

Speech to Committee

Chair

Thank you for allowing me to speak before this committee. I am the B&NES Councillor for Paulton and on behalf of the residents of Paulton, Radstock and surrounding areas, I'd like to present this petition of signatures to you.

This petition, only in place for a few weeks, represents the strength of feeling felt by bus users regarding the changes to the First Bus time table in our area of Paulton, Radstock and Midsomer Norton.

The biggest change has been scrapping the fast commuter bus to Bristol which was half hourly and replacing it with an hourly, slower service which doesn't stop in the centre of Bristol, but goes straight to the bus station. The other big change is that there is no direct service from Paulton to Bristol on a Sunday.

Many residents felt that these changes were publicised in August when people were on holiday, with no opportunity to give feedback on the effects of these changes. One resident said "We feel incredibly let down by the proposed changes and the manner in which they have been delivered. A pointless 3 week warning period"

First Bus have replaced the 379 with the 178, but it is slower and doesn't stop in central Bristol. First Bus has also introduced a new service to Bath, the 172 which I believe is very successful.

However, Chair, I'd like you, the panel and Mr Freeman to be aware of the consequences of some of these changes particularly to the 379 which are having on the lives of my residents.

"The 379 just about got me to work on time for 9am. The 178 collects us 5 minutes later, is a longer route, with more traffic and fewer bus lanes, so no way will it make it into Bristol for 9am."

"I am now faced with an extra 10-15 minutes walk from Temple Mead to my office. The new route of the 178 at 7.40 never makes it on time."

"Many residents like me working at Southmead Hospital cannot catch the 178 bus to get to work on time, especially on the return journey home and have to catch the 376, which goes on the A37. We then have to get from the A37 to Paulton. Luckily some weeks I can get my husband to pick me up, otherwise I have to walk the two and a half miles from the A37 at Farrington Gurney to Paulton. Some of this route is without a pavement."

Some residents are concerned that Paulton's 379 is being sacrificed to another bus route the 376 which goes from Bristol to Wells. "It's an over investment in the 376 to Wells which in part shares some of the 379 route so taking customers away from each other."

"I know of people whose job will be at a stake as they cannot get to work on time. Houses have been sold in Paulton based on the good transport links to Bristol, which have now ceased"

These are just a flavour of the emails and letters I have receive, outlining the effects of these bus changes on our residents.

I greatly appreciate the Managing Director of First Bus being present and I hope having heard my representations and those of oter fesidents, he will reconsider some of the changes that have been made.Paulton desperately needs a "fast bus", the new 177, at peak times in the morning to get commuters into work before 9am and again in the evening two buses to take commuters home

Thank you for your attention in this matter

Liz Hardman