

Loughborough Pedestrianisation Consultation

Following the recent consultation regarding the pedestrianisation of Loughborough town centre I write to formally respond on behalf of Kinchbus.

Currently Kinchbus operate six bus services which all serve Loughborough town centre and four of which cross the town. Between them these services carry over 30,000 customers to and from the “at risk” bus stops every week (more than 1.5 million people a year).

Our most important bus stops are Market Place and Swan Street which are frequented by over 52% of these 30,000 customers.

From research we carried out earlier in the year our customers reported “convenience of bus stops” as their 2nd favourite Kinchbus asset, behind friendly drivers. This emphasises the importance of convenience to our customers, 95% of who gave us a convenience rating of either good/very good/excellent.

We have had recent experience of the impact on customers when customer convenience deteriorates. Earlier this year Kinchbus 2 was forced to divert between Barrow and Quorn for an 8 week period due to repair works on Bridge Street, Barrow. We ran a dedicated shuttle bus, ensuring all connections were maintained, and therefore minimising the inconvenience caused. Despite these efforts, compared with the weeks preceding and following the diversion, our customer numbers fell by 12% (around 10,000 journeys in these 8 weeks).

Should buses not be able to continue through the town centre, resulting in customers having to change buses to make cross town links, or having to walk further to get to/from their destination, it would be logical to assume a similar proportionate drop in journeys – totalling around 188,000 less journeys a year into Loughborough.

If each customer has a £10 “value per journey” to Loughborough’s economy then refusing access to buses could, almost overnight, create a £1.8 million deficit to Loughborough’s current annual economy.

Currently around 30% of our customers have a car available for their journey but choose to use the bus for convenience, value for money. If option A or B were chosen and buses given a further convenience and time advantage over the car we would expect this number to rise as people are encouraged onto a greener form of transport. Should option C be chosen we would expect this figure to reduce as buses become less attractive. This will add more vehicles to the transport network and increase congestion and pollution.

We have many people who rely on our buses, including people with impairments, disabilities, and those less able to walk long distances. Many of these customers carry concessionary travel cards. Nationally around 30% of bus users use a concessionary card, although on our town based services this proportion is around 50%. These are the people who would be most affected by changes of access to shopping and many would find alternatives, travel less or simply not travel at all.

With the above in mind our expressed favoured option is Option A.

Our views on the proposed options are shown below.

Option A – buses both ways

- Will reduce number of vehicles in market place by 98%
- Will increase bus priority and therefore improve bus punctuality (customers number 1 demand)
- Maintain bus stop convenience and attract more people to an accessible Loughborough town centre
- Encourage modal shift from car to bus – reduce congestion in the town and promote a greener way to travel
- Promote Loughborough as an accessible town giving it an advantage over the Cities which surround it – bringing in more people from the surrounding area
- Maintain access for impaired customers negating the need for them to cross a busy relief road
- Maintain cross town bus links to Hospital, Schools and Colleges

Option B – buses southbound

- Will reduce number of vehicle in market place by over 99%
- Will increase bus priority and therefore improve bus punctuality when travelling southbound
- Northbound vehicles will only serve High Street stops
- Maintain some bus stop convenience and attract some people to a partially accessible Loughborough town centre
- Encourage some modal shift from car to bus – reduce congestion in the town and promote a greener way to travel
- Promote Loughborough as an accessible town giving it an advantage over the Cities which surround it – bringing in more people from the surrounding area
- Maintain access for impaired customers negating the need for them to cross a busy relief road
- Maintain cross town bus links to Hospital, Schools and Colleges

Option C – no buses

- Will reduce number of vehicle in market place by 100%
- Will remove all bus priority and therefore see bus punctuality worsen
- The town centre will be split into 2 (South and North)
- Cross town services will be severed and customers have to change
- Through town services will be diverted onto the relief road with all other traffic – this means they are unable to stop in the town centre and customers will need to cross the busy relief road to catch their bus or get into town (this includes impaired and concessionary customers)
- This will deter people from coming to Loughborough as it becomes inaccessible therefore reducing footfall in the town centre as people find alternative destinations which are more accessible

- Encourage modal shift into the car (30% of our customers) which will increase congestion around the relief road – opposing the governments emphasis on greener sustainable travel
- Remove Loughborough's advantages over the surrounding cities



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