

Agenda 13d)

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03/02/25

RAME PENINSULA PUBLIC TRANSPORT USERS GROUP

Chairman – Geoff. Cadwallader CMILT
Treasurer – Nigel Bruce-Robertson MILT
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20th January 2025.

Gary Davis,
Mayor of Torpoint.

Dear Gary Davis,

Request please for letter of Support for RPPTUG Proposals to Improve Local Bus Services

As you may be aware that despite Cornwall Council's strong commitment to Climate Change in emphasising the continuing need to encourage local residents to reduce their carbon imprint, the substantial bus cuts that the Council has overseen in our Rame Peninsula Area in recent years has unfortunately had the reverse effect. The number of buses operating from Torpoint to Plymouth by the Ferry have been dramatically reduced by 75% in recent years from four buses an hour each way for most of the day (10.00 – 18.00) to only one bus an hour. As the essential ingredients of a good bus service include frequency and reliability, it was inevitable that many who previously used the bus now take their car into the city. Savings will have been made from the cuts but how much consideration was also given to people increasing their carbon imprint, loss of bus revenue and likely additional parking problems in Plymouth.

The most recent significant bus cuts made to bus services in our area took place in April 2022 without any prior consultation whatsoever. This resulted in the 70B Bus being withdrawn for most of the day that not only halved the number of buses crossing the Tamar each way, but the loss of 20 through buses in total each day seriously reduced the number of buses serving other parts of our area particularly the villages in the Shevioc Parish. The late night 22.50 Royal Parade -Millbrook Bus used by both by shift workers & Theatre goers in the Rame area for over 23 years now terminates at HMS Raleigh. In addition the Torpoint Town Bus Service operated commercially by A Line Coaches was withdrawn when the company lost the tender for the provision of peak hours bus services between Cremyll, Millbrook & Cawsand, that have been also reduced in number.

Our RPPTUG continue to meet regularly with senior officers from both Cornwall Council and Go South West Bus & members of the public, in our endeavours to bring back to the area a much needed significantly improved bus service. After much deliberation, we have to date been able to gain some modest marginal cost bus improvements that has mitigated the effects of the cuts for some local bus users, thanks mainly to help afforded us by the M.D. of Go S.W. Bus. However, all our other submissions have been declined due to lack of available funding etc; but as you know the Government has recently awarded Cornwall Council over £10million Bus Service Improvement funding, some of which we hope can be allocated to funding our proposals, that are attached and, which we believe are in line with Government requirements. We would very much welcome please a letter of support from Torpoint Town Council for the proposals, together with any remarks/provisos you may wish to make. If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best regards,

Geoff. Cadwallader,
Chairman, Rame Peninsula Public Transport Users Group

BUS SERVICE IMPROVEMENT PLANS FUNDING RPPTUG PROPOSALS TO IMPROVE BUS SERVICES IN THE RAME PENINSULA AREA

(I) FLAGSHIP PROPOSAL TO TRANSFORM THE NO.75 LISKEARD – TORPOINT BUS SERVICE. BY OPERATING IT AS A THROUGH BUS SERVICE TO & FROM PLYMOUTH

Operate the No. 75 Bus Service with the same calling points as now between Liskeard and Torpoint but extend the service over the Ferry to Plymouth Royal Parade, connecting on the Devonport Side of the Torpoint Ferry with the No. 34 Plymouth – Derriford Hospital – George Junction Bus.

Compile a new time table with say 8/10 buses each way on weekdays including a service that will enable residents of Seaton & Donderry (population 1,300) etc. for the first time to commute the short distance to Plymouth to work or attend schools/colleges or one of the three city universities etc:

In June 2023 the RPPTUG distributed a questionnaire throughout the Torpoint & Rame Peninsula Area to obtain bus users feedback – Question No 3 read -"The 75 bus route currently terminates at Torpoint. The RPPTUG is campaigning to extend this route to Plymouth. How do you rate this proposal?" The favourable agreement responses we received was given as 4.5 out of a possible 5 marks which is 90% and therefore gives us a clear mandate to pursue the proposal.

The new service would replace the current unreliable No.75 connecting two hourly bus service that involves a 25 minutes wait at Torpoint on an outward journey to Plymouth and a tight 6 minute connection on the return journey. There is not a connecting bus from Plymouth between 13.00 & 17.20. Inevitably if a Liskeard-Torpoint Bus is late or cancelled etc. the return bus from Torpoint is also likely to be late or cancelled, as many have experienced. With a through bus service to & from Plymouth a replacement bus and driver from Milehouse could be provided whenever the outward journey from Liskeard fails to arrive due to a breakdown or other reasons.

***BENEFITS** – The official Government document published about the Mid Cornwall Metro Scheme stated it "will really enhance services, better connecting people with jobs, students with education services and leisure opportunities for all, providing valuable support for the community and local economies" It also said it would encourage walking. This we think could certainly also apply to the above proposal albeit on a smaller scale particularly as far as cost is concerned, which would of course only be a very tiny fraction of the Metro Cost.*

The important locations in Plymouth (Population 264,700) that the 75 Bus would likely stop near i.e. within a short walk are :- The Devonport Royal Dockyard (employs over 6,000), Princess Yachts (employs over 3,000), The Plymouth Life Centre (one of the country's leading indoor sporting venues), Home Park Football Ground, Central Park, Plymouth Railway Station, Two universities (Plymouth University & The Arts University), the renowned Box Museum & Galleries, The Theatre Royal ("the largest best attended regional producing theatre") The Pavilions Entertainment Centre, the City's Shopping Centre, National Marine Aquarium, numerous restaurants, The Barbican & The Hoe. If you add the connecting No.34 City Bus (mainly half hour frequency), then this goes direct to the largest hospital in the South West (employs over 10,000) & stops near the Marjon University

There is also tremendous potential to attract Day Visitors from Plymouth on the 75 Route if it becomes a through bus and is afforded good publicity. It traverses along a very scenic river & coastal route that includes several miles running alongside the South West Coastal Path that of course attracts many walkers some of whom use the bus at times. The bus calls at the three attractive coastal villages of Portwrinkle, Downderry & Seaton all of whom have easily accessible beaches, and amenities. Portwrinkle has an attractive ancient small harbour, Seaton a Countryside Park. Near Torpoint there is Antony House (National Trust) and the Antony Woodland Garden. Joint fare tickets with other local bus & even rail routes could be made available.

The RPPTUG consider that this proposal if agreed is the best & most economical way of giving back a better bus service for many, and substantially improving the bus service where it is most needed in our area

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(2) Request that the Late Evening 22.55 ex Royal Parade – HMS Raleigh No. 70 Bus to be extended as previously to Millbrook.

This bus ran through to the Rame Peninsula for over 23 years prior to it being cut in April 2022 and it has since been much missed by late shift workers, theatre goers and others, and was headlined on the front page of an article in the Cornish Times. The RPPTUG have put forward compromise suggestions and have been very surprised and disappointed that proposals to run the extended service on just two or even one night a week have been rejected outright, with it would seem no regard to the beneficial effect this could have on climate change by those who now have no alternative to using their car. Electric buses funded by government grants will soon be used on this route so it is surely important that these buses are well used, We have also approached the Rame Community Bus Group to ask if they could connect to the No 70 Bus at HMS Raleigh but they replied that it would not be practical for them.

(3) The need for a Bus Service from villages in the Rame Peninsula to operate to & from St Germans Station to connect with GWR Train Services.

Currently some 50 trains call at St. Germans each day on weekdays that include 22 through trains in total to & from London Paddington, Cardiff & Bristol etc. The St. Germans PTUG have carried out extensive surveys that have been published and demonstrate the need that there should be a concentration on linking bus services between villages like Donderry, Seaton, Craffhole, Millbrook & Cawsand/kingsand etc to St. Germans Station,, It should be recognised that there is a potential attraction for tourists wanting to visit the Rame Peninsula by train and bus. GWR have demonstrated their interest in encouraging such integrated services.

It should be mentioned that back in 2002 a demand responsive Bus Service named Corlink with two 8 seater mini buses that carried wheelchairs, was installed and based at St. Germans as part of the then Governments Rural Bus Challenge. It was ideal for those who were able to use the service but its boundaries were limited to a few miles and although extended it never included Millbrook or Cawsand/Kingsand. Despite much organised protests the service was short lived and was withdrawn in 2004. Since then the number of trains calling at St. Germans station and the annual footfall there have both more than doubled !

(4) Extending No. 70 Buses to run through to Derriford Hospital.

The Cornwall Rural Community Charity have recently contacted our Cornwall Councillor Kate Ewert about support to implement the return of the direct bus service from the Rame Area to Derriford Hospital. We have noted that the through bus mentioned only operated for approx. 3 years from around 2009-2012 and was an extension of the then First Bus No. 81 Cremyll- Royal Parade Bus Service, through the government funded Kickstart Project. At that time there was not such a very good connecting Bus Service from the Devonport Side of the Torpoint Ferry that now exists, which City Bus has developed well with their No.34 Bus that runs direct to the Hospital via Peverell with a 30 minute frequency on Weekdays during most of the day. It also operates on Sundays

We appreciate however, there are some bus users, particularly the handicapped who understandably would prefer using a through bus service to Derriford Hospital regardless of the length of journey time, and we would support this request if it can be arranged – would it be possible to integrate No. 70 Bus Route with a City Bus Service operating from Royal Parade on a fairly direct route to the Hospital?

It should be mentioned that the No. 71 Bus operated from Liskeard to Derriford Hospital via Menheniot. St. Germans & Saltash until April 2022 since when it has since only run between Saltash & Derriford. This has meant that the large villages of Menheniot & St. Germans have not only lost their important link to the Hospital but have lost all their bus links to Liskeard & Saltash except for once a week bus services.

(5) Sunday Bus Services to cover more destinations in the Rame Peninsula.

This again would enable more local residents and visitors to use the new electric buses & help climate change.

(i) Re-routing existing bus services incurring only marginal additional costs-

(a) Re routing all the five Royal Parade – Cremyll Sunday No 70 Buses to become 70B Buses as previously happened several years ago via Sheviok & Crafhole & to now also include calling at Portwrinkle in the Summer or alternatively

(b) Re route two buses each way namely the 08.25 & 10.25 ex Cremyll – Royal Parade Buses and the 14.20 & 16.20 ex Royal Parade No 70 Buses to become 70B Buses.

When implemented either of the above proposals would enable more local residents to shop in the City and use Plymouth Railway Station particularly as taxis are more expensive on Sundays. They would also help visitors to Portwrinkle when the car park and all available spaces are full, as the village has two popular easily accessible beaches an attractive harbour and amenities i.e. public toilets plus a cafe, a restaurant, and the hotel when it reopens. The Bus currently has a turn round time of 20 minutes in Plymouth and adjustments can be made to the initial outward morning bus services from Milehouse.

(ii) Revive as a No. 75 Bus, the Royal Parade to Looe & Polperro Sunday Bus Service

This used to be very successfully operated by the First Bus Company several years ago, when they were often observed running full to capacity. The villages of Portwrinkle, Donderry & Seaton all have easily accessible beaches, the Seaton Countryside Park, and amenities including toilets and a number of pubs cafes and restaurants. The car Parks and all car parking spaces in all three villages are frequently full on Sundays in the Summer.

X - Proposed Alteration to No.70/70B Weekdays Service that we assume is being progressed following our October 31st Meeting when this was put forward and discussed, and will hopefully appear in the next timetable changes. – there is no additional cost whatsoever involved, but it will benefit some local residents in the future:-- To operate the 12.00 ex Royal Parade- Cremyll No. 70 Bus on weekdays as a 70B Bus via villages in the Sheviok Parish instead of the 13.00 ex Royal Parade Bus, which will revert to being a N0.70 Bus. This request was made as there is not a No.75 Bus connection to the 12.00 ex R.P. Bus but there is one to the 13.00 ex R.P. Bus. This will also be of benefit to those shopping in Torpoint etc; by improving the frequency choice of return buses.

Y - RTPI (Real Time Passenger Information) – Whilst RTPI has been installed for several years at most bus stops in the Rame Peninsula Area, it has not yet been installed at any of the bus stops on the 75 Bus Route between Antony and Liskeard, where we consider it has been and still is most needed. Although the situation is again under current review, it is important that RTPI is installed asap at most of these these locations where if a bus is cancelled there is a 2 hour wait for the next bus, or if it is late a connecting bus can be missed. RTPI is also not available at Freathy, where there is also a need.