

Boxted Parish Council
Mr P Evans
64 Feering Hill
Feering
COLCHESTER CO5 9NL

Your Ref:
Our Ref: HT/PT/DLC/822
Date: 30 June 2010

Dear Mr Evans

CHANGES IN RESPONSIBILITY TO CONCESSIONARY TRAVEL PASSES AND THE PUBLIC CONSULTATION

As you may already be aware the responsibility for providing the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS), commonly known as the English Bus Pass, changes from District and Borough Councils to County Council from the 1st April 2011.

To allow the county to get the correct structures in place to deal with the change Essex needs to understand how much people value the various elements of their pass or alternative concessions where these are provided. We plan to do this by holding a public consultation using a questionnaire that can be accessed both on line and in hard copy form.

We are running the consultation from the 1st July 2010 until the 30th September 2010. The questionnaire can be obtained by calling Contact Essex on 08457 430 430, from libraries across the county and online at <http://www.essex.gov.uk/buspass/>.

In order that as many people as possible have the opportunity to contribute to this consultation, we enclose a poster for you to place in a position that people will be able to see it. If you require more, please don't hesitate to contact us.

We anticipate that people will have a number of questions and in order to cater for this, we have placed some of the commonly asked questions online at: www.essex.gov.uk/buspass/. We also have enclosed the FAQ for your convenience.

If you have any specific questions or would like to discuss with us further about your own areas, please email dominic.lund-conlon@essex.gov.uk or call 01245 436 296.

Yours faithfully



Richard Gravatt
Passenger Transport Strategy Manager

Please reply to Dominic Lund-Conlon
Telephone: 01245 436296
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Concessionary fare (English National Bus Pass) responsibility changes

Public consultation

What is happening?

In the past the responsibility for providing your free bus pass and paying for the service has been with your district council. This will change from the **1 April 2011** to become an Essex County Council responsibility.

Are you taking away my pass?

No. All free bus passes already issued will remain valid until their expiry date.

For all applicants the County Council is required to provide a minimum offer of free travel on bus services between **0930** and **1100** on weekdays and at all times at weekends and on bank holidays.

At present all districts offer a **0900** start, **2400** finish Monday to Friday, all-day travel Saturday and Sunday and a companion pass, extending the free travel offer for those unable to travel without a companion so that the companion also travels free. Some district councils also offer additional services, such as a limited value of taxi tokens in place of a pass, but these are not offered by all authorities.

We are therefore asking you what you find most useful about your pass at the moment so that we can make an informed decision about what the County Council offers from 1 April 2011.

Are you changing the times that I can travel?

As stated above, not at the moment. To make a decision about changes we might need to make, we need to fully understand which elements of the current pass you find most useful and valued. We will use this data to put together an Essex wide offer.



I have taxi tokens – are you taking these away from me?

To make a decision about changes we might need to make, we need to fully understand which elements of the current pass you find to be most useful and valued. We will use this data to give a consistent Essex wide offer.

I am disabled – how will this affect me?

At present you should not be affected. Your pass will remain valid until it expires and the current offer from whatever area you reside will hold until at least 1 April 2011.

We will be standardising the criteria we expect people to meet in order to qualify for a pass so that there is one definition across Essex.

There will be a clear appeals procedure set up as part of the changes and we will tell people about this if they are not eligible for a new or renewed pass from 1 April 2011.

After consultation, we will inform you properly and in good time about what decision has been made.

I am hearing or visually impaired – how will this affect me?

At present you should not be affected. Your pass will remain valid until it expires and the current offer from whatever area you reside will hold until at least 1 April 2011.

We will be standardising the criteria we expect people to meet in order to qualify for a pass so that it is one definition across Essex. We will inform you of any changes in due course.

There will be a clear appeals procedure set up as part of the changes and we will tell people about this if they are not eligible for a new or renewed pass from 1 April 2011.

I need a companion to travel – will this change?

If you need a companion to travel, the qualifying criteria will be standardised across Essex. We understand that there might be people who may become eligible and others who may not. This is why we are consulting with both the public and stakeholder groups. A clear appeals procedure set up as part of the changes and we will tell people about this if they are not eligible for a companion pass following the changes in responsibility.



We will also be discussing this with stakeholder representative groups.

When will you know what is going to happen?

We anticipate a decision will be made in **December 2010**.

How will you tell us about changes?

We will announce the changes through radio and newspaper press releases and through the County Council's website. We will directly contact all those whose free travel entitlement is affected by any changes.

Who are the stakeholder representative groups?

They are groups suggested by other directorates and they include older persons planning groups, deaf/blind/deaf-blind planning groups, access groups, the Participation Network Forum and others. They have been invited to send representatives to stakeholder meetings to get their group's views across.

How will I obtain my pass in the future?

If you qualify for a pass up until the 31 March 2011 you should still apply to your local district council office to obtain your concession.

From 1st April 2011, you will need to apply to Essex County Council for your pass. We will be making forms available via local council offices, county council offices, libraries and Contact Essex.

We will put press releases out through radio and newspapers as well as communicating to Parish Representatives and Village agents, advertising of any changes.

I live in Southend-on-Sea or Thurrock. Will this affect me?

If you live in these areas this will not affect you as Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock areas have their own Unitary Authorities and will remain responsible for issuing their passes.

