

Developing the Daffodil Line

Stakeholders Report
October 2023



Prepared By:

Martyn Evans

Professor Les Lumsdon

Clare Stone

Buses4Us CIC

Email: info@Buses4us.org

Tel: 07766 496210



Public Transport for
People, Places & Planet

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Summary

In February 2022 bus services between Ross, Newent, and Ledbury were axed amidst much public outcry.

Focussed through the Buses4Us Community Action Group (now CIC), local councils, businesses, and individuals came together to own the problem and devise a solution.

After a year of research, planning, and fundraising the new 232 Daffodil Line was launched in April 2023.

The new service seeks to deliver benefits for:

- **People:** to enhance physical, mental and financial wellbeing through improved access to employment, educational, social, and leisure opportunities.
- **Places:** to enable access to our towns and villages for more customers, staff, visitors, and community members. Particularly to showcase our area as a sustainable tourism destination and foster community engagement with local organisations, events, and businesses.
- **Planet:** to facilitate the modal shift from private car to public transport journeys in our area, reducing CO2 emissions, particle pollution road congestion and potholes!

This is a new community bus service and as such is likely to take 3 years to achieve its full potential, in terms of both revenue and social benefit generation.

Buses4Us has set out to work with stakeholders to provide the service with the financial, administrative and promotional support it needs to succeed over that three-year period.

In terms of finance, this means that we aim to secure full funding for each year in advance, in order to enter into a new one-year contract with the bus operator and provide passengers with confidence in the continuity of the service.

The cost of running the service for year 2 will be £179,000. £120,000 of this amount is already secured through County council contributions and year 1 ticket revenue carried forward. This leaves a £59,000 funding gap to bridge.

To help bridge that gap we would like to suggest the following reduced year-two funding contributions from town councils:

- **Ross Town Council £17.300** (year 1, £26,000)
- **Ledbury Town Council £16,000** (year 1, £24,000)
- **Newent Town Council £10.000** (year 1, £15,000)

Contributions from parish councils will be sought at a similar level and the remainder of the funding gap will be bridged through grant funding, donations, and business sponsorship.

This report details progress to date and future plans for the service.

Impacts - First 6 Months

- 20,914 passengers carried.
- 1,040 trips completed, with only 3 missed.
- 6,300 private car journeys saved.
- £405,000 passenger spend in local businesses. (£38.80 average)
- 300% increase in kids travel with "Free Kids" in August
- 37% of operating costs covered by ticket and concessionary revenue (average for rural bus services - 30%)

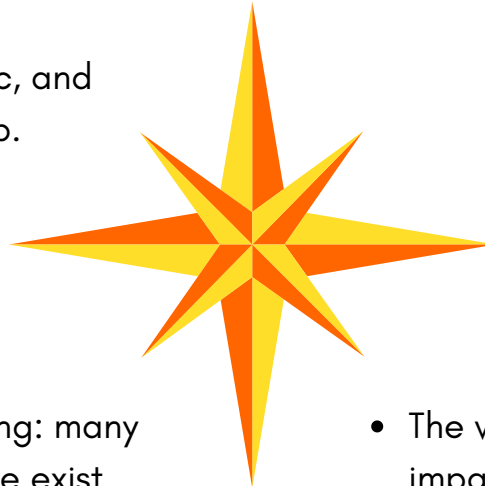
SWOT Analysis

Strengths

- Community engagement.
- Passenger Loyalty.
- Local Media support.
- Stakeholder support.
- Partnership Working.
- Expert Support from CC Officers and Professor Lumsdon.
- Brand and Marketing.
- Bus Drivers.
- Service Operator: DRM Bus.
- Updated timetable
- Natural and cultural assets on the route.
- Committed, enthusiastic, and growing Steering Group.

Weaknesses

- The launch timetable, too tight, late running.
- Roadworks threaten timekeeping.
- Steep learning curve for everyone involved: new route, new (to the area) funding model, new steering group.
- Concessionary reimbursement. Pass holders are 40% of our passengers but generate just 22% of revenue, an average of 80p per journey.



Opportunities

- Further awareness raising: many locals still don't know we exist.
- Partnership working with events and festivals.
- More destination marketing - supporting local businesses.
- Continued affordability with £2 fare cap.
- BSIP funding opportunities for improvements/extension to service.
- Robin DRT service extending to funnel isolated passengers to our route.

Threats

- The weather: bad weather impacts passenger numbers: see July.
- Funding uncertainty: funding policies can change dramatically and we have no control over this.
- Political uncertainty: very supportive local politicians currently.
- Volunteer fatigue. no signs so far, but we know we need to guard against this.

Data Sources

Our passenger data comes from 2 key sources:

- **Ticketer Reports** give data on passenger numbers and revenue.
- **Passenger Surveys** give data on passenger behavior and satisfaction.

Both sources have their strengths and limitations.

Ticketer Reports give very accurate data on revenue, especially as a large number of payments are now taken by card.

They are likely to give an underestimate of passenger numbers. when a passenger boards the bus and no ticket is issued (because the passenger has a return ticket, season ticket or concessionary pass for example) the driver should record this passenger through the Ticker machine. With the best will in the world, this doesn't always happen. especially at busy times like the school run.

Our team of volunteers aim to carry out passenger surveys at least twice a month. This is resulting in an ongoing and growing data set which will become more robust over time. At the time of writing 113 surveys had been completed on the bus.

Passenger Behaviour

Demographics

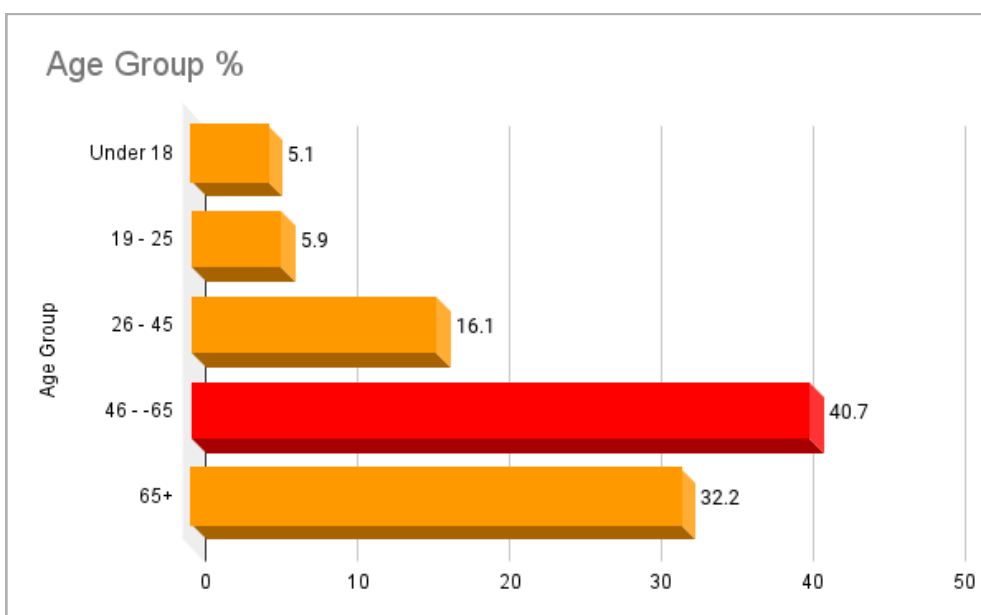
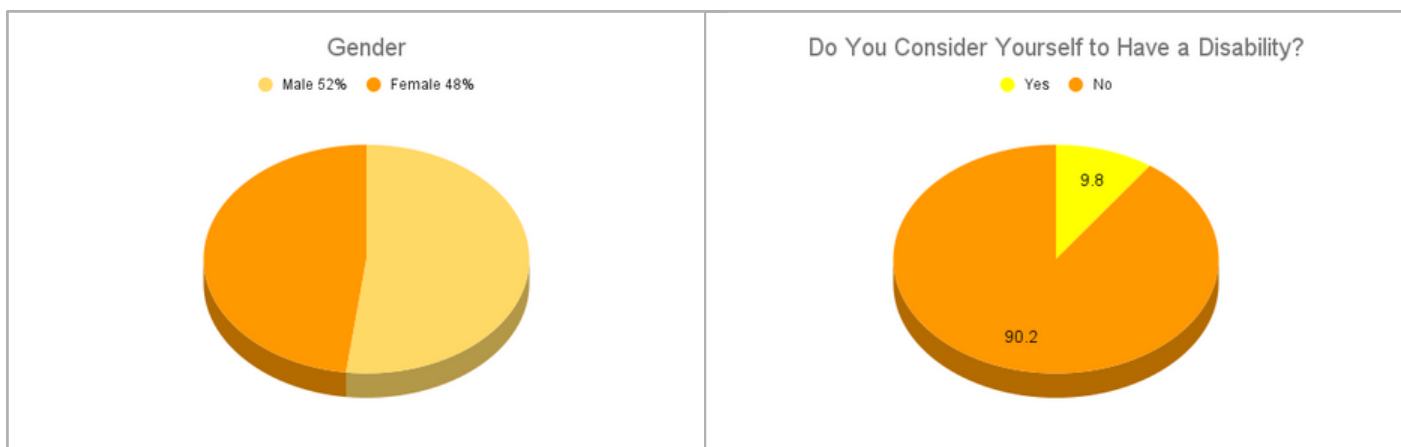
There were some surprises here.

From our passenger impact surveys, carried out by GCRP when the Stagecoach Services were withdrawn we had expected to see significantly more women than men aboard the bus. but as you see, men slightly dominate.

The bus offers good access for people with mobility issues: roll-on-roll-off for manual or electric wheelchairs.

The real surprise though is the age range of passengers. For many rural bus services over 70% of the passenger base are aged 65 and over. You can see that our passengers are typically younger

This has a positive impact on revenue (lower proportion of concessionary passes). We also feel it's a positive indicator in terms of adoption of bus travel by younger people.

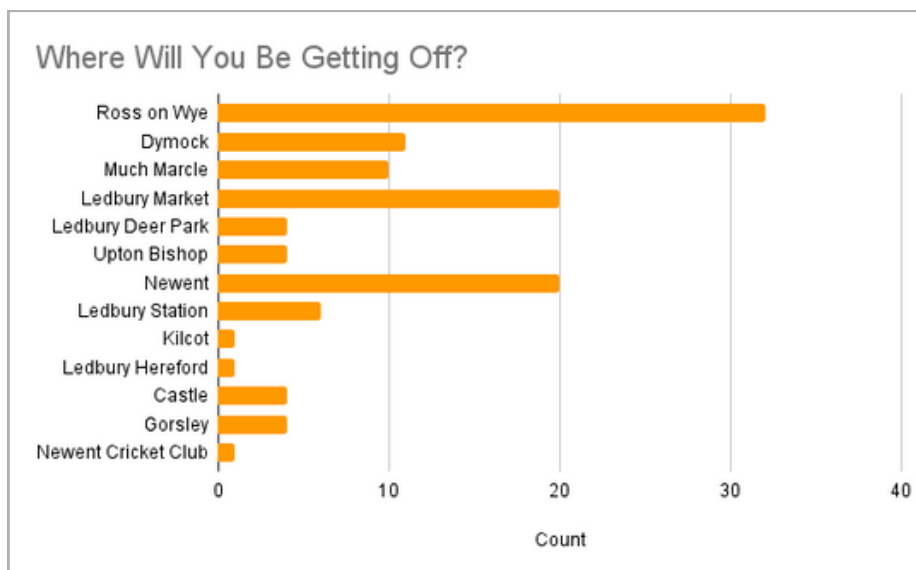
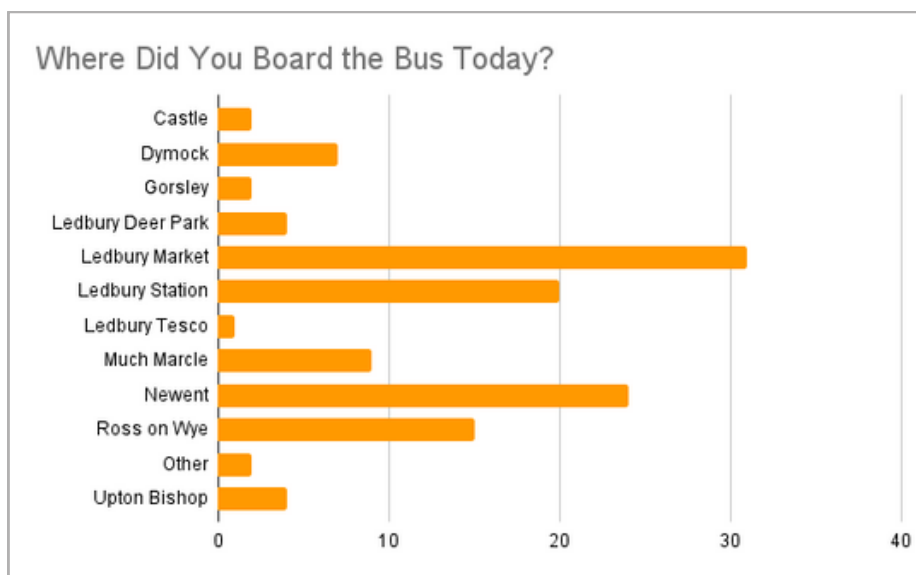


Departures and Destinations

There is a fairly even spread of people boarding and alighting the bus in the different towns and villages along the route.

At the moment, the numbers are a pretty close match with the size of the settlements with the exception of Ledbury, which is clearly acting as a gateway to the route for passengers arriving from further afield via train and bus.

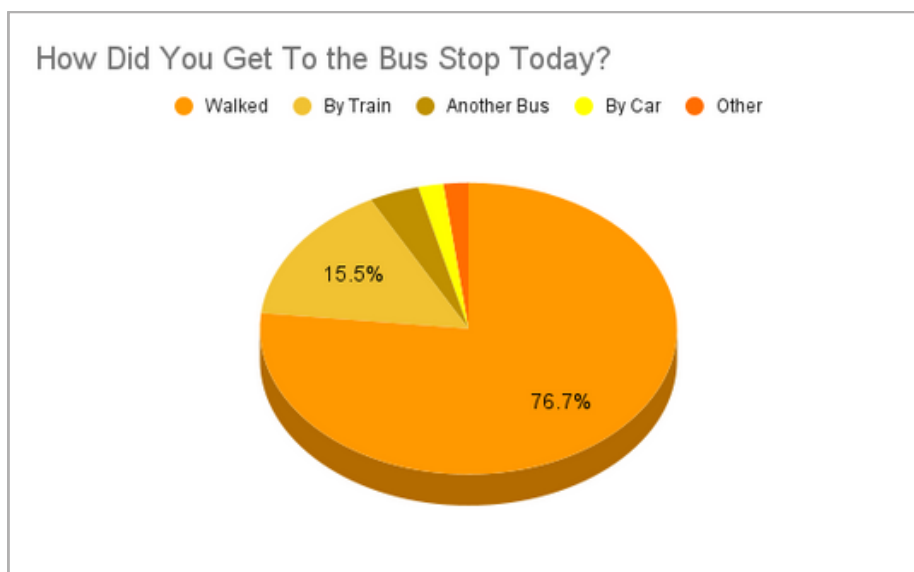
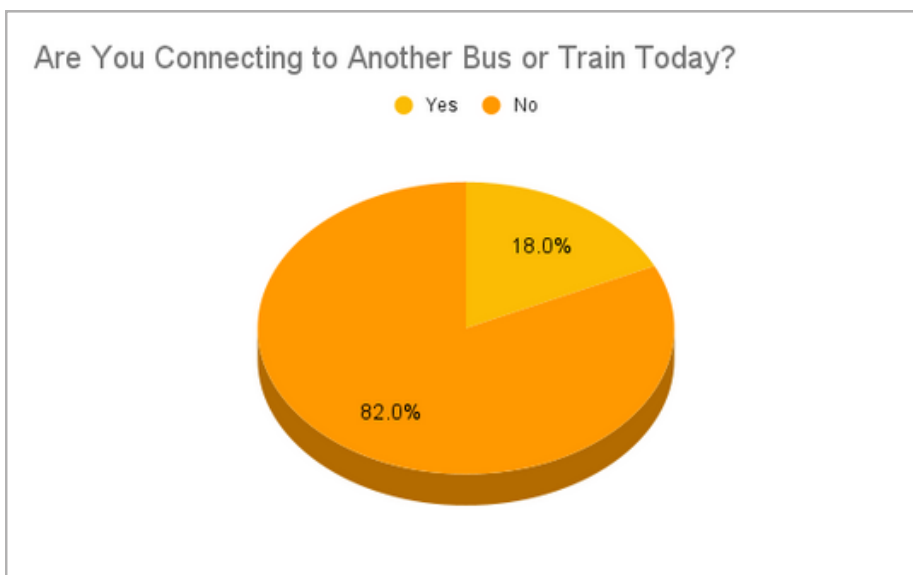
Future marketing will focus on drawing in connecting passengers via Ross from the Forest and Monmouth and via Newent from Gloucester.



Getting to the Bus Stop

As you can see, the vast majority of people walk to the bus stop. The health benefits of the active travel element of most public transport journeys are well recognized. Walking to bus stops situated in the centre of towns and villages also facilitates passenger spending in local businesses.

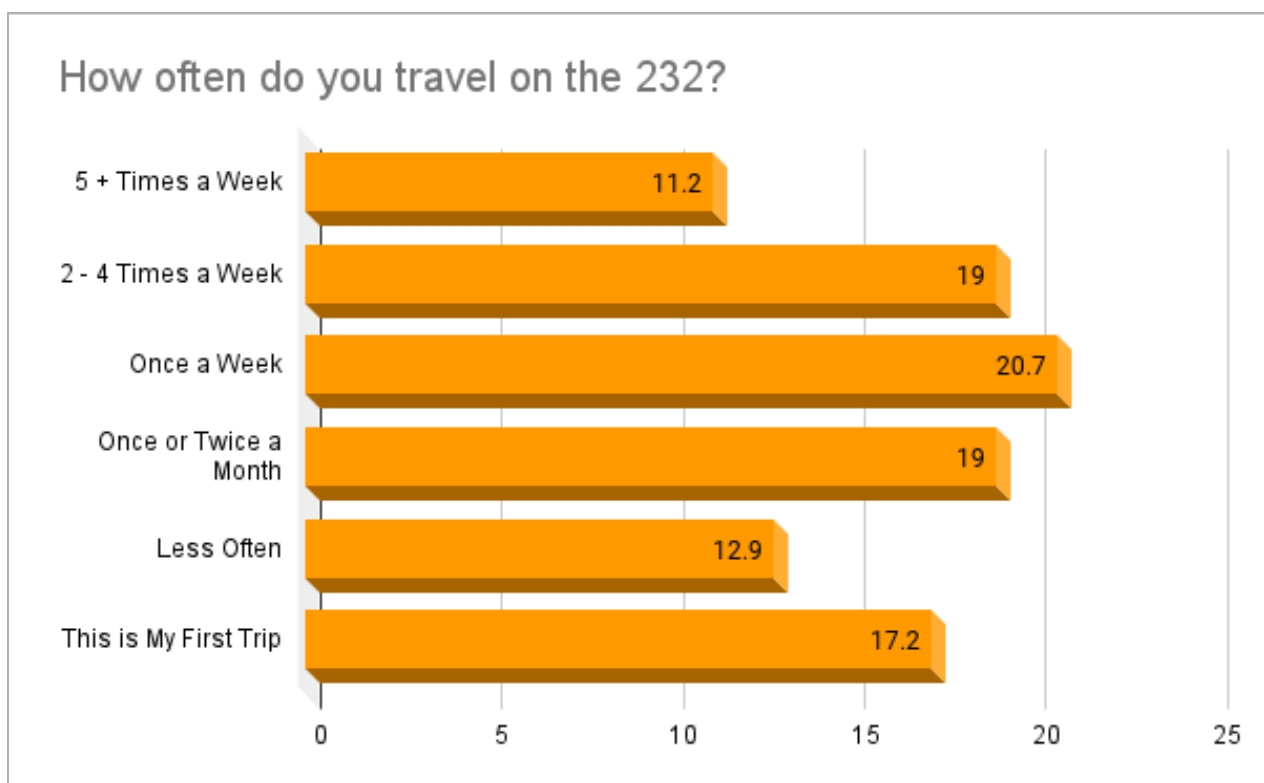
Currently, 17% of passengers are using the Daffodil Line as part of a longer public transport journey, connecting to rail at Ledbury, or buses in any of the three towns. We expect to see this figure grow as we promote the service in a geographically wider area.



Frequency of Travel

There is a good mix of regulars and less frequent travelers on the bus and the service is continuing to attract new users.

As well as some passengers who use the bus to get to and from work and college, we now carry 25+ Gloucestershire-resident students to John Masefield High School in Ledbury each day. This group was one of the worst affected when the previous services were cut, and providing a service that worked for them was a key aim.



Modal Shift

This is one of our favourite charts. We are aiming to generate benefits for People , Places, and Planet. and this is the Planet bit.

42.5% of passengers surveyed had access to a car on the day of their journey and chose to take the bus instead.

People tend to choose the bus in preference to private car use for three main reasons:

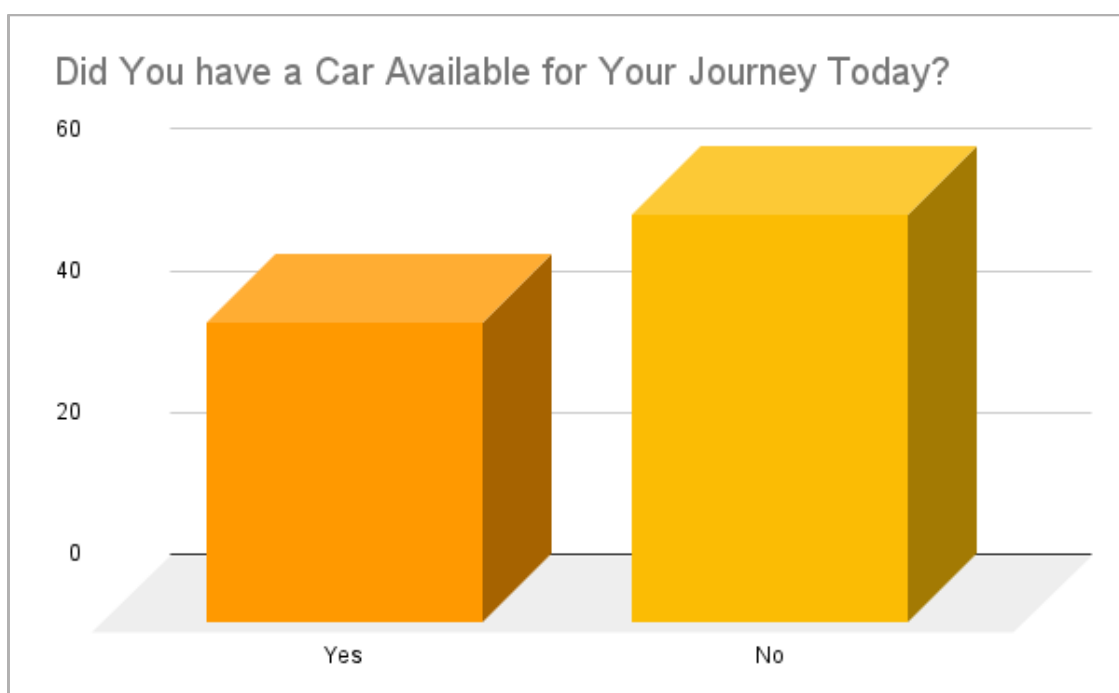
- relaxation and stress-free travel for visitors and leisure travelers.
- cost savings for many, especially concessionary pass holders.
- environmental concerns the increasing number who appreciate that the bus is a cleaner, greener way to travel. DRM use a Euro 6 bus low on CO2 emissions and pollution.

We calculate that this means a saving of 6,300 private car journeys in just our first six months of operation.

Transport accounts for 33% of all carbon emissions in the UK. We need to do everything we can to decarbonize transport and our bus service is definitely playing its part.

In addition to the CO2 savings, a switch to bus travel cuts air pollution, particle pollution, congestion, and road wear and tear.

We suspect that many of our “modal shift” passengers are currently leisure users and concessionary pass holders. We aim to make service improvements that will make a switch to bus travel for more pragmatic users (eg.work commuters) a viable option.



Purpose of Journey

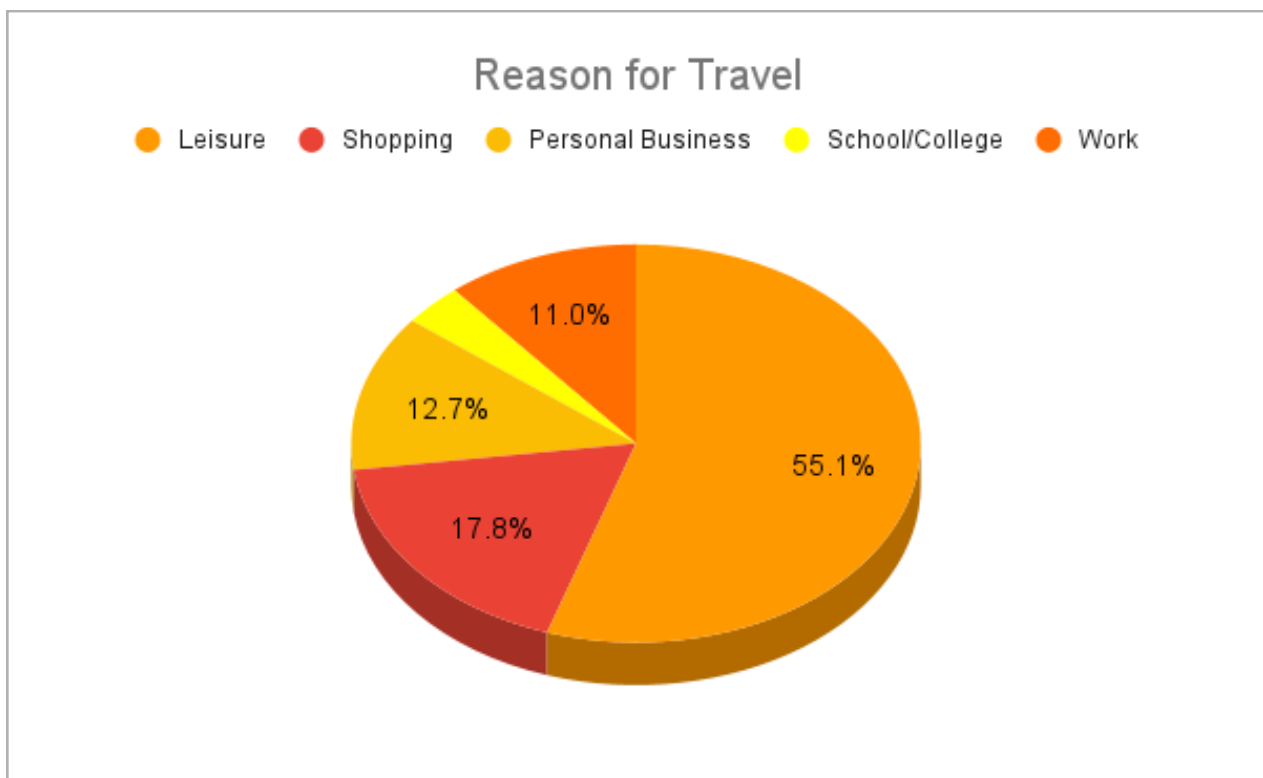
A high proportion of our passengers are leisure travelers. this was a key part of the strategy and we are pleased to see it paying off.

When we started the service we knew we had to target the leisure market in order to attract enough passengers to keep the service running for those who depend on it.

For this reason, we amended the route to take it through Much Marcle and the Daffodil country between Dymock and Much Marcle.

The route now takes in a range of visitor attractions and some very appealing walking country as well as our towns and villages. There is plenty to see and do and we work hard to promote this through our marketing and public relations.

Focus on the visitor and leisure market also has the advantage of bringing in passengers who spend in our local businesses.



Passenger Spend

Our passengers spend an average of £38.80 at their destinations.

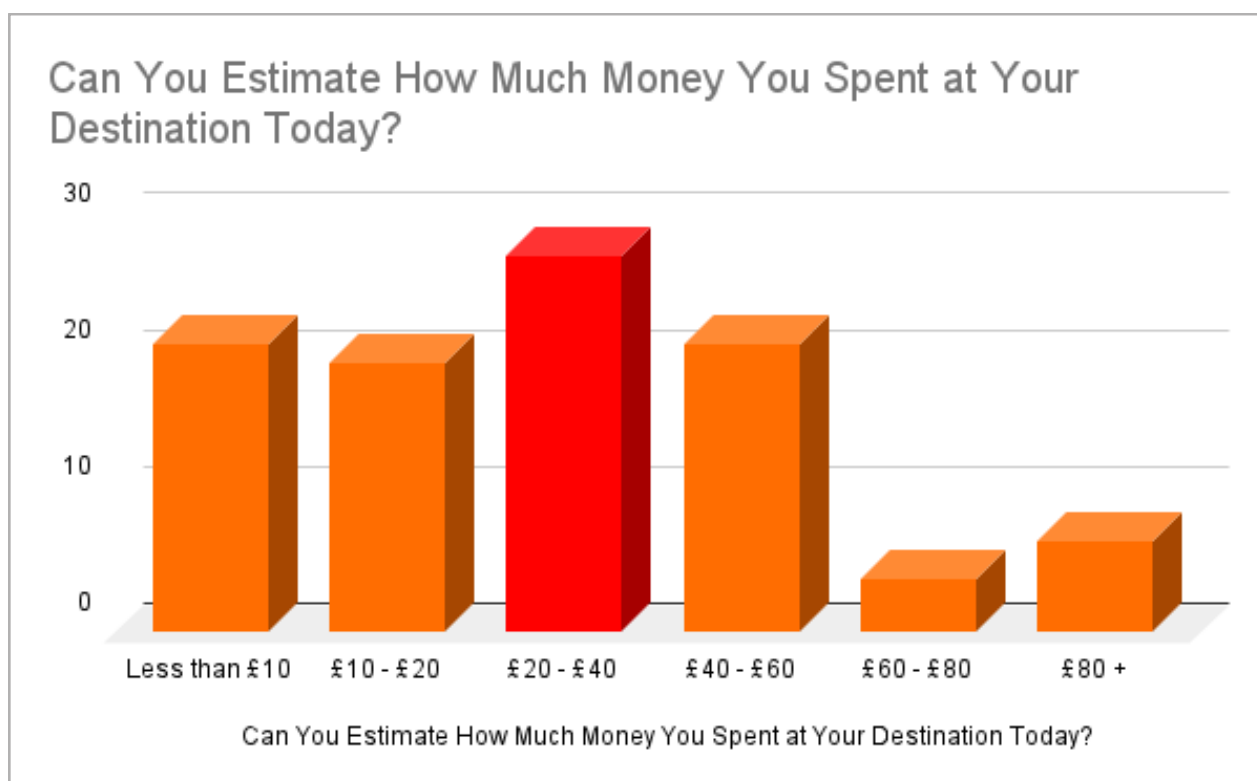
This gives an estimated total passenger spend of £405,000 for our first six months of operation.

The tendency of bus users to spend more in local businesses is well documented. In the case of the Daffodil Line, this trend will be enhanced by the high proportion of visitors and leisure users.

The location of bus stops and transport hubs within our town centres is key to maintaining this benefit for our local businesses. Any shift towards edge-of-town transport hubs will inevitably reduce passenger spend in local businesses.

We run an evening service on Friday and Saturday. This is becoming increasingly popular with people looking for a car-free evening out and thus making a contribution to the evening economy.

Our evening services have also proved popular with people attending various festivals over the summer, reducing congestion and drink-driving risk.



Passenger Satisfaction

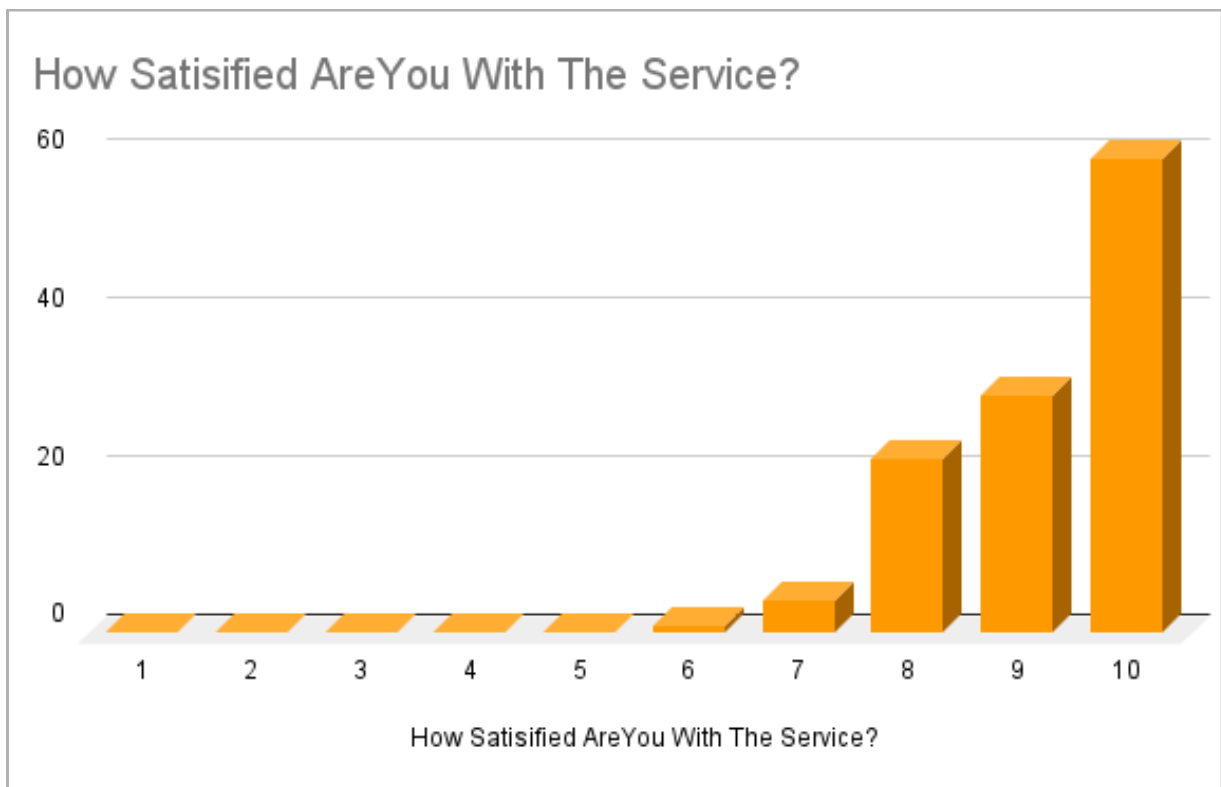
Passenger satisfaction levels are high. Especially given the poor timekeeping of the first few months.

We are lucky to have a clean, comfortable, and modern bus operating the route.

And perhaps most importantly excellent drivers who take pride in their work, know many of the passengers by name, and go the extra mile to give a good service.

Areas for improvement include timetable tweaks for better connectivity, bus shelters and signposting.

These are all areas that we can work on.



Passenger Satisfaction

Way too many cars on the road. We use the bus because it makes more sense

Want to support the route. Heard about it from others...all very satisfied too

If it wasn't for this bus I'd be stuck. I care for two elderly parents so I really need this. The drivers are great...they go the extra mile.

This has been a God send. 12 out of 10 on the scale. The Government says use the bus then cuts the funding. Stagecoach were hopeless...sometimes didn't turn up or very late. People moved out of the village when they took the buses off. DRM drivers are kind and polite.

This is the first time we have had a Sunday service for a very long time. We are going to the Newent Car Show then we'll continue to Ross for the day out.

We are visitors to the area, have bus passes and travel on buses a lot. We like walking on buses to shop local, staying at Broad Meadows campsite, Ross.

It was awful before this bus. People really struggled. Used to catch a taxi which cost me £15 into Ross. Not good.

We work at Castle Farm. There are a group of around 25 workers and everyone is using the bus once or twice a week.

It is not often that you loose a service and then it gets replaced with something better than before.

We are looking after our two grandchildren today. The children love the higher seats and this bus is ideal. We live in the Forest of Dean.

I'm going for an interview at Westons Cider and will use the bus if I get a job there.

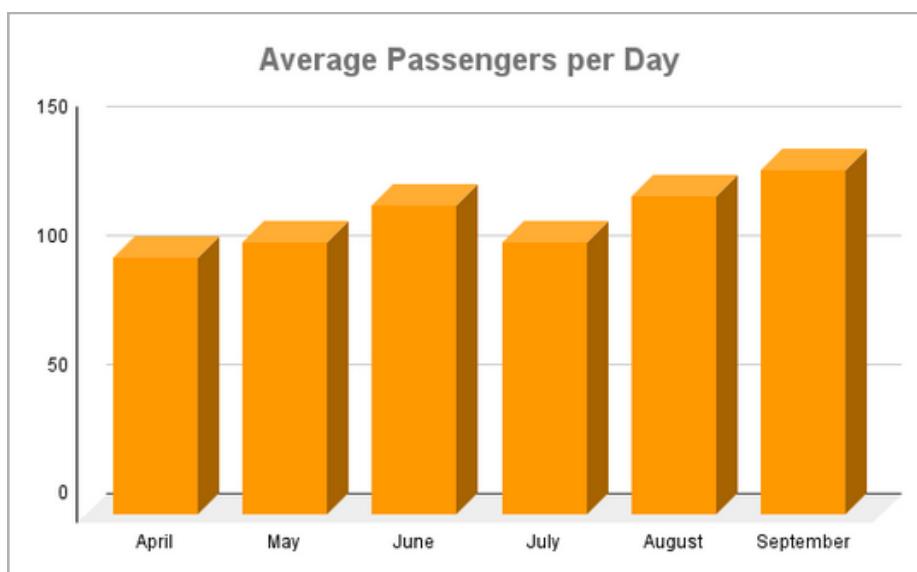
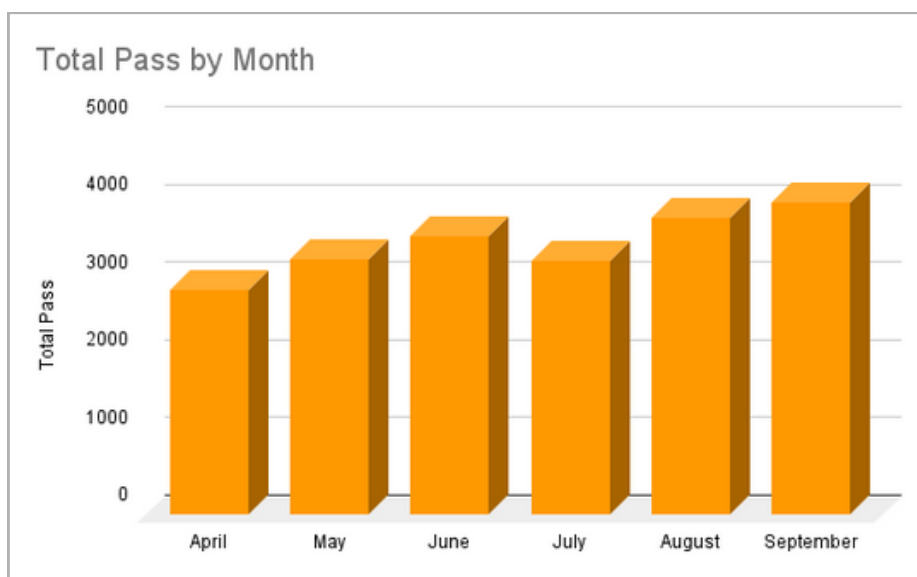
Passenger Numbers

The number of passengers carried by the service is a key measure of success. We are pleased with the first six months results.

We have so far delivered a total of 20,914 single-passenger journeys.

With the exception of July, when exceptionally wet weather hit our figures, numbers have increased steadily month on month, with an overall 30% increase in monthly passenger numbers over the period.

In September, we were carrying an average of 134 passengers per day.



Revenue

On average, rural bus services in the UK cover 30% of their running costs through ticket sales and concessionary reimbursement. So it is unlikely that the 232 will ever generate sufficient revenue to cover all of its running costs.

Our aim is to carry as many passengers as possible, whilst keeping fares affordable for all. In this way we will deliver the maximum social good from the service: benefits for People, Places, and Planet.

At the same time, we are working towards meeting the Transport Authorities' "value for money" criteria, so that any subsidy required by the service can be provided directly by the county councils. When we reach this level no further financial support towards running costs will be needed from town and parish councils, businesses, and other stakeholders.

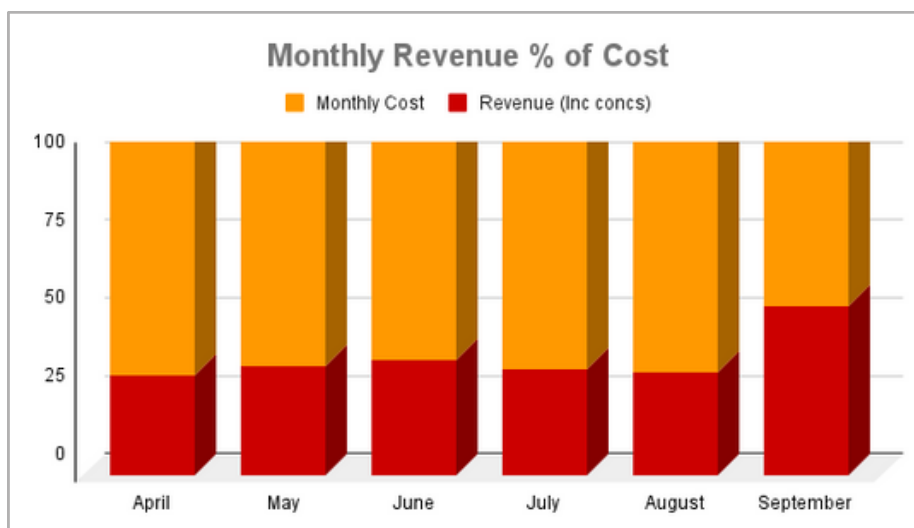
Currently, the country council's maximum level of subsidy per single-passenger journey stands at £2.

Based on our first six months' figures, the subsidy required by the Daffodil Line was £2.51. We are covering 37% of our running costs from ticket sales and concessionary reimbursement, well above the average for rural services.

It is an excellent start. But competing demands on transport authority budgets are huge. the cuts to our local bus services were among the first, post-COVID, but they were certainly not the last.

Communities all over the country have lost bus services and Transport Authorities are now juggling scarce resources to try to reinstate them.

Our aim over the next 2 years, with your support, is to drive passenger numbers to a level where any support required from the Transport Authorities represents such excellent value for money that it is assured.



Increasing Passenger Numbers In Year 2 and Beyond

Increasing passenger numbers is key to both maximizing the benefits the service can deliver for people, places, and the planet and achieving financial sustainability.

Restoring an hourly service between our three towns, which we had until 2015, is our ultimate aim. This will, we believe deliver the maximum social good and become sustainable by providing a viable alternative to private car travel for a wider range of pragmatic users including work commuters.

But first, we must increase passenger numbers. There are three key routes to doing this.

Retain existing passengers.

- By monitoring and maintaining service levels and passenger satisfaction.
- Maintaining low fares policy, ensuring affordability for all.

Increase usage by Existing Passengers.

- By providing more reasons to travel through the promotion of events, attractions, and business on the route.
- Promoting adult weekly and monthly season tickets.
- Securing funding to repeat “Kids Go Free” during all school holidays.
- Service tweaks to improve convenience and connectivity.

Attract New Passengers

- Raise awareness in locals by recruiting town and village champions.
- Improve signposting on all bus stops, and provide new bus stops where needed.
- Liaise with local groups particularly walkers, CAMRA, U3A, and lunch clubs.
- Liaise with event organisers to ensure cross-promotion.
- Do more work with local visitor accommodation.
- Capture more of the “day trip” market from neighboring connected towns: Hereford, Malvern, Gloucester, Monmouth, Cinderford, Coleford, Worcester, and the West Midlands.
- Secure national travel/weekend supplement feature for “Slow Travel” itinerary.
- Promote the environmental benefits of choosing bus travel “Ditch the car, catch the bus.”

Passenger numbers have so far peaked at just over 4,000 per month. we believe that over the next 2 years, we can drive this to an average of 6,000 passengers per month.

This will put the service firmly within the Transport Authorities value for money criteria with a subsidy required per single-passenger journey of less than £1.

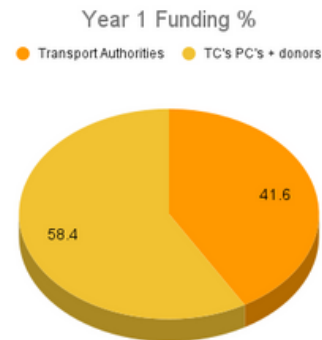
It will deliver impressive annual benefits for people places and planets. Like nearly £1.5 million passenger spend in local businesses per year, and more than 20,000 private car journeys taken off the roads.

And it will put us in a strong position to push for a return to an hourly service,

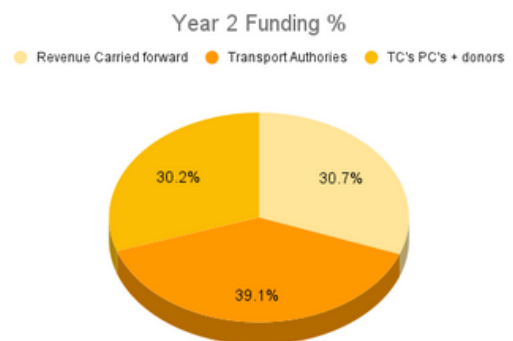
Year 2 Funding Requirements

Buses4Us aims to secure full funding for the 232 Daffodil Line Service for its first 3 years of operation.

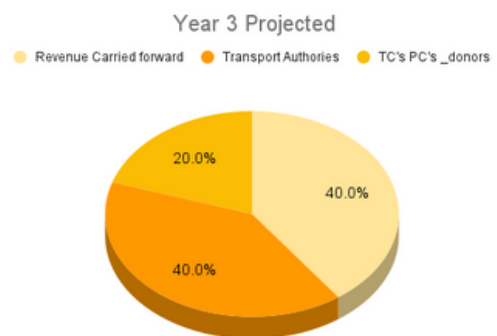
In **year 1** the full cost of the service was covered by contributions from the Transport Authorities (Gloucestershire and Herefordshire County Councils) and contributions from Town and Parish Councils, grants, donors, and business sponsors.



In **year 2**, the transport authorities have already committed to maintaining their level of support. And we have year 1 ticket sales revenue to carry forward. So the contribution requested from town and parish councils is reduced by one third.



Both transport authorities have indicated their intention to continue support into **year 3**. Increased ticket sales will mean that levels of support required from TC's PC's and donors should fall to around 20% of the total by year 3, with no support required beyond that point.

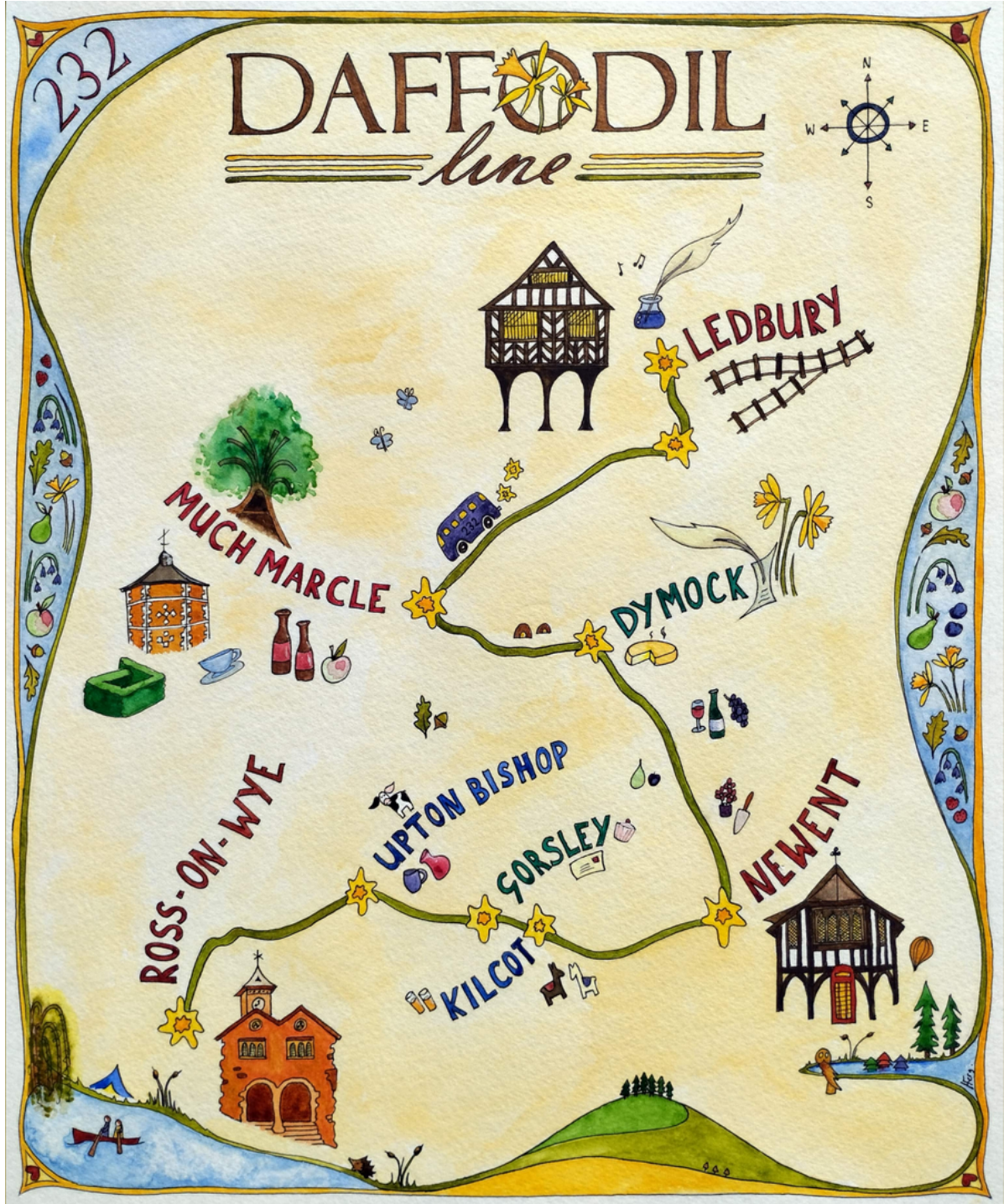


To help us bridge our anticipated Year 2 funding gap of £59,000 we would like to suggest the following contributions from Town Councils, which represent a 33% reduction in year 1 contribution levels:

- Ross Town Council £17.300** (year 1, £26,000)
- Ledbury Town Council £16,000** (year 1, £24,000)
- Newent Town Council £10.000** (year 1, £15,000)

We hope that the impacts delivered in our first six months will give you confidence that your continued support for the Daffodil Line represents a worthwhile and value-for-money investment in people, places and the planet.

THANK YOU



FOR YOUR SUPORT