

# Foundation for Integrated Transport

## Press Release

### Immediate

21<sup>st</sup> June 2019

## Shropshire needs rural buses as good as anywhere else in Europe

On Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> June 2019 at Theatre Severn in Shrewsbury the Shropshire bus upgrade project will be officially launched (Note 1)

Rural bus services in England are not fit for purpose. A recent report published by the national organisation, the Foundation for Integrated Transport (Note 2) looked in detail at Shropshire's rural buses and compared them with similar areas in Sweden, Switzerland and Germany. Its main findings are summarised in the table below:

The main differences between Shropshire and similar rural areas in Switzerland, Sweden and Germany are striking:

<b>Shropshire</b>	<b>Comparable areas in Sweden, Germany and Switzerland</b>
Buses do not connect with trains	Small towns and villages have bus links with train stations
Buses often stop running in the early evening and do not run on Sundays and bank holidays	Buses often start at 6 am and run through until 10pm and run 7 days a week
Buses often run infrequently and make it difficult for users to schedule arrival times, departure times and time spent on activities e.g. shopping, banks, GP surgery, hospital appointments	Buses run at a higher frequency so there is no problem using a bus and carrying out routine activities within a reasonable amount of time
If you do not have a car and live in a small village the bus services do not provide timings that can be used to get to work and get back home and this damages the rural economy	Buses run at times that are convenient for the journey to work and the journey home at the end of the day and make it possible for rural residents to take up work opportunities
Buses are not planned or co-ordinated in any way and subsidised services are subject to large budget cuts	Buses and trains are co-ordinated in a regional transport plan framework to make maximise convenience and opportunity to users and are funded at a level that guarantees high quality

The Shropshire bus upgrade project has 3 objectives:

1. To make sure that all councillors, MPs and transport decision makers are aware of the multiple benefits for everyone that are delivered by high quality bus services (reduced congestion in urban areas, reduced air pollution, reduced carbon emissions in line with Shropshire Council's declared "climate emergency" and improved health)
2. To identify the improvements that can be made in bus services so that they more properly meet the needs of all users (students, commuters, visitors to hospitals, those who need connections to stations)
3. To work with other organisations nationally to argue that central government should fund high quality rural bus services at a level to be found in other countries

Commenting on the objectives of the project the co-ordinator, Professor John Whitelegg said:

**"This report is asking for changes in the way that all politicians and decision-takers think about buses. We can do so much better than the current disorganised and unco-ordinated arrangement. Establishing a co-ordinated model of integrated rural transport is the first step. After that we need to address funding but changing the way we do things is more important than more funding. Rural residents in Shropshire and in every other English shire deserve a much better bus service than the one currently on offer and the time is now right to embark on the upgrade"**

Alastair Hanton, who represents the funder of the project, the registered charity "Foundation for Integrated Transport" (Note 3) added:

**"The bus is the only truly inclusive mode of transport- available to everyone, not requiring traffic skills, physical fitness or wealth, able to go almost anywhere. All other modes of transport (driving, taxis, walking, cycling, rail) whatever their merits fail one or more tests. We therefore believe that the provision of a high quality bus network should be a first call on available transport resources, rather than an optional extra"**

Ends

For more information please contact Professor Whitelegg on 07504 225619 or Alastair Hanton, the Foundation for Integrated Transport on 0208 693 2618

#### **Note for editors**

Professor Whitelegg is a Visiting Professor at the School of the Built Environment, Liverpool John Moores University and an Associate of the Centre for Mobility Studies, Kassel, Germany

**Note 1**

The launch event is for all Shropshire councillors, all town and parish councils in Shropshire, all MPs, bus operators, bus users groups, environment groups and all organisations with an interest in rural communities. A full public meeting will be organised in October where we will report back on the response we have received from our discussions with those on the list for the 29<sup>th</sup> June

**Note 2**

<http://integratedtransport.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/FIT-Shropshire-Buses-Report-web.pdf>

**Note 3**

<http://integratedtransport.co.uk/>