


CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL
COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES

COMMITTEE:	Community Committee		
MEETING DATE AND TIME	18th June 2026 7 pm	LOCATION	Congleton Town Hall
REPORT FROM	Cathy Dean, Communities Manager		
AGENDA ITEM REPORT TITLE	12 Free Bus Days – Cheshire East Bus Partnership		
BACKGROUND	<p>Cllr Kay Wesley (Community Chair), Cllr Holland, Cllr Chadwick and the Chief Officer attended the Bus Partnership Forum on the 3rd of June. Key takeaways were:</p> <p>Cheshire and Warrington Combined Authority - The new Combined Authority was established on 22 April and is expected to improve access to transport funding, particularly for bus services. The streamlined model reduces the number of authorities competing directly for government funding, helping to simplify funding allocation and strengthen the area's ability to secure investment.</p> <p>Current Cheshire East Projects</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bus stop improvements in Congleton, including cleaning, better information and accessibility enhancements, are due to be completed over the next two years. • A new Cheshire East transport app, expected in September 2026, will provide journey planning, bus tracking and real-time information via QR codes at bus stops. • Real-time information displays will be installed at bus stations. • An on-demand rural transport service is scheduled to launch in August 2026, offering flexible journeys for £4, free travel for concessionary pass holders, and door-to-door transport for disabled users. 		
Proposal	<div style="border: 2px solid blue; padding: 10px;"> <p style="text-align: center;">New Initiative: Free Bus Travel Days</p>  <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="border: 1px solid white; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; width: 15%;"> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">Town Councils will be offered up to 4 free bus travel days per year.</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid white; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; width: 15%;"> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">This will be to promote local events and encourage residents and visitors to travel by bus.</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid white; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; width: 15%;"> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">Town Councils will choose the dates, to align with key local events and priorities.</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid white; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; width: 15%;"> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">Bus operators will be reimbursed for lost fare revenue, based on average revenue from a similar non-event day.</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid white; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; width: 15%;"> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">The events will need to be open to all and accessible from existing bus routes.</p> </div> <div style="border: 1px solid white; border-radius: 15px; padding: 5px; width: 15%;"> <p style="font-size: 0.8em;">Free travel will only apply to existing timetabled services in a pre-defined zone around each event.</p> </div> </div> <p style="text-align: center; font-size: 0.8em; margin-top: 10px;">Borough-wide ticketing incentives are being explored with potential alignment to DfT summer travel initiative.</p> </div> <p>Free Bus Travel Days</p>		

	<p>Congleton Town Council can select 4 free bus travel days. The Food and Drink Festival's free bus services demonstrated the success of providing free travel to major events.</p> <p>The events which run on scheduled bus timetables include:</p> <p>4 x Summer Play Days (Tuesday's - 28th July and 4th, 11th and 18th August)</p> <p>Green Fayre - Saturday, 26th September</p> <p>Christmas Light Switch On – Friday 27th November (Note: the event finishes after the last scheduled bus pick up from around 5:30 pm, so this would incur additional cost to the council to continue the buses until 8 pm).</p> <p>Another suggestion was to provide free Saturday shopping during December to support local businesses on the 5th, 12th and 19th December.</p>
FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS	Cheshire East Council is funding the free travel days. Potential cost for the Christmas Light Switch On from 5.30-8pm if this is desired.
EQUALITY CONSIDERATIONS	The free bus service helps remove financial barriers to travel, enabling more residents to access events, services and activities within the town. It particularly benefits older people, young people, lower-income households and those without access to a car, helping to promote inclusion and equal access to community opportunities.
ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS	The free bus days encourage the use of public transport and may help reduce the number of individual car journeys into the town. This can contribute to lower traffic congestion, reduced emissions and support the council's environmental objectives.
DECISION	To note the report and decide which days to request free bus travel.