



Riding high as community celebrates revamped bus stops

A beautifully-crafted timber shelter is the centerpiece of a revitalised bus service serving villages around Petersfield and Midhurst.

Residents gathered to celebrate the unveiling of Rogate's unique bus shelter – designed and built by woodsman Ben Law, who was made famous by his intricate “house in the woods” on Channel 4's *Grand Designs*.

It comes as the parishes of Rogate, Compton, Westbourne, Trotton, Chithurst, and Harting have joined forces to help ensure local bus services survive, with regular meetings to discuss ways of ensuring the services stay viable.

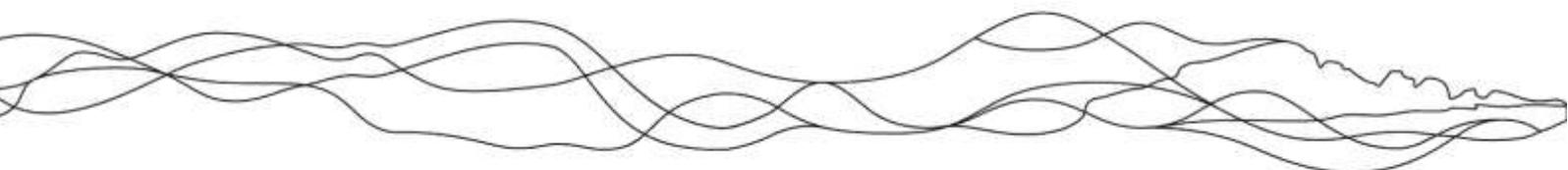


As part of the initiative, the rundown bus shelter in the centre of Rogate has been replaced with the attractive timber shelter, partly funded by the South Downs National Park Authority and sourced from local wood.

Rogate Parish Council also replaced three other shelters in the village through the West Sussex Volunteers Scheme, which saw local volunteers building the structures.



Meanwhile, Stagecoach, which took over the running of the Service 54 and Service 91/92/93 in April 2018, has revamped all bus stops along the routes with colourful South Downs-inspired branding. Since taking over the routes passenger numbers have steadily increased.



At the unveiling of the new shelter, Mary Collins, who has lived in Rogate for 55 years, said: “It’s a really lovely bus shelter, especially now winter is on the way.



“We just want to keep the buses going – they’re so important to us. Lots of us don’t have a car and have appointments, dentists, and shopping.”

Sheila Burtoo, who has lived in Rogate over 30 years, said: “We rely on these buses – they are so important for the village. It makes it a community.”

Max Harwood, from Rogate Parish Council said: “The old bus shelter was quite tatty and this one is actually quite a feature in the village.

“It’s great that it’s built from wood in the local area so fits in with the whole ethos of the South Downs.”

Local District and County Councillor Kate O’Kelly added: “The buses that go through these villages are absolutely vital, particularly to the elderly, vulnerable and an increasing number of young people who don’t drive.

“It’s absolutely critical to the survival of these villages. We’ve formed this group to keep telling the county who support bus services how important it is.”



Allison Thorpe, who leads access and recreation in the National Park, said: “This has been a lovely initiative to support as we know how vital these bus services are for local communities, as well as being an important transport link for visitors to the National Park.

“Buses provide a unique experience for seeing the beautiful landscape. You are higher up and obviously get a better view! As part of the National Park’s drive towards sustainable transport, we’re keen for visitors to see catching the bus as part of the day-out, rather than just a means of going from A to B.

“When visitors support buses it also keeps these services viable for local communities.”

For more information contact:

Jeff Travis, Media and Public Relations Officer, South Downs National Park Authority

Direct Line: 01730 819252, Mobile: 07557 853277, Email: press@southdowns.gov.uk

www.southdowns.gov.uk

