

CHARITY BUS IS DROPPED

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CHARITY fundraisers have voiced their disappointment at the announcement that the popular Stroud Carol Bus will not be on the road this Christmas.

Organisers behind the annual festive service confirmed yesterday that the future of the carol bus, which has entertained Gloucestershire families and raised thousands of pounds during the past 21 years, is still in doubt.

They blamed the move on the upheaval of recent management changes following the takeover of Stroud Valley's buses by national transport giant Stagecoach.

Cancel

"Because of the changing scene of the bus company at Stroud we simply haven't had the time or the facilities to put the carol bus on this year," revealed Ian Frost, secretary of the carol bus committee.

"Rather than put out a half-hearted rushed job we have reluctantly decided to cancel it this year."

The carol bus is run by bus employees and goes out for around 30 days in the lead up to Christmas taking seasonal music and Father Christmas to almost every town and village south of Gloucester.

by Andy Read

With sponsorship from the bus company, which pays its running costs, and Pathfinder Tours, which organises an accompanying draw, it has become a popular feature of the festive season locally.

Last year the event celebrated its 21st anniversary, having raised more than £150,000 for local charities since it started.

Afterwards around £7,000 was handed over to 22 local good causes including large donations to Stroud Hospital and the Cotswold Care Hospice.

"It's a great shame," said a hospital spokeswoman.

"A lot of charities have benefitted from the carol bus over the years and it has brought joy to many people."

While Mr Frost said he hoped the carol bus would resume normal service in 1995 he admitted the event had been putting increasing demands on bus workers and their families.

"It is a very big thing to put on every year," he said.

"We will wait to see what reaction there is to this year's decision, and see if we have some fresh ideas and extra help next year."