

Transport firm to look again at changes which passengers say have hit services

Stagecoach is to reconsider controversial bus timetables

By Lauren MacDougall
lauren.macdougall@kentlive.news

STAGECOACH has agreed to take a look closer at issues with bus services across Dover, following a huge wave of complaints from passengers after a timetable shake-up in September.

The bus firm has repeatedly defended its new timetable after an incredible public backlash from several Deal and Dover residents.

Some had been consistently stranded at home or work, children's journeys home from school had doubled in time and services were frequently overcrowded.

Pressure from residents, the Dover Express and local MP Charlie Elphicke had seen a school route to Kingsdown reinstated, as well as the frequency of some journeys re-adjusted.

However, many residents were still dissatisfied with the changes, with scores of complaints regarding routes across the district being sent in to the Express and Mr Elphicke.

Regular

Despite the cutbacks abandoning villages – removing their only regular service – as well as doubling the journey times of commuters and schoolchildren

Stagecoach maintained 'passenger data' meant axed routes were no longer viable when probed by the Dover Express.

And now Stagecoach's area chief Philip Norwell and Kent County Council's head of public transport Phil Lightowler have met with the Dover and Deal MP and for crunch talks on the recent shake-up, following the additional complaints.

The Express was contacted by dozens of concerned locals regarding the changes implemented in July.

While Mr Elphicke recently asked residents to reach out to him on his Facebook page so he could pass on their concerns to the bus firm – and more than 100 took the chance to have their say.

Mr Norwell, Stagecoach's South East managing director, told the MP he had read peoples' concerns, but many of the problems raised had already been addressed.

The bus boss said Stagecoach had taken action on services to local schools, ensuring students from Kingsdown could get home from school.

Mr Norwell added Stagecoach had worked with KCC to ensure parts of Great Mongeham and Northbourne are covered after residents told the Express they had become completely marooned in their villages.

According to bosses, Stagecoach has also added an additional journey between Eastry



MP Charlie Elphicke looks at routes with Stagecoach boss Philip Norwell and KCC's Phil Lightowler

and Canterbury.

Mr Norwell also agreed to look closer at issues resulting from changes to services in St Radigunds and River.

Mr Elphicke said: "It's welcome that Stagecoach say they have made changes after people raised concerns – and that they are working with KCC to help cover some areas.

Case

"Yet if anyone is still experiencing problems, I urge them to get in touch with me so I can take up their case."

Residents can get in touch with Charlie by emailing charlie.elphicke.mp@parliament.uk or messaging him on Facebook.

Anyone affected by the cuts can also get in touch with the newsdesk by emailing lauren.macdougall@trinitymirror.com.



School pupils have been hard hit by the changes



Bus timetable alterations have been tough for many passengers

Recreation opponents fight back

HUNDREDS of people have come out against plans to build a new recreational area in Lydd.

The multi-use games area (MUGA) on the council-owned Rype was proposed by Mayor Robert Stanley Jones last year.

But residents have come out in force against the plans deeming it "completely unnecessary".

More than 300 people attended a parish council meeting on Monday, October 2 to voice their concerns.

In rejection comments on the application, people have said the site is unnecessary because the town already has two other MUGAs.

Residents have also complained about not being consulted on the plans before they were put forward.

David Bacon, 67, who has lived in the area for 25 years, said he understands the MUGA was suggested to combat antisocial activities among youths – but that it is not the answer.

The grandfather-of-three, who lives in Green Way and works in health and safety for Shell said:

"There has been a rise in the congregation of youths in town who can create a nuisance.

"But the proposed site is a play area for children and it can become an unpleasant place for them. People also fear it is too close to their homes.

"It is also horrendously expensive to build and maintain a MUGA."

Michael Walsh, 76, from Lydd, who has been a councillor since 1995, obtained funding for the first MUGA in the town at Lydd Town Football Club 18 years ago.

He said the project would not work as the area borders three residential roads – Manor Road, Skinner and Queen Road – and would interrupt people's quiet lives.

He added: "By law the project has to be floodlit and it would be very noisy.

"As councillor, I tend to talk a

lot to people and I have never heard of anybody wanting another MUGA in the town. I knew it would cause trouble and it did."

At the council meeting, Mayor Robert Stanley Jones said the MUGA was considered as part of a way to improve recreational facilities for the town.

But he said the council may now approach Shepway District Council for alternative land.

He said: "Taking into account the thoughts of the inspector of The Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA), members of the committee agreed that the Rype would not be the ideal position for the MUGA.

"With this in mind I am advising that we approach Shepway District Council to request that they look at their land in Lydd to determine if they can provide a MUGA on the basis that Lydd Town Council does not have any suitable land."

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