

# A CHANGE OF TUNE

## THE UK GOVERNMENT'S CLAIMS ON BUS DEREGULATION

### 1984 BUSES WHITE PAPER

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### 2021 NATIONAL BUS STRATEGY FOR ENGLAND

Department of Transport, Scottish Office, Welsh Office, Buses, 1984.

Department for Transport, Bus Back Better: National Bus Strategy for England, March 2021.

“Competition provides the opportunity for lower fares, new services, more passengers.” (p. 3)

“[S]ervices became unstable and confusing; the quality of vehicles fell and fares in many places rose sharply.” (p. 19)

“More people would travel.” (p. 2)

“Bus services have been in decline for a long time.” (p. 19)

“If one operator fails to provide a service that is wanted, another will.” (p. 2)

“Many communities have lost their daily bus services altogether. Others have services for only a few hours a day.” (p. 47)

“Competition also brings continuing pressure to keep costs down.” (p. 2)

“Average bus fares have risen by 403% since 1987.” (p. 59)

“A free market encourages a quicker response to what the customers want than a regulated system ever could.” (p. 13)

“Services can be confusing, split between different companies who do not accept each other’s tickets or, in some cases, acknowledge each other’s existence.” (p. 8)

“Without the dead hand of restrictive regulation...[n]ew and better services would be provided.” (p. 2)

“This model doesn’t always work for passengers. There is often no incentive for integrated ticketing, or for operators to run services that are not profitable...” (p. 38)

“There can be no doubt that major improvements in efficiency are possible, given the right pressures to identify and secure them.” (p. 16)

“The legacy of the 1980s ‘bus wars’ is overprovision, with dozens of buses per hour, including with duplicate competing services which do not accept each other’s tickets. This is wasteful, polluting and can paradoxically make services slower and less attractive.” (p. 45)

“Transfer to the private sector also removes any potential future liability on the taxpayer to provide capital or make good losses.” (p. 17)

“Few services could now survive without emergency state support. If we are not to abandon entire communities, services cannot be planned purely on a commercial basis.” (p. 8)

“Informal measures of cooperation between operators will develop to ensure that their services connect.” (p. 53)

“The way the bus industry works, with few incentives for operators and local authorities to work together, has made it harder to cope with these trends, or to act strategically.” (p. 19)