



Government scheme gets more people on the buses

Taking a bus is now easier for people who lack access to transport, thanks to an initiative supported by the Department for Transport (DfT).

Transport Secretary Alistair Darling visited a community transport bus service in Hastings, Sussex. He saw a DfT Kickstart project that is funding the service's seven buses, including three new vehicles.

A new, independent organisation called Hastings Area Transport (HAT) manages the service with East Sussex County Council and Hastings Borough Council. The County Council provided HAT with Â£206,000 received from the Department for Transport. Â£78,000 of this was used for new buses.

East Sussex's lead councillor for transport, Matthew Lock, commented:

"This is an excellent scheme providing a much needed service to the whole community, particularly less able people and those unable to access public transport. Since the funding was secured much has been achieved."

Easier access to better bus services

Kickstart is part of the Department's goal to grow bus passenger numbers by helping to develop services that are flexible, reliable, and tailored to local needs.

Funding for 18 Kickstart pilot projects was announced in January 2004. It aims to help finance new and potentially self-supporting bus services developed by local authorities and bus operators.

In December 2004, Alistair Darling told the Local Government Association conference:

"We want local authorities to improve bus services in their area as part of a coherent overall strategy to improve choice and tackle congestion.

"The (July 2004, Future of Transport) White Paper said that most areas will be best served by partnership between bus operators and local authorities. That approach has produced dramatic results in a number of towns and cities."

The Department for Transport has a number of initiatives and schemes as part of a strategy to reverse the decline in bus patronage since the 1980s.

Figures are mixed area by area but overall in the year to March 2004, bus patronage in England rose by 2.3%, from 3,887 million trips to 3,978 million.

Particularly successful increases include: 14% in Gloucestershire, 10.4% in London, and 6.5% in Blackpool.

More information

- East Sussex County Council press notice, 'Kick start for new buses', 17 January 2005
www.eastsussex.gov.uk/yourcouncil/pressoffice/pressreleases/2005/01/0501017jw.htm
- Press notice, '[Public transport statistics bulletin: Great Britain 2004](#)', 25 November 2004
- [Best practice and policy guidance for bus and coach operators](#).
- The Future of Transport, [Buses: better services, easier access](#).
- [Tackling crime on public transport](#).
- Projects receiving government funding announced in Department for Transport's press notices, '[Extra Â£20 million for urban buses](#)', 14 January 2004, and '[Extra Â£20 million for rural buses](#)', 21 January 2004.

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