



**Public Transport Options
And The Proposed Subsidy Withdrawal
To The X16**

January 2017

Background

As part of Newport City Council's draft budget for the 2017-2018 financial year proposals have been made to end subsidies for the X16 bus service which currently serves Marshfield.

The village of Marshfield is situated equidistant between Newport and Cardiff and has a population of approximately 3500. The Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation shows that generally Marshfield is not deprived, however, due to the comparatively rural nature of the ward it ranks within the top 10% most deprived in Wales in terms of 'access to services'. The village has a high demographic of elderly residents who do not have access to a private motor vehicle.

The village is currently served by a Demand Response Transport service from Newport Bus taking passengers into Newport and a service into Cardiff via the X16 currently provided by Stagecoach. Stagecoach has indicated that without the support grant they will have no option but to cease the service. The reduction in the concession payments made to them by Welsh Government for carrying elderly and disabled passengers has been greatly reduced; this along with the low passenger numbers leaves the service no longer financially viable. Both services are deemed inadequate by the community and do not serve the current needs of the users.

The DRT service currently in operation has been criticised by residents for not meeting their needs. It only has a small number of registered stops; needs to be pre-booked in advance and users are seeing an increase in their phone bills due to the ring and book system. Pensioners have reported an increase of around £7 per quarter; this is an extra cost to those already living on limited budgets and state pensions.

Stagecoach inadequately displays any timetable in Marshfield or Castleton; potential passengers don't know when the service runs or exactly where it stops. Bus stops are infrequent and poorly advertised. This inefficiency most definitely has an impact on passenger numbers.

The area has seen a number of changes including the loss of its regular 31 service. The X16 service provider has changed several times in recent years and the community would welcome a permanent, adequate service to be put in place safeguarded into the future.

Members of this community are highly dependent on both services especially elderly residents who mostly live on the two housing developments near St Mellons Road. The X16 service gives them access out of the village to socialise, attend appointments and complete their weekly shopping.

The next closest bus link into either Cardiff or Newport can be accessed on the A48 at Castleton, this is approximately 1.5 miles from the bottom end of the village.

Needs

An affordable, adequate transport system that supports Marshfield and safely and conveniently connects people with Newport/Cardiff and beyond is crucial to the sustainability of the community. It should provide opportunities for services and jobs to be accessed in a sustainable way.

An adequate and improved service would assist in supporting growth and regeneration, thus provide opportunities for residents to access jobs, training and education. Enabling economic growth without causing congestion is a priority for Welsh Government and the UK as a whole, making transport easier to use and places easier to get to reduce social exclusion faced by all residents.

Residents have commented on the large amount of money spent on the regeneration of Newport City Centre. It is unfortunate that they are unable to benefit from this due to the restricted public transport networks serving this community.

Marshfield Community Council advocates that good health and quality of life accompanied with adequate transport infrastructure would encourage active travel. We need to maximise opportunities for transport to positively contribute towards people's quality of life. Public bodies need to make sure that when making their decisions they take into account the impact they could have on people living their lives in Wales in the future. Welsh Government has made a commitment to protect the wellbeing of future generations. Marshfield is currently cut off from services including, health services, shopping, and social activities. The withdrawal of any further services would render this community totally unsustainable into the future and leave residents completely reliant on their own private transport.

Community Impact Statements

Passenger A is in her 70's and uses this service to access shopping and social opportunities in Cardiff. She relies solely on this service as there is no family available to assist with her transport needs. Using a taxi is not an option due to the high cost. Loss of this service would render passenger A cut off from social activities, leave her isolated and unable to complete her weekly shop. This would have a serious and detrimental impact on her wellbeing. Passenger A is incredibly independent, for this to continue adequate public transport options are essential.

Passenger B is 16 and uses the X16 to access 6th form in Bassaleg High School. He does not drive and his parents work full time. The X16 is his only option to get to and from his education placement. Passenger B would also like to access social opportunities outside of the village in the evening. This is difficult due to the restrictions in the service. He would welcome an enhanced service that runs more regularly and later into the evening. Passenger B feels by removing or failing to support him with adequate transport fails to support his wellbeing and that of the future generations.

Passenger C is 47 and is a mother and full time carer to her disabled daughter, she does not drive and is totally dependent on public transport to get around. Passenger C does not think the current services meet her needs. She uses the X16 and DRT service regularly and has raised several complaints regarding the inefficiencies of the DRT service. Passenger C works part time and has already negotiated a later start time due to the infrequency of the bus services. Any further cuts would leave this passenger potentially unemployed and make it difficult for her to carry out her daily tasks.

Passenger D is in his late 50's, he uses the x16 daily to travel from Rogerstone to visit his elderly mother in Marshfield nursing home. The bus route forms part of his daily routine and ensures his mother has a visit each day. Withdrawal of this service would not only effect passenger D it would have a huge impact on his mother who would not get a visit each day. Passenger D would see a cost increase if he were to have to catch 2 busses a day; this would also cut the time he has to spend visiting.

The financial cost too many pensioners was also highlighted by two examples of taxi fares, each taken to visit the doctors costing £12 -£13 for an outward journey and £20 for a return journey, something which they cannot afford to pay.

Proposals

Neither transport service currently in place meets the needs of existing users nor does it encourage new users to access the service.

If withdrawal of the subsidy results in Stagecoach withdrawing the service we would need a commitment from Newport City Council that they would support alternative transport arrangements. An enhanced DRT service would not be adequate due to the limited number of destinations and the current booking system. Ideally a better utilisation of current services and a potential reroute would better serve the needs of this growing community.

- Increased publicity of the service and timetables would encourage more users, particularly fee paying passengers. It must be cheaper for those who work in Cardiff to use the X16 rather than drive and pay parking charges every day.
- Consider if alterations to the route would increase passengers, adding stops onto the DRT to meet the demand could be a start.
- Reroute some of the existing 30 bus services via the X16 route as a replacement service.
- Ask Cardiff Council to subsidise part of the X16 or support the re-routing of the current service 30 as passengers would be shopping in Cardiff.
- The A48 is serviced by a number of services to and from Cardiff and Newport. We would like to see one service 30 diverted every hour to service Marshfield. This seems a cost effective and viable option. The infrastructure is able to support a single deck vehicle to come down Marshfield Road, through St Mellons Business Park and join the A48 via Cypress Drive. This would improve the links to both cities and offer a great improvement to the services already in place. This option would mean the saving on the subsidy could be met without having a detrimental impact on our community.