

NEWS RELEASE

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Book-a-Bus – the new, flexible transport option for rural areas



Getting around the county has become even easier with the introduction of Book-a-Bus, a new flexible, on-demand bus service launched by West Sussex County Council.

Book-a-Bus is a demand responsive transport system, which will serve the more rural areas in the county that currently have limited or no traditional bus service available. The new service will operate within set zones and offer passenger pick-up in a location closer to them and travel to their destination all for the same price as a standard bus fare, currently capped at £2 per trip until October 2023.

Book-a-Bus launches today, with the first zone encompassing the rural area between Chichester and Petworth, where two types of service will be available to passengers. The existing 99 service remains a semi-flexible service that incorporates some fixed stops and the ability to deviate within pre-defined areas and can be booked seven days in advance. The second service, called the “99 Flex”, is a fully flexible service with no conventional timetable or routes, instead operating based on the bookings it receives via the Ride Pingo app or by phone.

Three additional zones are currently being explored, all serving those communities where conventional bus travel is limited. These include rural areas north of Petworth and north-west of Chichester and villages in the Barnham, Eastergate and Westergate area not served by frequent conventional bus services. The three additional zones will operate on a fully flexible model to provide passengers with a travel option that suits their needs. While travel will be restricted to starting and ending within the same zone, there are several onward connections to travel by bus or train.

This new flexible service is part of the [Bus Service Improvement Plan](#), a county council initiative, funded by central government, that aims to make it easier and more attractive for residents and visitors to travel by bus.

Councillor Joy Dennis, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, said: "Maintaining a sustainable and prosperous economy in West Sussex is a priority for us in the council and is part of [Our Council Plan](#). Improving our transport network with better bus services supports this priority.

"The flexibility of Book-a-Bus is vital for keeping our residents in rural areas connected with their communities and to provide continued access to key services, including healthcare, education, shops, and leisure facilities. The service follows an on-demand rideshare approach, allowing for travel around popular locations at a time that's convenient for them.

"Although currently only available in areas between Chichester and Petworth, we are exploring expansion to more zones very soon."

Compass Travel Managing Director, Chris Chatfield, the operator for the first zone, said: "Book-a-Bus is a great new way to travel across the county and will give more flexibility to the county's residents and visitors.

"Ensuring the ease of travel for our passengers is a priority for us. Our buses are fully accessible with low-floor access and a designated space for wheelchairs on board. Our drivers are highly trained and can offer extra support at pick-up points and at the destination."

To "Book-a-Bus", download the Ride Pingo app or call our call centre at 01243 858854. Bookings for the fully flexible service can be made for up to five passengers per trip subject to availability. Anyone can use the service, anytime between 7.00am to 7.00pm, Monday through Saturday excluding Bank Holidays.

For more information on Book-a-Bus, visit www.westsussex.gov.uk/book-a-bus

Notes to Editors:

You are invited to the launch event and bus demo on Monday 7 August 2023, at 11am -1pm at Leconfield Hall, where you'll be able to meet the people who will be operating services in the Petworth area. Let us know if you intend to join or would like to do interviews and we will share further event details and arrange this for you.

ENDS

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