

BUS IT

NEARLY HALF OF SOMERSET'S
CARBON EMISSIONS COME
FROM TRANSPORT.

BY USING BUSES, YOU HELP
SUSTAIN BUSES FOR THOSE
WHO HAVE TO RELY ON THEM.

Somerset Bus Partnership

Connecting communities and encouraging public transport.

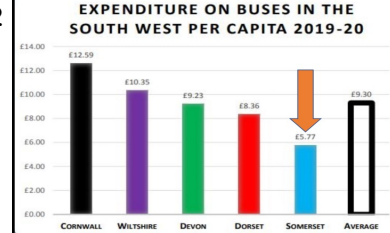
WE CAMPAIGN FOR BETTER BUS SERVICES
AND ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO GO BY BUS.

Email us at somersetbuspartnership@gmail.com.
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Somerset Bus Partnership BUS PLAN FOR 2023/24

Our original Bus Manifesto issued in May 2022 called for Somerset's spend on supporting buses to be increased during the term of the new council up to the average of that of our neighbouring rural councils. This was endorsed by two thirds of newly elected Unitary Councillors.



We believe Councillors across the political spectrum now recognise buses are a vital service on which many of their Somerset residents depend.

Buses are also an integral part of how the Council addresses the challenges of its climate emergency agenda and the cost-of-living crisis.

Important strides for buses have been made in Somerset during 2022/23.

However, most of the initiatives introduced in Somerset this past year have been funded by central Government. Most notably, the £12m BSIP award made to SCC has funded the £1 fare in Taunton, the new evening services radiating out from Taunton and the town's bus priority schemes. The Government's Bus Recovery Grant has been used to fund the continuation of crucial bus services in Wells, Frome and elsewhere.

But there have been cuts in bus services, particularly in the Yeovil area.

Given the pressure on next year's council budget, we have developed proposals in our 23/24 Plan that are designed to help stabilise Somerset's bus network and prevent any further decline in our bus services, while starting to deliver on some measures contained in our 'Bus Manifesto'.

We recognise the budgetary challenges the New Somerset Council is facing: hence we are proposing the front loading of lower-cost measures.

Despite this, we believe our 2023/24 Plan would achieve demonstrable improvements in key aspects of bus provision across Somerset.

HOW TO DELIVER OUR VISION IN 2023/24

1. COMMIT TO STABILISE SOMERSET'S BUS NETWORK AT ITS CURRENT LEVEL OF PROVISION

- ❖ To achieve this, the Council's revenue budget will need take into account the threats from bus industry inflation, lower fare revenues post-COVID and potential loss of Bus Recovery Grant. The aim would be for the network to be stabilised in 2023-24, with a view to expanding and improving the network in years 3, 4 and 5 of the Council's term of office.

2. IMPROVE THE PROVISION OF BUS INFORMATION:

- ❖ Easily accessible public transport guides, timetables and maps.
- ❖ Up to date information at all main bus stops, libraries, tourist information centres, council offices & hospitals.
- ❖ Continue the "BUS IT" publicity campaign
- ❖ Employ a 'timetable person' as envisaged in the BSIP and make the production, printing and display of timetables a responsibility of the Unitary Council
- ❖ Agree with operators a common date for timetable changes
- ❖ Secure a commitment from operators and (for tendered services) Somerset County Council to consult with bus users on timetable changes.

3. IMPROVE BUS ACCESS FOR YOUNG PEOPLE:

- ❖ Negotiate with operators to standardise their discounted fares, ideally at a 50% reduction for all under 18s, a first step in the BSIP aim of reduced fares for the under 25s.
- ❖ Allow all under-25s access to the Slinky service, regardless of access to private vehicles.

4. CREATE BETTER INTEGRATION BETWEEN OPERATORS AND MODES:

- ❖ Negotiate with bus operators to provide an all-operator, countywide, day ticket similar to the Devon Day Ticket.
- ❖ Identify quick wins in terms of improved connections between buses and trains at railway stations.

5. IMPROVE THE EXPERIENCE FOR SOMERSET'S BUS USERS

- ❖ Clear the backlog of maintenance repairs to bus shelters across the county and commit to an ongoing budget for future maintenance.
- ❖ Improve the system for notifying passengers of planned disruptions caused by roadworks.
- ❖ Improve Transporting Somerset, the County Council's in-house bus service operator, to make it an example of best practice in rural transport:
e.g. able to take both card and cash payments, affordable fares for young people, effective publicity for services, vehicles that can carry passengers with wheelchairs.
- ❖ A zero-emission fleet by 2030.

6. PREPARE FOR FUTURE FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES:

- ❖ For future rounds of BSIP funding, prioritise Yeovil, the county's second largest town, for significant investments in services and infrastructure.
- ❖ Also develop proposals for other parts of the county.
- ❖ Identify the capital funding required to match future bids to the Department for Transport's Zero Emission Bus funding streams.