

# Mark JENKINSON MP

Working hard for the Workington constituency



23<sup>rd</sup> October 2023

Councillor Denise Rollo  
Executive Member - Sustainable, Resilient  
and Connected Places  
Cumberland Council  
Cumbria House  
117 Botchergate  
Carlisle  
CA1 1RD

Dear Denise,

I am writing in an effort to urge Cumberland Council to make good use of the considerable funding provided through the Government's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP+) allocations.

Rather than tinkering with timetables or refurbishing bus shelters, this substantial investment should be spent on reviving cancelled services, and supporting existing services which are deemed to be at risk.

As you know, the financial pressures currently faced by bus operators, and some subsequent service cancellations, are due in no small part to a refusal by the former Cumbria County Council's failure to pass Covid funding for concessionary travel to operators.

Additionally, I had to push the council at the time to claim additional Government support for bus routes, after it informed the department for Transport it had no need for it.

The track record of Cumbria County Council was regrettably poor in supporting bus users, both rural and urban, and I now have significant numbers of constituents who have no access to a bus, despite receiving funding from central government specifically to support services that they should benefit from.

In 2013, despite being in receipt of government funding for bus support, the Labour administration that took control that year pulled all subsidies for bus services – a position they kept until their end. In that time, they received £4m in government support. There were reports it had even sent money back to government.

I now hope that Cumberland Council would wish to put some clear blue water between them and their predecessors, who let the public down so badly.

However, I am disappointed to note the continued absence to date of a clear transport strategy from Cumberland despite confirmation of continued government support of almost £0.5m per year. I would draw your attention to the work of Westmorland and Furness, which appears to be moving in the right direction at a much greater speed.

As you will know, 10 routes in Westmorland and Furness have been assessed as meeting the local authority's own criteria for being allocated BSIP+ funding. These routes all ceased within the last 5 years, which the council are using as the cut-off point.

It would be hoped that Cumberland Council could, at the very least, follow suit - enabling the most recently closed services, such as the M1 (Maryport), the 60 Skinburness to Maryport and the 53 Northside to Workington to be revived - restoring a direct bus route to Allonby, which could be further developed by the tourist trade. It

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could also be used to assist the 400 to include all of its current route, avoiding the current proposal to amend the route, and thereby leaving Skinburness without a bus service. It could be used to continue to support the 93 and 93a Bowness to Carlisle service, £12,000 of funding for which was secured through a partnership John Stevenson and I arranged between Allerdale Borough Council and Carlisle City Council, in the absence of leadership by the county council.

In short this is about joined-up thinking and joined-up transport links.

I would urge you to speak to your counterparts on Westmorland and Furness, whilst speaking with passengers, and bus operators regarding the viability of repeating this policy across Cumberland. If you do so, you will discover that there is not only a demand to save existing services, but to see resurrected those routes which have, regrettably, been scrapped. This grant will be able to act as pump-priming for such routes enabling them to be further built up over time. Once constituents see a regular and reliable service for the price of £2 a journey they will then see the bus as a viable means of transport.

Cumberland Council needs to do its bit to make these services sustainable – and to help our communities stay connected. Bus services are essential for my constituency, linking rural communities to essential shops and services. We must ensure that such services continue running – and further expand - under the new Cumberland Council.

I have campaigned tirelessly for this funding package delivered to improve and protect bus services – and I am pleased my lobbying of the Department for Transport is paying off.

When I first was elected I received a letter from a family who regularly had to pay £12 for the two grandchildren to see their grandfather. This is now £4.

To help people with the cost of living and save on everyday travel costs, the government also invested £200 million to extend the bus fare cap, with single bus tickets capped at £2 outside London. This was originally intended to be until the end of October 2023, but has now been extended to December next year. Additionally, the government have today announced **additional** bus funding for transport authorities, alongside a 60% uplift in mileage rates for our Western Dales Community Bus Service and Wigton & District Community Transport.

However, I would hate to think that this hard fought for support for constituents to use local buses could potentially not be reciprocated by Cumberland Council in both backing current bus routes like the 93 and 93a, or by seeking to restore services that have been lost.

The government has stepped up to the plate to support bus services, it is only fair that Cumberland Council do likewise.

Yours sincerely



Mark Jenkinson MP

Member of Parliament for Workington  
Conservative Candidate for Penrith and Solway

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