CHANGES TO UPPINGHAM HOPPER BUS AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Throughout the Covid 19 pandemic the Uppingham Hopper Bus has been kept operating in one form or another in order to provide the free service to the residents of Uppingham that we know that many of you really value.

Over the past few months we have been carefully monitoring our passenger numbers (which also directly impacts on the donations that passengers most kindly make) and are now able to report to that we are carrying about 40% of our pre-pandemic levels. At the same time our costs have continued to rise with fuel in particular being at an all-time high. The bus itself is getting older and this leads to more expensive repairs and maintenance.

The volunteer drivers have been consulted at to their views about how to keep this important service available for as much of the day as we can, whilst recognising the challenges that we have set out above. One possible solution that has been suggested is to consider moving to a “call and collect” type service for the afternoons in the winter (with the normal scheduled service being maintained in the winter mornings and throughout the summer months). An alternative suggestion has been made by a passenger that the afternoon scheduled service be restricted to two or three afternoons a week with “call and collect” offered on the other days.

Before we make any radical changes to the service we need to hear what the people of Uppingham think (both those who use the bus regularly and those who could perhaps start to use it). There will be an opportunity to respond via the Neighbourhood Forum where there will be a Newsletter and a public meeting on Thursday January 20th 2022 at the Falcon Hotel).

In the meantime we are going to stop the scheduled service at 4pm each week day as our monitoring of passenger numbers has shown that the bus is extremely lightly used in the last hour. This change to the scheduled hours will come into force from Tuesday 4th January 2022.

As well as making a cost saving in fuel, not running the bus around empty of passengers will have a positive environmental impact which is something that we are all too well aware of.

We want to send a positive message about the long term future of the Uppingham Hopper bus. We remain committed to operating this service and are already investigating some potential exciting opportunities for an additional vehicle to join the fleet – which we hope might be an environmentally friendly electric bus! We will give you more information about this over the coming months but for now we need to know your views about the timetable changes proposed.