

Age Concern

Presented by: - Sue Butler-Cole – Exeter Age Concern and Exeter Senior Voice

Background

Ms Butler-Cole was speaking on behalf of frail elderly people based in Exeter. The information presented in this paper was based upon surveys and associated feedback from this group.

Key Issues Highlighted: -

1. Buses

There are **too many buses** in the High Street.

This results in:

- Making crossing the road hazardous.
- Many of the elderly struggle with the effects of heightened emissions especially when buses are idling.

2. There are **not enough bus services crossing the city (as opposed to radial routes).**

- Changing buses to reach services deters the elderly from using public transport.
- A further deterrent was paying for journeys a number of times.

3. Low floor buses

A great improvement - although their benefits are neutralised by the inability of drivers to park by the curb side due to illegal parking at bus stops. Effective enforcement of bus priority measures is therefore important.

4. Drivers' awareness

Knowledge of the requirements of the elderly has improved due to awareness training. However not all new drivers/ relief drivers receive this training.

5. Bus Design

Stopping bells are not always easy to reach.

6. Bus Shelters

Location

The distances between the bus shelters are too great.

Design of bus shelters

- Many of the elderly find it hard to stand for long periods of time and many of the bus shelters have seats that are too high or do not offer sufficient support.
- The design of most bus shelters offer protection against the rain but they do not offer any protection against the wind, a major problem and deterrent for the elderly.
- Timetable fonts need to be at least 16-point format to be easily legible for the elderly.

7. Trains

Provision of support services

- Ability to book support services increase trains accessibility to the elderly. However cancellations/ delays of trains can result in missing the services at the stations and the elderly are left stranded.
- Many of the elderly require extra facilities on the trains (Wheel chairs etc) but many trains do not have adequate facilities for wheel chair provision.
- Overcrowding on trains is particularly difficult on the elderly.

8. Behaviour on trains

There is an increasing concern regarding anti social behaviour on trains.

9. Taxis

Many of the elderly rely heavily on taxis. The wheelchair-adapted taxis offer an excellent service and increase access to many services. However the elderly do encounter problems: -

- It is required to book taxis 24 hours in advance – this restricts spontaneous use.
- Some drivers are poorly trained in how to set up ramps etc.

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- Attitude- many drivers are aware of the needs of the elderly and are very courteous - however not all drivers are so helpful.
- Fares for the same journey vary between firms.

10. Community Schemes

Community schemes such as Shopmobility and League of Friends are a vital service. Without these schemes a greater pressure would be placed on social services.

11. Street Furniture

Street furniture provides excellent rest places for the elderly. However there are those who find street furniture difficult and find too much street furniture hazardous.

12. Road Layout

There has been varying responses to gradient ramps on the roads. For many it has been welcomed and improved access. However there are those who find it increases the risk of falling (Especially those with sight/ depth problems).

13. Access

Social Isolation

The elderly are especially susceptible to social isolation. Reduced ability to travel results in an increased dependence on social services and the health service.

14. Station Design

The layout of Paris street bus station and Central train station results in access difficulties for the elderly.

15. Getting About

When walking many of the elderly are particularly concerned about skateboarders and cyclists using the pavements. Many cannot see/ hear their approach, this causes great anxiety.

16. Consultation

Greater emphasis must be placed on consultation with the elderly and associations representing the elderly.

Recommendations For Next DLTP (2006-2011)

1. Buses

- Reduce the number of buses in the High Street.
- Have more bus routes travelling across the City.
- Introduce through ticketing schemes.
- Have stricter regulation of illegal parking in bus stops.
- Make elderly awareness part of basic training.
- Ensure that stopping bells are easy to access.

The Panel noted that there has been a marked increase in drivers' awareness of the requirements of the elderly as a result of driver awareness training.

2. Bus Shelters

- Redesign the bus shelters to be more suitable for the elderly.
- Shorter distances between bus stops.

3. Trains

Investigate the provision of extra facility/ services on trains and platforms.

4. Taxis

- Investigate reducing the reservation time from 24hrs.
- Better driver training – ramps etc.

5. Community Services

Further / increase support for community schemes.

6. Street Furniture

Ensure street furniture suitable designed for the elderly.

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5. Road Layout

Address the problem that sight impaired elderly have with gradient ramps.

6. Access

Address the physical access issues in / around Paris Street Bus Station and Exeter Central Train Station.

9. Getting about

Stricter deterrents preventing skateboarders and cyclists using pavements

10. Consultation

Greater consultation with elderly groups.

Handouts

The following papers were circulated by Sue Butler-Cole:-

- **Key points From Age Concern Exeter**
- **Exeter Senior Voice – ‘Transport Extra**

Panel Discussion: -

- For the elderly the main priorities for the next DLTP are to include better co-ordination of services and service reliability.
- Information to changes in travel information has to be supplied in a variety of media to ensure that this information reaches the maximum number of people.
- The DLTP needs to recognise and provide for Devons ageing demographic. These problems will become more prominent in the future as the proportion of frail and elderly people in the population increases.