

Environmental Information Regulations – Response - 27694

You have advised that grants and subsidies paid to bus companies are calculated based upon their passenger number declarations.

Please can you disclose these declarations by each bus company that uses Beccles bus station.

I am requesting this data as there is a massive disparity between the “supply” of (subsidised) buses into Beccles and the actual passenger demand in Beccles. This results in approx 50% of all buses driving through Beccles empty with the rest materially less than half full.

A – Apologies if the previous response was unclear, but the only subsidy linked to passenger numbers is the reimbursement for accepting concessionary bus passes. As stated previously, we are unable to split the number of bus pass journeys in Beccles out from the totals for each operator as we only receive an aggregated total from the scheme administrators.

It should be noted that other than the Beccles town services, all buses serving Beccles are running to/from other locations. As such, they may appear to be underused in the town but can often be carrying larger numbers elsewhere along the route. This is particularly the case at school times as many students are carried on public services rather than closed contracts.

Operators purchase vehicles suitable for the maximum in-service load expected during the day. The difference in operating costs between a double decker and a minibus is marginal, and even over the entire lifetime of a bus would not equal the cost of buying both small and large buses plus designing timetables so that buses can be swapped around between journeys according to need. The larger buses will therefore be used for every journey on a route, leading to them appearing underused at times.

Similarly, service timetables are designed where possible to provide a regular frequency which makes them more attractive to use and easier to understand, so passengers can be assured that their bus will always be at the same minutes past each hour. This can lead to passengers being spread over multiple journeys who could perhaps be concentrated on fewer, less frequent buses – but they are less likely to use the services if timings are inconvenient.