

NEWS RELEASE



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

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Issued by: Debby Morgan

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FREE BUS TRAVEL THIS FESTIVE SEASON

Wokingham Borough Council is planning to offer free bus travel on the six Saturdays leading up to Christmas, with a [decision due to be made this week](#) following officer recommendations. This follows on from a [decision made last week](#) (31 October) to offer free town centre parking for those attending two Sunday Christmas events in Wokingham and Woodley.

The free travel and parking are being paid for from national grant funding and so do not come at cost to the local taxpayer – which is important as the council faces a difficult financial position, with low government funding, high costs and increasing needs among its resident

Free bus travel for all

Free bus travel for all is on the cards on the six Saturdays leading up to Christmas as well as for [Wokingham Winter Carnival](#) and [Woodley Christmas Extravaganza](#), with a decision set to be made by Cllr Paul Fishwick, executive member for active travel, transport and highways this week (10 November).

Cllr Fishwick said: “Offering free bus travel on Saturdays in November and December and for the Sunday Wokingham Winter Carnival and Woodley Christmas Extravaganza would be a great help to a lot of our residents.

“The free bus travel would help people who don’t drive, prefer not to drive or are struggling to afford to run their car at the moment, whether visiting friends and family, stocking up on festive gifts and treats or getting to and from work. If it has been a while since you have taken the bus, why not take advantage of a free trip to see what you’ve been missing.”

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Wokingham Borough Council has put forward proposals to use around £47,000 of a £400,000 grant, which was awarded to the council by the Department for Transport (DfT) for bus improvements, to fund the free travel meaning there is no cost to the council.

If agreed, the free bus travel will run each Saturday from 18 November until 23 December for services starting in the borough, as well as extra free travel for those travelling to and from the Wokingham Winter Carnival and Woodley Christmas Extravaganza on specific routes.

The council has already agreed free town centre parking for visitors to Wokingham Winter Carnival and Woodley Christmas Extravaganza, thanks to an economic development grant, which will cover the shortfall in income of around £12,000.

Supporting our local businesses

Cllr Clive Jones, executive member for business and economic development, added: “Wokingham and Woodley’s festive events are hugely popular and bring thousands of people into the towns. By offering free parking, and planning free bus travel as well, we’ll help everyone attending the festivals and all those people who run the stalls that make these such great community events.

“We are working on a range of activities to support our local businesses – we know it’s a difficult time for them and being able to provide free bus travel on the major shopping days leading up to Christmas should help encourage footfall for them. And, because it’s being paid for entirely by a DfT grant, there is no extra cost to our taxpayers.”

Travel free by bus

If you board a bus within Wokingham borough on any Saturday between 18 November and 23 December, you won’t need to pay. Additionally, the Lion 4/X4 will be free on 26 November for the Wokingham Winter Carnival and the Orange 13/14 on 3 December for Woodley Christmas Extravaganza.

If you’re travelling outside the borough, you will need to pay for your return journey, unless a similar scheme is in place in the area where you board.

This will only be on local buses, operated by Reading Buses and Thames Valley Buses and won’t be provided on services such as park and rides or football specials.

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Routes included in proposals

Reading Buses on Saturdays 18 November to 25 November:

- Leopard 3
- Lion 4 and 4X
- Route 9
- Orange 13 and 14
- Little Oranges 19a-c
- Claret 21 and 21a
- Route 600 & 603.

Thames Valley Buses on Saturdays 18 November to 25 November:

- Route 121
- Route 122 and 123
- Route 124
- Route 125 and 125A and B
- Route 127, 128 and 129.

Sunday 26 November:

- Reading Buses Lion 4 and 4X

Sunday 3 December:

- Reading Buses Orange 13 and 14

Park for free at winter events

Free parking will be available for visitors to Wokingham and Woodley town centres for their festive events to help support local businesses and stallholders, many of whom are charities.

Wokingham Winter Carnival takes place on Sunday 26 November, and on this date all council owned Wokingham town centre car parks will be free to use.

The weekend after, Sunday 3 November, the Woodley Town Christmas Extravaganza takes place and on this date all council owned car parks in Woodley town centre will be free to use.

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More information is available below, however, please note the ticket machines and RingGo will not be changed on these dates, and you will not need to enter a registration or purchase a ticket. If you do purchase a ticket, regrettably refunds will not be available. Notices will be on display in the car parks on these dates.

How will it work

Parking will be provided free of charge from 10pm on the Saturday evening prior to the event dates at the car parks below.

There will be no requirement to pay by the RingGo parking app or at the ticket machines until 6am on the Monday morning after the event date, or to get a free vend ticket.

Both RingGo and the ticket machines will remain fully operational over this period and if you use either you will be charged. Refunds will not be available for any payments made during the free parking period.

Which car parks are included?

Sunday 26 November Wokingham Winter Carnival free parking in the following car parks:

- Rose street
- Easthampstead Road East and West
- Cockpit Path
- Denmark Street
- Carnival multi-storey car park
- Shute End car parks

Sunday 3 December Woodley Christmas Extravaganza free parking in the following car parks:

- Headley Road
- Crockhamwell Road
- Lytham Road East and West

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Further information:

1. More from Cllr Clive Jones at clive.jones@wokingham.gov.uk
2. More from Cllr Paul Fishwick at paul.fishwick@wokingham.gov.uk