

BUS

Following on from the success of the MetroConnect Leeds FreeCityBus and Huddersfield FreeTownBus, Metro launched the Wakefield FreeCityBus in April 2007.

Used by over 3,600 passengers in its first week of operation and 100,000 in its first four months, the service links key city-centre locations including the Westgate and Kirkgate rail stations, the bus station, shops and edge of city retail parks. It runs every ten minutes from 7.30am to 7pm Monday to Friday and from 8.30am to 5pm on Saturdays.

When it celebrated its first anniversary in October 2007, Huddersfield's FreeTownBus had been used by over 250,000 passengers.

Another new development was the launch of the first MetroLocal services in North Huddersfield, South Huddersfield and the Spenn Valley.

Jointly funded by Metro and Kirklees Council, MetroLocal are innovative new bus services designed to provide people with links to local services such as health and community centres, libraries, Post Offices and shops. Adults pay just £1 to travel anywhere along the route, and MetroCard, West Yorkshire DayRover and Metro concessionary permits can be used too.

Recognising that many shops, restaurants and entertainment centres now open on 26 December, Metro funded a trial of Boxing Day services on over 25 busy routes in the Kirklees and Leeds areas. Passengers were able to travel for a flat, all-day fare of £2 (£1 half fare) and every adult travelling was able to take one child free. MetroCards and concessionary travel for senior, young, disabled, and blind people applied.

Over 37,000 trips were made with an average of over 30 passengers per journey with most people using the services to go shopping. Feedback was very positive and will provide key pointers for further trials on Boxing Day 2008 and possibly New Year's Day 2009.

At the national Bus Industry Awards, Metro took runner-up spot in the Bus in the Countryside category for its development of rural service 923 between Otley, Wetherby and Tadcaster, and was commended in the Infrastructure category for its programme of bus-stop improvements.

In March, Metro confirmed that it is investigating the introduction of a Bus Quality Contract in the Wakefield district as one way of improving local bus services. The Wakefield district is close to areas covered by the neighbouring South Yorkshire Passenger Transport Executive, which is also looking to progress the Quality Contract model and represents the best initial opportunity to package a number of contracts.

