

Welland Wanderer Bus Service

This service, linking Wilbarston to Harborough on Tuesdays and Corby on Fridays, has now been running for nearly four years. It arose from an initiative by ten parishes situated along the edge of the Welland Valley, all faced with losing previous bus services and all feeling potentially isolated – not everybody can drive or make regular use of taxis.

Funding for daily or more frequent services was beyond reach (previously provided by the county council and withdrawn when they were making cost savings) but the parishes with support from Kettering and Corby Borough Councils raised sufficient to provide a very reduced service enabling people to catch a bus once or twice a week to spend a couple of hours in Harborough or Corby and then travel home. Although a restricted service it is scheduled, and bus passes may be used.

At the time Northamptonshire was converting to unitary status, involving the cessation of the county and district/borough councils with all responsibilities to pass to newly created North and West Northamptonshire Councils. It was always felt by the parishes that responsibility for supporting bus services should rest at the higher level and one aim in creating the Welland Wanderer was to demonstrate need and keep the bus habit in being during the handover period. It was originally set up for a year.

In fact, it is still running after four, but circumstances have changed since it started and with the new authorities now coming on stream it's time to talk with North Northamptonshire Council about its future.

There is no doubt that it has demonstrated demand, with some buses running nearly full in the months before covid and lockdown. Since things started to return to normal, however, numbers have gradually increased but are nowhere near previous highs. This is partly because some of those who set it up and used the service have moved on, but it may also be because it has become part of the norm and more likely to be taken for granted.

Good passenger numbers are evidence of demand and reduce the cost of funding – these are both positives in discussions with NNC. If you haven't used it why not give it a try? The bus stops outside The Fox or at the bus stop opposite.

Tuesday, 9.53 to Mkt Harborough Market Hall (10.25 – 12.40) and back in the village at 13.12.

Friday, 9.32 to Corby Asda, Rail Station, George Street and Cottingham Road Health Centre (10.18 – 12.30) and back in the village at 13.18.

All intermediate stops can be used. Timetable and fares are displayed at the bus stop and on the parish council website.