

North Bristol SusCom: National Bus to Work Scheme

Aim: to increase the number of employees across the UK commuting to work by bus

Many employers are working hard to increase the numbers of staff traveling to work by sustainable means. Public transport plays a significant role in getting people out of their cars. However, there are significant barriers in place that are preventing more people making this choice.

There are two ways in which the Government can help employers support their staff to get “on the buses”.

- allow employers the ability to subsidise bus travel for staff commuting to work
- allow employers to operate Salary Sacrifice Schemes for bus tickets

Under the current HMRC rules, employers are allowed to subsidise a bus ticket that is for a specific commuting journey only, as any private use is deemed by HMRC to be incidental.

Most bus companies operate zonal ticketing which is far more cost effective for the traveller but falls foul of HMRC rules. So the only way employers can subsidise the employee’s bus journeys is to buy a more expensive point-to-point ticket, if available, which then defeats the whole object.

If HMRC allowed employers to subsidise their employees’ commuter bus tickets and/or operate salary sacrifice schemes, many staff who currently drive to work would view commuting by bus as a more cost-effective option. This would have a number of knock on effects:

- a reduction in congestion
- a reduction in Co2 emissions
- an increase in bus patronage, which means services would become more financially independent and thereby reduce the need for subsidies from local government
- greater physical activity benefits through walking compared to car use
- increased wellbeing (social contact) benefits through use of public transport
- staff would be more likely to use the bus during their leisure time which further increases the above outlined benefits

A National Bus to Work scheme could deliver significant, over-night benefits without the need for complex systems to be put in place or significant infrastructure to be built.

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