

PRESS RELEASE
TRANSPORT PLANNING SOCIETY'S PEOPLE'S CHOICE
AWARDS
NUMBER 8 & VINTAGE BUS IN THE FINAL

TWO SEVENOAKS TOWN COUNCIL BUS SCHEMES AMONG FINALISTS FOR TRANSPORT PLANNING SOCIETY'S PEOPLE'S AWARD

Two local bus services operated by Sevenoaks Town Council, Route 8 and the Vintage Bus have overcome stiff competition from across the UK to make the shortlist of six finalists of the inaugural People's Award, announced by the Transport Planning Society on 10th October 2018.

The Vintage Bus Service initiated by the Sevenoaks Town Partnership, and Route 8 bus service, are both in the running to win the Award, which recognises the most significant transport planning initiatives of the year. The organisers invited communities to demonstrate how transport planning projects, whatever they might be, had made a positive impact in their local area.

Working with Go Coach Ltd the Vintage Bus Service established in 2011 has been a hit with Sevenoaks locals as well as tourists. The circular route takes in local landmarks including the National Trust property Knole, The Stag theatre and cinema, The Vine, and Blighs shopping centre. Meanwhile, the No 8 bus service again working with Go Coach Ltd– available free of charge for 11-18-year-olds – now attracts thousands of passengers every year, and supports older people struggling with loneliness.

The competitive judging process was led by Stephen Joseph OBE, former Chief Executive of the Campaign for Better Transport. The panel looked at community schemes that had made a real difference to people's access to services, quality of life and wellbeing.

Key members of the Group have been invited to celebrate reaching the final stages at a special ceremony in the House of Commons on 10 October, hosted by the Chair of the Transport Select Committee, Lilian Greenwood MP. The overall winner will be announced at the Transport Planning Day, on 13 November at the Institution of Civil Engineers in London.

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Town Clerk

Councillor Richard Parry, Leader of the Majority Group at Sevenoaks Town Council, said:

“These bus routes are part of a large range of measures we have put in place to improve connectivity for Sevenoaks residents, and attract new people to the town. We have been delighted to see both initiatives prove so popular, and this recognition confirms that our work has been worthwhile.”



Lynda Addison OBE, Chair of the Transport Planning Society, said:

“We’re delighted with the wide range of entries we received from communities across the UK. It was very hard to reach a final shortlist and the calibre of submissions was good. The whole process – from judging to the final winner - sends a positive message to professionals about what is important to communities in terms of transport and best practice in community engagement in transport planning.

“This award recognises the projects and initiatives that have made a genuine contribution to improving people’s accessibility, quality of life and wellbeing and have made such a huge difference to their local communities.”

Lilian Greenwood MP, Chair of the Transport Select Committee, said:

“We all rely on transport to connect us to jobs, schools, family, friends and vital services, but it can be easy to forget about the planning that goes into making transport work.

“These finalists have shown that when communities take centre stage, telling the professionals what good transport looks like, they can deliver real and lasting benefits for local people.

“I congratulate all the projects who have been shortlisted for this important award, and it was great hearing more about them when they visited the House of Commons today.”

Victoria Hills, Chief Executive of the Royal Town Planning Institute, and former Chair of the Transport Planning Society, said:

“Congratulations to all the finalists of these awards. The work that transport planners do is vital to ensure the connectivity of communities with essential services and jobs whilst balancing environmental and other issues.

“I am delighted that these awards recognise the importance of the work of transport planners in the UK. “

This year’s finalists are:

- Cycle Centres in Broxtowe
- Hackney Community Parklet
- Jaguar Land Rover Solihull Bicycle User Group
- Loch Earn Railway Path
- Sevenoaks Number 8 Bus
- Sevenoaks Vintage Bus

The People’s Award is part of the programme led by the Transport Planning Society with support from Arup, Aecom, PBA now part of Stantec, Atkins (a member of the SNC-Lavalin group), Meridian, Steer and Systra. It culminates in the Transport Planning Day (13 November) which will bring together transport planners and community groups for a discussion about best practice in community engagement and what transport planners should look to achieve in developing local schemes.

The Transport Planning Society was launched in 1997 as the professional body for transport planners in the UK. With over 1,000 members and 34 corporate members, the Society promotes best practice in transport planning and gives guidance, training and support to the profession.

ENDS

Notes to editors:

For further information about the Transport Planning Society and the People's Award, please contact Jo Field at jo@jfgcomms.co.uk or 07788 131347

Images of the special ceremony in the House of Commons and the shortlisted projects are available on request.

About the People's Award judging panel

The judging panel was chaired by Stephen Joseph OBE, former Chief Executive of Campaign for Better Transport. Other members of the judging panel included Steve Quartermain, Chief Planner at Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government; Tricia Hayes, Director General for Roads, Motoring and Devolution in the Department of Transport; and Mary Parsons, Group Director – Placemaking and Regeneration at Places for People.

About the Sevenoaks Town Partnership Vintage Bus Service:

Established in 2011, the Partnership is a Sevenoaks Town Council initiative bringing together a wide range of people from the local community to establish Sevenoaks as a prosperous and vibrant place to live, visit, shop and do business. The introduction of the Vintage Bus was one of its first projects. Designed to increase the number of visitors and improve footfall to the Town Centre in particular from visitors from the National Trust property, Knole.

Research indicated that 90 per cent of people visiting Knole drove straight there and then home without visiting the town. The bus operates as a hop-on, hop-off ticket (£3.00 day ticket). It operates during the summer months and is now in its sixth year. The circular route includes additional stops - Knole, The Stag (theatre and cinema), Sevenoaks Railway station, The Vine (common with cricket), Blighs (shopping centre) and the bus station.

Due to popular demand additional stops were added last year. Feedback indicates that during the Vintage Bus operation, independent businesses are more likely to receive international visitors. Local residents are now using the bus route often, instead of taking the car. Older people say they can now visit the town independently rather than waiting for their grown-up children visiting to take them. The bus operates using Volunteer Bus Conductors and local businesses are able to advertise at a reasonable rate on board.

About the Sevenoaks Route 8 bus service:

Sevenoaks Town Council commissioned an Integrated Transport Strategy which, during consultation for the strategy, one of the key needs identified was for a regular orbital service linking the

residential areas to the Town Centre. The Town Council worked with Kent County Council and local bus operator Go Coach to put in the place the provision of the No. 8 bus originally on a three-year trial.

The bus operates six days per week, linking the two train stations, bus station, residential areas and town centre. It operates on a loose figure of eight route – hence its name. The bus is regular and has a £2 one-way journey. The introduction of the No. 8 bus has also enabled the Town Council to provide free bus independent travel within the town for young people aged 11 to 18. Older passengers have said they find the bus a social experience meeting the same neighbours and conversing with the bus driver and helps sometimes with loneliness experiences. The No. 8 bus has been successful exceeding original business plan and attracts nearly 80 passengers per day.