

# TravelWatch NORTHWEST

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Have Your Say  
 Public & Integrated Transport  
 Lancashire County Council  
 County Hall, Preston  
 PR1 0LD

27<sup>th</sup> April 2018

Dear Sir/Madam

## **Proposed Closure of Transport Information Centres in Lancashire**

We are very concerned about the effect on passengers of these proposals. We appreciate the severe budgetary constraints that the Authority is working under but there are bound to be adverse effects on those who rely on these facilities and have no practical alternative option.

### ***Information & General***

Increasingly many passengers glean journey and ticket information through internet services. However, not everyone has a smartphone or similar device to access information electronically. There is also much to be said for the human contact offered by these information centres and for paper-based information which many find convenient and indeed essential.

The total savings from the closure of these centres seems minimal (£99,000 a year) and there may well be ways of reducing costs. Information about local buses, in particular, is already not easy to find and these closures would exacerbate this situation.

In December 2017 Lancs CC committed £1million per year for rural bus support. It seems perverse to remove these important information outlets which help to promote the supported services. It is often difficult especially for visitors to an area to find out about bus services and in particular what appears to be an almost covert network of minor operators and independents who provide supported as well as commercial services along with the major operators.

Closure of these facilities, which would be difficult to convert to alternative uses, would result in unused, decaying buildings and an eyesore in the environment, subject to vandalism. Has this been considered?

### ***Clitheroe***

The Clitheroe facility is a first-class operation providing a crucial service, bringing in we understand (from a FOI request) a substantial yearly turnover of £650,000. From the same source we understand that staffing costs are overly high at £60,000 and together with other costs of £12,000 and commission receipts of £43,000 leads to a yearly loss of £29,000 a year.

Ticket checks on trains can be hit and miss and the ability to buy a ticket before boarding is an effective way of reducing ticketless travel.

Given the high staff costs there may be scope for an alternative model of operation perhaps involving a CRP which would be able to diversify and expand the retail offer. For example, the Settle Carlisle Railway Development Company has an interest in the line and is an experienced business employer and promoter of the rail passenger business.

### ***Carnforth***

Carnforth is an expanding community and the ticket office provides an excellent information and rail retail service. We understand that the operation loses around £12000 a year but generates a significant turnover which is contributing materially to the choice of using public transport. There is therefore an income for the county council via commission on ticket sales which we cannot see mentioned anywhere in the council's justification for closure.

The distance between Carnforth and Lancaster is short and the trains are busy so the potential for lost revenue on journeys between the two stations is considerable and this will be increased by the closure of the office. Also the station office is the only point in the town where one can obtain advice and printed information on buses. The council has recently increased its spending on the subsidised bus service from Carnforth to Silverdale, by increasing the frequency, and now proposes to remove the only local source of information about it!

As with Clitheroe, staffing costs at Carnforth may again be higher than needed. Again, if necessary an alternative model possibly involving other agencies, e.g a Community Interest Company (perhaps with CRP involvement), could be sought.

### ***Preston***

Preston has no city tourist information centre at all unlike, say, The Storey in Lancaster or in The Mall in Blackburn. So, if the information centre closes in the bus station, there will be nowhere to find out details of transport services,

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ask about lost property, buy season tickets, book coach trips, find out about events, and so on. For strangers visiting Preston and for example, needing to get to a location on the outskirts of the city, they would really need a human being to talk to rather than a website to look at.

The bus station is being refurbished in a multi million pound scheme. This is not the time to deny this useful service which helps to transcend the information barrier which exists with the smaller operators and amongst all operators in general because of competition considerations.

### ***Nelson***

We regret the proposal to close the Nelson centre. In this deprived area public transport needs as much support and promotion as possible. Many of the above arguments will apply.

Thank you for the opportunity to respond

Yours faithfully

*John A Moorhouse*

John Moorhouse  
Company Secretary