

# Bus Back Better Consultation 2021 Information Document

This information document outlines the actions developed in partnership with bus operators in the [Bus Service Improvement Plan \(BSIP\)](#) in October 2021. We are consulting the public and key stakeholders on these actions before developing an Enhanced Partnership with bus operators to improve bus services in Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP).

Please read this Information Document before replying to the questions in the [survey](#). You can also submit further to the Ideas Board on the [main consultation page](#).

The consultation will run from 29 November 2021 until midnight on 7 January 2022.



## Background

Following the publication in March 2021 of [Bus Back Better: National Bus Strategy for England](#), BCP Council issued its formal statement of intent to proceed with an Enhanced Partnership in June 2021. This Enhanced Partnership is intended to deliver the vision and ambition set out in the [Bus Service Improvement Plan \(BSIP\)](#) published on 31 October 2021 by BCP Council in partnership with its local bus service operators.

BCP Council declared a Climate and Ecological Emergency in July 2019 committing the organisation to being carbon neutral by 2030 and the wider Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole area by 2050. In support of this objective, a key Sustainable Environment theme priority for the council is to 'Develop an eco-friendly and active transport network'. Buses form an integral part of this, and the published BSIP and evolving Enhanced Partnership Plan set out how closer working with the bus operators, supported by government funding, will achieve the goal of making buses more frequent; more reliable; easier to understand and use; better co-ordinated; and, cheaper.

The aim is for buses to be both a service for everyone and the transport of choice. The intention is to demystify buses for non-users, tackle misconceptions about bus travel and address the negative perceptions some still hold about it.

The council's corporate strategy recognises that reducing traffic congestion is a priority for residents and developing sustainable transport alternatives is part of the solution. Moving longer journeys from car to bus helps improve air quality and reduce carbon emissions. The greatest single climate change mitigation measure for the transport sector is to transfer journeys from car to bus, bicycle or walking. Buses also contribute to the Council's priorities of supporting an innovative, successful economy in a great place to live, learn, work and visit as well as helping people lead active, healthy and independent lives, adding years to life and life to years. Buses are disproportionately used by older and younger people and by people with a disability. They provide independence and an ability to access healthcare, education, training and services. For many people they are a key part of being able to live independently and successfully in their community.

The recently published [Bus Service Improvement Plan \(BSIP\)](#) was developed in partnership with the local bus operators in the BCP area. It sets out what bus services currently offer residents and visitors in the BCP area as well as proposals for improvement. The proposed

improvements take account of the views of passengers and third parties taken from a range of surveys in recent years as well as key stakeholder views during the formation of the BSIP.

The next stage is to finalise the Enhanced Partnership Plan (EP Plan) and the Enhanced Partnership Scheme (EP Scheme). The EP Plan will largely draw on the published Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). The EP Scheme is the document that sets out exactly what the BCP and the local bus operators will deliver and/or comply with. The EP Plan will remain a 'live' document and as such will be varied over time to reflect changing circumstances. Similarly, the EP Scheme will initially reflect what is currently considered deliverable with known or expected funding availability. This too will be updated as funding becomes available to deliver further improvements.

### **Commencement Date**

The EP Plan and Scheme commencement date is 31 March 2022. The EP Plan will initially cover the period from April 2022 to March 2025.

The EP Scheme will have no specific end date but will be reviewed annually.

## **EP Plan**

11 actions have been developed with the bus operators with the shared aim of increasing the number of bus journeys undertaken by passengers and in particular for more of these journeys to replace car journeys.

Proposals for improvement are summarised as follows:

1. **Making bus services more frequent**
2. **Making buses faster and more reliable**
3. **Making fares lower and simpler**
4. **Making buses easier to understand**
5. **Making buses easier to use**
6. **Improving integration of buses with other transport providers**
7. **Modernising and de-carbonising buses**
8. **Involving bus passengers**
9. **Improving safety, security and passenger facilities**
10. **Consideration of demand responsive transport such as pre-booked Dial-a-Rides and more council subsidised bus services to meet local need**

### 11. Ensuring bus operators receive support to address the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic

These are set out in detail below and your views are requested on whether you agree with the suggested actions to deliver the improvements.

## **BSIP Actions and Interventions**

The following 11 actions and interventions are set out in the Bus Service Improvement Plan. The delivery of some of the actions and interventions will be dependent on the availability of government funding. As funding is confirmed, the actions and interventions will form the EP Scheme.

### **Making bus services more frequent**

- a) Bus operator investment in new buses and vehicle improvements will be targeted on high frequency (“flagship”) routes and economically important tourist services. At least three quarters of annual investment will be in these services
- b) Bus priority (including bus lanes, bus priority at traffic signals, and bus gates which block other motorised vehicles) will be introduced to speed up bus services. This will result in a saving of the numbers of buses and drivers required which will be redeployed onto other routes where there is demand for higher frequencies, with the aim of bringing them up to “flagship” status
- c) Identify the funding required to increase the frequency of hourly services so that they can run every 30 minutes as well as other route enhancements to support passengers (including route extensions and timetable changes) by April 2023.

### **Making buses faster and more reliable**

- a) A ranked list of facilities to give buses more priority, making them faster and more punctual, has been developed in partnership with the bus operators. Improvements will be prioritised (according to suitability of location) to bus lanes, bus gates and expansion of traffic signal bus priority to improve journey times and so increase the number of passengers/bus users by December 2022
- b) A review of on-street parking on busy bus routes where it slows buses down and makes services less attractive or convenient will be undertaken by September 2023

- c) Longer distance express bus routes, with fewer bus stops, will be considered to support people accessing work or training. We will investigate the feasibility and funding of express routes to improve commuting times, especially for the wider travel to work area by April 2023.

### **Making fares lower and simpler**

- a) The Getting About Ticket enables unlimited travel on both Yellow Buses and morebus services and is currently available as a paper ticket and smartcard (which can be 'topped-up'). It is proposed to also make this ticket available via mobile phones which could eventually replace the paper tickets and smartcards
- b) The bus companies permit the contactless payment of fares through a 'tap-on' arrangement. Work is currently underway to add a 'tap-off' facility which will enable daily 'cap' on fares, regardless of the number of journeys undertaken to be introduced by April 2022 as part of a national trial. This will ultimately be available on any of the operators' services
- c) morebus and Yellow Buses offer discounted travel to children and young people on a commercial basis (without external funding). The schemes operated are different, can be confusing and put people off travelling. We will develop and introduce a standardised young person's fares offer applicable to all local bus service operators by autumn 2022
- d) Most traffic congestion occurs during the peak hours as high numbers of people travel to work. We will explore fare promotions/initiatives that could encourage more people to try the bus at peak times to help reduce congestion by September 2023 (for introduction at a later stage depending on funding)
- e) Fares promotions can also be useful to 'kick-start' new routes (e.g., from new housing developments) or support other activities (e.g., town centre shopping). The partnership will initially identify where fares initiatives can deliver passenger growth and develop business cases. This will enable bids for relevant funding to introduce any initiatives by September 2023.

### **Making buses easier to understand**

- a) Frequent and uncoordinated timetable changes can be confusing for passengers and reduce their confidence to use buses. We will ensure that as far as possible timetable changes will be harmonised across bus operators so that two changes are made, suggested in March/April and September/October. This excludes emergency timetable

changes and services that need to change at other times e.g., school/university related and seasonal summer uplifts

- b) As a tourist area, the BCP area encounters seasonal uplifts in travel creating congestion hotspots. We will develop a media campaign to promote bus services for visitors to the region for the summer 2022 season to encourage bus use and help reduce congestion
- c) Some bus stops are served by summer sightseeing services as well as local bus services. This can lead to confusing bus information at stops and has created a need for co-ordination. Operators of summer only sightseeing services will be included, from the summer 2022 season, in publicity protocols for the Enhanced Partnership so the tourism bus offer is clearer
- d) The use of the same bus service numbers by different bus operators can be confusing for passengers if their routes are not the same. We will identify all incidences where services share common route numbers and agree a strategy to amend these where appropriate by September 2022
- e) People who haven't used the bus before, particularly young people, can feel daunted due to unfamiliarity. We will develop a 'How to use the bus' campaign aimed at young people/teenagers, to help promote and explain what travel by bus involves in simple to understand steps by September 2022
- f) The bus operators currently promote their own services and have no reference to other operator's services. By April 2023 all publicity materials produced by the local authority and operators will clearly indicate other operators' services within the relevant areas.

### **Making buses easier to use**

- a) Passengers need good quality facilities at bus boarding points. This helps raise the profile of bus travel and improves confidence. We will continue to maintain and enhance, subject to funding, the transport interchanges in Bournemouth Square (Gervis Place), Bournemouth Travel Interchange, Poole Bus Station, Boscombe Bus Station, the Lansdowne and Christchurch High Street.

### **Improving integration of buses with other transport providers**

- a) As set out above, we will be improving liaison with other transport providers, (including rail, bike share, car club) to provide a more integrated approach and improve partnership working by April 2022. We will also be progressing multi-modal ticketing and integration initiatives for a multi-modal app-based scheme by April 2023, delivered

jointly with the Transforming Travel programme. In addition, we will be working with adjacent areas and will consider the wider regional bus network with a view to increasing awareness of regional journey opportunities, particularly around leisure and tourism, for summer 2022.

### **Modernising and de-carbonising buses**

- a) Buses need to be at the core of an air quality strategy, with policy interventions needed to focus on reducing emissions per passenger with encouraging modal shift from car to bus being the means to improve air quality. The ultimate goal is a zero-emission bus fleet delivered through electric or hydrogen power. In the shorter term, cleaner diesel engines and, in particular, those that meet the latest Euro VI standard will be prioritised. BCP Council will develop a minimum Euro VI emissions specification for all future tenders for supported services by April 2023
- b) In addition, we will identify the costs to retrofit Euro V and older vehicles with Euro VI engine technology by April 2023
- c) We will commission specialist support to work towards zero-emission vehicles to become standard for BCP bus fleets by 2030, with support to commence in 2022/23.

### **Involving bus passengers**

- a) We will support the formation of a representative Bus User/Advisory Group, to include prospective bus passengers, to identify measures needed to improve bus travel commencing in April 2022
- b) We will also develop a Partnership-wide Customer Charter for all bus services that operate in the BCP Council area by September 2022.

### **Improving safety, security and passenger facilities**

- a) By April 2022, we will develop a specification for a minimum level of bus stop infrastructure and maintenance regimes for all bus stops. This will include better accessibility for people with mobility problems, improved perception of safety, more CCTV and lighting. Subject to gaining external funding, this specification will be used to upgrade the bus stop network by 2025
- b) We will install new passenger information displays incorporating CCTV at Poole Bus Station (subject to funding) by April 2022. The CCTV cameras will enable live streaming to the BCP Council control room

- c) We will provide live stream CCTV at 250 of the busiest bus stops in the BCP area by April 2023 (subject to funding)
- d) All local buses within BCP will have on-board CCTV by December 2023.

**Consideration of demand responsive transport such as pre-booked Dial a Rides and more council subsidised bus services to meet local need**

- a) By September 2023, we will undertake a review of community transport provision across the BCP Council area to identify how community transport can better contribute to the overall public transport provision and identify funding opportunities to deliver improvements
- b) Also, by September 2023, we will undertake a detailed performance review of all subsidised services due for renewal in 2024. This will ensure the local authority financial support for bus services achieves maximum benefit.

**Ensuring bus operators receive support to address the challenges resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic**

The local bus operators need to be supported as they seek to respond to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Bus patronage was severely impacted by COVID-19 and is yet to return to the levels experienced pre-pandemic. It has also been a period of cost pressures for the industry with challenges including fuel and energy costs plus driver shortages. As a result, there is likely to be a requirement for short-term targeted revenue support to retain current frequencies as well as providing a strong platform from which to achieve the shared ambitions for long term sustainable passenger growth.

- a) Subject to government funding, short-term financial support will be provided for services not currently commercially viable.

## Have your say

Your views are important to us and we want to hear from all those who live, work or visit the BCP area, and who could be affected by the proposed actions.

From 29<sup>th</sup> November 2021, members of the public and key stakeholders can complete an [online survey](#) which will be available until **midnight on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2022**. The survey link and all the relevant documents and information are available on the [main consultation page](#).

In addition to the survey, respondents can also submit further ideas through the [Ideas Board](#) on the main consultation page. We welcome these additional comments which will be considered with the same importance as those received through the main survey.

If you have any questions or require a large print copy of the survey or in alternative language please email [busstrategy@bcpcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:busstrategy@bcpcouncil.gov.uk) giving your name, address and telephone number.

You can also refer to the [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#) tool on the [main consultation page](#).