

# Kent Freedom Pass and Kent 16+ Travel Card Review

## Information for parents & students

The Kent Freedom Pass scheme and the Kent 16+ Travel Card scheme are currently being reviewed by the Council in advance of the next academic year (starting in September 2014).

- 1) What is happening?
- 2) Why is KCC doing this?
- 3) Are the schemes going to stop completely?
- 4) How are they likely to change?
- 5) When will we know for sure what's happening?
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- 10) Why couldn't you just expand the Freedom Pass?
- 11) What will it cost and how much will it save?
- 12) Will I still be able to use the pass on the same buses?
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### **1) What is happening?**

Kent County Council is currently reviewing the Kent Freedom Pass and the Kent 16+ Travel Card schemes taking account of cost and the expansion of the Kent Freedom Pass.

### **2) Why is KCC doing this?**

The Council received a petition signed by over 16,000 residents calling for the Kent Freedom Pass scheme to be expanded to include children attending college and 6<sup>th</sup> form. Council budgets are also under significant pressure and KCC spend over £13 million each year supporting the Kent Freedom Pass scheme and over £1.5 million supporting the 16+ Travel Card both of which are discretionary.

### **3) Are the schemes going to stop completely?**

No. Whilst the Council does not have to provide either scheme and they are very expensive to run, KCC remains committed to helping children and parents with access to the bus network for travel to school and further education, so wants to keep something in place. While many people enjoyed the benefits of unlimited bus travel, KCC must prioritise its spending and pre-consultation engagement and research has suggested that school transport is the most important part of the service.

#### **4) How are they likely to change?**

A decision will be made after the consultation closes and the results are analysed.

The current proposals are;

Kent Freedom Pass – replaced by the Young Persons Travel Pass.

The cost of a pass will double from £100 to £200 per annum and use of the pass will be restricted to between the hours of 0600 and 1900 on Mondays to Fridays only.

Kent 16+Travel Card Amendment – cost reduced from £520 to £400 per annum without a restriction on when it can be used.

#### **5) When will we know for sure what's happening?**

There will be a consultation on the proposed scheme; once this is complete a decision will be made. This is likely to be at the end of March.

#### **6) How will the new scheme work, what will the card cost and what will I get in return?**

The current proposals are;

Kent Freedom Pass – replaced by the Young Persons Travel Pass.

The cost of a pass will double from £100 to £200 per annum and use of the pass will be restricted to between the hours of 0600 and 1900 on Mondays to Fridays only.

Kent 16+Travel Pass Amendment – cost reduced from £520 to £400 per annum without a restriction on when it can be used.

#### **7) Will it cost me more over the year and what if I can't afford it?**

Yes, but it remains a very generous offer which is not available anywhere else outside of London. It is likely that the reduced charge for low income families (those who qualify for free school meals) will continue and the Council is also considering whether it might be able to split the overall cost to parents perhaps by offering half year passes.

#### **8) What other options have been considered?**

A range of options have been considered some of which would have increased the cost to parents significantly more than proposed option, and indeed would have cost more overall for 16-19 year olds. These have included a capped credit (Oyster Card) type scheme and a half fare scheme. The proposed scheme is the most equitable way of extending the scheme.

**9) I have chosen my most appropriate school based on the current Freedom scheme. How will I be affected?**

Unfortunately there are no special, transitional arrangements proposed for children already in the school system and the cost of the Kent Freedom Pass will increase.

**10) Why couldn't you just expand the Freedom Pass?**

Simply expanding the Kent Freedom Pass scheme to 16-19 year olds would have costs the Council £millions more in subsidy each year and this simply could not be afforded.

**11) What will it cost and how much will it save?**

The new scheme is estimated to save the Council approximately £3 million per year which means that it will still cost KCC in excess of £10 million.

**12) Will I still be able to use the pass on the same buses?**

Yes. It is not proposed to restrict use of the pass by service but the Freedom Pass will not be valid for travel after 1900 or at weekends. Children will still be able to travel on every public bus service in Kent which is the same as the Kent Freedom Pass and Kent 16+ Travel Card schemes. More information about the services which can be used is available on the website

**13) What happens next?**

The Council will make an announcement after the consultation ends. We will then need to work really hard to make sure that the scheme is ready for the start of the next School year in September 2014. You should be able to apply for your pass at the start of the summer as currently happens.

More information about the Kent Freedom Pass scheme is available at;

[www.kent.gov.uk/kentfreedompass](http://www.kent.gov.uk/kentfreedompass)

More information about the Kent 16+ Travel Card is available at;

[www.kent.gov.uk/post16travel](http://www.kent.gov.uk/post16travel)

To contribute to the consultation please go to;

<http://consultations.kent.gov.uk/consult.ti/TravelPass/consultationHome>