

Life in the Bus Lane

Autumn 2003 Newsletter

"Life in the Bus Lane" has been chosen to test out merging the transport smartcard with the Government's Connexions Card in an exciting national pilot scheme!

This means that one card - the Smartrider/Connexions Card - will be used for Connexions and for transport to and from college.

Have you applied for your new Smartrider/Connexions Card yet? If not, you could be missing out on all kinds of free rewards including chart topping ringtones, 50% off National Express coach trips and much, much more!

There are also over 6,000 discounts on offer throughout England. All you need to do is show your Card at places like Top Shop, Top Man, UCI Cinemas and BSM to get some great deals. Locally, to name just a few, stores like Up Front Records, SnV, Private Collection, Trawlers and J & A Cameras all offer discounts to Connexions Card Holders.

Any student aged 16 - 19 can apply for a free Connexions Card, though some students up to 25 may qualify. If you become a card holder, your college will set you a target attendance figure for the week. If you reach that figure you automatically rack up 100 points on your personal Connexions Card account. You can then redeem your points for a wide range of rewards and exciting experiences. It's as simple as that! To get you started you even get 100 points free!

The website www.connexionscard.com is packed with information about careers and courses - it will also help you to create a job-winning CV. If you can't find the help you need on the website there is also a free Helpline on 0808 172 3333.

Swapping Smartcards

Students at North Devon College, and sixth form students at Bideford and Ilfracombe Colleges were issued with "Life in the Bus Lane" smartcards as usual this autumn term.

From early November these "Life in the Bus Lane" smartcards will be exchanged for new Smartrider/Connexions Cards which will be used for bus transport and for collecting Connexions points for attendance at college. Most students with "Life in the Bus Lane" smartcards have applied for a Connexions Card.



However, if you are one of the few that haven't, please contact Marcia Clayton on 01271 338184 or call into the Travel Centre in A23 at North Devon College as soon as possible.

Students with "Life in the Bus Lane" smartcards will be sent a letter telling them when to come and swap their old cards for their new Smartrider/Connexions Card. **Please make sure you come to do this as the "Life in the Bus Lane" cards will expire on 31 December 2003!**

The new Smartrider/Connexions Card shown above has a colour photograph and a date of birth on the front so that it can be used as a proof of age card. It also has an expiry date. However, this expiry date relates to the Connexions Card and not the transport provision. The card will be valid for transport until 31 July 2004. Students who wish to return to college in September 2004 will need to reapply for their transport as usual.

Although any student aged 16 - 19 can apply for a Connexions Card, only the cards with the Smartrider logo on the reverse will be valid for bus travel to and from college.

Under 3 Mile Smartcards

Students living less than three miles from college can also purchase a smartcard. The cost is £125 for the year and is paid to "First". There is no fee waiver for these cards. However, these smartcards provide the same benefits as smartcards for students who live more than three miles away. If you would like to apply for a smartcard please contact Marcia Clayton on 01271 338184.

College Travel Co-ordinator

Marcia Clayton, the College Travel Co-ordinator, is situated in the Travel Centre (A23) at North Devon College. If you have any problems connected with transport Marcia should be your first contact and she will do her best to help. You can also contact her on 01271 338184.

Don't Forget Your Smartcard!!!

Some students are forgetting to carry their smartcards! Many bus drivers have been allowing the students to travel in to college, whilst warning them they need to obtain a temporary permit to get home. Temporary permits are not intended for this purpose and drivers are being instructed not to carry students in to college without a smartcard. **However, in an emergency they will carry students home to avoid any student being stranded.** Therefore please ensure that you have your smartcard each morning before you leave home. **If you do not carry your smartcard you will have to pay for your bus journey.**

If your card fails to work on the bus, the bus driver may confiscate it to make sure it is repaired. If this happens ask the driver for an unpaid ticket, which you should take to the Travel Centre in A23 at North Devon College as early as possible in the day. Temporary permits, for use until the card is returned, will then be available for collection at the end of the college day, at 4.15 pm. Students at Bideford and Ilfracombe College should go to their admin office for assistance.



"Life in the Bus Lane" Travel Audits

Each March, for the last three years, a travel questionnaire was sent to all full time students at North Devon College, and the sixth form students at Ilfracombe and Bideford Colleges. The results from the questionnaires have provided useful information on student travel patterns and have been used to produce a Travel Audit and Report for the "Life in the Bus Lane" project.

A similar audit will be carried out in February 2004. Although at first glance the questionnaire seems quite lengthy, it really only takes a few minutes to complete and the information provided helps to improve the transport service for students. The first page of the questionnaire will contain the student's name, which will be entered into a prize draw for £25 of gift vouchers from a local store. So please spare a few minutes of your time to complete the questionnaire - you may be the lucky winner!

Transport Focus Group

If you would like the opportunity to discuss any problems you are having with your transport, or to suggest any ideas you may have for improving the bus services, then you may be interested in joining the Student Transport Focus Group. This Group meets once a term, usually with a representative from "First" who will answer any queries you may have. If you would be interested in joining the group please call into the Travel Centre in A23 and have a chat with Marcia, the College Travel Co-ordinator.

Retail Discounts

Don't forget you can use your "Life in the Bus Lane" smartcard to obtain retail discounts from over 80 local businesses until 31 December 2003. After that use the Smartrider/Connexions Card with the Smartrider logo. Call into the Travel Centre at North Devon College for a copy of the leaflet which tells you all about these discounts. The businesses listed in the leaflet all provide discounts to holders of Connexions Cards with the Smartrider logo on the reverse. Some of the businesses also provide discounts to any Connexions Card holder - log onto www.connexionscard.com for more details. Please give your business to these retailers, who have been kind enough to offer their support to the "Life in the Bus Lane" project. By doing so you will be helping to support the local economy.

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