



2004-2005
Supporting People
2006-2007
Waste and Recycling
2006-2007
Culture and Sport for
Hard to Reach Groups

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DRAFT OUTLINE LETTER

Date

Dear Sir/Madam

DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT IN RESPONSE TO REQUEST FOR CONSULTATION ON POSSIBLE CHANGES TO THE ADMINISTRATION OF CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL

Babergh District Council appreciate the opportunity to respond to the request for consultation on possible changes to the Administration of Concessionary Travel in England.

We recognise that appreciable economies of scale are likely to arise from consolidating the scheme through either a transfer of responsibility to the county council or to a national agency. These benefits are likely to be diluted if the responsibility for issue of passes is separated from responsibility for policy issues. Our view would therefore be that responsibility for all aspects of the scheme should remain vested in one body.

If the county council were to become responsible, this would bring together all matters of local transportation under one organisation and in Suffolk one body instead of 7 would be speaking with bus operators on concessionary travel matters.

On balance, a countywide scheme is probably better from a customer and bus operator perspective than a national scheme. Other benefits are dealt with at county level (Blue Badges, free school meals, student grants & loans, etc) and matters of access for those services to all residents of Suffolk are in place. So we can safely assume that they would also be able to deal with this service application matter.

However, there are obviously clear advantages of transparency in a fully funded national scheme being kept entirely separate from local government finance. If such an approach could deal successfully with the current widespread concerns that some of the financial burden of this national scheme is falling on individual local authorities, then transfer of responsibility for the scheme to a national agency may have real benefits. .

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Possible disadvantages of removing this responsibility from the district tier, however, may be

- i) that there would not be the same opportunity for local consideration of the current additional discretionary provisions, if provided by another tier or nationally e.g. Babergh would not have any discretionary powers to add any additional benefits to the scheme, as we currently do with reduced cost travel for bus pass holders (Babergh, Suffolk Coastal and Tendring) on the Harwich Harbour Foot Ferry (Harwich/Shotley/Felixstowe) and free travel before 9.30am and after 11pm for all bus pass holders (not just Suffolk issue) in Babergh. and
- ii) there may not be the same level of face to face customer service provision for a client group who have shown a marked preference for that style of service delivery.

However, we strongly indicate that if the function were to move from district councils, that the level of grant removed should make us no worse off financially (with the reduction in RSG and the removal of statutory spend on concessionary travel) and that the application and issue of bus passes to the clients should at least match the current level of customer service currently provided locally.

Yours faithfully

Bob Southgate
Head of Customer Services