

22.04.25

12 Deputy R.J. Ward of the Minister for Infrastructure regarding the £20 bus pass for under 19s (OQ.67/2022)

Will the Minister state the current uptake of the under-19s bus pass scheme and outline what work, if any, is currently being undertaken to review the scheme and the success of its implementation?

Deputy K.C. Lewis (The Minister for Infrastructure):

There has been a good uptake of the Avanchi18 card launched on 21st March, which has now been operating successfully for 5 weeks. The total number of Avanchi18 cards issued as of 8.30 a.m. this morning stands at 2,280 with a further 19 to be processed. **[Approbation]** In accordance with the Deputy's amendment to the Government Plan, a review of this scheme will be presented to the Assembly by the end of September.

3.12.1 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can I ask the Minister, given that we are dealing with young people here, what work has been undertaken to find the most appropriate method of communication with young people to genuinely get their voice in the success or not of this scheme? Because it is a very distinct thing that we have to do there and I think engagement with the Assembly, for example, has shown that we have to think of other methods of engagement.

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Indeed, LibertyBus has been extensively promoting the Avanchi18 cards and, as I say, the take-up speaks for itself. It has been very successful, as it has only been going 5 weeks, the roll-out continues.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Sorry, the question was about what methods for the review not to take up the review. I think I made the question very clear in terms of what unique methods for young people will be taken for reviewing the success or not. Sorry to be pedantic but that is my job.

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

But the review will be obviously in the uptake and obviously the students will be interviewed whether they are happy with the way things are running. As I say, this will be reviewed by September. I do not have an actual list of what will be requested of people but I know that LibertyBus are promoting it, Infrastructure are promoting it, and I think schools are doing likewise.

3.12.2 Deputy K.F. Morel:

I am heartened to hear of the successful take-up so far. But I was wondering if the Minister could advise the Assembly as to why the decision was taken, rather than rolling over existing bus passes, which many students who were already using the buses had, the decision was taken to require students to go to the bus station in person with identification to pay the money and often, therefore, having to take their parents, essentially making it more difficult to get the new bus pass. I was wondering if he could advise as to why that decision was taken.

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

It is a relatively simple process, it just needs the person processed in person because they need a new photograph taken. It is a new card and they need to be identified - either a passport or a National Insurance number - just so we can establish it is them. Because obviously it applies to people of 18 years of age and under and as the situation stands that will expire when they are 19. The age is quite crucial to be checked but it is a relatively simple process.

3.12.3 Senator S.Y. Mézec:

Does not the massive uptake of this scheme already demonstrate what a success it has been? On that basis, does the Minister regret his opposition to it when it was first proposed and accept that a future for our bus service is to expand schemes like this in the future?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I was opposed to it because I did not have the money and I have introduced many things myself besides the senior citizens' pass. We have had the disability pass and the disability carers' pass, which I introduced last year. We are all on the same track, I believe.

3.12.4 Senator S.Y. Mézec:

I guess my question is: what is next? He has just listed 3 previous bus passes that were introduced. This scheme has quite clearly been a success, who would he like to see it expanded out to next?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

There is not much further to go. I would like to see an expansion of the student bus service generally. I would like to see more young people on the buses and indeed more people generally on the buses to cut down our carbon footprint on the Island. I would like to see the bus service expand. As I say, the amount of people that are paying at the moment is reducing, so we will need greater subsidies if we go down this road; no pun intended.

3.12.5 Deputy M. Tadier:

The Minister will be aware, he has listed some already, that there is a disability bus pass, there is also something called a throughfare, which I know that many people have been taking benefit of, which means that you can get from one part of the Island to any other part of the Island for just £1.75 with your AvanchiCard. There is also now this great scheme which we found out has already raised £46,000 for LibertyBus but, more importantly, it has given young people the ability to have unlimited bus travel service throughout the whole year. Does the Minister agree that these 3 Reform Jersey policy initiatives could be built on in the next Government if we have the right Minister in charge to make sure that all sections of our society have affordable and very accessible bus passes of this nature to get them out of their cars where possible and to get them using sustainable and active transport and travel?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I do believe that the correct Minister is in charge at the moment; that is why he brought in the carers' pass. There is more work to be done, absolutely, and, as I say, I would like to see an expansion of the bus service further north, south, east and west to really cover the whole Island and get as many cars off the road as we possibly can and more people on to public transport. We have all seen the recent statistics regards the population, so I cannot build more roads wearing my other hat as Infrastructure. We need to get as many people as we can on to the buses and whatever that takes.

Deputy M. Tadier:

I will let the Minister off this time, Sir, no supplementary.

The Bailiff:

Final supplementary, Deputy Ward. Sorry, I beg your pardon, I have the Connétable of St. John indicating a desire to ask a question; that will be the last before the final supplementary.

[11:15]

3.12.6 The Connétable of St. John:

The Minister said that both Liberty and I.H.E. (Infrastructure, Housing and Environment) are promoting the scheme. Can the Minister explain to us why the scheme is not promoted on the buses themselves? I would have thought that would have been a good place to start.

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I believe it is promoted at the bus station where people get on the bus and because of all the electronic screens at the bus station, and I believe it is promoted in schools as well.

3.12.7 The Connétable of St. John:

Would the Minister agree with me that people like me do not use the bus station on all of our journeys, we sometimes get off in the Parade and go down Broad Street? Using the buses to promote the scheme would be a good thing to do in my opinion, would he agree?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Indeed, I will point that out to LibertyBus who control on-bus advertising.

3.12.8 Deputy R.J. Ward:

I will return to the point about consultation with young people and listening to their voices as to the success or not of this scheme. Can I urge the Minister, can I ask him to really take that seriously and find a way of engaging directly with young people to find out whether this was a success or not? I will make the point to the Minister that it is an absolute bargain, probably the cost of about one or 2 consultants.

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I would agree with the Deputy. It had to happen one day, it is an absolute bargain, absolutely; £20 for a year. Anybody listening now I will promote it even now, that if you are under the age of 18, 18 and under, go along to the bus service with I.D. (identification), passport or National Insurance card, and secure your student bus pass. It is not just for school buses, it applies to any bus.