



Winchester Friends of the Earth Transport Group  
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**Press Release**  
**Park & Ride Winchester South Decision**

Hampshire County Council's Policy and Resources Committee has recently rubber-stamped the Winchester South Park and Ride scheme, despite the fact that its cost has risen by over 40% in just 10 months. The County Council is borrowing to finance this car park in the same year that it has taken the decision to cut support for conventional bus services in Winchester. The £7.1M price tag of the scheme would buy the whole bus support for Winchester for 10 years.

Chris Gillham, for Winchester Friends of the Earth, said that *'The economics of this decision are extraordinary. Apparently the Council will be borrowing money for this car park and paying interest equivalent to all the support it currently offers to conventional bus services. Yet at the same time it is cutting that support after being told by the Government that it is not doing enough to increase bus patronage'*.

The Committee meeting was more remarkable, however, for the fact that officers admitted that the scheme would increase traffic overall in Winchester, something that Friends of the Earth have been saying all along. A County officer said that the purpose of the scheme was to intercept some commuter traffic, but admitted that as a result the central car parks would attract more short-stay trips. The Leader of the Council, Ken Thornber, gave the go-ahead to the scheme, but refused to tie this to any kind of commitment by the City Council to provide complementary car park reduction in the centre.

Chris Gillham said *'We know that despite promises, over 25 years, to reduce central car parking in Winchester, no such action has been taken. The suggestion that the Town Access Plan might at long last contemplate real action on traffic in the City must, therefore, be taken with much more than a pinch of salt. The County Council, by giving unqualified approval to the City for yet another traffic-generating car park, has given it carte blanche to carry on business as usual – more traffic, more carbon, more air pollution, less and less chance to bring about the civilised 'shared space' it preaches about.'*

Winchester FoE has developed a transport strategy for Winchester, which shows a clear path to more efficient access of people to the City centre, which is both economically and environmentally beneficial. The strategy points to the huge waste of resources represented by acres of central car parking and how those resources could be put to better use supporting a gradual but systematic transformation of transport access to the City whilst at the same time allowing Winchester to profit from its very special environmental assets. Gillham said *'It is all about getting the environment right - make the streets of Winchester a place where people want to be and the economy is likely to evolve to benefit from that environment. If we carry on thinking of Winchester as competing with the ordinary, we merely perpetuate its 'clone town' dreariness.'*