

Report Purpose

Events/Bus Report

Author

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Background

One of the key aims of the Community Transport Working Group is to help ensure Macclesfield has a sustainable, accessible and inclusive community transport system.

In 2023, the Committee agreed to partner with the local bus operator, D&G Bus, to provide two free bus days in the lead-up to Christmas, helping connect communities across Macclesfield during the festive season.

The initiative was introduced following the withdrawal of the four free event parking days previously provided by Cheshire East Council to Macclesfield Town Council.

The free bus days were intended to provide an alternative means of supporting residents to access the town centre and its seasonal events.

The objectives of the scheme were to:

- Support residents and families without access to a car by removing transport barriers and enabling them to enjoy Christmas events and activities in the town centre.
- Encourage a shift towards more sustainable travel, helping to reduce car journeys and their environmental impact.
- Promote long-term behaviour change by encouraging people who would normally drive into town to try using local bus services instead.
- Help residents become more familiar and confident with using the local bus network, making it easier to identify routes, locate bus stops and incorporate public transport into their everyday journeys.
- Encourage families and young people to experience bus travel, supporting greater use of local services and helping to sustain the network for the future.

The scheme therefore sought not only to improve access to the town centre during the festive period but also to encourage wider use of public transport, supporting both environmental objectives and the long-term viability of local bus services.

Both free bus days were successful, attracting significant passenger numbers and generating positive feedback from residents. Many commented that the initiative made it easier and more affordable to visit the town centre and enjoy the festive events

Town Council agreed to continue funding free bus travel on selected event days, recognising the scheme's contribution to improving accessibility, supporting the local economy, encouraging sustainable travel and promoting greater use of the local bus network.

The below table shows the bus usage for each of the Town Council organised/supported events vs a “normal” day, for the last 12 months.

2025

Event	%increase from "normal"
Do Something Summer	40
Do Something Summer	29
Do Something Summer	36
Do Something Summer	70
Do Something Summer	73
Do Something Summer	12
Step Into Christmas	34

2026

Event	%increase from "normal"
Lunar New Year	37
Easter	34
Bikeathon	1
Macc in May	21
1261	36
Macc Pow	11
Macc Pride	13

All events show a healthy percentage increase from a “normal” day.

Many other Town Councils expressed interest in this initiative, and Cheshire East Council has recently announced a new scheme enabling each Town Council to claim four free bus days to coincide with local events.

Officers suggest it would be best to use the CEC days for some of our smaller events, and for MTC to continue funding free to use bus days for the larger events such as 1261 and Christmas, as we can control the promotion of both elements.

We have suggested to CEC that we use the free bus days for

- Textile Week (Sep 26)
- Remembrance Sunday (Nov 26)
- Lunar New Year (Feb 27)
- Easter (Mar 27)