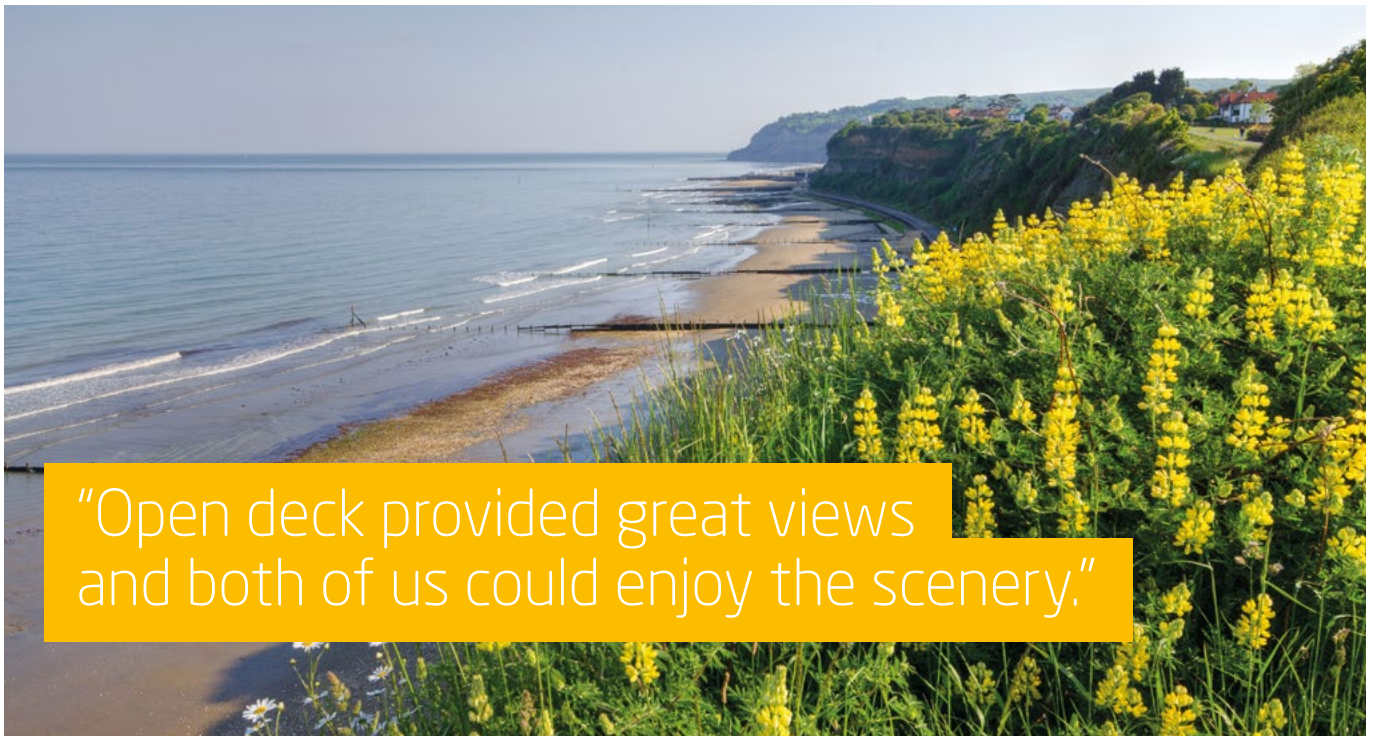


Visitor Bus Key Card Loans

A free bus pass for visitors with cars reached a significant proportion of habitual car drivers and got them onto a bus, some for the first time in many years, for a positive experience.





“Open deck provided great views and both of us could enjoy the scenery.”

The Isle of Wight has an extensive network of bus routes and travelling by bus offers the opportunity to see much more of the iconic Island landscapes. Yet surveys undertaken by Tourism South East had identified that less than 11% of visitors use the bus as their main mode of transport, compared to 58% which use a private car.²⁹

The Visitor Bus Key Card project was an innovative project designed to increase volumes of visitor bus travel. This project, which ran between June 2017 and September 2020, provided around 40 selected accommodation providers with free bus passes (key cards) pre-loaded with 30 days of travel valid on any scheduled or visitor bus service provided by Southern Vectis. These were offered to guests with cars (and who did not have a bus pass already) to encourage them to explore the Island by bus instead. Accommodation providers signed an agreement to ensure that staff were aware of the scheme, and could support guests with bus journey planning.

The bus passes proved very popular, with a total of 956 bus trips made in the first 3 months of the project alone. It is estimated that over the course of the project the bus passes were used by over 2,500 visitors to make over 21,000 bus trips.

This was estimated to have avoided around 122,000 car km and 22 tonnes greenhouse gases.

The Bus Key Card project clearly reached people who were not regular bus users. Based on the survey data there were a significant proportion (approximately one third) who had not used a bus for a year or more, or did not know, or could not remember, the last time they had used a bus. The vast majority of people rated the bus service highly: with over 90% rating customer service, reliability, punctuality, cleanliness and ease of use as good or excellent.

From the additional comments made it was clear that visitors enjoyed their bus journeys, with many citing lack of parking issues, more relaxed journeys (particularly in view of the narrow country roads), great views from the top of the bus and generally having great fun. It also allowed visitors to enjoy other modes. Typical comments included:

“Fabulous – very enjoyable car free day – made a change.”

“We used buses to get back to the starting points of our long walks, meaning we didn’t need to do circular walks.”

“Great as no need to park – got bus one way and train back – great day out.”

²⁹ Combined results from visitor surveys (Tourism Trends) from April 2019 to end of December 2019. The surveys were paused in March 2020 due to COVID-19.