

Stirling Observer Article from 11 December 2013

Parents save scrapped bus Private contract set to be agreed

Parents have stepped in to salvage a bus service that was axed earlier this year.

The S8 Dunblane High School service was scrapped at the start of the school year as part of a mass removal of council subsidies. Parents reacted with outcry, with many pupils facing a long walk to school and a free shuttle service was brought in on a trial basis for those who live more than two miles away from the school in September. However parents are now on the verge of securing a daily bus service to the school on a permanent basis after striking a deal with a bus company.

Kath Holcroft, who has two children at the school, said talks with First Bus are ongoing but it is hoped that the route will return on January 6 when the children restart school after their Christmas holidays. She told the Observer: "The parent council, led by Linsay Goodfellow, contacted all the relevant bus companies to see if they would consider taking on the contract from parents." "It was First Bus that came back with a service that works for us. The contract hasn't been signed yet, but we're hopeful.

"Essentially we thought we may need 40 pupils signed up to make it viable, but we now have about 32 or 33 and if nobody opts out then that would work. "For my children it is just over a two mile walk to the school and that's why I was prepared to do something about it." Under the plan proposed, the bus that takes younger children to the Dunblane Kids Club will also call at the High School both in the morning and the afternoon.

Green Councillor for Dunblane Mark Ruskell, who was contacted by several concerned constituents in September, thanked the parents for stepping in to save the service. 'congratulations to the parents who have won through in spite of the public transport cuts forced through earlier this year,' he said. "It's been too difficult to align commercial bus services with the start and finish of the school day, so hopefully this private contract bus, alongside spare seats on the one remaining education funded school bus can fill the gap. "I don't want to see any further cuts in council supported buses, but if more cuts are pushed through by the administration, then work must happen with communities in advance to develop alternatives."