



THE RT HON MARK HARPER MP
Working for Gloucestershire West of the Severn

HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA



Mr Roland Dowding
Clerk to the Council
Ruspidge & Soudley Parish Council
Rheola House
Belle Vue Centre
Cinderford
Gloucestershire
GL14 2AB

16th January 2023

Dear Mr Dowding

Thank you for your email on behalf of Ruspidge & Soudley Parish Council regarding Stagecoach services.

Following the announcement by Stagecoach that they would be cutting numerous routes across Gloucestershire, I have been in close contact with my colleagues at Gloucestershire County Council, who have provided me with the following update.

Gloucestershire County Council states:

“The unexpected cutting of these routes left us with a huge challenge. The County Council’s efforts have ensured that around 350,000 journeys per year have been saved. However, some routes could not be reproced – not through lack of effort on the part of officers it must be said, but due to a lack of bids from an already struggling market.

For the services that could not be procured, we have provided information to help residents plan alternative ways of getting around. This includes making use of more innovative transport such as dial-a-ride, community transport and demand responsive transport (The Robin). In addition, personal transport planners will be on hand to talk to anyone who needs help by calling 0871 200 22 33.

‘The Robin’ has been funded as part of the Department for Transport’s Rural Mobility Fund. The Department have funded the pilot for two years, after which the County Council would have to fund any extension or adoption ourselves.

The pilot is subject to our own internal review to assess if this innovative way of transporting people provides better value for money than traditional services. There could be a case in 18 months for us to fund the expansion of The Robin rather than continue to fund lightly used infrequent rural bus services that require heavy subsidies.

Passenger numbers and cost of delivery will be used in our own internal metrics to gauge success of the trial. So we will need to see that this new, more flexible approach to transport is working, then we could look to shift our investment from our subsidised bus routes to more demand responsive transport.

The Robin is just the start of us looking creatively at how to address modern transport needs in rural areas. Infrequent time-restrictive bus services don’t suit everyone’s needs in a fast-moving world.



So far we have only soft launched and still our website has had over 16,000 visits and our social media promotion has reached over 70,000 people. This is a good indication that people are excited about this new approach.”

I hope you find this response useful.

Thank you again for taking the time to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Mark Harper

The Rt Hon Mark Harper MP