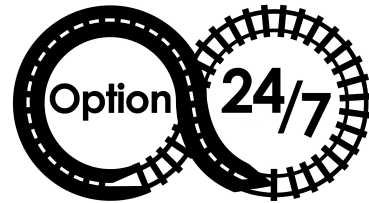


news release



FROM OPTION 24/7

4 JULY 2016

Option 24/7 launches its own sustainable transport survey for 'Catch the Bus' week

Catch the Bus Week is an annual celebration of the bus organised by Greener Journeys, to recognise the importance of buses to the UK's transport mix. It aims to increase awareness of the benefits of bus travel and encourage people who don't usually think of catching the bus to leave their cars at home and give it a try.

To recognise the importance of the work carried out by Greener Journeys, Option 24/7 has launched a survey to understand what it is that the people of Wiltshire really want from their bus services.

Earlier in the year, Wiltshire Council carried out their own consultation which received a record 11,500 responses. Commenting on the Wiltshire Council survey, one of the founding members of Option 24/7, Graham Ellis, said: "the high level of responses shows that Wiltshire residents are passionate about retaining and indeed growing a sustainable bus network. We were encouraged by the level of feedback to the Council but would now like to see the data translated into a network providing a more effective travel solution rather than cuts to services. To this end, we have submitted a proposal to Wiltshire Council which would actually mean that very little would have to be cut to meet their budget requirements.

Since the council carried out its consultation, the Bus Services Bill has been debated in Parliament. This Bill offers local authorities other solutions to the recent culling of services we have seen in the South West and other rural areas, and we would like to see Wiltshire Council take up the opportunity to lead others in putting forward the best practices available under the terms of the Bill. Whilst the Bill is not due to be enacted until the spring of 2017, we would urge Wiltshire Council to not make any cuts this year but to look at the positive options available."

The launch of the Option 24/7 survey is to assist the campaigning group in collating data to counter the cuts proposed by the local authority and to analyse the data from the passenger's point of view. The survey can be found here:

<http://option247.uk/busweeksurvey.html>

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For more information about Option 24/7 log onto: www.option247.co.uk. The organisation also has a Facebook page, www.facebook.com/groups/option247 and an active Twitter feed, which can be found at www.twitter.com/option247.

Notes to Editors

- For more information, contact: Graham Ellis: graham@wellho.net
- **Option 24/7** was founded in January 2016 from seeds sown in March 2015. It is formed of a group of people who have come together to promote the consideration of new options such as bus franchising in Wiltshire, under the Bus Services Bill. Wiltshire Council is looking to reduce and then remove bus subsidies over coming years, and if that's done under the old system it will result in major service losses. With a planned network, retaining existing local commercial companies to operate buses under contract, significant efficiency savings and other improvements can be made, leading to growth of bus use and a reducing subsidy need for an expanding service. Option 24/7 members include transport professionals, and members of the "TransWilts" team who have helped raise passenger journeys on the Swindon - Westbury train service from 18,000 to 235,000 in the last 3 years.
- **Bus Services Bill** – more information can be found here - <http://services.parliament.uk/bills/2016-17/busservices.html>
- **Catch the Bus Week** runs from 4 to 10 July. More information can be found here - www.catchthebusweek.co.uk/