

## Ben Smith

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**From:** Jeff Counsell <jeff@trentbarton.co.uk>  
**Sent:** 19 March 2014 10:36  
**To:** Mary Portas  
**Cc:** Tom Morgan; perrya.midlands@arriva.co.uk; smiths.midlands@arriva.co.uk; Mr. P. C. Osborne; Tony Kirk; Mr. A. M. Kershaw; Ian Drummond; andy.rush@trinitymirror.com; matt.jarram@trinitymirror.com  
**Subject:** RE: On the Buses. An open letter.

Hello Mary,

The independent research was carried out by the University of Leeds and commissioned by Greener Journeys. The report's entitled 'Buses and the Economy II' and it was published in December 2013.

I have no doubt whatsoever that you would find it hard to believe that bus users contribute so much to the local economy as it apparently conflicts with your personal, and seemingly outdated, perceptions of bus travel.

My letter dealt with the factual benefits of the role of buses in Loughborough and the contribution they make to the town and also highlighted real examples of how good levels of accessibility by public transport can help a town thrive within our local area. Very few, if any, facts have been provided by the Portas Town Team or Loughborough BID in the alternative. I would sincerely hope that after considering all of the relevant details and at least considering the facts put forward, those who have initially supported full pedestrianisation may reconsider their position.

Buses provide a vital role in a modern society and vibrant and strong economic community. The success of my business relies upon the economic success of Loughborough, making Loughborough an attractive destination is in my interests, making it less accessible will make it less convenient and therefore less attractive.

With my best wishes

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**From:** Mary Portas [<mailto:mary@maryportas.com>]  
**Sent:** 18 March 2014 12:58  
**To:** Jeff Counsell  
**Cc:** Tom Morgan; [perrya.midlands@arriva.co.uk](mailto:perrya.midlands@arriva.co.uk); [smiths.midlands@arriva.co.uk](mailto:smiths.midlands@arriva.co.uk); [peter.osborne@leics.gov.uk](mailto:peter.osborne@leics.gov.uk); [tonykirk@leics.gov.uk](mailto:tonykirk@leics.gov.uk); [tony.kershaw@leics.gov.uk](mailto:tony.kershaw@leics.gov.uk); [ian.drummond@leics.gov.uk](mailto:ian.drummond@leics.gov.uk); [andy.rush@trinitymirror.com](mailto:andy.rush@trinitymirror.com); [matt.jarram@trinitymirror.com](mailto:matt.jarram@trinitymirror.com)  
**Subject:** RE: On the Buses. An open letter.

Dear Jeff

Thank you for your reply and sorry for the delay in response but I've just returned from a long business trip.

The link to the independent research you cite didn't work (please could you resend) but I do find it hard to believe that on average, for every passenger of any age on a bus, they spend £41 in the town centre. Your analysis would also suggest, if the total income you cite were evenly spread amongst the 600 businesses in the BID, they would all enjoy an average revenue of £213,000 just from bus passengers. Sound like a bonanza to me!

And if that were the case it would be very hard to work out why the town has a 13% vacancy rate which my contacts are concerned may well increase unless the town centre has a chance to re-launch itself to fight off competition from out-of-town and the internet.

You cite a great many details in your letter but you don't appear to have convinced the public (according to the consultation), 96% of the businesses, the Town Team, Chamber, FSB, the Town Community Forums, RNIB or Nicky Morgan MP.

The local people simply want to try Option C – if they are wrong I've no doubt you'll have statistics galore emerging from the test. I bet it will work because the people who have most to lose have declared unanimously that they want it.

Kindest

Mary

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**From:** Jeff Counsell [<mailto:jeff@trentbarton.co.uk>]

**Sent:** 14 March 2014 13:21

**To:** Mary Portas

**Cc:** Tom Morgan; [perrya.midlands@arriva.co.uk](mailto:perrya.midlands@arriva.co.uk); [smiths.midlands@arriva.co.uk](mailto:smiths.midlands@arriva.co.uk); [peter.osborne@leics.gov.uk](mailto:peter.osborne@leics.gov.uk); [tonykirk@leics.gov.uk](mailto:tonykirk@leics.gov.uk); [tony.kershaw@leics.gov.uk](mailto:tony.kershaw@leics.gov.uk); [ian.drummond@leics.gov.uk](mailto:ian.drummond@leics.gov.uk); [andy.rush@trinitymirror.com](mailto:andy.rush@trinitymirror.com); [matt.jarram@trinitymirror.com](mailto:matt.jarram@trinitymirror.com)

**Subject:** RE: On the Buses. An open letter.

Dear Mary,

I feel that I must respond to your 'open letter' and perhaps bring you up to date in respect to the role of public transport (buses) and their contribution to society and a thriving economy:

### **Buses are Vital to Loughborough's Economy**

- Over 60,000 consumers travel to Loughborough Town centre by bus every week. That's over 3million trips every year.
- Independent studies<sup>[1]</sup> reveal that bus users spend an average of £41 on shopping in the cities and towns on each trip. Based on current customer numbers this equates to Loughborough bus users contributing around £128million to the local economy every year.
- 53% of customers using local bus services in Loughborough are concessionary pass holders. These customers are the most vulnerable being either over 60 years old, infirm or disabled. If they have further to walk this directly impacts on the attractiveness of their journey and the likelihood of them doing it as frequently or finding an alternative destination.
- More than 20% of current bus users make journeys across the town centre. If Option C is chosen these routes will be severed resulting in customers having to change buses and/or cross the town on foot to continue their journey. The vast majority of these trips are made to either;
  - School
  - College
  - Hospital
  - Work
- More than 30% of bus customers could make their journey by car (according to DfT figures supported by local, independent research) – they choose not to because the bus is more convenient, removes hassle, is cheaper or a collection of these reasons. Should any of these advantages be removed and buses forced to circumvent the relief road with all other traffic, more people will get back in their cars. This will increase congestion and pollution which will in turn make Loughborough harder to get into and less attractive as a destination
- Our own records show that when buses find it more difficult to penetrate the town centre, and convenience for the passenger is reduced, passenger numbers fall significantly and/or switch their travel habits and go to alternative destinations which are more convenient for them.
- A recent survey of bus customers revealed that 30% "may use their service into Loughborough less" if buses were re-routed in the town.

## **Flawed Consultation**

- Despite being far reaching and made readily accessible, less than 2.5% of Loughborough's population responded to the consultation with only 217 votes separating those in favour of a ban on buses from those against.  
No decision, which will have a long lasting impact on the town's future, can surely be made on this basis.
- No evidence has been produced to support the proposal for banning buses from the town centre.

## **Limited Risk**

- With 'Option A' 95% of the traffic in Loughborough town centre would be removed whilst retaining the huge benefits the high quality public transport provision. Given the improved reliability that will consequently be afforded to buses as a consequence of reduced congestion, we are confident that we can bring even more consumers to the town centre.
- Bus users would be able to catch their bus from the safer environment of the town centre rather than having to walk to areas which may be less well populated and lit and also come into conflict with more traffic. In some cases having to cross the busy inner relief road.
- If full pedestrianisation is chosen, there is a high risk that many bus users will choose to travel to alternative destinations which they may find more convenient in respect to accessibility. Once lost, our research in other areas shows that these consumer trips are almost impossible for those locations to regain.

## **Supporting Loughborough**

- We support Loughborough 100 per cent and recognise our role within the community. Our positioning throughout this consultation has been aligned with protecting the town's economic future and not concerned solely with the success of our business.
- We have the support of local employers, educational centres and providers of essential services who are all keen to protect the economy of the town and in favour of allowing buses to access the town centre.

These are not necessarily headline-makers who do the majority of their business elsewhere, but important local organisations who need Loughborough to succeed in order for their businesses to succeed or for their employees to access transport easily.

These supporters include:

East Midlands Airport, Loughborough University, Charnwood College, Loughborough RNIB College and Loughborough Hospital.

## **And Finally – A Tale of Two towns**

We can point to a number of towns and cities in the UK which are thriving by allowing buses unimpeded access to their centres enabling thousands of commuters and consumers' direct access to work and retail opportunities. Sadly, on the other hand, there are some examples where full pedestrianisation has had a detrimental effect on the areas economic standing.

Here are two contrasting examples close to home for you to consider:

### **West Bridgford – Bus only town centre**

A bustling town centre filled with shoppers day and night. West Bridgford attracts big name stores and independent shops alike as well as regular farmers markets and occasional town centre events. Buses run through the town centre in both directions and allow people to get on and off in the heart of the

activity. No other vehicles are allowed access. The town has grown from strength to strength and almost all retail units are full.

**Ilkeston** – Fully pedestrianized shopping area

Buses were removed from Ilkeston town centre and forced to only serve the town's perimeter. Now, day and night the town centre is dead. The number of vacant retail units is increasing and major brands and retailers continue to move away. Every morning bus services carry thousands of consumers away from the town to the neighbouring cities of Derby and Nottingham and this flow is reversed in the afternoon/evenings.

In summary, we support the option of allowing buses only to access Loughborough's town centre, not in the interests of bus companies but in the wider interests of the future economic growth of the town. In light of the above and especially in light of the extremely low response to consultation and marginal nature of even that vote, I would urge you and your supporters to reconsider your position for the benefit of the people of Loughborough and its future retail success.

Regards

**Jeff Counsell** | Managing Director | trentbarton

**t** 01773 536335 | **f** 01773 536333 | **m** 07753 979113  
Mansfield Road, Heanor, Derbyshire, DE75 7BG



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**From:** Mary Portas [<mailto:mary@maryportas.com>]

**Sent:** 05 March 2014 13:27

**Subject:** On the Buses. An open letter.

**I'm hugely proud of the Loughborough Portas Town Team and I'm grateful that they've alerted me to the issue of bus routing in the town.**

**I'm writing to ask you to support them and the overwhelming number of people in the town who want to try the option of no buses (including 95% of town centre businesses who are best placed to know and understand the needs of their customers). I'm sure you know that the new inner ring road will see the town united for the first time in a generation.**

Central to the recommendations in the Portas report was the idea of communities using space cleverly – making town centres once again a place where people congregate. As lovely and useful as the buses no doubt are, they also disrupt and divide. Oxford (Queen Street) is a great case in point here. A more attractive and more vibrant town centre is likely to bring more people in on the buses, not less. Given full pedestrianisation, all stakeholders in the town must surely be able to work with the bus companies to help devise a successful transport scheme that serves the community well and secures the longer term economic viability of the bus services.

The Team and the Town have this one chance, afforded by the new inner ring road. Please support them and back the trial of Option C – no buses through the town centre.

Many thanks

Mary

Sent to:

Jeff Counsell - MD of Kinchbus

Tom Morgan - General Manager of Kinchbus

Peter Osbourne CC - Cabinet Lead member for Highways and Transport

Steve Smith - Area Manager Arriva

Ian Drummond - Assistant Director for Highways and Transport

Tony Kirk - Sustainable Travel Manager

Ian Griffin - The Business Editor at Leicester Mercury

Matt Jarram - Loughborough Echo reporter

Andy Rush - Editor of the Loughborough Echo

Tony Kershaw - Chair of the Scrutiny Review Panel

Alex Perry - Managing Director at Arriva Midlands

Nick Rushton CC

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