

9 April 2020

Dear Operator

COVID-19 Continuation of Concessionary Fares Reimbursement and Supported Contract Payments

The onset of coronavirus has brought about major changes to our way of life in a very short space of time. It has forced most of us to work differently and had led a substantial reduction in the use of bus services.

I would like to thank you and your staff for your commitment to maintaining a basic level of bus service provision and for your co-operation in planning and implementing the emergency service levels.

The West of England Combined Authority (WECA) has given a commitment to maintain payments for concessionary travel and contracted bus services until 30 June 2020. Prior to that date, the prevailing situation will be assessed and an extension considered if necessary.

To demonstrate that public money is being spent appropriately and that WECA is meeting its obligations as a public body accountable to Government, the following conditions must be met in respect of the committed payments:

1. The reduced network operated, and any subsequent changes to it, to be agreed in discussion with WECA.
2. Journeys to support key workers and essential trips - as defined by Government - to be prioritised on the reduced network.
3. No fare rises during the period of payments.
4. Work flexibly and proactively with WECA to redeploy resources as required and to react to specific points of demand, subject to such proposals being agreed as safe to operate with appropriate vehicles.
5. Continue to accept ENCTS passes before 0900.
6. Actual concessionary travel journeys must continue to be recorded and reported to WECA on a monthly basis.
7. Share with WECA your workforce plan, including specifically any plans for the use of furloughing if this is considered necessary.

8. Agree to Open Book access including access to any patronage, revenue and cost data required to demonstrate:
 - a. the payments made have been used in the manner intended;
 - b. the payments were needed to ensure that the agreed level of service could be delivered;
 - c. the need for funding to protect the financial viability of the organisation.
9. Agree to repay any payments that could not be demonstrated were needed and agree that WECA can set off any such required repayment against future payments.
10. Social distancing policies on transport to be implemented and communicated in line with national guidance. This may preclude the use of smaller vehicles.
11. Continue to commit to enhanced cleaning standards of touch points in vehicles to ensure Coronavirus spread is controlled.
12. The fleet used for the agreed network to be the least polluting vehicles available.
13. Updated timetable information to be provided at the earliest possible opportunity to WECA to ensure timely provision to customers.
14. Day-to-day service disruption to be communicated to WECA via the usual channels.

My intention is to pay invoices for contracted bus services at the end of the month, as has been normal practice. We will be sending you a payment spreadsheet soon.

In respect of concessionary travel, I propose to make one payment per month in the early part of April, May and June for travel that would have been made that month. The normal system of payments will be suspended for the time being, but actual trip numbers must be reported at the end of the month, as normal.

I hope you will agree to the conditions and I'd be grateful if you would send confirmation of your agreement as soon as possible to christopher.heward@southglos.gov.uk.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Peter Mann".

Peter Mann
Head of Strategic Transport Integration