

Press Release

**From Councillor Barry Stamp
Stafford Borough Councillor
Church Eaton Ward**

Date : 2nd April 2006

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Lack of Spare Capacity Could Mean No New Bus Services for Isolated Villages

A leading Stafford Councillor has criticised the County Council's insistence that Rural Link can provide local bus services to areas where Arriva services have recently been withdrawn.

Church Eaton Ward Councillor, Barry Stamp, made the comment after news that villagers living in Seighford were pressing for addition Rural Link bus services to be provided following the scrapping of the Arriva 433 service through the Village.

"When the announcement was made a few weeks ago that buses serving Bradley, Church Eaton and Seighford were to be scrapped, the County Council insisted that the local communities would not be adversely affected as these could be replaced by ones operated by Rural Link. However what they failed to tell anyone was that Rural Link only have one seven-seater vehicle on the road and that this is already running a very busy timetable. Last week residents of Seighford asked for a new Rural Link service, and I am aware that similar requests are going to be made by residents of Bradley and Church Eaton. While I admire and the support the work that Rural Link are doing I would question if they have the capacity to provide all the extra services that are required. They are already committed to running services for other villages at popular times I am worried that the spare capacity they do have will be at unusual and inconvenient times. Following the withdrawal of the 412 service Bradley now has no buses at all for five days a week. What they need is a well thought-out service which fits in with the needs of residents and not one dictated by a vacant slot on a timetable. As the County Council were subsidising the services that have been lost in Bradley, Church Eaton and Seighford they could, if they wanted, re-tender for another larger bus company to take them over. This would ensure a proper service was maintained at times the villages wanted. However I believe that the underlying reason for cutting these services in the first place was the County Council desire to save money so any suggestion that goes against this plan, is I fear bound to fail. Even-so I have written to the Council urging them to re-tender the services as soon as possible," said Cllr Stamp.

"To make matters worse Government funding for Rural Link runs out in 2007 and they have clearly stated that they do not intend to provide more cash after that date. This could mean that even if extra services are provided to Bradley, Church Eaton and

Seighford they could disappear next year in any case. The long term future for these village bus services really does rest with the County Council” added Barry Stamp.

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