

**Friends of the 65 Bus**

**Passenger Feedback Survey Report**

**(November 2023)**

## **CONTENTS**

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Results Summary - Key Points</b>	<b>Page 3</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Some Conclusions</b>	<b>Page 4</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Results in Detail</b>	<b>Page 5</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Appendix – Comparison Tables for 2020 and 2023</b>	<b>Page 11</b>

# 65 Bus - Passenger Feedback Survey Report

## 1 Introduction

With the aim of gaining a better understanding of when and why our passengers use the 65 Bus, Friends of the 65 Bus undertook a feedback survey of passengers over a period of two weeks (Monday 23 October – Friday 3 November 2023). This was administered in 2 ways: via an online survey on the Friends of the 65 Bus Facebook page; and via face-to-face questionnaires with passengers travelling on the bus.

100 passengers of the 65 Bus completed our survey - 37 online and 63 face-to-face.

## 2 Results Summary – Key Points

### 2.1 Frequency of use

- Over half of passengers surveyed use the 65 Bus more than once a week; 15% use it on a daily basis.

### 2.2 Nature of the journey

- The most frequent points on the route where passengers surveyed *begin their journey* are: The Narth, Penallt, Devauden, Trellech and Chepstow, accounting for 81% of the total in our survey.
- The large majority of passengers surveyed cited their *most frequent destination* at *either end* of the route – Monmouth or Chepstow, but there were a small number of passengers (7%) with a different *regular* destination. However, a significant number of passengers do also use the bus to access medical appointments, visit family or access a countryside walk on the route.

### 2.3 Passenger status

- Almost two thirds of passengers surveyed hold a Bus Pass, and only just over half of passengers have access to a car.

### 2.4 Purpose of Travel

- It is evident that people make use of the 65 Bus for a wide variety of purposes (*detailed below – Question 7*). The most frequently cited (69%) is shopping, and around half of those surveyed use the Bus to access services, meet up with friends/family or go out for a meal/drink. A significant percentage use the Bus to go to/return from work (16%) or school (17%).

### 2.5 Why people choose to travel by the 65 Bus

As noted below (*Question 6*), many passengers have made a positive choice to use the 65 Bus, even if they have access to a car. A variety of reasons were put forward, the major ones being:

- Environmental
- More convenient

- They have limited access to a car in their household
- Social interaction
- Cheaper than driving
- Enjoy the journey and scenery, and the friendly service
- Independence (particularly for young people using the service)

## 2.6 What would encourage people to use the 65 Bus more often?

- Improvements in the frequency of service was, once again, the top answer to this question – cited by over a third of those surveyed. Some respondents mentioned the desirability of a Sunday Service and a later service during the week.
- Better connections with other bus routes and trains
- Greater reliability e.g. fewer breakdowns
- If they become unable to drive at all
- Cost of fuel

## 2.7 Suggestions/Comments

See below (*Question 9*) for full details of these.

- *Suggestions* – the majority related to the desire for **increased frequency** of the service. Some of those surveyed made a plea for a **modern, comfortable bus** for the whole day, such as the electric bus that runs the afternoon service. Others suggested that the bus could be **better promoted** – to visitors, local people and walkers. There was a general plea to **maintain the high quality** of the service and the **excellent drivers**.
- *Comments* were, without exception, very positive and reflected passengers' reasons for choosing to use the 65 Bus.

## 3 Some Conclusions

It is evident that passengers highly value the 65 Bus service and the quality of its drivers. It forms an essential link for the villages between Monmouth and Chepstow. It is an attractive route that makes the bus journey a pleasure in itself, especially on the regular service vehicles, including the electric bus.

Many people rely on it as their **only** means to go shopping, accessing services, work and education, and meeting others – either on the bus or at a destination on the route. It helps prevent social isolation of senior citizens, enables elderly people who live alone, without access to a car, to maintain their independence, and offers independent travel and life opportunities to young people. **Quality of life**, it seems from our survey, is improved through the existence of the 65 Bus.

For those that could opt to drive, but choose to use public transport, it keeps cars off the roads and out of town centres, meeting more than one environmental objective – minimising the negative effect of vehicle emissions on climate change and improving air quality in urban areas.

The economic benefit is also apparent, as the 65 Bus allows access to shops and services in Chepstow and Monmouth, and also in some of the villages on the route. As only slightly over half of the people surveyed have access to a car, their contribution would be lost to the local economy in Monmouthshire.

Many respondents made a plea for a more frequent service, whilst recognising that the logistics and cost of this would make it difficult to meet this need. However, this groundswell of opinion highlights the need for a greater level of bus services in rural communities, rather than any reduction. Any reduction in service, particularly at the beginning or end of the day, or on a Saturday, would result in the loss of many existing passengers, including those who are economically active.

Finally, some respondents highlighted the fact that bus services in general, and the 65 Bus in particular, are not promoted as a preferred method of travel. Train services are not available to residents in many parts of Monmouthshire, whilst buses can access passengers in many rural villages that are otherwise isolated. There are many opportunities for walking, including walking dogs, along the route and the public footpath network offers many linear walks that using the bus would make possible. This could be marketed to residents and also to tourists and would be an opportunity to increase income thorough an increase in passenger numbers. Intuitively, through undertaking this survey 3 years on from our survey in early 2020, 65 Bus passenger numbers have increased over that period, and individual passengers are using the Bus for a wider variety of purposes.

See Appendix for a comparison of the 2020 and 2023 Passenger Survey results.

## 4 Results in Detail

### Q1 How often do you use the 65 Bus?

Frequency	Number/%
Daily	15
More than once a week	38
Once a week	20
At least once a month	17
Less than once a month	9
Less than twice a year	1
	100

### Q2 When you use the 65 Bus, where do you usually start your outward journey?

	Number/%
The Narth	23
Penallt	16
Devauden	16
Trellech	14
Chepstow	12
Llanishen	8
Itton	5
Monmouth	4
Lydart	2
	100

**Q3. What is your most frequent destination?**

	No
Chepstow	24
Monmouth	69
Other (see below)	7
The Narth (2)	
Trellech (2)	
Devauden (1)	
Penallt (1)	
Llanishen (1)	

**Q4 Do you have a bus pass?**

Yes 60%  
No 40%

**Q5. Do you have access to a car?**

Yes 56%  
No 44%

**Q6. Why do you *choose* to travel by the 65 Bus, rather than by other means of transport?**

With just over a half of passengers surveyed stating that they have access to a car, but make a positive choice to use the 65 Bus, it was interesting to note their reasons for choosing this means of transport. A number of reasons were stated by respondents, with many giving more than one. The main reasons put forward were:

- Environmental (17)
- More convenient – just as quick as driving and no issues with parking etc. (17)
- They have limited access to a car in their household (15)
- Social interaction (8)
- Lack of confidence in driving, especially the elderly (6)
- Cheaper than driving (9)
- Enjoy the journey and scenery, and the friendly service (5)
- Independence (particularly for young people) (9)
- To support the continuation of the service (7)

Some sample quotes:

*“Environmental reasons - I cannot justify driving a car where there is a good public service alternative”*

*“Cheaper, environmentally friendly, convenient (especially if taking one-way journeys) and avoids parking difficulties at destinations.”*

Friends of the 65 Bus  
November 2023

*"I often meet people on the bus. It is more convenient to go on the bus and I love the bus ride."*

*"I don't like to drive if I can help it. I like to see people"*

*"I find it more relaxing and also think that public transport is a more sustainable option than using a private vehicle. Plus there are people in rural communities who are, or become, dependent on public transport. "*

*"I am elderly and prefer not to drive on the narrow lanes if possible, especially in winter. Also, it saves me costs and, of course, reduces CO2 emissions."*

*"I am 13 years old and the bus helps me get to Monmouth to see my friends and go to the gym."*

*"Need to travel home from school evening clubs."*

*"Can't drive so rely on parents for general transport.....travelling on the bus gives me the freedom and independence to travel when I need to."*

*"I don't drive and rely on lifts or this vital bus service otherwise I wouldn't be able to get to college."*

*"Car is shared and not always available. I have to visit the doctor's surgery regularly..... and could not do that without the 65 bus"*

*"A convenient service and we must keep rural bus services for all."*

*"To travel with others and be part of the 65 bus community"*

*"The 65 bus is a lifeline for lots of people. We are trying our hardest to keep it running. To help the environment and people who rely on the bus service. Also it's a joy to travel on the 65. The drivers are amazing. We class them as friends. We are able to make sure people are ok if we haven't seen them on the bus for a while."*

**Q7. What are your main purposes in using the 65 Bus? (select all that apply)**

	No/%
Shopping	69
Meeting up with friends/family in town	52
Going out for a meal/drink	49
Accessing services e.g. doctor/dentist/bank/library	45
Connecting with other buses/train	35
Just visiting a town or village on the route	25
Going to the start of a countryside walk/returning from a walk	23
Going to/returning from school/college	17
Going to/returning from work	16
Visiting friends/family at their home	3
Other (please specify below)	
Gym/sports	3
Visiting church & graveyard	1
To and from the garage	1

### **Q8. Is there anything that would make you likely to use the 65 Bus more often?**

The vast majority of people (36) out of those (55) who answered this question cited the **frequency of service**. It is apparent that this is an issue that affects the use of the 65 Bus, including for those who use it to go to/from work.

- **More frequent service**, including suggestions that:
  - there is a later bus in the afternoon/evening buses
  - there is a Sunday Service

*“Frequency/ later service - but recognise not cost efficient and I really value the current service as a lifeline that allows me to continue to live rurally - I couldn’t live and work in Trellech without this service.”*

*“More frequent or better times e.g. early to Chepstow to get bus to Bristol for work”*

*“I would like a more regular service. I usually use the bus in the morning because there are more services available to get home after the shopping/dentist/haircut.”*

*“More frequent services - as using the bus usually means either a rushed shopping trip or a long wait. Times aren't always convenient, eg for medical appointments..”*

- **Better connections**

*“Improved timetable, better links with Hereford and Abergavenny buses, later services returning from Monmouth and Chepstow.”*

*“I would also use the bus into Chepstow to connect with the train if the timings were more coordinated between the services, although the walk from the station to the bus stop is also a problem ..”*

- **Future inability to drive**

*“If I couldn't drive, it would be my lifeline”*

*“If I have to give up driving altogether”*

*“In due course the bus would be a lifeline as a senior citizen”*

### **Q9 Do you have any other comments/suggestions?**

Almost all passengers who completed the survey took this opportunity to make comments or suggestions about the 65 Bus. Without exception, everyone was very positive.

Where **suggestions** were made, they related to:

- The desire for **increased frequency** of service. For example:



Friends of the 65 Bus  
November 2023

*"To encourage more people out of their cars and on to the buses, you need more frequent services - not less."*

*"I would be happy to use the bus more often, for environmental reasons as well as convenience, if there were more options on bus times, but I realise this isn't likely! "*

*"Please add service at night until 10pm, so people who go back from work can go home safely (e.g. for care workers). Because of transport difficulties, people don't want to come to this area. We need more bus services."*

- Better **promotion** for the bus – to visitors and residents.

*"It is a shame the 65 bus does not seem to be promoted to visitors and walkers - reasonably quick, convenient, environmentally sensible, and you are not having to sort out parking in an unfamiliar place. And of course, amazing views!"*

*"Market the bus better - many unaware of its existence."*

- More **bus stops**

Passengers' **comments** covered the following positive features:

- **Good service and important resource**
- **Convenience**
- **Environmental benefits and contribution to climate change agenda**
- **Pleasure in the scenic route**
- **Friendly and helpful drivers**
- **Encourages social interactions**
- **Cost effective**

Typical **comments**:

*"Invaluable service to enable me to access shops and meet other people."*

*"An excellent service to connect all the villages between Monmouth and Chepstow."*

*"This is my only source of transport and I value the service - thank you."*

*"Essential for medical appointments for non-drivers."*

*"No hassle of parking, environmentally friendly, reliable service."*

*"Please keep the bus running. I would be lost without it. I love going on the bus and the drivers are all so friendly. I see more of the countryside from the bus."*

*"As I am unable to drive, using the bus plays a big part of my life! and many other people in outlying villages! Young and old! Many school pupils use it for after school activities."*

*"A vital service for elderly people. Mental health may suffer if service reduced"*

*'Friendly passengers. Hope the 65 keeps running please!'*

*The drivers are very helpful & the buses are reliable. I will be using the bus more often as I approach 80yrs old. Without the bus, I would have to rely more often on neighbours and friends"*

*"The 65 Bus is an institution and supports older and younger generations. Staff are always helpful and professional. Should be aimed at the middle generation and visitors."*

*"Amazing drivers that always deliver exceptional customer service."*

*"I am setting up a footpath group in Llanishen and hope that eventually we will work out some walks from the village along the 65 route. Thank you for working so hard to keep the service going."*

*"We look forward to our 65 bus trips. It's a joy travelling with the great bus drivers and passengers. We would be cut off without it. Please let's keep it going."*

*"The driver is really friendly and helpful. I feel **safe** using the bus."*

*"It is hard for rural teens to access post 16 education as it is. If this service were reduced or cut, it would become even more difficult."*

*"65 Bus is a great service with excellent drivers. It is essential for many people who do not have access to a car. For those with a car, it keeps cars out of Monmouth and provides a greener way to travel."*

*"All rural buses are extremely important to the communities they serve and the 65 is a very good example. It provides an essential service to the people who live in the villages between Monmouth and Chepstow."*

## APPENDIX

### Comparison Tables for 2020 and 2023

#### Q1 How often do you use the 65 Bus?

Frequency	% Jan 2020	% Nov 2023
Daily	9	15
More than once a week	42	38
Once a week	16	20
At least once a month	19	17
Less than once a month	12	9
Less than twice a year	2	1
	100	100

#### Q2 When you use the 65 Bus, where do you usually start your outward journey?

	% Jan 2020	% Nov 2023
The Narth	24	23
Penallt	11	16
Devauden	4	16
Trellech	11	14
Chepstow	15	12
Llanishen	9	8
Itton	2	5
Monmouth	18	4
Lydart	2	2
Cobbler's Plain	4	
	100	100

#### Q3. What is your most frequent destination?

	% Jan 2020	% Nov 2023
Chepstow	30	24
Monmouth	59	69
Other (see below)	11	7
	Devauden The Narth Chepstow Hospital Trellech	The Narth Trellech Devauden Penallt Llanishen

**Q4 Do you have a bus pass?**

	<b>% 2020</b>	<b>% 2023</b>
Yes	61	60
No	39	40

**Q5. Do you have access to a car?**

	<b>% 2020</b>	<b>% 2023</b>
Yes	68	56
No	32	44

**Q7. What are your main purposes in using the 65 Bus? (select all that apply)**

	<b>% 2020</b>	<b>% 2023</b>
Shopping	67	69
Meeting up with friends/family in town	44	52
Going out for a meal/drink	30	49
Accessing services e.g. doctor/dentist/bank/library	37	45
Connecting with other buses/train	5	35
Just visiting a town or village on the route	7	25
Going to the start of a countryside walk/returning from a walk	12	23
Going to/returning from school/college	11	17
Going to/returning from work	14	16
Visiting friends/family at their home	9	3

In 2023, individual passengers are using the 65 Bus for a wider variety of purposes, most notably:

- Connecting with other buses/train
- Going out for a meal/drink
- Visiting a town or village on the route
- Countryside walks
- Going to/returning from school/college (including after-school activities)