

Chairman's Announcements

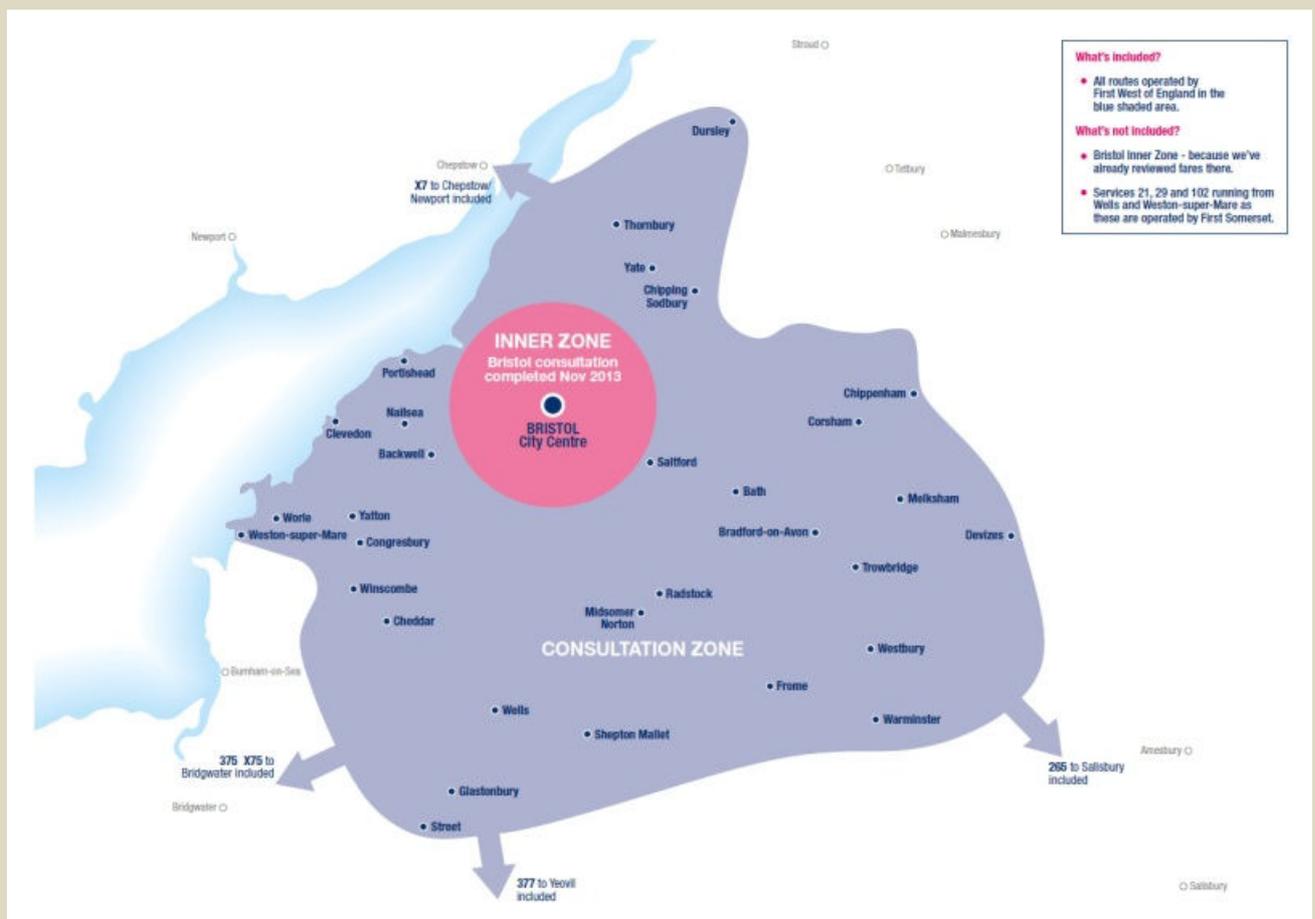
Summary of announcement:



First Launches Bus Fare Consultation Across West of England

Local residents across the West of England are being asked what they think of bus services in their area in a major consultation exercise being run by bus company, First.

The latest review will look at all First's bus services covering the West of England areas outside of Bristol's inner zone. The consultation follows a similar major review of bus fares in and around Bristol last year, which led to significant changes being implemented with children and young people getting much bigger discounts on travel and the whole structure of fares in the city changed.



Under the banner 'Fairer Fares for All', people will be asked to fill in either hard copy or online questionnaires regarding their use of buses, sharing their opinions regarding the fares charged. The results of the questionnaires will then be analysed by independent transport consultants before decisions regarding any subsequent changes are made.

Hard copy questionnaires will be available on buses, in libraries, in council one-stop-shops and in First's own travel shops to further aid people's ability to feed back their thoughts. A number of customer-facing road shows around the region are also being arranged. Separate consultation

Chairman's Announcements

events will be organised for the region's councillors, which MPs will also be invited to attend. Further details will follow.

Talking about the consultation, Paul Matthews, Managing Director for First in West of England, says: "We need to better understand how people use our buses, how frequently they travel and for what purpose. We would also like to know what type of tickets they're buying at present and how they rate them in terms of value for money. All this data will then help us, and our transport consultants, determine the way forward. This is a mammoth task but it is an important one to enable us to provide the bus services that local people want."

Brian Allinson, Chair of the West of England Joint Transport Executive Committee, commented: "This is excellent news, buses play a vital role moving people around the area, and we need to make them as affordable as possible – the councils will be working with First to spread the word and encourage people to take part in this consultation. It is really important that as many people as possible take part in the consultation so we can be sure that people from more rural areas as well as villages, towns and edge of the city have their say."

The online questionnaire will be found at www.firstgroup.com/fairerfaresforall from 1 February and the consultation will run from then until 16 March 2014.

More information about the consultation can be found at www.fairerfaresforall.co.uk (this website includes details of the process, the location of roadshow events, links to the online survey and a list of frequently asked questions. Email queries regarding the consultation process can be sent to: fairerfaresforall@firstgroup.com.

For more information about First West of England, contact Karen Baxter, PR Manager, First on 0117 373 6470. Email: Karen.baxter@firstgroup.com