



# NEWS RELEASE

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## LIBRARY AND BUS CUTS SQUEEZE RURAL LIFE

Oxfordshire's proposal to close 20 public libraries will hit rural communities already at risk of bus cuts, says the Oxford Group of independent bus passengers' organisation Bus Users UK.

Oxfordshire says users of libraries to be shut can go to a "hub" library a few miles away. However, the cost and travelling time to do so will put many people off using libraries. Bus fares are reasonable for what is in most cases a good service, but it all adds up. For families the combined cost of bus travel for a parent with two or three school-age children will be particularly high.

Rural communities would be hit hardest. Most rural communities facing library closures have only an hourly bus service to their nearest "hub". Worst-hit would be Deddington, Adderbury, Bampton, Chinnor, Woodcote, Berinsfield and Charlbury. In each case a round trip to a "hub" library would be time-consuming and for anyone without a concessionary bus pass it would be expensive as well.

If Deddington and Adderbury libraries close their "hub" will be Banbury. An adult return from Deddington or Adderbury to Banbury on Stagecoach route 59 is £5.50. An adult and two children travelling to Banbury and back could share a Goldrider family ticket for £12 which would save them 70p. Below are the fares for the Oxfordshire communities that would be worst hit.

Community	Buses	Operator	Frequency	Journey	Adult rtn	Child rtn	Adult +2 children
Deddington	59/A/B	Stagecoach	hourly	28 mins	£5.50	£3.60	<b>£12.00</b>
Adderbury	59/A/B	Stagecoach	hourly	19 mins	£5.50	£3.60	<b>£12.00</b>
Bampton	19	RH Buses	hourly	15 mins	£4.90	£3.20	<b>£11.30</b>
Chinnor	40	Arriva	hourly	24 mins	£4.50	£3.15	<b>£10.80</b>
Woodcote	X40	Thames Travel	hourly	25 mins	£4.10	£2.70	<b>£9.50</b>
Berinsfield	114, 116	Heyfordian	hourly	29 mins	£4.20	£2.10	<b>£8.40</b>
Charlbury	X9	RH Buses	hourly	24 mins	£3.50	£2.30	<b>£8.10</b>

Subsidised buses link Bampton, Chinnor, Berinsfield, Charlbury, North Leigh and Grove to the towns where their "hub" libraries are. The government is cutting £100 million from county council bus subsidy funds. From 2012 the government will also reduce the Bus Service Operators Grant fuel rebate which currently helps operators to run routes that are either subsidised or only just profitable.

Mobile libraries and Internet services cannot replace closed branches. Mobile libraries call only once a fortnight, mostly on weekdays when many people are working. Many rural residents have no broadband, so downloading large files such as e-books may be difficult and expensive.

Bus Users UK Oxford Group chairman Hugh Jaeger said:

*"Rising oil prices make it hard to keep down bus fares. Government cuts will hit bus services by cutting both subsidies and fuel rebates. If rural libraries shut, the cost for rural people to get to a "hub" library is likely to rise more quickly than their pay packets. Residents of Deddington, Adderbury, Bampton and Chinnor will be hit particularly hard."*

*"But Oxfordshire's library cuts would reduce access to only one set of services. Cutting buses would reduce access to all services. If Oxfordshire closes libraries then it should protect subsidised buses between those communities and their library "hubs"."*

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**Notes for editors:**

BUS USERS UK is a non-statutory body established as the National Federation of Bus Users in 1985 to give bus passengers a voice in the liberalisation and privatisation of bus services outside London.

Its aims are:

- To strengthen the voice of bus users in the discussion of public transport issues
- To increase the influence of bus passengers on local and national decisions affecting bus services
- To develop good communication between bus companies and their passengers

Its membership comprises mainly bus passengers, although its work has been recognised by the industry such that it also has representation in most major bus companies (outside London, which has its own representation body) and local authorities.

BUS USERS UK is a partner in the Bus Appeals Body, set up to help passengers where legitimate complaints about bus services have not been resolved satisfactorily, and organises Bus Users Surgeries in town centres throughout Britain to enable bus passengers to voice their concerns directly to bus company managers.