

**County Council Meeting – 14 December 2023****Question to Councillor David Williams  
Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport****By Councillor Charlotte Atkins**

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**Question**

When and how will bus services in Staffordshire Moorlands benefit from extra money from the Government as a result of the cancellation of the northern leg of HS2?

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**Reply**

I can confirm that last week, the Department for Transport confirmed our Network North: Phase 3 BSIP funding allocation of £4,982,000 million of revenue funding to support delivery of our Bus Service Improvement Plan in 2024/25. This funding is in addition to our existing Phase 2 BSIP (BSIP+) funding allocation of £2,655,346 million that covered the period 2022/24. At the same time the government announced the BSIP+ extra funding, the previous Bus Recovery Grant payments came to an end (worth approximately £0.7M per year).

The Bus Recovery Grant (£0.7M) had been used to subsidise existing services that had become unviable as a result of passenger drop off post-covid. In addition, the funding to bus operators was changed resulting in their post-covid extra funding reducing by around 20% and more services therefore being deregistered as non-viable, which SCC have stepped in to support and maintain from the new BSIP+ funding.

In the Staffordshire Moorlands, BSIP+ funding has been allocated to introduce from February a Saturday service to route 94 alongside a new service (95) commencing on the 8th January that will serve Audley, Kidsgrove, Mow Cop, Harriseahead and Biddulph. The additional BSIP funding will enable these services and all services across the county that require subsidy to continue to at least March 2025 where it is anticipated that additional BSIP funding will be made available from the Department for Transport.

One of the challenges that we are aware that operators are facing is in relation to recruiting drivers even though hourly rates of pay have

increased. The impact of this is that operators have been unable to tender for evening and weekend enhanced services.

Alongside ensuring existing connections are maintained, the Local Bus and Community Transport Team and I welcome ideas that can be investigated for further enhancements to the Bus Network. BSIP funding expenditure will have a focus on accessibility when we are assessing local need as well as current and future provision. This funding cannot be utilised for capital expenditure for example bus stop upgrades to improve accessibility, however through our work to audit every bus stop across the county, a programme of improvements will be funded through the Capital Programme where possible.

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