

Committee: Community Committee

Agenda Item

Date: January 18, 2007

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Title: HERITAGE BUS ROUTE

Author: Councillor David Gregory

Item for decision

Summary

1. This report deals with the current position over negotiations with Blue Triangle regarding the setting up of a heritage bus route in the district.

Recommendations

2. That Members endorse the progress that is being made and that officers continue to pursue sources of funding.

Background Papers

3. None

Impact

- 4.

Communication/Consultation	Ongoing with ECC and Blue Triangle
Community Safety	None
Equalities	None
Finance	Under investigation (see report)
Human Rights	None
Legal implications	None
Ward-specific impacts	District wide
Workforce/Workplace	Staff time

Risk Analysis

5.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
None	None	None	None

Situation

6. Three years ago, the Community Committee received a presentation entitled a Classic Bus Route – A tourist attraction for Uttlesford. The current Blue Triangle proposal would be a way of putting that vision into practice on Sundays between the end of May and the end of September. Officers consider that this could become a first class tourist attraction benefiting both local residents who want a day out, visitors to Uttlesford, and the enthusiast market. It could also be a benefit to local tourist attractions and businesses such as pubs and restaurants by moving people with leisure time around Uttlesford. The District Council could provide literature for distribution on the buses, and might also be able to consider providing maps of local ‘walks’ where, for example, passengers could leave the bus and walk into Easton Manor and rejoin the bus later.
7. Some years ago with funding from ECC Blue Triangle a bus company based in Rainham, Essex, recreated a historic route (the 622) between Harlow and Braintree based on an old Hicks Bros route. This was part of the ECC Summer Sunday services. In 2006 Blue Triangle re-introduced this route together with a servicing route from Epping L T Station to Harlow and an overlapping route from Easton Lodge to Witham. This service operated on one Sunday each month and was entirely manned by volunteer crews. As well as using a selection of vehicles (RT’s, RM’s, RF’s etc from their own fleet, the Managing Director of Blue Triangle also has a wide range of contacts that own and maintain other old buses, who provided other vehicles to operate the route. A bus used this year came from the Cobham Bus Museum. This variety of vehicles adds interest to the bus enthusiast fraternity! The preserved vehicles that would be used are maintained to a standard of worthiness able to be used for fare paying passengers.
8. Consideration has been given to a number of possible routes, and an exploratory journey has taken a double deck bus from Gt Dunmow through Little Easton, Tilty, Duton Hill and Thaxted to Audley End House. A second journey went from Audley End House to Audley End Station and then into Saffron Walden via Littlebury. A third journey was then to Bishops Stortford via the Wild Life Park (Widdington) and the Toy Museum, Stansted.
9. In terms of establishing which are the practical routes, a tree branch clearance of 16 ft 6 in on all roads. This isn’t a problem on the ‘A’ and ‘B’ class roads but

the exploratory routes did identify a number of problem areas that will be discussed with the Highways Authority.

10. Blue Triangle have been looking at possible timetables and at the moment are suggesting a servicing route (double deck) from Epping to Gt Dunmow via Harlow and Hatfield Heath (3 journeys), a (single deck) journey from Chelmsford to Saffron Walden via Dunmow, Tilty and Thaxted, a (double deck) route from Gt Dunmow to Audley End House via Thaxted, Saffron Walden, Littlebury, and Audley End Station (6 journeys) and a (single deck) journey between Saffron Walden and Gt Dunmow via Radwinter, Finchingfield, Gt Bardfield and Bran End Stebbing.
11. It is proposed that fares will be charged, there will be an 'all day' ticket, and concessionary passes will be accepted. It may be possible to include the Essex Sunday Saver ticket. All services, as well as using the regular stops, will be 'hail and ride'.
12. One weakness of the routes operated this year by Blue Triangle has been publicity. Though there was a brief item in 'Buses', the enthusiasts magazine many people did not realise the buses were running through Dunmow etc this year until they went past. Subsequently timetables were supplied to the TIC desk in Gt Dunmow. At Showbus at Duxford in September some very attractive posters were available one of which has also gone to the CIC in Gt Dunmow. This is an area where Uttlesford can put in a lot of help at relevantly low cost. Certainly the route should be able to be featured together with a timetable in Uttlesford Life and on the Web Page. A 'tourist circuit leaflet' may also be able to be produced, along with publicity in the local press and other local media, even possibly having a Press Launch in somewhere like Thaxted with local T V present. At the same time the route could be promoted the route through the trade and enthusiast magazines and Websites. It might also be possible to promote it at enthusiast gatherings.
13. It is likely that the overall costs to operate this tourism opportunity will be in the region of £20,000 plus some in house publicity costs. The Council's Funding and Strategic Partnerships Officer has identified some funding that could be applied for, and it is possible that Essex County Council will include some of the costs in their Summer Sunday programme. It should be possible to have a clearer idea of costs available at the meeting. There will of course be some revenue from passengers carried.