

Free Bus Travel

As to funding both bus companies and local councils are less than transparent in their dealings. The money coming down from Government is NOT ring **fenced**, the councils DO NOT want it ring fenced and therefore it is not always used on the free travel. The imprecise nature of funding does not end **there**, the half price fare travel in **2000**, the gender balance money for men and women in **2002**, the local bus pass money in 2006 is still in little parcels *within* the **grant** and none of it ring fenced, along with the now much talked about 2008 Act special **grant**, is it any wonder that bus companies and councils can make it up as they choosc! That makes a **scparatc amounts** of money together spread over 280 local authorities all negotiating with a few big companies *skilled* in such negotiations.

The money coming from Central Government needs to allocated at least on a county basis and then a tighter **grip** made ⁰¹¹ the bus companies with better **auditing** of their arrangements.

In some cases some bus operators DO NOT book the fares correctly. the pensioner boards a bus at one stop gets off at a couple stops further on , but that fare is booked to the end of route journey. Bus companies should have invested in computers to scan the passes but clearly have not because they state "*It is to **expensive***", so some bus companies carry on with what tantamount to fraudulent deception of the councils and therefore these bus companies make a bigger profit and the pensioner gets the blame because the councils complain they are losing money because of the free bus passes.

The Act clearly states; Operators should be "no better and no worse **off**", yet some plead poverty and others show pensioner travel as a healthy contributor to their bottom line. All it needs is the political will to realise that society as a whole benefits from the inclusion within it of the senior members of that society. It is easy in a recession to find someone to blame.

Older people are not without *some* disposable income and they spend that income in the precincts and town centres on their trips **out**, contributing to those local economies and their communities. For the tourist centres to spend millions of pounds advertising for visitors and then complain when the pensioner visit smacks of greed and hypocrisy.