

ECONOMIC (IN)JUSTICE

FACTSHEET - STORY

Name	Rosemary Corcoran and Brian Mahony, Friends of the 65 Bus
Details, area of experience	Local residents, regular users of the 65 bus service
Interview date	November 2020
Issues addressed	Community cohesion, social isolation, climate change, access to services
Injustice category (linked to economic injustice)	ability <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> age <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> class <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> faith <input type="checkbox"/> gender <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> neuro-diversity <input type="checkbox"/> race <input type="checkbox"/> sexuality <input type="checkbox"/>
Dates mentioned	June 2018
Locations referenced	Chepstow, Monmouth, villages in between
Campaigns, movements, protests	Successful campaign to save and maintain the 65 bus route between Chepstow and Monmouth
Historical context	Cuts in local bus services, increased isolation of rural communities
Tactics	Petition in local shops, cafes etc; large visible poster ; making connections to key values of the council; continued activism to understand and maintain use and usability; website and social & local media .
Key words	Rural Services Isolation Community cohesion

	Climate emergency
Key points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Action started by one person ● Use of contacts in cafes etc to spread the word ● Linking to the Council's key values ● Listening to people who use the bus ● Emphasis on personal connections, the bus as a community, bringing people together ● Bus services as an asset in fighting climate change ● Winning the battle to keep the service is not the end – its usability has to be maintained and developed with needed changes

Story summary	<p>Rosemary and Brian tell the story of a group campaigning to save the 65 Bus route in Monmouthshire. They lobbied councillors and MPs, started a petition and encouraged support by talking to the community about rural isolation and climate change. Today, the bus remains vital for those who are isolated or vulnerable, and is now popular with other residents and visitors.</p> <hr/> <p>In June 2018 Rosemary realised the 65 bus service was going to be ended by Monmouthshire Council without consultation. She knew that the service was important to both the older and younger people in the area. It connects Chepstow and Monmouth and runs through several villages with few services (doctors, shops etc) and gives people a way of connecting with others. She decided she had to do something and started the campaign on her own, supported by local councillor Debbie Blakebrough who had campaigned previously on cuts to the timetable.</p> <p>Her aim was to overturn the council decision and keep the service running. Not being technical, she decided to start a paper petition and, using her contacts, got it into places such as shops, cafes, a community centre and a hospital. She also had a big poster on her garage gateway saying 'Save the Bus', for people to see when driving by. One Saturday she spent the whole day sitting on the bus, chatting to people about why they used it, and getting signatures. It was a very personal campaign and got over over-1,400 signatures.</p> <p>As the campaign developed, more priorities for keeping the bus running became apparent. With only one shop and two pubs on the route, people need to be able to get to Chepstow or Monmouth. They showed how the bus service met the Council's own priorities of <i>connecting communities, tackling rural isolation and addressing the climate emergency</i>. The bus service lifts communities and keeps people in touch, even if just to go down to the pub and meet people. And when a driver mentioned that a</p>
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	<p>regular elderly couple hadn't been on the bus for some time, a passenger went to see them and found they needed care and social help. The 65 Bus is important for people who are unable to drive, often because of mental or physical health issues, and the service provides their only means of independent travel and relief from isolation. A significant proportion of users are females travelling alone, often because they do not have access to a car, are unable to drive or no longer feel confident doing so. Both types of user would suffer injustice if the service were to be withdrawn. It also keeps cars off the roads. It was important to the campaign to connect the bus to council agendas and policies on climate emergency. An example of how using the bus connects to the issue of the climate came from two people who came new to the service. Having used it for a while, they found that they had done 1,200 miles less in their car than in the previous year, which saved a quarter ton of CO2.</p> <p>As a result of the petition, the decision was reversed. The bus was saved and is still running with a new vehicle and more passengers. However, the campaigners recognised the danger of politicians saying 'use it or lose it', and that ensuring growing use is not so simple. So, they looked at how easy it was to use and the importance of good information, marketing and promotion, as well as attempts to engage the community. They have worked hard at the changes needed to make the service usable and successful. People need to see it as a real community asset. They have a website with regular news and updates, as well as a Twitter account for professional and political contacts, thereby raising the profile of bus. Support from the local newspaper has helped. They want to be an example for users of other rural bus services around the UK.</p> <p>It will be a challenge after Covid-19 to get numbers back up.</p>
Stand-out quotations	<p>"I had to do something about it. I couldn't just let it go without something happening."</p> <p>"A rural bus is a community service – and there's a community on the bus."</p> <p>"It is very, very important for rural communities to have the community service of a bus."</p> <p>"If you believe in it, then do it. Don't be afraid to become an activist – we didn't expect to be."</p> <p>"It is for ordinary people like us to be involved if there's an issue that you believe strongly in and you can make a difference. Be prepared for a long haul ... keep it sustainable for the long term."</p>

	<p>“I feel very proud of what we’ve achieved. I feel also very humble that what I’ve done has actually made a difference to so many people over the past two years.”</p> <p>“We are relentlessly positive. There are ups and downs along the way and you can feel quite gloomy sometimes, but this is all about being positive.”</p> <p>“There are a lot of other rural buses in the UK, and if we can be an example to them, to keep fighting to keep the services going, I think we’re achieving more than just saving our bus, we’re helping a lot of people out there.”</p>
Main themes for learners	<p>Learning more about challenges faced by people in rural communities.</p> <p>If you believe something needs changing, you can act – even one person can get things going.</p> <p>The importance of listening to people, finding out their needs.</p> <p>Thinking about ways to improve community cohesion in your own locality.</p> <p>Thinking about how to relieve isolation, both with human interaction and structural changes (like keeping a bus service).</p> <p>The role played by good public transport networks in addressing the climate emergency.</p>

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