

Canterbury District Green Party

PRESS RELEASE (DRAFT 2)

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Greens slam new park and ride scheme as a fiasco.

Empty diesel buses are environmentally damaging and a waste of money, says Green Councillor



Green Councillor Andy Harvey who calls the new park and ride scheme a waste of time and money in front of an empty park and ride bus (jpg attached to email)

The recently re-opened Canterbury Park and Ride scheme at Sturry has been criticised by Green Party Councillor, Andrew Harvey, for actually increasing congestion, air pollution and CO2 emissions—something Canterbury City Council says it is committed to improving.

Harvey was one of several Green Party activists who visited the site last week (30 April) to talk to drivers and passengers and monitor the new system in action. Greens say they witnessed four consecutive empty buses leaving the park and ride for the city centre, with no passengers aboard and bus drivers told them it always very quiet.

“How can empty diesel buses thundering up and down the Sturry Road help traffic congestion, air pollution or our CO2 emission,” says Councillor Harvey.

This is costing local residents more than £200,000 per year when the Council is supposed to be short of funding—it’s a fiasco,” he says.

Canterbury City Council, now run by Labour and the Lib Dems re-introduced the scheme on 1 April 2024 at a cost of £232,500 per year, while hiking parking charges elsewhere in the district. The move comes as part of the coalition’s wider plans to adopt what they call a “bus-first” strategy.

“What we need is a proper bus-led integrated public transport system that works for local residents—sadly that’s not what this is,” says Henry Stanton, the Green Party’s official parliamentary candidate for Canterbury.

“It’s detrimental to the environment and a complete waste of money,” he says and accuses the Labour led council of only paying lip service to genuine public concerns about environmental issues.

The driver of one double decker bus told the Greens that passenger numbers were always very low and that the maximum he carried on his 104-seater bus was about 30. Buses left the stop every eight minutes but most had no passengers aboard.

Chris and Carol Giles from Hythe were using the scheme and told Greens they liked to use park and services because the parking fees in Canterbury were “extortionate” but this is the first time they had used the Sturry scheme

“I did think this is a very big diesel bus with no-one on it, except us,” said Mr Giles.

The Greens say that the City Council should have secured hybrid or electric hopper vehicles which were trialled on the route five years ago, that it’s the wrong location, there are no cycle options and that’s it’s cheaper to use the train.

“This is actually increasing car use on busy routes where public transport options already exist,” says Harvey.

Greens also say Labour broke an election promise to make the service free for locals meaning less residents use it. Currently, local residents can only apply in advance for a discount of 80 pence on the standard £4 charge.

Their main concern is that there are more than seventy additional diesel bus journeys daily to collect passengers, all running along the Sturry Road emitting more than ten times the CO2 of the typical car, yet with generally less than six passengers on board—and often none at all.

“As it stands, it’s a disaster and it would probably be cheaper and less environmentally damaging for me to drive all the passengers into the city centre in a gas-guzzling V8 Range Rover”, says Harvey.



NOTE TO EDITORS: For further information, photos and contact details of those quoted in this press release please contact your local Green Party Press Officer, Stuart Heaver on 07921 377955 or at press@canterbury.greenparty.org.uk.