

NEWS

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Facility has been fixed

A NEW sports facility in Lyme Regis was closed for repairs yesterday.

The Multi Use Games Area (MUGA) in Anning Road was closed on Wednesday so that the town council could make repairs following a night of vandalism.

As reported, the newly opened MUGA was damaged by jobs and has cost the town council a further £1,500.

It only opened in July after a £100,000 project was completed.

At the time of the vandalism, the town council expressed their 'disappointment' following a night of anti social behaviour.

The new facility features line markings and nets for football, basketball, netball and pickleball, but any ball sports can be played there.

It reopens today following the repairs.



Local transport campaigner Stewart Palmer is opposed to the cuts

Bus route axe fears

Andy Jones

KEY bus services in west Dorset are set to be cut this winter with local transport campaigners expressing concern.

First's new winter bus schedule - starting on Sunday, September 21 - will see vital services between Dorchester, Bridport and Axminster cut significantly.

The X51 and X53 schedule will see just five services run each way on weekdays between Dorchester and Bridport, with the last service departing an hour earlier than now. On top of that, only three westbound and four eastbound services will run on Saturdays, with none on Sundays.

Services operating from Bridport and Lyme Regis to Axminster have also been reduced, with the new timings providing poorer connections to rail services in Exeter.

For those needing to arrive in Exeter by 9am, they would need to leave Bridport at 5.55am. Getting home would be equally difficult

- the connection arrives back in Bridport at 7.42pm.

None of the local Transport Action Groups (TAGs) were formally consulted on these changes.

In a joint statement from the groups, they said: "These service reductions go against everything that Dorset Council is promoting in their Local Transport Plan (LTP4) which is currently out for consultation. This political decision to reduce bus services on these core routes will only force more people to take to their cars."

During the summer, the X51 and X53 operate as commercial services run by First, without any financial support from the council. Each winter, First introduces a reduced timetable, as has been their long-standing practice.

The council said First approached it 'very late in the process,' and requested a 'significantly higher subsidy' than last winter to continue operating the service. However, given the 'sharp increase' in cost and limited public funding, the council said it could

not agree to the request.

A spokesperson for Dorset Council added: "To avoid losing the service entirely, council officers worked swiftly with First to revise the route and operating pattern."

"These changes reduced the financial burden on the council while helping to secure the long-term viability of the service—not just for winter, but with improvements for the Weymouth area throughout the year."

"The council can only influence them when public funding is involved, and even then, we are constrained by available resources and the operator's legal obligations, such as driver hours and rest periods."

The council also confirmed it is working with First to consider adjustments to better connect with the 7.35am Axminster train to Exeter.

The spokesperson added: "We will also continue to engage with local groups to monitor the winter service and strengthen this vital east-west route."

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Difficult decisions say bosses

A BUS operator has responded to cuts to its services in west Dorset.

A spokesperson for First Bus said: "During the winter months, the X51 and X53 is a subsidised service. Following negotiations with Dorset Council, we have had to make some difficult decisions which has resulted in us reducing some timetables."

"We operate a reduced network during the winter months every

year due to reduced demand, and the service changes implemented so far are largely the same as the changes implemented last year."

First Bus has said that whilst the level of service for the X53 'has dipped,' it will be offering an increased service on the 1/10 route, which will serve Poundbury on a Sunday - this was not in place before.

The bus operator added: "We

are continuing to work with the council to explore potential adjustments, where possible. Any changes we make to services are kept under review, and any further decisions will be based on additional feedback from the public, consultations with local authorities and our own data."

"Full changes to the timetable will be communicated to customers by the end of the week."