

Reprieve for vital Aspatria rural bus service

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Villagers near Aspatria have won their battle to bring back a 'survival link' rural bus service.

A community campaign has earned a reprieve for the route 39 from Bothel to Carlisle.

The Reays service was axed in April after Cumbria County Council scrapped subsidies for the route as part of spending cuts.

It was one of 19 routes affected to make council savings of £340,000 a year.

But now it has been announced that the twice-weekly service which stops in Aspatria, Wigton and villages including Fletchertown, will be revived from July 5.

Bromfield parish councillor Phill Roberts helped fight to keep the service described as a lifeline, particularly for elderly people living in remote areas.

He hailed the developments as a victory for local campaigning. "People are delighted. If we had not picked up on this it would have died a death. It needs people to campaign to save things. It is really good of Reays. It is to be a commercial route and we have to make it work."

Mr Roberts added that local people will be looking to launch a community bus scheme for other routes in the future. Reays has also pledged to continue the number 88 Wigton town bus, taking people to various stops in the market town each working week day. The service will also be extended from July 11, running between 8.15am and 5.30pm.

Chris Reay, managing director of Reays, has also announced a new number 72 shopper service from Caldbeck to Carlisle. Launched on July 6, it will run on Wednesdays, stopping at villages including Hesketh Newmarket. The Caldbeck route will be branded as a Village Hopper service by Reays.

Mr Reay said: "We are working very closely with Cumbria County Council, local councillors and local residents. We are running these services on a commercial basis, with no subsidy, so the numbers will have to add up."

Passengers will be able to use their NoW concession cards and passes on all routes.