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UK Bus Network

I believe that transport should be considered a fundamental human right and that the Government should regulate accordingly.

I know the report on bus services in the UK authored by the former UN Special Rapporteur on Extreme Poverty and Human Rights found them to be costly, fragmented and inadequate. It states that as a result, “many people have lost jobs and benefits, faced barriers to healthcare, been forced to give up on education, sacrificed food and utilities, and been cut off from friends and family”.

Buses are a public service which should be run for the public good. It is clear that Deregulation has not worked for most bus users and people in this country.

I have concerns about the Government’s national bus strategy. It is, in my opinion, a missed opportunity and has not delivered a radical transition to a zero-emission fleet. We are still waiting for almost all of the 4,000 zero emission buses promised last year. While we wait, cuts to bus services and rising ticket costs push more people into using more polluting forms of transport.

The more integrated set-up between local authorities and operators announced in the strategy is welcome, but mayors like Steve Rotherham and local transport authorities wanting to bring in franchising still face countless hurdles and ideological barriers. I am concerned that the Government is leaving it to others to chart the complicated course of winning support for greater public control of our bus networks.

It would be far better for councils to be supported in their efforts to start up, and run, municipal bus services that meet the needs of their communities. This could be a genuinely ambitious alternative, including overhauling access to public buses in rural areas with an “every village, every hour” approach to support those communities who need better access to healthcare, education and jobs.

I assure you I will continue to support calls to reverse the millions of miles of bus routes lost across the country and for the Government to support this crucial sector.

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