

I wish to address the panel on the question of the recently withdrawn 379 bus service to Bristol, already sorely missed by its many loyal regulars, because it delivered to our community, **and beyond**, both the route and timetable suited to its passenger needs.

Reasons advanced by First for its withdrawal include:

**Underuse:** On my own authority I can state **NOT** so, as there was often standing room only. Less busy perhaps away from peak times and holidays, but I've yet to use a service which ***isn't***.

**Duplication of the route by 376:** True for ***part*** of the route, but unable to think of a route which is **NOT!** (Bath to Peasedown most readily comes to mind and Keynsham-Brislington to Bristol).

I moved to Paulton to reduce my daily commute. Travel to Filton via Bath often took 2 hours each way and cost £200 a month. And allowed for no work - life balance at all.

From Paulton I save £40 a month, and thanks to 379, reduced my travel time by up to an hour a day.

Now, to my options courtesy of 'First':

1. The 178 – less reliable and takes longer (even discounting the Chandag Estate) and seen mainly as another service for Keynsham and Brislington; possibly why **the timetable suits no one in our community**.

2. Or an hour's bus to Bath for train as already mentioned, which completely negates my reason for moving!

'First' say passengers will in time benefit from ***their*** changes.

So, how is the lady at Radstock benefited who now has to get up at 4.00 a.m. and doesn't get home till 7? If she can't change her working hours then her job is under threat.

Or the lady who from her late nursing shift at Southmead, is forced to wait nearly an hour in a fast emptying station, and feeling vulnerable with only drunks for company?

Or the older residents whose weekly social visits to Broadwalk are at an end, and who feel cut off because the 178 doesn't serve ***their*** needs?

And what of the Hallatrow regulars now catching the 376 as I often am? Part of our walk to nearest bus stop is along 500 yards of busy main road with no path. Cold comfort indeed when one of us becomes a statistic for walking along what should be part of our bus route!

**I should like to conclude** with an appeal for Mr Freeman's especial consideration. When working for Reading buses Mr Freeman was instrumental, commendably, in delivering record levels of passenger growth and **customer satisfaction**.

Then on becoming MD for 'First Bristol' Mr Freeman stated in his press release: "I relish the thought of working with everyone in the team to make the bus services in ***Bristol***, Bath, Wells and **surrounding areas** the very best they can be".

No disrespect intended Mr Freeman, but to many of us in one of those “surrounding areas” these laudable objectives have now patently failed.

**Because finally** I cannot of course assure the growth rate of new passengers resulting from reinstatement of the 379, though I am confident of a solid and loyal passenger base to build on - more than many services can boast. Above all, I can most certainly guarantee unprecedented customer satisfaction; and with it, the gratitude and approbation of an entire community.

Thank you for your time today.