

Devon County Council Proposed Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP)

Report of the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

Please note that the following recommendations are subject to consideration and determination by the Cabinet (and confirmation under the provisions of the Council's Constitution) before taking effect.

Recommendation: that the Cabinet be asked to:

- (a) Agree the main principles of a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) to be agreed in partnership with our local bus companies;
- (b) Agree the forthcoming public consultation on the main recommendations within the County Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan;
- (c) Approve a bid to the Government of approximately £34m per year (revenue) and with a local contribution based on the emerging allocated revenue budget for 2022/23. In addition, a bid for £7.5m capital for bus priority measures with a local contribution from the Local Transport Plan. This is subject to a further review of cost and approval by the County Treasurer and the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport;
- (d) Give the Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport delegated authority to make minor amendments to the Bus Service Improvement Plan following the consultation and response from the Department for Transport (DfT).

1. Summary

Bus is the main form of public transport in Devon, providing services to a large range of people, many of whom have no alternative means of transport. The opportunity provided by the government to bid for extra funding will provide a quantum leap in how the bus service operates in the future. The bid is the first step in a process to engage in a conversation with government on how best to improve the current service and how it should be funded.

This report sets out the framework for the implementation of the aims and objectives of the Government's National Bus Strategy – Buses Back Better and how these would be applied to the Devon through the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP).

2. Introduction

In March 2021 the UK Government published its National Bus Strategy for England – [Bus back better - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/bus-back-better). This sets their vision for the future of local bus services, linked with the recovery of public transport after COVID19. They aim to increase the importance of local bus services as an integrated part of the transport network.

The national strategy aims to make buses greener, more frequent, more reliable, easier to understand and use, better co-ordinated and cheaper and is linked with the Government’s funding announcement prior to the pandemic of £3bn of new funding to improve local bus services across England.

The strategy sets out a way forward for the County Council and its local bus operators to work together and form an Enhanced Partnership (EP).

Within the Strategy and associated guidance, a timetable has been set out to work towards the forming of the EP:

- By 30 June 2021 the County Council and our local bus companies had to commit to working towards the EP. This has been achieved and by doing so both the County Council and the bus companies will continue to receive financial support until March 2022 to maintain the bus network in the face of lower patronage due to COVID19.
- By 31 October 2021 the County Council must have developed and published a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). The BSIP will be submitted to the Department for Transport (DfT) and published on the DCC website.
- This report sets out the main recommendation of this BSIP for approval. The BSIP will be an ongoing live document with at least an annual review, linked to the aims and objectives of the EP.
- From 1 November 2021 the DfT will assess the BSIPs submitted by each LTA and respond with a funding package for the next three years.
- By April 2022 the EP must be in place as new discretionary forms of funding will only be available through this mechanism.

3. Proposal

The DfT are looking for ambitious plans to improve local bus services and the County Council plans to respond with the following proposals:

Bus Service Improvements

Our base line is to continue to maintain the current network wherever possible as it recovers from the pandemic.

Beyond that we propose to include service improvements set out in the table below:

Area for Improvement	Details
Improvement to rural services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of at least four return journeys Monday to Saturday for all communities with a population of over 500. • Exploration of alternative models of delivery including Demand Responsive Transport (DRT), expansion of Fare Cars or fixed routes.
Evening and Sunday services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On improved inter urban and city corridors; a service of at least three journeys per evening and on Sunday.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expansion of hourly night-time services for routes carrying over 2 million passengers* per annum.
Inter-urban services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improvements to services identified in the Exeter Transport Strategy up to a maximum frequency of 15 minutes. • Other services into Exeter to gain an additional journey per hour, plus those to strategic towns such as Barnstaple, Newton Abbot or Plymouth currently carrying over 100,000 passengers* per annum.
Devon “Lynx” services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic links improved between centres of population. • Better connections with the strategic rail and coach network. Examples of possible links included in Appendix A.
City and town services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Towns with a population of 20,000 to gain an additional journey per hour if carrying over 100,000 passengers* per annum. • Towns with a population of between 5,000 and 15,000 to gain a minimum provision of an hourly off-peak service.

Figure 1: table showing proposed improvements to bus services

*Passenger numbers are based on pre COVID19 levels

We appreciate all will wish to know what this means in detail for individual areas; all improvements are subject to available funding, public consultation, and on-going working with bus companies as we move towards the establishment of the EP. Four workshops (East & Mid Devon, Exeter, South Hams & Teignbridge & West Devon, North Devon & Torridge) are in place for Devon County Councillors, and all should now have received an invitation to one of these.

Bus Priority

The National Bus Strategy expects significant increases in bus priority to make the bus an attractive alternative to private transport. Journey times in peak periods vary considerably. The roll out of contactless payment has decreased boarding times at peak times, but additional journey times (and costs) remain built into current timetables to reflect the higher levels of congestion.

The Exeter Transport Strategy sets out a long-term vision for priority corridors for bus services into the city and the BSIP will propose expanding this concept to other urban areas of the County. Points where delays occur have been identified and will focus on the most affected bus routes serving Exeter, Exmouth, Newton Abbot and Barnstaple.

An example of this work includes the procurement of a new traffic light system for the County where the need to prioritise bus movements can be built into the specification.

Infrastructure

The BSIP will consider the whole journey, including the so called first and last mile, with it being important to establish a positive passenger experience.

We will be proposing improvements to the level of information provided at bus stops and key interchanges based on the number of passengers, frequency of services and profile of the stop. This will help make buses easier to use and attract new people. The County Council is already recognised nationally for the quality of its public transport information, both in paper form and online. This will be developed and improved further, including further development of Real Time information.

Fares

Through the BSIP the County Council is seeking funding to reduce fares to make travel by bus better value, and therefore a more attractive option, which will lead to an increase in passenger numbers.

We are proposing a range of multi-operator tickets including:

- The expansion of the current Devon Day Ticket across Devon and Cornwall working with Cornwall Council, Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council and all bus companies across the Peninsula.
- A range of zonal tickets taking into account journey to work areas including:
 - Exeter and surrounding tickets
 - Northern Devon
 - Plymouth and surrounding catchment
 - Torbay and the South of the County.

We will explore the offer for young people and how this could be improved, in particular for those over 16.

We wish to expand ticketing options to include local rail services offering an integrated offer across all public transport and linked to rail operators.

Single network

For any passenger it is important that the bus network is presented as a single entity, irrespective of local bus operator and whether provided commercially by an individual company or through County Council financial support. We will expand our “Devon Bus” brand to develop a common identity for the bus network in Devon, including inter-available ticketing.

Future vehicles

Part of the strategy sets out targets for moving towards zero emission vehicles. The County Council has been involved in two previous unsuccessful bids for reduced emission or electric vehicles. The challenge in a county like Devon is the range of the vehicles versus the length of the routes operated.

Through the BSIP and EP we will be working with local bus companies and manufacturers to look at future options. We are currently working with a national bus manufacturer to look at examples of our longer distance routes and what method of

propulsion is possible now and in the future. This could include electric or hydrogen options.

Passenger experience

In partnership with the bus operators and in consultation with bus passengers we are developing a Bus Passengers' Charter. This will enable passengers to hold us as a local authority, and our operators to account for delivering the BSIP. The charter will set out how to use and access bus services and what they can expect from bus operators. It will include areas such as customer service, punctuality, vehicle cleanliness, information provision and complaint handling.

Integrated transport

The Government are looking for local bus services to be an integrated part of the transport network alongside other modes of transport, including rail, walking, and cycling.

Within the BSIP the County Council is proposing better connections with the rail network, as set out in Appendix B, which identifies possible improvements. Longer distance coach services also provide an important strategic connection.

The County has excellent cycle links and there is scope to introduce a programme aimed at upgrading bus stop infrastructure to offer a stronger multi-modal interchange. Bus / cycle hubs with secure parking would strengthen access to fast services on strategic bus corridors.

Through its Transport Coordination Service, the County Council manages all aspects of passenger transport including Education, Social Care and, on behalf of Devon CCG, Non-Emergency Patient Transport. The BSIP gives an opportunity to explore further integration of statutory transport services with an improved public transport network.

Community Transport

The county has a strong community transport sector and the BSIP gives the opportunity to further develop and integrate their services. This is especially important for access to health facilities – an example being our Community Car Forums; the County Council currently helps fund three regional forums across Devon which support over 60 volunteer car schemes and hundreds of volunteer drivers.

Working with neighbouring authorities

Recognising that travel patterns do not match local authority areas; Devon County Council is working with our neighbouring local authority transport teams. Working with Cornwall Council, Plymouth City Council and Torbay Council we have already highlighted improvements to cross border connections and possible collaborations for fare initiatives. We are also holding similar discussions with Dorset Council and Somerset County Council for the eastern side of Devon.

We are also sharing best practice across the South West Peninsula through the Peninsula Transport Sub National Transport Body.

Impact of COVID19

Within the BSIP we will assess the impact of COVID19 in the short and long term. The level of patronage recovery varies across the County with, for example, services providing access to leisure activities over the summer recovering well compared to those linked with commuting such as Park & Ride services.

Impact on the supply of bus drivers is affecting this recovery and we are already working with our bus operators to identify possible solutions. This is also being raised at a national level so that the passenger transport sector is given the same recovery support as others.

Links with other strategies and developments

The BSIP will include how we can link the outcomes for local bus services improvements with other initiatives, for example future updates of our Local Transport Plan, Transport Infrastructure Plan or local cycling and walking infrastructure plans. The DfT is expecting strategies for different modes of transport to be looked at in a joined-up way and not in isolation.

The County Council has a good track record working with partners on the development of transport networks and we will emphasise this and how we can continue to work with others improving services. Examples include how we develop joint strategies with Dartmoor National Park, the NHS and main centres of employment or education.

4. Options/Alternatives

As part of the process of compiling our BSIP we have examined and costed three levels of service provision for all categories of service. The level set in section three, whilst still ambitious, does not include the highest service levels explored for rural areas. This is because the cost of this would prove very high for the numbers of potential passengers, and we can see no way how it could achieve any form of sustainability if Government funding was to end. We have therefore selected an interim level that balances the improvements with long-term sustainability. However, we wish to introduce small scale experiments in three areas of the County based on:

- Demand Responsive Transport as established in some other parts of the country
- An improved offer based on the Devon Fare Car model
- Improved fixed route services which, as well as benefiting the local community, provide a more sustainable alternative for access to leisure.

Based on the success of these experiments, we will consider rolling out further improvements across the county, subject to available funding.

Within the National Bus Strategy options for moving to a Bus Franchising model of delivery are set out. This is similar to the system in Greater London and as proposed in Greater Manchester. However, all other areas must first move to the Enhanced Partnership model. The County Council and our bus companies have worked successfully together on an informal basis, for example protecting the

network to the significant cuts in service seen in many other areas, and we believe the EP model is the best way forward at the present time.

5. Consultations/Representations

As per guidance from the DfT, a high-level stakeholder consultation took place in July and August. This was sent to over 500 individuals and organisations, including county, town and parish councillors, local authority representatives, bus, community transport and rail operators, industry recognised professional bodies, other organisations representing education, health care, tourism and local businesses.

A summary of the results from the consultation are shown in Appendix C and highlight the areas we considered as priority when writing our BSIP.

As a next step and following the Cabinet briefing, we are preparing to do the following:

- DCC Elected members have already been invited to four workshops (East & Mid Devon, Exeter, South Hams & Teignbridge & West Devon, North Devon & Torrington) to discuss this proposal and the BSIP in further detail
- The BSIP will go to the Scrutiny committee in November
- We will be undertaking a full public consultation on the BSIP over the period of November to January. This will include focus groups to cover the views of minority and protected groups, as well as a chance for the general public to give their views on our proposals.
- On-going discussions with our bus companies on our proposals and how they fit with their own plans and ideas.

6. Financial Considerations

Costings are estimated – final figures may vary as we are still awaiting input in some areas:

Area of Improvement	Details	Cost
Improvement to rural services	As shown in the proposed improvements table in Section 3 of this report.	£8,370,000
DRT (Demand Responsive Transport)	In addition to the improvements detailed above, costs indicated are for DRT trials in 4 rural areas over the next 3 years.	£2,160,000
Evening and Sunday Services	As shown in the proposed improvements table in Section 3 of this report	£2,790,000
Inter-urban	As shown in the proposed improvements table in Section 3 of this report.	£7,365,000

Devon “Lynx” – strategic enhancements including links to rail services	As shown in the proposed improvements table in Section 3 and Appendix B of this report.	£4,575,000
City and town services	As shown in the proposed improvements table in Section 3 of this report.	£4,145,000
Devon Fares Strategy - lower and simpler to attract more passengers	Proposals include: introduction of regional zone tickets to simplify fares, supported fares for young person's (age 16-18), ticket machine upgrades.	£3,340,000
Devon Bus - branding and marketing	All buses in DCC area will carry the specified livery and Devon Bus or Devon Lynx branding. Development of websites and continuation of marketing campaigns.	£1,250,000
	TOTAL REVENUE COST PER YEAR	£33,995,000
Bus Priority Measures	Priority schemes identified across Devon to increase bus priority and reduce journey times by bus.	£5,000,000
Bus Stop Infrastructure	Standardisation of flags and information points with clear information to assist passengers.	£2,500,000
	TOTAL CAPITAL COST	£7,500,000

Any Government funding allocated through this process cannot be used to offset existing funding to support public transport. Match funding is also expected but the County Council is in a strong position with its existing continued support for public transport, the joined-up approach across internal and external transport budgets and its success in achieving other sources of funding, for example with Section 106 developer funding.

7. Legal Considerations

The County Council is empowered to financially support local bus services over and above what bus companies would provide if acting alone. It is not quite clear yet how the Enhanced Partnership will alter this process and if there will be a change in the law. It is likely that there will be a requirement to formalise the Enhanced Partnership with a legal agreement especially if there is a change in the way funding is used to support bus services.

Subsidised local bus services in Devon are secured within the terms of Sections 89 to 92 of the Transport Act 1985 with reference to tendering, together with the Service Subsidy Agreements (Tendering) (Amendment) Regulations 2004 which allow de minimis exemptions from tendering.

The development of the Bus Service Improvement Plan and the forming of an Enhanced Partnership is set out in the Bus Services Act 2017 plus associated guidance.

8. Environmental Impact Considerations (Including Climate Change)

As set out when DCC declared a climate emergency in 2019, transport accounts for 31% of Devon's greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and the sector is the largest emitter. The movement of people, as apposed to goods, accounts for around two thirds of these transport emissions.

Whilst all areas of transport must decarbonise, transforming how we move about Devon will provide the opportunity to realise significant wider benefits for our health, safety, public and personal finances, and enjoyment of public space. A good local bus network reduces adverse environmental impacts by attracting people away from private vehicles, leading to less traffic and less emissions.

9. Equality Considerations

Where relevant to the decision, the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty requires decision makers to give due regard to the need to:

- eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other prohibited conduct;
- advance equality by encouraging participation, removing disadvantage, taking account of disabilities and meeting people's needs; and
- foster good relations between people by tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

Taking account of age, disability, race/ethnicity (includes Gypsies and Travellers), gender and gender identity, religion and belief, sexual orientation, pregnant women/new and breastfeeding mothers, marriage/civil partnership status in coming to a decision, a decision maker may also consider other relevant factors such as caring responsibilities, rural isolation, or socio-economic disadvantage.

This may be achieved, for example, through completing a full Equality Impact Needs Assessment / Impact Assessment or other form of options/project management appraisal that achieves the same objective.

In progressing this particular proposal, an Impact Assessment has been prepared which has been circulated separately to Cabinet Councillors and is also available alongside this Report on the Council's website at: [Bus Services Improvement Plan - Impact Assessment \(devon.gov.uk\)](https://www.devon.gov.uk/Bus-Services-Improvement-Plan-Impact-Assessment), which Councillors will need to consider for the purposes of this item. The Impact Assessment will also be published as an appendix to the BSIP.

10. Risk Management Considerations

This policy/proposal has been assessed and all necessary safeguards or action have been taken/included to safeguard the Council's position.

The County Council's BSIP is ambitious but does not include the highest service levels explored for rural areas. It is recognised that nearly every Local Transport Authority will be submitting a similarly ambitious bid. There is a risk that the DfT cannot afford to fully fund all the submitted bids. In this case it is anticipated there will be a conversation with the DfT on how to make the bid affordable.

The BSIP is predicated on the bus patronage levels rising to the those prior to COVID. The risk is that this will be not be achieved. It is assumed that if this does occur there will be a review of the BSIP to take account of this new baseline an either the BSIP will go ahead as planned or there will be some modest changes.

The aim is to create a virtuous circle: increasing usage, but also reducing operating costs so better services can be sustained without permanently higher subsidy. The risk is that the regular monitoring shows that improved service does not demonstrate a sustained increase in patronage. It is anticipated that upgrades will be given time to bed in before there is a review and the service revaluated.

11. Public Health Impact

The Impact Assessment has identified the positive contribution of bus services towards public health, including mental health.

12. Summary

The County Council has remained a strong supporter of public transport and maintained financial support over a number of years. It welcomes the opportunities the National Bus Strategy brings to build on our commitment and looks forward to being able to improve the network in the future.

The recommendations and suggested improvements set out in this document are an exciting and ambitious opportunity to put local bus services at the heart of the future transport network in the County and offer a real alternative to private transport.

Dave Black
Head of Planning, Transportation and Environment

Electoral Divisions: All

Cabinet Member for Climate Change, Environment and Transport: Councillor Andrea Davis

Local Government Act 1972: List of Background Papers

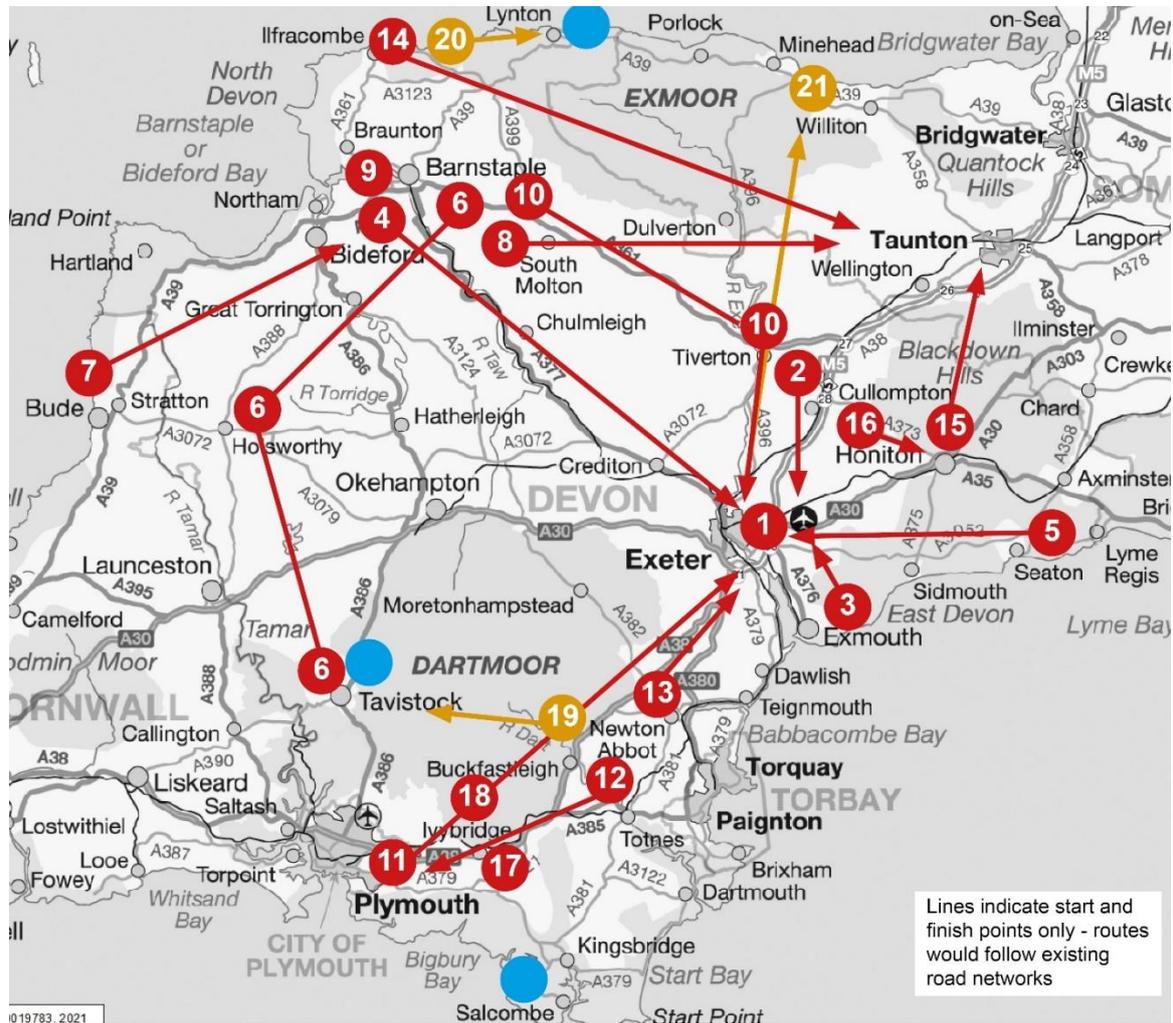
Contact for Enquiries: Damien Jones

Tel No: 01392 383000 Room: Matford Offices, County Hall, Exeter, EX2 4QD

Background Paper	Date	File Reference
Nil		

Appendix A to PTE/21/33

Map showing new proposed strategic bus links – “Devon Lynx”



1	Exeter City early morning/late evening services to East of Exeter growth point	11	Improved hourly X38 Exeter - Plymouth (forming part of Ivybridge to Plymouth 15-minute frequency)
2	New service Tiverton and Cullompton to East of Exeter growth point	12	New Newton Abbot - Plymouth service (also forming part of the Ivybridge to Plymouth improvement)
3	New service from Exmouth to East of Exeter growth point	13	Increase 7 between Newton Abbot - Exeter to every 30 mins (serves new developments along the route).
4	More direct Bideford to Exeter journeys	14	New strategic link Ilfracombe - Taunton via Lynton
5	More direct Seaton to Exeter journeys	15	Improve frequency on 20 between Honiton – Taunton, extends to Taunton Station
6	Strategic link - Barnstaple, Holsworthy, Tavistock (for connections to Plymouth)	16	New strategic link between Cullompton - Honiton Station
7	Through service between Bude, Bideford - Barnstaple (with Cornwall Council)	17	New strategic link between Bigbury, Modbury and Ivybridge Station
8	New strategic link between Barnstaple, South Molton, Bampton and Taunton	18	New Ivybridge, Plympton to Derriford Hospital service (working with Plymouth City Council)
9	New strategic link - Bideford, Barnstaple, South Molton, & Tiverton Parkway	19	New summer leisure service between Newton Abbot, Dartmeet and Tavistock
10	Improved hourly 155 between Barnstaple, Tiverton and Exeter	20	Summer leisure service between Ilfracombe – Lynmouth
Blue Circle	Devon Lynx Services already proposed or in operation – 300, 118, 164	21	Summer Saturday service between Exeter - Tiverton – Minehead

Appendix B to PTE/21/33

Rail Enhancements – Links to Rail Services

With improvements on the rail network such as the opening of the new rail station at Marsh Barton and the full time reopening of the Okehampton line we wish to give increased opportunities for a seamless integrated journey. Examples of potential improvements at our stations include:

Station	Improvement to connecting bus services
Okehampton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service 118 will operate to Okehampton Station from its opening, providing a link to Lydford, Brentor and Tavistock. When the train service increases to hourly it is recommended that all journeys serve the Station • We will also explore links to from Tavistock to Bere Alston to link with the Tamar Valley line • We will work with Cornwall Council to explore improved frequencies from Launceston, Bude and Holsworthy • A new link from Hatherleigh will be examined and costed • When West Devon Transport Hub opens this will open up more opportunities
Axminster	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earlier and later journeys and Sunday service from Seaton via Colyford and Colyton • Subject to discussion with Dorset Council examine earlier and later journeys to Lyme Regis
Barnstaple	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new 2245 Barnstaple - Ilfracombe journey to connect with the 2233 train arrival and reduce waiting time for travel to Pottington, Braunton and Ilfracombe • Examine and cost extension of certain journeys on rural service to Combe Martin, Lynton and Woolacombe to the station • Examine and cost extending service town service from Whiddon Valley to the Station.
Bere Alston	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore options for better links to Tavistock and on to Okehampton station
CREDITON	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local journeys to operate via the station for onward rail connections to Exeter, Barnstaple and Okehampton
Dawlish	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved frequency on local service will improve connections
Honiton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earlier and later journey from Sidmouth to Honiton station • Later journey connecting to Ottery St Mary • New strategic service from Cullompton
Ivybridge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Strategic links from Bigbury and Modbury to the south and Derriford Hospital and Plympton to the west
Newton Abbot	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through journeys examined and costed from within the town and Bovey Tracey, Buckfastleigh, Ashburton, Chudleigh, Ipplepen and Kingsteignton • Including earlier and later journeys and a Sunday service which does not currently exist

Pinhoe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With existing funding from South West Railways a link from the station to Skypark and Exeter Airport will be trialled in 2022
Taunton	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service from Honiton, Dunkeswell, Hemyock and Culmstock extended to station • New strategic links from Ilfracombe and Lynton and Barnstaple, South Molton and Tiverton providing links to station
Teignmouth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Town services to operate via station forecourt with earlier and later journeys for work and education travel
Tiverton Parkway	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extend Exeter service from Tiverton to Tiverton Parkway giving half hourly combined frequency with existing service. This will provide direct links for settlements along the Exe Valley to Tiverton Parkway • New strategic link – Bideford, Barnstaple, South Molton and Tiverton Parkway • Increase frequency between Cullompton and Tiverton parkway • Potential new links from Westleigh and Burlescombe
Totnes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved link to Kingsbridge and Salcombe already in place • Increased frequency from Dartmouth to improve connections
Umberleigh	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New strategic link between South Molton and Torrington providing a new link for the Tarka Line

Appendix C to PTE/21/33

Stakeholder Consultation – Summer 2021

What are the barriers to bus travel, and what should be the priorities for improvement?

During summer 2021, a high level consultation was undertaken with key local stakeholders, including representatives and officers of councils at all tiers of local government, bus operators, action/user groups and other public bodies (e.g. National Park authorities). We received 174 responses.

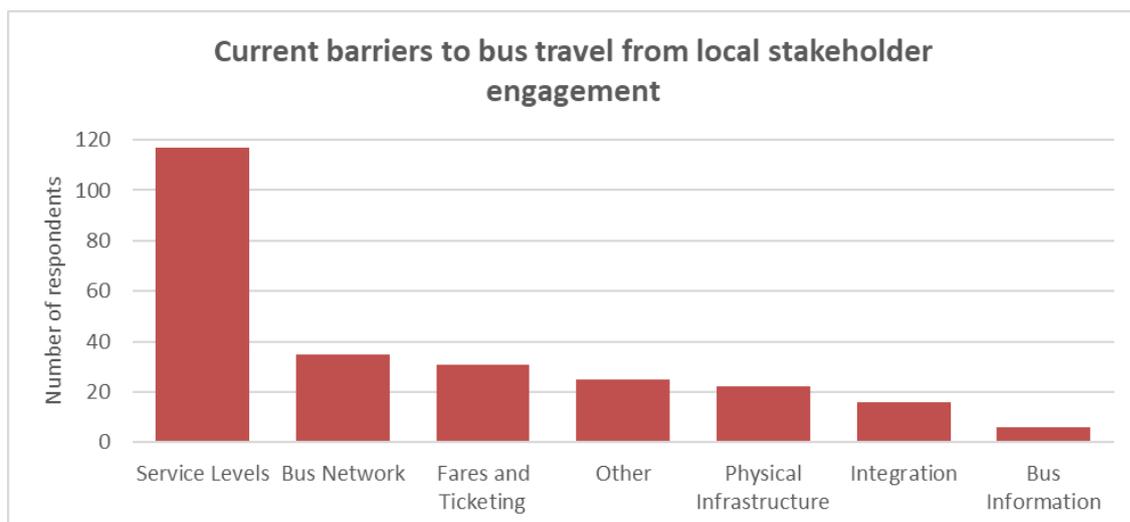
Respondents were asked for feedback in three areas:

1. What do you see as the biggest barrier to bus travel in Devon at the moment?
2. What areas would you see as a priority for the Bus Services Improvement Plan in Devon?
3. Comments/other areas for improvement you would like to be considered when we write our Bus Service Improvement Plan

Question 1 – Current barriers to bus travel

As shown in the figure below, service levels (including general service levels, evening services and weekend services) overwhelmingly emerged as the greatest barrier to bus travel among local stakeholders, with almost 120 of 174 responses referencing the topic. The design and reliability of the bus network and fares and ticketing were also identified as key barriers by around 20% of respondents. However, information provision/service promotion was seldom identified as a barrier, with only 6 respondents referring to this aspect.

Issues with the bus network were also commonly cited by town/parish councils, particularly those in rural areas, with many responses suggesting the range of destinations offered is too limited, and/or that routes are too indirect to be attractive. Operators raised a range of other issues, including concerns around the viability of routes and regaining patronage/consumer confidence post-COVID.



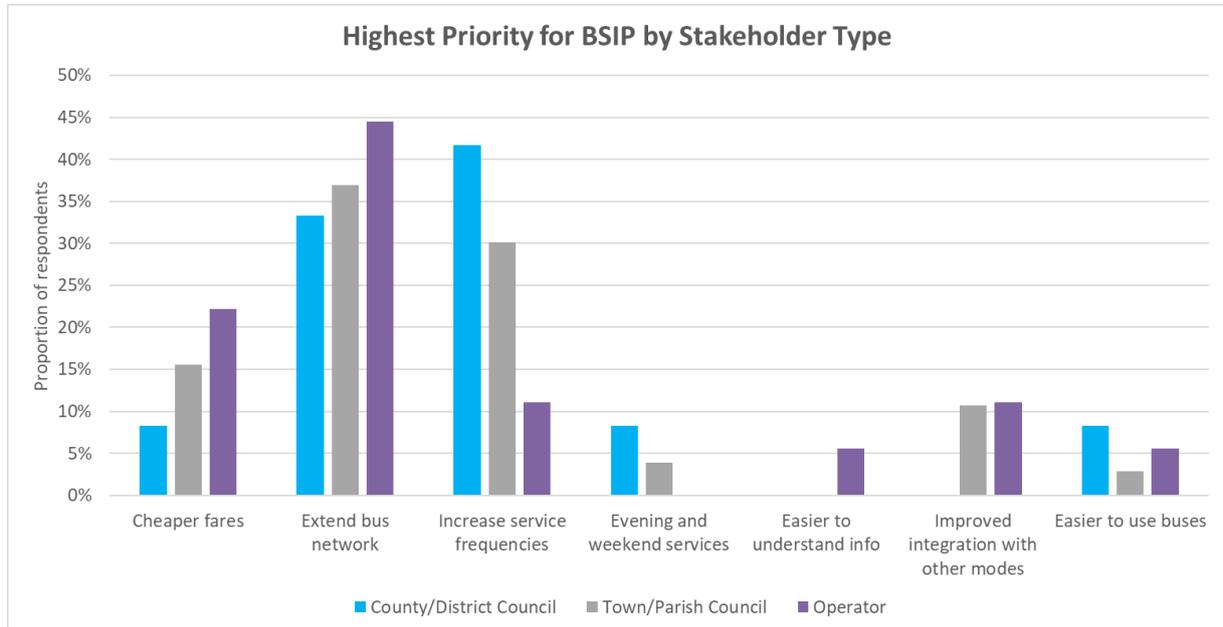
Question 2 – Priorities for BSIP

We invited respondents to rank seven items in terms of their importance for the BSIP:

- Cheaper fares;
- Extending the bus network to include more places;
- Increasing the frequency of services;
- Expanding services into evenings and weekends;
- Making bus information easier to understand and more consistent across operators;
- Improving integration with other modes of travel; and
- Making buses easier to use, with common branding, simpler fares and more easily accessible information.

The graph below shows the highest priority aspects among each of the three principal stakeholder groups. It can be seen that expanding the bus network was viewed as high priority by all stakeholder groups, but that increasing service frequencies was significantly less important to operators than local councils, especially county/district councils. Conversely, cheaper fares was viewed as the highest priority by over 20% of operators, but less than 10% of county/district councils saw this as the most pressing issue.

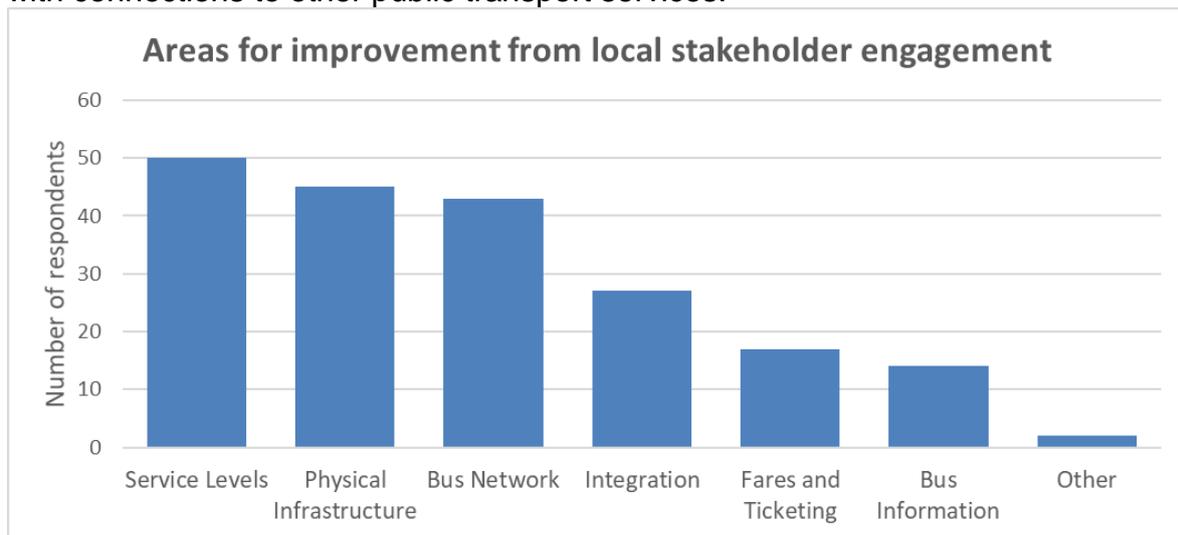
Of middling importance, with approximately equal numbers of respondents viewing as of high and low priority, were aspects such as cheaper fares and expanding evening and weekend services.



Question 3 – Other areas for improvement

Finally, as shown below, the suggestions of areas for improvement partly mirrored the feedback to Q1, regarding the principal barriers to bus use, with service levels emerging as the area most cited as needing improvement. However, comments regarding physical infrastructure and integration were more common in response to Q3, with the former including the introduction of more eco-friendly buses and

improvements to bus stop infrastructure, and the latter being principally concerned with connections to other public transport services.



Devon County Council Proposed Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) - Final