. Our lovely trees make relatively little difference to pollution levels. In 2015 40,000 people in the UK died as a result of air pollution. This figure is now thought to be closer to 50,000 a year. It's our second biggest killer. London is the worst affected area closely followed by the Southeast. Last year London levels equalled those of Beijing 4 times and those in both Sevenoaks and Maidstone equalled that of London. The cost to the NHS is estimated at £20 billion every year. The Royal College of Physicians links air pollution to a long list of health issues. One of which is that apart from causing asthma in young children, whose lungs are not fully developed, it can also reduce their lung growth by 10%!

70-80% of air pollution is caused by increased traffic on the road. Pollution from tailpipe emissions increases fourfold in congested traffic. Both petrol and diesel engines emit pollutants, though diesel engines are worse. Progress in clean diesel bus technology has far exceeded that of the diesel car. Overall, for each kilometre, a bus can deliver 75% fewer harmful emissions per bus passenger compared to that of a car passenger.

Stay safe and healthy!
Jackie.