**Bus Passenger Charter – Purpose and Area**

The purpose of this Bus Passenger Charter is to improve bus services across Somerset in partnership with local bus operators, bus users, and stakeholders. It covers all locally registered bus and coach services provided by all operators across Somerset, including any services operated on a flexible or demand-responsive basis and most services[[1]](#footnote-1) provided by Community Transport.

This Bus Passenger Charter establishes a consistent standard for all bus services to meet (including punctuality, proportion of services operated, vehicle cleanliness and, information), sets out what passengers can expect from bus operators delivering local bus services across Somerset, and gives bus users the ability to hold all partners to account.

**Our Commitments to You**

This Charter sets out passenger rights[[2]](#footnote-2) and a collective commitment from Somerset County Council (SCC) and local bus operators to work together to provide services which meet all passenger needs

As a partnership we commit to you to:

* operating all bus journeys as advertised and adhering to published timetables and routes;
* providing a sufficient standard of service which meets the majority of our passengers’ needs;
* ensuring that your journey is reliable and safe;
* ensuring that you travel on vehicles which are clean, comfortable, and accessible to all;
* providing recognisable bus stops with up-to-date information;
* Ensuring all bus stops are accessible, free from damage, and safe to use;
* doing all we can to discourage unreasonable behaviour by other passengers on the bus;
* making reasonable adjustments to accommodate the individual needs of passengers;
* all customer-facing staff undergoing periodic customer and disability awareness training;
* all buses displaying route information, including a route number, destination, and staging points;
* all information provided for passengers being as accurate, relevant, and accessible as possible;
* providing timetable and journey planning information through the following channels:
* The SCC Think Travel portal, and SCC and bus operator social media platforms;
* Operator websites that adopt the principles of accessible web design; and
* At bus stops, shelters, and interchanges across Somerset.
* Providing different ways to pay for your journey including cash, contactless, and mobile apps;
* Ensuring bus operators provide a range of value-for-money tickets that are easy to understand;
* positively managing the effects of roadworks and highway emergencies on bus routes;
* introduce process and systems that help make staff aware of travellers with disabilities; and
* make available information relating to the carriage of wheelchairs, prams, and buggies in a joint ‘Somerset [Conditions of Carriage](https://www.stagecoachbus.com/conditions-of-carriage)’.

**Your Commitments to Us**

Bus travel and the continuing improvement of the local bus network is a partnership process. We believe that this also includes our passengers and feel that you can make a difference too by:

* Respecting bus drivers and their requests, other staff and your fellow passengers;
* Reporting damage to buses, bus stops, or bus shelters to help us know what we need to repair;
* Clearly signalling to the bus driver that you want to board when waiting at a bus stop;
* Having your pass, ticket or payment ready as you board to help keep buses running on time;
* Keeping your bus clean by not putting feet on seats and taking your litter home with you;
* Allowing wheelchair users to occupy the dedicated wheelchair spaces when they need them;
* Sitting whenever possible and not standing at the front of the bus, blocking others and distracting the driver;
* Ringing the bell in advance of when you want to get off the bus; and
* Staying seated or holding onto the handrails while the vehicle is moving at all times.

**Beyond Your Journey**

SCC and all operators welcome feedback on bus service performance – good or bad. This bus passenger charter is available online by visiting [insert link].

Additionally, we can make the bus passenger charter available in a range of accessible formats. Please call 0300 123 2224 to discuss your requirements.

To make any comments, suggestions, or complaints regarding bus services, including but not limited to their performance, information, and safety you can contact us to make a comment or complaint by following:

[Complaints, comments, compliments (somerset.gov.uk)](https://www.somerset.gov.uk/our-information/complaints-comments-compliments/)

**Or by telephoning: 0300 123 2224**

We aim to give you a response within 10 (ten) working days. If we are unable to do so within that timescale, the relevant organisation will contact you to outline expected response time.

**Comments, Suggestions & Complaints Procedure**

When you forward us comments, suggestions, or complaints regarding local bus services, we will collectively use them to monitor performance and identify areas for improvement.

We will respond to comments, suggestions, and complaints in the following manner:

1. All communications are forwarded to the relevant Managing Director of the organisation concerned, the local police or local schools as appropriate;
2. For all communications, an initially written reply will be sent within ten working days;
3. If a reply cannot be sent in ten working days, the customer will be acknowledged within two working days and an expected timescale for a further response given.

**What to Expect When Things Go Wrong**

Somerset’s BUS Group will hold all parties accountable to their performance against this bus passenger charter. While we are committed to providing the best service possible, we understand sometimes things do not go to plan. If you feel dissatisfied with any bus journey within Somerset, then we invite you to get in touch using the operator’s details in Annex 1 below. Complaints may be used to inform ongoing service improvements and will be reported on annually.

Where either SCC or a bus or coach operator falls short of the commitments set out in this charter, you will receive an apology and, where appropriate, compensation. Furthermore, if for any reason the last scheduled journey to your destination becomes later than 45-minutes or is cancelled, we will reimburse you for the taxi cost to get you to the destination stop of the intended service. You must provide a taxi receipt to the relevant operator for this and details of the affected journey (including date, time and locations involved).

Where buses fail to operate or break-down en-route causing passengers to miss connections to other bus or rail services suitable compensation will be provided on a case-by-case basis. Where the passenger has made alternative travel arrangements a receipt for the costs should be submitted with the complaint for consideration by the relevant operator.

**Independent Appeals**

If you disagree with the response received to any complaint, you have the option of approaching Bus Users UK (by post to Bus Users UK, 22 Greencoat Place, London SW1 1PR, email to enquiries@bususers.org or Telephone on 0300 111 0001) who will try to resolve the issue for you.

They may refer your complaint to the Bus Appeals Body ([appealservice.co.uk](https://www.appealservice.co.uk/)). SCC, and all local bus operators abide by the Bus Appeals Body’s recommendations.

**Legal considerations**

**Statutory rights** - This charter does not affect your statutory rights.

**Legal relationships** - This charter does not change any legal relationship between bus operator, local government, and passenger.

**Links to legal rights** - This charter contains links to key documents that will help you if you want to read more about your rights, such as a bus company’s conditions of carriage.

**Equalities Act and inclusivity** - The measures in this charter aim to improve the inclusivity of services and how they are held accountable. They will take protected characteristics (eg age, ethnicity, disability, etc) into account.

**Improving your services and funding them**

We’ve made an Enhanced Partnership (EP) with all local bus operators running services within, to or from Somerset to deliver our Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs). Links to the SCC EP and BSIP are given below:

<https://somersetcc.sharepoint.com/sites/SCCPublic/Transport/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FSCCPublic%2FTransport%2FEnhanced%20Partnership%20Plan%20and%20Scheme%2029%2E3%2E2022%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2FSCCPublic%2FTransport&p=true&ga=1>

<https://somersetcc.sharepoint.com/sites/SCCPublic/Transport/Forms/AllItems.aspx?id=%2Fsites%2FSCCPublic%2FTransport%2FSomerset%20Bus%20Back%20Better%5FFINAL%20291021%2Epdf&parent=%2Fsites%2FSCCPublic%2FTransport&p=true&ga=1>

**Date and Validity of this Charter**

This Charter[[3]](#footnote-3) was published on [Date TBC] and will be reviewed annually. It will be updated when required following consultation through Somerset’s Bus Users and Stakeholders (BUS) Group.

**Annex 1**

For all queries relating to timetable information, lost property or to feedback your experience on a particular service, you can contact the relevant partners who have signed up to this Bus Passenger Charter using the details below:

**Bus Operator Details [Insert all Operators in the SCC EP]**

* XXXXX – [Insert Link]
* YYYYY – [Insert Link]
* ZZZZZ – [Insert Link]

**Local Transport Authority Details [Insert SCC details from EP]**

* XXXXX – [Insert Link]
* YYYYY – [Insert Link]
* ZZZZZ – [Insert Link]

**Bus User and Stakeholder Group Details [Insert BUS Group details from EP]**

* XXXXX – [Insert Link]
* YYYYY – [Insert Link]
* ZZZZZ – [Insert Link]
1. Only those operated under s22 of the 1985 Transport Act carrying passengers for separate fares on registered routes. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. You can request information about your rights when you use locally registered ‘regular’ bus and coach services. These are included in the Conditions of Carriage produced by each individual operator. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Version number 1.1 [↑](#footnote-ref-3)