

VORBAL REPORT

Mr M Fittock
41 Crescent Gardens
Swanley
Kent BR8 7HE

Sustainable Transport Team
Kent Highways Service
Kent County Council
Invicta House
County Hall
MAIDSTONE
Kent ME14 1XX

Tel : 01622 696943
Ask for : Paul Lulham
Email : paul.lulham@kent.gov.uk
Date : 29th January 2009

Dear Mr Fittock

Re: Changes to Arriva Service 476

Thank you for your letter to my colleague Aziz Jiwaji regarding the recent changes to bus services in Dartford and Swanley, which has been brought to the attention of the Sustainable Transport Team at Kent Highway Services.

Route 423 between Swanley, Dartford and New Ash Green is operated on an almost wholly commercial basis by Arriva Southern Counties. Of the 11 services currently operated between Swanley High Street and Dartford Rail Station on Mondays to Fridays in each direction, three receive financial support from Kent County Council (KCC). The recently withdrawn Route 476 between Swanley, Dartford and Bluewater via the Darent Valley Hospital, was operated on a wholly commercial basis on the section of route between Dartford and the Darent Valley Hospital. KCC is therefore under no obligation to provide a replacement service in the light of Arriva Southern Counties' recent decision to remove direct services between Swanley and the Darent Valley Hospital.

Whilst I share your concern that these changes have reduced the public transport options available between Swanley and the Darent Valley Hospital, I wish to draw your attention to Route 477, operated by Arriva Southern Counties, which continues to provide a direct service between Swanley and the Hospital, also on an almost wholly commercial basis. Route 477 operates on a 30 minute frequency between the hours of 0700 and 1900 on Mondays to Saturdays and an hourly frequency between the hours of 1000 and 1900 on Sundays. It is therefore inaccurate to suggest that passengers from Swanley must now change at Dartford in order to access the Darent Valley Hospital. It would also be misleading to claim that Arriva Southern Counties have benefited significantly from increased concessionary reimbursement on alternative routes since the withdrawal of Route 476, for the same reasons.

I would also like to draw your attention to the North West Kent Dial-a-Ride service, operated on behalf of KCC, which provides an alternative means of transport for local residents who find it difficult to access conventional bus services. The Dial-a-Ride service offers access to nearby shops and medical facilities for people who have a medical condition that makes travelling on public transport difficult or who live in an area more than 500 metres from a

conventional bus route. The North West Kent Dial-a-Ride provides door-to-door services throughout Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley, including the Darent Valley Hospital, between the hours of 0800 and 1800 on Mondays to Fridays and between 0900 and 1800 on Saturdays and Sundays.

In order to register for the North West Kent Dial-a-Ride, intending users must complete an application form which can be obtained by calling 01622 605349. Once this has been received and processed, members are free to book their place on the service. Journeys must be booked at least one day in advance and a standard flat fare, single or return, will be charged at the time of travel.

I hope this information proves useful to you. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Paul Lulham
Public Transport Planner