

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

Before completing this EqIA please ensure you have read the guidance on the intranet.

Initial Information

Name:	Owen Clark
Job Title:	Transport Planner
Email address:	owen.clark@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk
Members of the assessment team:	Gordon Sneddon
Date assessment started:	01/07/2021
Date of completion:	26/10/2021
Version Number:	1.2

Part 1: Background Information

Is this (please tick or expand the box to explain)

Existing	
Changing, updating or revision	
New or proposed	Y
Other	

Is this (please tick or expand the box to explain)

Internal (employees only)	
External (residents, communities, partners)	Y
Both of the above	

What is the name of your policy, strategy, project or service being assessed?

Bus Service Improvement Plan and Enhanced Partnership

What is the policy, strategy, project or service designed to do? (include the aims, purpose and intended outcomes of the policy)

The Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) is a response to the Government's National Bus Strategy - Bus Back Better, aimed at improving bus services across England.

The Plan is a strategic document which sets out how the council and local bus operators will work together to improve bus services across Dorset. The Plan will be delivered through an Enhanced Partnership, which means the council will work more closely with local bus operators to plan and deliver services. The Enhanced Partnership will begin in April 2022.

The Plan sets out a new vision for delivering a step-change in bus services. The plan describes how the council and operators can achieve the overarching goal of the National Bus Strategy - to grow bus patronage and raise buses' mode share.

The Plan covers the whole Dorset Council Unitary Authority area, with consideration also given to bus services operating into the neighbouring Council areas of Devon County Council, Somerset County Council, Wiltshire Council, Hampshire County Council, and BCP Unitary Authority.

The plan sets out:

- The future bus network that the council, in consultation with the public, stakeholders and operators want to see
- The actions that will be taken to significantly grow bus use
- How these actions will be delivered against targets set for 2025 and 2030

Many of the policies and deliverables will require further consultation. The plan and deliverables set out are all subject to funding being identified.

The Plan will act on six key areas:

1. Better network coverage and scale
2. Better integration between modes
3. Better and clearer information
4. Better journey time reliability
5. Better value and integrated fares
6. Better vehicle standards and lower emissions

The Plan will be published at the end of October 2021 and will be updated annually.

The council will deliver the Plan through the establishment of an Enhanced Partnership. The Enhanced Partnership is the legal framework between the council and local bus operators to work together to improve local bus services for passengers. The Enhanced Partnership will agree vehicle standards, ticketing arrangements, information provision and any aspects which are to remain under the sole commercial control of the operators, such as their own tickets and products.

What is the background or context to the proposal?

On 15 March 2021 Government launched [Bus Back Better, a new National Bus Strategy \(NBS\)](#) for England outside London. The National Bus Strategy sets out a vision to improve bus services in England outside London through greater local leadership, to reverse the recent shift in journeys away from public transport and encourage passengers back to bus. Local Transport Authorities and local bus operators must work with local communities to plan and deliver a fully integrated service with multi-modal tickets, bus priority measures, high quality information for all passengers, and better turn-up-and-go frequencies that keep running into the evenings and at weekends. The Bus Services Act 2017 provides the legal basis for the changes and the Strategy commits £3 billion of new funding to achieve these goals.

The Government requires that a Bus Service Improvement Plan must be produced by all upper-tier authorities in England and cover each Local Transport Authorities full geographical area, all local bus services within it, and take proper account of the differing needs of parts of that area (e.g. urban and rural elements).

The National Bus Strategy provides much greater emphasis on partnership working, where authorities and bus operators form statutory partnerships to define bus networks, service levels and fare strategies.

[By executive decision notice dated 29 June 2021](#) Dorset Council gave approval to proceed with the development of an Enhanced Partnership. The commencement of this is confirmed through this notice of the intention to prepare an Enhanced Partnership Plan and accompanying Enhanced Partnership Schemes, as required and set out in section 138F of the Transport Act 2000.

[On the 7th September Dorset Council Cabinet](#) approved the recommendations to:

- a) Agree the scope of the outline Bus Service Improvement Plan and the commitment of resources within existing budgets to take forward work to publish a first version of the Plan by the end of October 2021, be supported.
- (b) Agree that authority be delegated to the relevant portfolio holder, in consultation with the Executive Director for Place to approve the final version of the Plan before it is published.

Part 2: Gathering information

What sources of data, information, evidence and research was used to inform you about the people your proposal will have an impact on?

National Policies and Plans:

- ▶ [Bus Back Better: National Bus Strategy for England. 2021.](#)
- ▶ [Bus Services Act 2017: New powers and opportunities. 2017.](#)
- ▶ [Future of Mobility Urban Strategy. 2019.](#)
- ▶ [Future of Mobility Rural Strategy consultation. 2020.](#)
- ▶ [Future of Transport Regulatory Review. 2020.](#)
- ▶ [All Electric Bus Towns Fund. 2020.](#)
- ▶ [Zero Emission Bus Regional Area Fund. 2021.](#)
- ▶ [Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution. 2020.](#)
- ▶ [Transport Decarbonisation Plan. 2020.](#)
- ▶ [Sixth Carbon Budget. 2020.](#)

Local Policies and Plans:

- ▶ [Local Transport Plan](#)
- ▶ [Passenger Transport Strategy](#)
- ▶ [Low Carbon Travel Strategy](#)
- ▶ [Local Cycling and Walking Investment Plans](#)

- ▶ **Community Transport Action Plan**
- ▶ **Parking Policy**
- ▶ **[Local Plan](#)**
- ▶ **[Climate and Ecological Emergency Strategy and Action Plan](#)**

Data:

- ▶ **Department for Transport [National Travel Survey](#)**
- ▶ **Operator supplied bus use (patronage) data**
- ▶ **Operator supplied bus route mileages**
- ▶ **Operator supplied bus operator ticket sales**
- ▶ **Operator supplied bus fleet profile**
- ▶ **Accessibility mapping (TRACC)**
- ▶ **Mosaic persona analysis**
- ▶ **Bus network GIS layer**
- ▶ **Bus stop locations**
- ▶ **Destination / location hierarchy**
- ▶ **Main employment centres**
- ▶ **Car ownership**
- ▶ **Population density**
- ▶ **Index of multiple deprivation 2019**
- ▶ **[National Highway and Transport Public Satisfaction Survey \(NHT Survey\)](#)**
- ▶ **[Bus improvement survey](#)**
- ▶ **Stakeholder engagement feedback**

What did this data, information, evidence and research tell you?

The data has been collated and reviewed to inform a network baseline analysis. This baseline has been used to identify priorities and short, medium and long-term targets to improve bus services in Dorset.

The TRACC accessibility mapping shows that away from the core bus, rail, and coach network many areas have poor levels of accessibility even during peak hours (08:00 – 09:00 and 17:00 – 18:00), particularly rural areas of Dorset. Accessibility declines further in the evenings and at weekends.

The key findings from the bus improvement survey (1,845 responses) were:

- **There are low levels of satisfaction with bus services in Dorset. Only 29% of residents who live in Dorset are satisfied or very satisfied with bus services. This satisfaction rating is significantly lower than the result of the National Highway and Transport Public Satisfaction Survey (NHT Survey) 2020 which found a 51% satisfaction rating of local bus services. This is likely due to the self-selecting nature of the online survey sample which introduces bias compared to the random household sample methodology used in the NHT survey which ensures a more representative sample. Further work is needed to gain a better understanding of the causes of low satisfaction. A target for increasing customer satisfaction has been set within the Plan.**

- The main issues that stop residents using the bus more or at all have been identified as service frequency, services not going where individuals want to go, and cost.
- Gender and disability influence feelings of safety accessing and travelling on buses. Higher levels of safety are perceived by males, 83% feel very safe or fairly safe, compared to 76% of females who feel safe accessing and travelling on the bus network in Dorset. Residents who identified themselves to be disabled have lower feelings of safety with 72% feeling either very safe or fairly safe, compared to 89% of non-disabled respondents.
- The responses of local residents and visitors to Dorset show that improvements that deliver buses that run more often, to more places and that start earlier in the morning or finish later in the evening would encourage greater use of local buses. Respondents who identify themselves as disabled rank information on local bus services being made easier to obtain and understand, and better waiting facilities (bus shelters / bus stations) higher than those who don't identify as disabled.
- The most common themes raised through comments are:
 - Additional bus routes
 - Improved bus timetables (higher frequencies; weekend services)
 - Improved fare structure (lower cost; simplified ticketing)
 - Requirement of additional information (up to date information at stops; real time bus information; better quality information)

The data analysis identifies the following key challenges:

- Public transport services in Dorset have been in decline for many years. Indeed, a recent report (Campaign for Better Transport. 2020. Transport Deserts – The absence of transport choice in England's small towns) on public transport within England and Wales described a number of areas within Dorset as “transport deserts.”
- It is evident within the county's geography that having limited population between principal settlements and no critical mass to provide a robust customer base means operating and planning bus services is challenging.
- Dorset is predominately rural in nature and has one of the highest levels of geographical access to services deprivation in the country with an over-reliance on private car use. For those without a car, there are significant challenges to accessing local services, healthcare, work and education, resulting in rural isolation.
- Dorset's population is significantly older versus the national average. An ageing population presents major challenges with concessionary

journeys being higher in Dorset than the South West average, creating an over-reliance on concessionary income to support services.

- **There is limited economic growth in many parts of the county and a strong reliance on tourism. Further growth in tourism to Dorset's world class natural environment is not sustainable without significant improvements to bus services within the county.**
- **Road transport is the highest contributor to CO₂ emissions in Dorset and car usage across the county has shown no sign of decline over the last 15 years. Getting people out of their cars and onto public transport is one way to reduce our carbon footprint.**

Is further information needed to help inform this proposal?

The Plan will be a 'live' document and reviewed annually. The council will publish six-monthly progress reports, including reporting against targets set for:

- **Journey times**
- **Reliability**
- **Passenger growth**
- **Customer satisfaction**
- **Mode share**
- **Greening of the local bus fleet**
- **Increases in network mileage**
- **Proportion of the population within 400m of a frequent local bus service**
- **Number of rail connections made by the local bus network**

Part 3: Engagement and Consultation

What engagement or consultation has taken place as part of this proposal?

To fully understand the key issues and priorities for the Bus Service Improvement Plan, engagement activity with a large group of organisations and user groups has been undertaken.

An initial scoping exercise was undertaken to identify a wide and diverse range of stakeholder organisations and, where possible, obtain a named contact within each.

These organisations were then categorised into four main groups for conducting stakeholder workshops, defined as follows:

- **All public transport providers, ensuring a holistic overview of local 'bus' aims, aspirations and needs were captured including multi-modal integration opportunities. Given the rural nature of Dorset it**

was vital to incorporate the Community Transport sector from the outset.

- Council members, Town and Parish Councils, a number of the council's internal teams with a link to transport provision (e.g. Social Care, Planning, Highways), and neighbouring LTAs to address the importance of not working in isolation as a transport team.
- Local bus user and campaign groups, across the county as well as regional and national bus users and public representation organisations.
- Business and other special interest groups, covering a range of user needs from key attractors and targeted passenger groups such as the FE Colleges, local businesses, equality and diversity groups, the youth sector, and support agencies.

Engagement activity was approached using a three-stage engagement plan.

Stage One – Context setting and data gathering

An introductory briefing session provided each grouping of stakeholders with an understanding of the wider Bus Back Better policy context and the key requirements and expectations on the council for producing the Bus Service Improvement Plan.

Upon conclusion of these sessions, a stakeholder survey was circulated to all invited organisations. This was presented in a straightforward open-text response format, designed to enable respondents to present any ideas and all suggestions relating to their local buses. All written responses were received which were analysed and coded to generate a set of priority areas to be considered in the council's Plan.

The council also conducted an online survey, with phone support and in-person support provided at key locations across the county for those unable to complete by themselves. The public survey was live from Friday 30th July to Friday 27th August and returned 1845 responses (96% were resident in Dorset).

In addition to a series of closed questions on various aspects of the local bus services, there was an open text question offering the same opportunity to give more-detailed comments on specific issues. Over 1000 open text responses were subsequently analysed and coded using the same set of categories as used in the stakeholder feedback. This provided the council with a rich dataset encompassing a diverse range of views and issues to help inform the key priorities for the Plan.

Stage Two – Report on data gathered and define priorities

Following on from stage one and analysis of the quantitative and qualitative feedback, stage two sought to take a deep dive into the various priorities to steer the final direction of the Plan.

Based on the priorities understood from stage one, a series of key bus improvement attributes were derived. Within each, a sub-series of specific improvements were presented through an online Mentimeter interactive feedback platform.

Participants were asked to give their views on each proposed improvement using a five-point Likert Scale, where 1 = 'Not Important' through to 5 = 'Very Important'. Improvements were considered on their own merits and not ranked in order of preference against other proposed attributes outlined.

Feedback sessions were conducted with each of the four stakeholder groups in separate sessions to allow for any substantial differences in opinions to be identified and considered, as well as producing a final collective opinion score for each attribute identified.

Stage Three – Reporting back

The final set of workshops provided an opportunity to present the themes being carried forward as part of the council's Bus Service Improvement Plan submission to the Department for Transport. A presentation outlined the key proposals being developed and was followed by a discussion to allow stakeholders to comment on the plans and help identify if any further areas needed work or inclusion ahead of work to finalise the Plan.

How will the outcome of consultation be fed back to those who you consulted with?

The outcome of the engagement activity is reported within the Bus Service Improvement Plan and the key findings will also be shared via press releases, and the council e-newsletter.

Please refer to the Equality Impact Assessment Guidance before completing this section.

Not every proposal will require an EqIA. If you decide that your proposal does **not** require an EqIA, it is important to show that you have given this adequate consideration. The data and research that you have used to inform you about the people who will be affected by the policy should enable you to make this decision and whether you need to continue with the EqIA.

Please tick the appropriate option:

An EqIA is required (please continue to Part 4 of this document)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
An EqIA is not required (please complete the box below)	<input type="checkbox"/>

This policy, strategy, project or service does not require an EqIA because:

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Name:

Job Title:

Date:

Please send a copy of this document to [Diversity & Inclusion Officer](#)

Next Steps:

- The EqIA will be reviewed by Business Intelligence & Communications and if in agreement, your EqIA will be signed off.
- If not, we will get in touch to chat further about the EqIA, to get a better understanding.

Part 4: Analysing the impact

Who does the service, strategy, policy, project or change impact?

- If your strategy, policy, project or service contains options you may wish to consider providing an assessment for each option. Please cut and paste the template accordingly.

For each protected characteristic please choose from the following options:

- Please note in some cases more than one impact may apply – in this case please state all relevant options and explain in the ‘Please provide details’ box.

Positive Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the proposal eliminates discrimination, advances equality of opportunity and/or fosters good relations with protected groups.
Negative Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protected characteristic group(s) could be disadvantaged or discriminated against
Neutral Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No change/ no assessed significant impact of protected characteristic groups
Unclear	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough data/evidence has been collected to make an informed decision.

Age:	Positive
What age bracket does this affect?	All age groups
Please provide details:	<p>All age groups are likely to be impacted, particularly with people who do not have access to a car, van, motorbike or scooter. The Plan seeks to make bus services more attractive, cheaper, easier to use, faster, more reliable, and greener.</p> <p>The survey highlighted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People aged 65 or over ranked better integration with other modes of transport as the third most popular improvement, compared

	<p>to only being ranked between sixth and eighth by all other age groups 55 and under.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple to understand fares and a single ticket that can be used on all buses are more popular with respondents aged under 18 and 18-24 and less popular those aged 65 and over. • People aged under 25 are more frequent users of digital forms of information provision via mobile apps and web applications. • In this survey there is no clear pattern between age groups and their feelings of safety. <p>Evidence indicates a high proportion of bus passengers are older people with concessionary passes. Data for 2019/20 shows that 45% of bus journeys in Dorset were made by concessionary passengers. This group are most likely to use buses for shopping, leisure and to attend health appointments. This age group will continue to require access to traditional paper based forms of information such as printed timetables and timetable books.</p>
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Disability: (including physical, mental, sensory and progressive conditions)	Positive
Does this affect a specific disability group?	All
Please provide details:	<p>Disabled people who do not have access to a car are likely to be impacted. The Plan seeks to make bus services more accessible for all as well as more attractive, cheaper, easier to use, faster, more reliable, and greener.</p> <p>The National Travel Survey (NTS, 2019) identifies that people with a disability or illness expected to last more than 12 months make more trips by bus than those without a disability.</p> <p>Vehicle and bus stop accessibility, including low floor buses, raised curbs and space to transport wheelchairs, is critical for anyone with a physical impairment.</p>

	<p>Accessible information provision is also critical, both pre journey and during the journey, including traditional paper based information, digital media, and on bus announcements and displays. Through the Enhanced Partnership information will be produced in an easy to read/understand format for customers with visual, hearing, and physical disabilities, and all other customer groups.</p> <p>The survey shows that disability is also a significant factor impacting perceptions of safety. Residents who identified themselves to be disabled have lower feelings of safety with 72% feeling either very safe or fairly safe, compared to 89% of non-disabled respondents. Further work is needed to understand what would make people with disabilities feel safer accessing and using the bus network.</p> <p>Respondents to the survey who identify themselves as disabled rank information on local bus services being made easier to obtain and understand, and better waiting facilities (bus shelters / bus stations) higher than those who don't identify as disabled.</p>
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Gender Reassignment & Gender Identity:	Neutral Impact
Please provide details:	We don't anticipate at this time this plan or its associated initiatives will have any impacts related to a person's gender identity.

Pregnancy and maternity:	<i>Positive</i>
Please provide details:	<p>Women who do not have access to a car are likely to be impacted. The Plan seeks to make bus services more accessible, safer, attractive, cheaper, easier to use, faster, more reliable, and greener.</p> <p>The NTS shows that women make more trips (56) per year by bus than males (43).</p> <p>Vehicle and bus stop accessibility, including low floor buses, raised curbs and space to transport pushchairs, is critical for mothers and pregnant women.</p>

Race and Ethnicity:	<i>Neutral Impact</i>
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Please provide details:	We don't anticipate at this time this strategy or its associated initiatives will have any impacts related to a person's race or ethnicity.
Religion or belief:	<i>Neutral Impact</i>
Please provide details:	We don't anticipate at this time this strategy or its associated initiatives will have any impacts related to a person's religion or belief.
Sexual orientation:	<i>Neutral Impact</i>
Please provide details:	We don't anticipate at this time this strategy or its associated initiatives will have any impacts related to a person's sexual orientation.
Sex (consider both men and women):	<i>Positive Impact</i>
Please provide details:	<p>Anyone without access to a car are likely to be impacted. The plan seeks to make bus services more accessible, safer, attractive, cheaper, easier to use, faster, more reliable, and greener.</p> <p>The NTS shows that women make more trips (56) per year by bus than males (43).</p>
Marriage or civil partnership:	<i>Neutral Impact</i>
Please provide details:	We don't anticipate at this time this strategy or its associated initiatives will have any impacts related to a person's marriage or civil partnership status.
Carers:	<i>Positive</i>
Please provide details:	<p>Carers who do not have access to a car are likely to be impacted. The Plan seeks to make bus services more attractive, cheaper, easier to use, faster, more reliable, and greener.</p> <p>Vehicle and bus stop accessibility, including low floor buses, raised curbs and space to transport pushchairs and wheelchairs, is critical for carers.</p>
Rural isolation:	<i>Unclear</i>
Please provide details:	The current bus network is focussed on serving denser areas of population and connecting the main towns. Community transport is the main alternative for people without a car.

	Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) in rural areas is proposed through the Plan and would provide increased connectivity and integration with the bus network. The booking of journeys will need to be designed to be simple and easy and meet the needs of all potential users.
Single parent families:	<i>Positive Impact</i>
Please provide details:	<p>Single parent families who do not have access to a car are likely to be impacted. The Plan seeks to make bus services more attractive, cheaper, easier to use, faster, more reliable, and greener.</p> <p>Vehicle and bus stop accessibility, including low floor buses, raised curbs and space to transport pushchairs, is critical for single parent families with young children.</p>
Social & economic deprivation:	<i>Positive</i>
Please provide details:	<p>Low income groups who do not have access to a car are likely to be impacted. The Plan seeks to make bus services more attractive, cheaper, easier to use, faster, more reliable, and greener.</p> <p>The lowest income households make the most trips by bus and the fewest private vehicle trips.</p> <p>Between March 2005 and March 2021 bus fares in non-metropolitan areas have risen by 75% compared to the all items CPI increased by 41% over the same period, meaning bus fares have risen in real terms. Schemes to cap or lower bus fares will most benefit those on low incomes.</p>
Armed Forces communities	<i>Neutral Impact</i>
Please provide details:	We don't anticipate at this time this strategy or its associated initiatives will have any impacts related to a person being in the Armed Forces.

Part 5: Action Plan

Provide actions for **positive**, **negative** and **unclear** impacts.

If you have identified any **negative** or **unclear** impacts, describe what adjustments will be made to remove or reduce the impacts, or if this is not possible provide justification for continuing with the proposal.

Issue	Action to be taken	Person(s) responsible	Date to be completed by
Access to bus services in rural areas	In collaboration with local bus operators and the community transport sector, provide demand responsive transport services in rural areas that improve rural connectivity and integration with the core bus network and other forms of transport.	Project lead	2022/23 – 2025/26
Access to information about bus service	In collaboration with local bus operators, design all digital and printed media/bus information to meet accessibility standards	Project lead	2022/23
Vehicle and bus stop accessibility	In collaboration with local bus operators, adopt vehicle and bus stop infrastructure standards to meet accessibility needs of customers with protected characteristics.	Project lead	2022/23
Bus fares affordability	In collaboration with local bus operators, develop fares schemes to introduce a daily cap and through tickets for travel across any operators bus services. Develop new discount schemes for young customers and job seekers.	Project lead	2022/23

EqIA Sign Off

Officer completing this EqIA:	Owen Clark	Date:	26/10/2021
Equality Lead:		Date:	
Equality & Diversity Action Group Chair:		Date:	

Next Steps:

- Please send this draft EqIA to: [Diversity & inclusion Officer](#)
- The report author will be invited to an Equality & Diversity Action Group (these are held monthly - dates are available on the intranet)
- The Equality & Diversity Action Group will review the EqIA and you may be asked to make some alterations
- EqIAs are signed off and published
- The report author is responsible for ensuring any actions in the action plan are implemented.