

APPENDIX CG121

26th March, 2022.

Dear Sue Thomas, Clerk to Market Drayton Town Council,

Re: Loss of Service

In 2016 Market Drayton lost an important public service when the 341 /342 bus to Wellington was withdrawn. This action not only removed any affordable direct access to Princess Royal Hospital for many people but, for people living around Stoke Heath and Childs Ercall a vital means of connection with Market Drayton was lost.

It also created difficulties for students wishing to attend Telford College of Art and Technology resulting in many seeking alternative further educational opportunities, such as Newcastle under Lyme.

It is regrettable that at the time of the scraping of the 341 /342 bus service neither **Market Drayton Town Council** nor **Owen Paterson MP** made any apparent effort to actively speak out on behalf of the people they represented and to challenge either Shropshire Council or Telford & Wrekin . . . both of whom just lay blame on the other, citing reduction of subsidies.

I am sure that by now you will have heard that our only remaining inter-town public transport service, the 64 bus route between Shrewsbury and Hanley, is about to suffer more severe cuts – following on from the diminution of service last September.

The result of the latest proposal will be a major blow to our community and members of all the communities en-route. It will leave many people in isolation and cut off altogether at weekends from ‘affordable’ access to Shrewsbury, Newcastle and Hanley . . . and from indirect connective travel to Whitchurch, Wem, Telford etc.

The loss of a Saturday service (there has been no Sunday service for many years) will prevent lots of people from:

- visiting any of the catchment hospitals at a weekend
- various non-hospital health appointments
- visiting relatives in care homes such as at Whitchurch or Shawbury
- visiting family and friends living outside of Market Drayton
- accessing rail services
- family outings
- attending social or special events
- shopping
- court attendances
- various other activities and reasons there might be necessitating a weekend journey by public transport.

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The reductions made last September to route 64 badly affected students attending college at Newcastle under Lyme and Keele University. The current proposals for more so called 'off peak' weekday cuts will again impact on students.

Difficulties with accessing Telford College of Arts and Technology is one of the reason many students chose to apply to Newcastle for their further education.

Of course, buses don't just take people out of Market Drayton – they also bring people into town for social, economic and health reasons.

Market Drayton is already one of the larger towns in Shropshire. It is set to rapidly expand further.

Several communities which lie alongside the route of the 64 are themselves predicted to grow within the near future; Shawbury, Tern Hill, Loggerheads, Hodnet.

It is almost impossible to believe that this town is of such little significance that it can just be cut off and isolated without explanation, apology or justification.

I am unsure whether a proper consultation process has even been followed . . . certainly users, including myself, seem to have only just heard about the proposals within the last couple of days.

I would urge you to bring this matter to the attention of Market Drayton Town Council and urge your Council to enter dialogue with both Arriva, Shropshire Council and Staffordshire County Council in regards to this seriously concerning matter.

Our elected representatives ought to support the needs of Market Drayton and its people and all the communities who live alongside the route of the 64 bus.

These cuts are due to be implemented before the end of April leaving us with no weekend service whatsoever, and only a peak time service during the week.

As time is of the essence I urge you to give this matter your full attention post haste.

Yours sincerely,