

Assessment of: Bus Services Improvement Plan Scheme for
Bideford/Barnstaple Western Bus Corridor: Roundswell Bus Lane
Service: Climate Change, Environment and Transport

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Version / date of sign off by Head of Service: Jamie Hulland 08/09/23

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1. Description of project / service / activity / policy under review

Devon County Council published the Bus Services Improvement Plan in 2022 to prioritise bus improvement schemes across the county.

Government funding has been secured for the proposed Roundswell Bus Lane scheme. A 4 week long public consultation was held in May 2023 and the final design is submitted for Cabinet approval. The proposal includes bus priority between Gratton Way and Roundswell roundabout via a new bus lane, as well as a footway along the west side of the A3125 from the Roundswell service station to Gratton Way roundabout.

2. Proposal, aims and objectives, and reason for change or review

The aim of the Devon BSIP schemes are the following:

- Grow bus patronage across Devon
- Facilitate a positive step change in bus provision across the area
- Create a bus network that meets the needs of all potential users
- Create a framework to regularly consult bus users, and use this information to influence bus service provision in the future
- Ensure information regarding bus services is of the highest quality and accessible to all
- Ensure the bus is considered equally alongside other modes of transport

Specifically, the Roundswell Bus Lane also aims to improve bus journey times for services from Barnstaple towards Roundswell roundabout. It promotes priority for buses and taxis to avoid the queuing traffic, ensuring more reliable bus services onto the A39, therefore

improving existing patronage experience and encouraging the further use of public transport services.

The lanes for the turning movements at the Roundswell roundabout are currently 40 metres long. This will be extended to 110 metres for all traffic to improve congestion for general traffic and to allow the bus sufficient time to weave to the right-hand lane.

A footway is proposed along the desire line for pedestrians and will allow them to carry out their journey in a safer and more comfortable environment, without having to walk/wheel on the verge or in the busy carriageway.

3. Risk assessment, limitations and options explored (summary)

Road Safety Audit

A combined Stage 1 and 2 Road Safety Audit has been requested for the Roundswell Bus Lane scheme and it is currently under review. Further changes to the design will be subject to the outcome and could be agreed through delegated powers.

Environmental survey

Multiple environmental surveys were carried out for the Roundswell Bus Lane scheme, including assessment of wildlife, coastal and water environment, flood risk, historic environment and trees and hedges. It was noted that the site contains a small/low hedge like line of shrubs which is to have 17 metres of it removed and cut back along the length of the scheme.

Limitations

A limitation of the scheme is the lack of space to make the bus lane longer without removing existing carriageway from other users.

Options

Maintaining the existing situation would continue to provide services with long journey times due to congestion. Maintaining current service will do nothing to improve patronage, and therefore fail to meet the aim of the BSIP.

4. People affected, diversity profile and analysis of needs

The people potentially affected by the proposals are principally people living or working in the Roundswell area, as well as bus passengers travelling in and out of Barnstaple to other parts of Devon. Therefore, the diversity profile for the Roundswell area, is presented below with North Devon, Torridge, Devon and England used as a comparator. The propensity for

certain demographic groups to use buses is also discussed, to inform assessment of the potential differential impacts of the proposals.

Age

Table 1 illustrates that the population of the Roundswell area is slightly older than the national average, but slightly younger than Devon and the districts population. However, Devon as a whole is comparatively older than the national average. 65 years olds and over make up 8% larger proportion of the county's population than the national average.

Geography	Total	% Age 0-19	% Age 20-64	% Age 65+
Roundswell area	36,558	22%	56%	23%
North Devon	98,611	21%	54%	26%
Torrige	68,114	19%	53%	28%
Devon	811,638	20%	54%	26%
England	56,490,048	23%	58%	18%

Table 1: Age (Census, 2021)

As highlighted by the 2019 National Travel Survey, people under the age of 30 and over the age of 70 tend to use buses more than those aged in between. Therefore, the proposals may benefit these groups more than other age groups.

Mode		All ages	0-16	17-20	21-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60-69	70+
Local Buses (outside London)	No.	32	37	73	33	20	18	21	31	46
	%	3%	4%	9%	4%	2%	2%	2%	3%	6%
All modes	No.	953	863	824	860	1,073	1,121	1,037	995	800

Table 2: Trips per person per year (National Travel Survey 2019)

Ethnicity

As shown in Table 3, the Roundswell area, North Devon, Torrige and Devon as a whole is lower in ethnic diversity than the national average.

Ethnicity	Total	% Asian / Asian British	% Black / African / Caribbean / Black British	% Mixed / multiple ethnic groups	% White	% Other ethnic group
Roundswell area	36,558	2%	0%	1%	96%	0%
North Devon	98,612	1%	0%	1%	97%	0%
Torrige	68,114	1%	0%	1%	98%	0%
Devon	811,642	1%	0%	1%	96%	0%
England	56,490,048	10%	4%	3%	81%	2%

Table 3: Ethnicity (Census, 2021)

Statistics indicate bus use is highest among people who identify as Black or of mixed ethnicity, and although the percentage of people from these ethnic minority backgrounds living in the Roundswell area or wider catchment is low, they will benefit as a result of the scheme.

Health and disability

Although people with mobility difficulty make fewer trips overall, the proportion of their trips made by bus is higher compared to groups with no mobility limitations. A larger proportion of Roundswell area were considered to have bad or very bad health compared with North Devon, Torridge, Devon and England, suggesting a higher proportion of people will benefit from improved bus services.

Health	Good health	Fair health	Bad health
Roundswell area	80.0%	13.9%	6.1%
North Devon	80.4%	13.9%	5.7%
Torridge	78.6%	15.3%	6.0%
Devon	81.4%	13.5%	5.1%
England	82.2%	12.7%	5.2%

Table 4: General Health (Census, 2021)

The Roundswell area has a similar proportion of people disabled under the Equality Act with their day-to-day activities limited a little and a lot, as Devon and England.

Gender

In all geographies considered, there were slightly more females than males. Females tend to make a greater proportion of trips by bus than males. Thus, the proposals may benefit females more than males.

Socio-economic

The proportion and number of trips made by bus tends to decrease within increasing income primarily due to those with higher incomes typically having greater access to alternative transport modes e.g. private car. The table below illustrates among those in the lowest income quintile (1st), 6% of trips are made by bus, compared to just 2% in the highest (5th) income quintile.

Mode		All income quintiles	1 st income quintile	2 nd income quintile	3 rd income quintile	4 th income quintile	5 th income quintile
Local Buses (outside London)	No.	32	53	39	27	25	15
	%	3%	6%	4%	3%	2%	2%
All	No.	953	859	921	969	1,017	995

Table 5: Trips per person per year by income (National Travel Survey 2019)

Compared to England as a whole, Roundswell area is slightly more deprived with only 46% of households not deprived in any dimension compared to England’s 48%. Similarly, the Roundswell area is 2% higher in deprivation in one or two dimensions than England. This suggests that higher proportion of people will benefit from the improved bus services.

	% Household is not deprived in any dimension	% Household is deprived in one or two dimensions	% Household is deprived in three or four dimensions
Roundswell area	46%	50%	4%
North Devon	48%	49%	3%
Torridge	46%	51%	3%
Devon	50%	48%	3%
England	48%	48%	4%

Table 6: Household Deprivation (Census 2021)

5. Stakeholders, their interest and potential impacts

- The local bus companies who run services along the impacted bus route. Improved bus services should have a positive impact on their business.
- Employers whose workers travel by bus. Improvements will improve access to work.
- Businesses which bus services provide access to including access for shopping and leisure.
- Community organisations e.g., bus user groups and environmental pressure groups, who may advocate for bus service enhancements or Living Options Devon who represent people with disabilities who are more dependent on public transport for access to services.

6. Additional relevant research used to inform this assessment

- Public Consultation
- Environmental Surveys
- National Travel Survey Data
- Census Data

7. Description of consultation process and outcomes

A public consultation was held between 26 May and 23 June 2023. A survey was hosted online on Devon County Council's 'Have Your Say' pages, with email and telephone contacts provided as alternative methods to submit responses. The full consultation report is available to view here - <https://www.devon.gov.uk/haveyoursay/consultations/bus-services-improvement-plan-bsip-in-north-devon/>

The consultation was promoted via:

- A local press release
- Devon County Council's Facebook account
- A consultation leaflet, delivered to businesses in the Roundswell area

136 responses to the online questionnaire were received, with an additional 5 via email. No responses were received by phone. A small number of additional emails were also received for clarifications.

Headline Results

- Overall, 105 (77%) respondents are strongly against the scheme, 10 (7%) are against it, 2 (2%) are neutral, 3 (3%) support the proposals and 15 (11%) strongly support the proposals.
- 67 respondents believe that the scheme will not improve current conditions, with too few buses using the route.
- 46 respondents have concerns that the scheme will make existing queuing worse, and 36 respondents believe that the current levels of congestion are the major issue which needs to be addressed.
- 33 respondents propose that instead of a bus lane, extend the 2 turning lanes at Roundswell roundabout for all vehicles to improve congestion.
- Comments received in support of the proposals highlight the benefit the scheme will have in encouraging people out of their cars through improved bus journey times and reliability.
- Comments in support of the proposed footpath adjacent to the A3125 on the western side were received.

Background information

8. Equality analysis

Under the Equality Act 2010, the local authority must consider how people will be affected by a service, policy or practice. In so doing we must give due regard to the need to: eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation; advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations across protected characteristics of age, disability,

gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership (for work), sex, sexual orientation, race, and religion and belief. The Equality Act 2010 and other relevant legislation does not prevent the Council from taking difficult decisions which result in service reductions or closures for example, it does however require the Council to ensure that such decisions are: informed and properly considered with a rigorous, conscious approach and open mind, taking due regard of the effects on the protected characteristics and the general duty to eliminate discrimination, advance equality and foster good relations; proportionate (negative impacts are proportionate to the aims of the policy decision); fair, necessary, reasonable, and those affected have been adequately consulted.

- a) Is this group negatively or potentially negatively impacted, and in what way?
- b) What could be done or has been done to remove the potential for direct or indirect discrimination, harassment or disadvantage and inequalities?
- c) In what way do you consider any negative consequences to be reasonable and proportionate in order to achieve a legitimate aim?
- d) What can be done to advance equality further? This could include meeting specific needs, ensuring equality of opportunity and access, encouraging participation, empowering people, making adjustments for disabled people and action to reduce disparities and inequalities.
- e) Is there a need to foster good relations between groups (tackled prejudice and promote understanding) and help people to be safe and protected from harm? What can be done?

All residents by geographic area

A perceived negative impact of the scheme is allocating additional carriageway to a bus lane while there is existing congestion for all modes. However, the aim of the scheme is to encourage more users to switch to public transport by improving the journey time and offering a more attractive alternative to the private car. In addition, extending the turning lanes for Roundswell roundabout for all traffic will improve congestion for all traffic using the route.

Age

Bus services which are for all to use are encouraged. As highlighted by the 2019 National Travel Survey, people under the age of 30 and over the age of 70 tend to use buses more than those aged in between, which is about half of the population within the Roundswell area.

Disability (includes sensory, mobility, mental health, learning disability, neurodiversity, long term ill health) and carers of disabled people

A footway is proposed along the desire line for pedestrians and will allow them to carry out their journey in a safer and more comfortable environment, without having to walk/wheel on the verge or in the busy carriageway. This proposal will especially benefit people who have some form of disability as there would be a safe and flat surface of a footway to complete their journey.

Race and culture: nationality/national origin, ethnic origin, skin colour, religion and belief, asylum seeker and refugee status, language needs

Bus services which are for all to use are encouraged. People identifying as Black or of mixed ethnicity make a greater proportion of trips by bus than the general population, and therefore improving journey times may particularly advance access to employment and services for people in these groups.

Sex and gender identity and reassignment (including men, women, non-binary and transgender people), and pregnancy and maternity (including women's right to breastfeed)

Bus services which are for all to use are encouraged. As detailed in section 4, females tend to make a greater proportion of trips by bus than males and so there may be greater benefit to females in terms of improving their access to employment and other key services.

Sexual orientation, and marriage/civil partnership if work related

Bus services which are for all to use are encouraged.

Other relevant socio-economic factors and intersectionality

This includes, where relevant: income, housing, education and skills, language and literacy skills, family background (size/single people/lone parents), sub-cultures, rural isolation, access to services and transport, access to ICT/Broadband, children in care and care experienced people, social connectivity and refugee status/no recourse to public funds. Also consider intersectionality with other characteristics.

Bus usage is higher among lower income groups who in general may not have access to alternative transport modes, such as the private car. Providing improved journey times and less time in congestion may particularly benefit people in the lower income group who are more dependent on buses.

9. Human rights considerations:

We need to ensure that human rights are protected. In particular, that people have:

- A reasonable level of choice in where and how they live their life and interact with others (this is an aspect of the human right to 'private and family life').
- An appropriate level of care which results in dignity and respect (the protection to a private and family life, protection from torture and the freedom of thought, belief and religion within the Human Rights Act and elimination of discrimination and the promotion of good relations under the Equality Act 2010).
- A right to life (ensuring that nothing we do results in unlawful or unnecessary/avoidable death).

No direct implications, however, enhancements to bus services may enable individuals to exercise certain human rights more easily, such as the right to employment or the right to education (both enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) by improving access to employment/education. Bus services are open to everyone.

10. Environmental analysis

An impact assessment should give due regard to the following activities in order to ensure we meet a range of environmental legal duties. The policy or practice does not require the identification of environmental impacts using this Impact Assessment process because it is subject to (please mark X in the relevant box below and proceed to the 11, otherwise complete the environmental analysis information below):

Devon County Council's Environmental Review Process	
Planning Permission	
Environmental Impact Assessment	
Strategic Environmental Assessment	

- a) Description of any actual or potential negative consequences and consider how to mitigate against these.
- b) Description of any actual or potential neutral or positive outcomes and consider how to improve as far as possible.

Reduce, reuse, recycle and compost

No negative consequences. No direct outcomes.

Conserve and enhance wildlife

No negative consequences. No direct outcomes.

Safeguard the distinctive characteristics, features and special qualities of Devon's landscape

No negative consequences. Increased bus use and less use of cars leads to less pressure for new road building.

Conserve and enhance Devon's cultural and historic heritage

No negative consequences. Increased access to leisure activities by bus contributes to more sustainable lifestyle.

Minimise greenhouse gas emissions

No negative consequences. Increased bus use and less use of private cars leads to less emissions, as well as passengers on the buses spend less time in the existing congestion.

Minimise pollution (including air, land, water, light and noise)

No negative consequences. Increased bus use and less use of private cars leads to less traffic noise and less pollution.

Contribute to reducing water consumption

No negative consequences. No direct outcomes.

Ensure resilience to the future effects of climate change (warmer, wetter winters; drier, hotter summers; more intense storms; and rising sea level)

No negative consequences. This scheme meets the objectives of DCC's declaration of a Climate Emergency. For example, it will lead to increased bus usage and less use of private cars, resulting in less traffic noise and greenhouse gases.

Other (please state below)

11. Economic analysis

- a) Description of any actual or potential negative consequences and consider how to mitigate against these.
- b) Description of any actual or potential neutral or positive outcomes and consider how to improve as far as possible.

Impact on knowledge and skills

No negative consequences.

The scheme will improve public transport links into the city. The 2019 National Travel Survey highlighted that younger demographics of 30 years and below including school and university aged people disproportionately use buses more. Thus, improving buses can support greater independence and enabling individuals from the local area to access academic institutions, early careers / jobs and training courses.

Impact on employment levels

No negative consequences.

Commuting is the most common trip purpose for bus users at 23% of local bus trips. Improved bus journey times will enhance access to employment in Barnstaple.

Impact on local business

No negative consequences. Bus services enable people to access their local shops and businesses, whilst affording reasonable choice. Bus services are particularly good for town centres.