



Norfolk Federation of WIs

Charity Number: 227411

EDP WI OPINION Wednesday 21st November 2018

Mary Dorrell

We should all be catching the bus more often. Norfolk buses are comfortable and reliable, a world away from the overcrowded and ramshackle buses I saw in Kolkata recently. We have suffered cuts, but fewer than similar counties. Buses protect our environment, provide affordable transport and link people together.

If fewer of us jumped into our cars for every journey, buses would run to time better. A fully loaded double decker bus can take 75 cars off the road. If more people caught the bus, the traffic jam ahead of you would disappear, the buses would not be delayed and increased demand could lead to more routes. What would it take to persuade you to take the plunge and catch the bus? It improves our environment. If, nationally, we all switched from car to bus for just one journey a month, it would mean one billion fewer car journeys on our roads saving 2 million tonnes of CO2 a year (greenerjourneys.com). David Jordan, Marketing Manager for First Eastern Counties says, *"We're proud that over 70% of our buses operating in Norwich are of Euro 5 emission standard or better, 22 fitted with Euro 6 micro-hybrid engines. All of our buses are fitted with GreenRoad telematics systems that help improve emissions by monitoring driving standards whilst helping provide passengers with a smoother journey."*

In a cleaner environment we will be happier to take a brisk walk to a bus stop and evidence shows that this brings benefits of increased physical and mental fitness, boosting our energy and lifting our mood, as well as lowering risks of serious illnesses like heart disease, type 2 diabetes, dementia and some cancers.

On the bus there is improved seating, including for the disabled, opportunities to read books and emails (many buses have Wi-Fi) and more than that: buses are places where you can chat, meet old and new friends. For us in the WI, campaigning to "Link Together and alleviate loneliness" they promise social benefit. We are asked to *"Connect... with friends, family, colleagues and neighbours. Mental health charity Mind suggests speaking to someone in person or on the phone. Spend 5 minutes to ask and really listen to how someone is"*. Frequent bus users, like myself, know the opportunities for that five minutes of connection on a bus, one that car users are deprived of.

The economy gets a boost too: buses provide crucial access to town centres, and carry more commuters every day than all other forms of public transport combined. Every £1 spent on local bus infrastructure can deliver more than £8 of wider economic benefits. As Dawn Dewar Transport Co-ordinator, UEA, said at a recent meeting of the Norfolk Bus Forum: *"The University is able to attract the very best staff and students, not just those who drive. Plus with less cars, our campus is a better environment to live work and study."*

The Norfolk Bus Forum, chaired by the WI, is where Bus Users, Bus Operators and Norfolk County Council meet to listen to each other and discuss common issues. At the Annual Public Meeting, this Saturday at the Norwich Millennium Forum, the public is welcome. We would like to hear from all parts of Norfolk. Issues users might want to raise: accessibility, timetables, reliability, routes, bus stops. Specific complaints should go first to the Bus Operator, and then to Bus Users UK (NBF is fortunate to have the National Vice



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Chair of BUUK as a member). Meanwhile the WI is discussing a possible new campaign to call for an increase in subsidies for rural bus services.

With all the benefits that using Norfolk buses can bring you and your community we would like to see more of you on the buses! *"It's time to try the bus: when did you last travel by bus? Direct to town and city centres and no parking issues!"* Charles Sanders Sanders Coaches Ltd

Contact us at fedsec@norfolkwi.org.uk

Annual Public Meeting, Norfolk Bus Forum

Saturday 24th November 2018, 10am

Norwich Millennium Forum: The Auditorium