

PETITION FOR THE SOCIAL INCLUSION OF DISABLED RESIDENTS

We, the undersigned residents of West Lancashire, draw the attention of West Lancashire Borough Council (WLBC) to the plight of disabled residents of the Borough whose rights to be socially included in the life of the Borough on the same terms as able bodied residents have been denied them. The withdrawal of local travel concessions to all elderly residents in 2011, a decision that we consider to have been discriminatory and unlawful, led to disabled residents and particularly Dial-A-Ride clients relying on the English National Bus Pass. The result is that some disabled residents of the Borough have been excluded from Council's stated vision that *"We've made a promise to put services first and to build a borough second to none. Our aim is to make the best use of resources to deliver the best possible services. And our values, that we will deliver our vision by continuing to be an innovative organisation that puts residents and "frontline services first", frontline meaning council services that customers come into contact with.*

Council's withdrawal of the local travel concession flew in the face of advice from the Department for Transport (DfT) which stated "that if there are changes in discretionary schemes that could affect the travel of disabled people and their helpers, **they would expect local authorities to assess the benefits and costs of discretionary concessionary travel schemes and other transport policies for their impact on the welfare of disabled people**". In respect of what they call "Rural Proofing" the DfT stated they "do not expect any direct impact of the proposals on rural areas. A number of rural areas have discretionary travel schemes to reflect particular travel needs. **The DfT would expect local authorities to assess the benefits and costs of discretionary concessionary travel schemes and other transport policies for their impact on access in rural areas**". And the DfT stated "they would expect local authorities to assess the benefits and costs of discretionary concessionary travel schemes and other transport policies **for their impact on health**".

Referring to these three DfT impacts, there is no evidence of any consideration of them by WLBC. By comparison we draw Council's attention to its policies that 7 Council employees paid in excess of £61,500 annually then receive annual benefits in kind that in total exceed Council's annual small subsidy to Dial-A-Ride and its 1,000+ disabled clients. Free parking all paid for with council tax is given to all Council staff. To balance such largesse we call on Councillor Westley and his Cabinet colleagues this year, and every year thereafter, to allocate just 0.3% of our useable reserves, currently £18,200,000, for the benefit of our most vulnerable residents. Otherwise we ask if it will still be Council's policy to say to disabled residents "here's your bus pass, now find a bus with wheelchair lifts, handrails and lowered steps to use it on". As a nation we donate a ring fenced 0.7% of our national wealth to overseas development aid. Is it too much to ask that we in this Borough should prioritise and take care of our most vulnerable disabled residents in a similar humane manner?

We therefore **PETITION** WLBC to apply the powers of well being provided by the Local Government Act 2000, to restore travel concessions that were callously denied to all disabled residents, particularly those who were reliant on Dial-A-Ride in 2011, and to mandate social inclusion of disabled residents by the implementation of the policy we outline above.

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Signed; [REDACTED]

Date; 21st February 2012

We the undersigned formally request WLBC to consider this **PETITION**

