

Agenda Item No. 6 (f)

DERBYSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

5 April 2018

Report of the Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Environment

**DERBYSHIRE BUS PARTNERSHIP PLAN 2018-23 (HIGHWAYS,
TRANSPORT AND INFRASTRUCTURE)**

(1) **Purpose of Report** To seek Cabinet approval to undertake consultation on a draft Derbyshire Bus Partnership Plan 2018-23 which aims to establish a long term strategy for the development of bus services within the County.

(2) **Information and Analysis**

Background

Buses play a major role in the way many people go about their daily lives with over 500,000 passenger journeys being made every week on bus services in Derbyshire. People use buses to get to work, school, college, hospital, the shops and a range of other essential services and leisure opportunities, all of which help to support the wider economy of the area. Without buses, Derbyshire roads would be more congested, the economy weaker, residents more socially isolated and the air quality worse.

Whilst the vast majority of passengers in Derbyshire use services provided on a commercial basis by bus companies, with no direct financial support from the Council, the Council has, for many years, funded a series of supported routes. These operate in areas or at times of the day where there is insufficient demand to make it financially viable to run buses commercially. However, on-going concerns about the future funding of these supported routes have made it very difficult to make long term plans for the development of the bus network.

Following the recent Council decision to restore a base budget allocation of £2.8m for supported services, it is now the ideal opportunity for the Council and partners in the bus industry and elsewhere to plan for the future of bus services in Derbyshire. The experience from other areas in the country, which have seen significant improvements to bus services and increases in passenger numbers is that partnership working between stakeholders is

essential to bringing forward positive change. This has also been recognised in the new Bus Services Act 2017 which provides a framework for bus operators and local authorities to work together to set a shared vision for bus services.

As a first step towards establishing a sustainable future for bus services, the following report on the agenda for this meeting of Cabinet sets out proposals, in the first instance, to bring the network of supported services into line with the available budget and then to review these services on an area-by-area basis.

There have been a number of bus strategies covering Derbyshire in the past, but these have been written very much from a Council perspective setting out what the Council will and will not do. However, as the vast majority of passengers use services provided on a commercial basis without any direct financial support from the Council, these plans have made only a limited impact. While the Council has a role to play, so do a number of other organisations. Using a partnership model, officers from the Council have worked with a steering group consisting of partners from the main bus companies, passengers groups, community transport operators, other local authorities and organisations such as the health and higher education sector, to develop a draft Plan that will be jointly owned by all these different parties.

The Draft Derbyshire Bus Partnership Plan

The draft Plan has four key aims:

- 1) Improving the overall passenger experience.
- 2) Developing and sustaining a high quality core commercial network.
- 3) Ensuring a flexible modernised supported services network.
- 4) Establishing strong partnerships to take forward improvements.

The draft Plan includes a number of actions which the stakeholder partners, who helped draw it up, can commit to and implement. It also gives those partners who will be contributing financially, the certainty and confidence they need to invest in the area. This will ensure that the network is sustainable in the longer term and continues to thrive, delivering the services which passengers want to use.

A copy of the draft plan is attached as an appendix to this report. This is in the process of being finalised and Cabinet is asked to authorise the Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Infrastructure to agree any minor amendments that may be needed prior to the start of consultation.

Next Steps

Whilst the draft Plan has been produced by the members of the steering group, it is recognised that wider consultation needs to be undertaken with relevant stakeholders. It is therefore proposed that a consultation process is undertaken in late spring 2018 with a view to consultation responses being considered by Cabinet and production of a final version of the Plan to be formally adopted by the Council in summer 2018. The consultation will primarily focus on seeking views from representatives of passenger groups, bus operators and other interested stakeholders.

(3) **Financial Considerations** The implementation of the draft Plan will require funding from both County Council and other partners, including the bus operators. The County Council's spending will include the ongoing financial support for the supported bus network, the installation of roadside infrastructure and the provision of bus information. Funding for the supported bus services has already been agreed and other elements, including roadside infrastructure, will be provided using a mixture of external grants, such as that for the A61 Growth Corridor and the Derbyshire Highways Hub Advanced Real Time Information Project, as well as money from the Local Transport Plan capital programme. Other partners, such as the bus companies, will provide the funding for elements such as new buses and ticketing systems.

(4) **Legal Considerations** The Bus Services Act 2017 gives Councils more ability to influence bus services. In authorities such as Derbyshire, it encourages greater joint working between Councils and local bus companies to develop plans to improve the quality of services. The Derbyshire Bus Partnership Plan includes specific proposals to use some of the elements in the Act to establish an Advanced Quality Partnership in at least one part of Derbyshire. This will include measures such as improved vehicles and service frequency, along with new roadside infrastructure and joint smart ticketing products.

(5) **Social Value Considerations** Bus services are particularly important to disadvantaged groups including young people, older people and those on low incomes, allowing them access to key services including employment, education, health and shopping. Having bus services in an area also helps to support local businesses, allowing them access to a wider catchment area of customers and staff, as well as providing direct employment opportunities for Derbyshire residents.

Other Considerations

In preparing this report the relevance of the following factors has been considered: prevention of crime and disorder, equality and diversity, human resources, environmental, health, property and transport considerations.

(6) **Key Decision** No.

(7) **Call-In** Is it required that call-in be waived in respect of the decisions proposed in the report? No.

(8) **Background Papers** Held on file within the Economy, Transport and Environment Department. Officer contact details – Chris Hegarty, extension 36721.

(9) **OFFICER'S RECOMMENDATIONS** That Cabinet:

9.1 Approves the contents of the draft Derbyshire Bus Partnership Plan as a basis for consultation

9.2 Authorises the Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Environment, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highway Transport and Infrastructure, to finalise the draft Plan prior to consultation.

9.3 Receives a further report on the outcome of the consultation.

Mike Ashworth
Strategic Director – Economy, Transport and Environment

Draft Derbyshire Bus Partnership Plan 2018-2023

March 2018 version

Derbyshire – Better by Bus

1 Introduction

1.1 Bus services are a vital public service playing a major role in the way many people go about their daily lives. Each week over 500,000 passenger journeys are made by bus in Derbyshire across a variety of urban and rural areas, making it the most frequently used form of public transport in the county. Buses take people to work, school, college, hospital, the shops and a range of other essential services and leisure opportunities, all of which help to support the wider economy across the area. Without buses, Derbyshire roads would be more congested, the economy weaker, residents more socially isolated and the air quality worse.

1.2 People who use buses in the Derbyshire area think highly of the services provided with bus passenger satisfaction in Derbyshire ranked the second highest of all the county council areas across the country in a recent national survey. However, despite this, overall bus patronage has been declining in Derbyshire for a number of years, as it has in most other places across the country.

1.3 If buses are to have a long term future, it is fundamental that they start appealing to more people from a variety of backgrounds and ages. To do this, bus services need to provide a good quality product which not only exceeds existing passengers' expectations, but actively appeals to new potential users. The key essential elements of this according to national and local surveys is a network which is -

- **Attractive**, providing reliable, punctual services, with high quality customer service and infrastructure and vehicles that are modern, well maintained, clean and safe.
- **Available**, with good network coverage, operating periods and frequency which people can easily access and understand.
- **Affordable**, with fares that are competitive with car use with a variety of different options giving people flexibility and value for money.

1.4 To make this happen we need a plan, which contains an **Achievable** set of actions which the various stakeholders in the private, public and voluntary sectors who helped draw up the Plan can commit to and implement.

The Plan has 4 key aims -

- 1) **Improving the overall passenger experience** – High quality customer service, easy to understand information and a clean, safe environment at every stage of the journey.

- 2) **Developing and sustaining a high quality core commercial network**
– Ensuring the services most people use on a regular basis are reliable, frequent, attractive and affordable to use.
- 3) **Ensuring a flexible modernised supported services network** –
Providing appropriate accessible ways for people to reach key destinations in areas where demand is more limited and to groups who may struggle to use conventional bus services.
- 4) **Establishing Strong partnerships to take forward improvements** -
All the various stakeholders with an interest in bus services working together to maximise the benefits for passengers and the wider community.

All of which will help the partners achieve our overall objective of increasing bus use in Derbyshire, which is important because it will help –

- **Support sustainable economic growth**
- **Reduce congestion**
- **Improve air quality**
- **Reduce social exclusion**
- **Support sustainable housing solutions**
- **Develop tourism**
- **Increase opportunities to access education**

1.5 Experience from elsewhere in the country, where bus usage has increased, has shown that partnership working is essential as no one organisation alone has the ability or resources to introduce all of the changes required. This has also been recently recognised in the new Bus Services Act 2017. The Act provides a framework for bus operators and local authorities to work together to set a shared vision for bus services in their area and introduce the changes required. This Plan therefore is a partnership between all the various groups who have contributed to its development and will be responsible for taking the actions required to deliver it. These include -

- **Bus companies**
- **Passengers groups**
- **Community transport operators**
- **Local authorities**
- **Other organisations such as business and health and higher education providers.**

The members of the working group that helped draw up the plan are shown in Appendix 1.

2 Background – What do bus passengers want?

2.1 National and local studies which have highlighted a number of priorities for improvement identified by current and potential bus passengers. The key priorities are -

- **Better value for money** - with passengers being able to purchase the tickets that are right for them in a variety of different formats, including simple paper tickets, mobile, smart cards, account based ticketing and joint operator schemes.
- **Punctuality and Reliability**– more buses running on time and when they should.
- **Frequency and coverage** – with buses running more often and to more places.
- **Better information** - including information when delays occur and in different formats such as real time information screens at stops and phone apps.
- **Safety** – more effort to tackle anti-social behaviour on buses and at bus stops.
- **Cleaner and better maintained buses and stops.**
- **Flexible ticketing** – a single affordable ticket which allows passengers to use all the bus services in an area, regardless of which bus company runs them.

3 Who provides the bus services?

3.1 Most bus services across the country are provided by private bus companies operating on a commercial basis with no direct financial support from the local councils. Currently, approximately 83% of all passenger journeys in Derbyshire are made on commercially operated bus services. These cover the urban areas and the majority of the main routes in the more rural parts of the County. On these services, it is the companies which set the routes, timetables and fares in a way which they feel best meets their wider business and financial objectives. As a result, these services can and do evolve over time with timetables and routing altering to take account of changing demand and market conditions. The map in Appendix 2 shows the current network of day time commercial services.

3.2 The companies which dominate the commercial bus sector in Derbyshire are Stagecoach, which is part of large national chain and Trent Barton which is a local business based in Heanor. Arriva, another national operator, is the main bus service provider in Derby and runs some routes in South Derbyshire. There are also a number of medium size local companies, including Midland Classic, Yourbus and High Peak Buses. Whilst the Council does not pay for, or control these commercial services, it still has a role to play by providing things, such as information, roadside infrastructure, including stops, shelters and measures to make it easier for them to operate, such as bus priority at traffic signals and ‘bus gates’.

3.3 In addition to the commercial routes, there is also a network of other bus services which Derbyshire County Council pays directly to be operated. These services do not make enough money through fares to cover their own costs, however, the funding the County Council provides allows them to operate. There are three main types of Council supported services –

- Complete conventional routes where the Council specifies where the bus should go, the timetable to be operated and the fares to be charged. These routes tend to be in more rural areas or parts of urban areas where there are limited or no commercial services operating.
- Additional early morning, evening or weekend journeys on services which are commercially operated during the bulk of the day but do not generate enough through fares income to justify running outside these times.
- Derbyshire Connect services which operate on a more flexible basis with the destination and times of operation based around passenger demand, rather than a specific routes and timetables.

This network of supported services has been built up over many years, and between them the services carry approximately 17% of all bus passenger journeys in Derbyshire. Whilst some of these services have been altered to take account of changes in demand some have remained essentially the same for a long time. The map in Appendix 3 shows the current network of supported services.

3.4 Apart from directly paying for services to be provided, the County Council also pays for –

- The costs of the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme, (known locally as Gold Card), for older people and those with certain disabilities.
- The b_line concessionary scheme for young people under 19.
- School transport for children who meet certain distance or financial criteria.

4.0 Why is a Plan needed?

4.1 Bus travel is a means to an end allowing people to get to where they want to go for work, education, shopping, leisure and other important day to day tasks. Whilst bus travel is particularly important to certain parts of the community, including children and young adults, older people, women and those on lower incomes, it also plays a wider role helping to strengthen the local economy and reduce social isolation. This is particularly true in the more rural areas of the county where facilities are generally more limited.

4.2 Whilst high levels of customer satisfaction with bus services in Derbyshire have been recorded for several years, passenger numbers have continued to

decline. Similar reductions have taken place in the other local county council areas across the East Midlands, as can be seen in the table below.

Bus passenger numbers in East Midlands County Council areas 2010-11 to 2016-17

Local authority	Bus passenger numbers 2010-11	Bus passenger numbers 2016-17
Derbyshire	30.1m	26.1m
Leicestershire	17.3m	13.5m
Lincolnshire	16.3m	13.6m
Nottinghamshire	34.1m	30.0m

On a national level there has also been a steady decline in passenger numbers over the same period.

4.3 Nationally, the bus industry continues to face a number a challenges including -

- High levels of car ownership.
- More on line shopping and people working from home, reducing the need to travel.
- New housing, urban edge retail development and out of town employment sites, often in places hard to serve by bus.
- Traffic congestion, making bus services slower and less reliable which, in turn, make them less attractive to passengers and more expensive for bus companies to provide.
- Competition from new players such as Uber and car clubs.
- The perceived affordability of bus fares compared to other options.
- Concessionary travel entitlement changes, with older people waiting longer before they receive a card.
- A growing focus on air quality, particularly in urban areas with the potential for restrictions on the use of certain classes of diesel powered vehicles, including older types of buses.
- The negative image of bus travel amongst certain groups of potential passengers often based on their past experience.

4.4 Despite these challenges, there have been some exceptions to this reduction in bus usage, with cities such as Bristol, Reading and Brighton all seeing growth. Some more rural areas such as West Sussex, Cornwall, Oxfordshire, North East Somerset and Bath have also managed to increase passenger numbers. **Therefore, decline in rural and urban areas is not inevitable.**

4.5 Looking at the areas which have seen growth, it is clear that they share a number of key features, including –

- Strong partnership working arrangements between the bus operators, the local authorities and other interested parties.
- A willingness to invest in services and infrastructure on a long term basis.
- Ability to be flexible and to take tough decisions when required to encourage bus use.

4.6 Due to the uncertainty over funding for supported bus services in Derbyshire over the last few years it has been difficult to develop a similar approach as the withdrawal of all these services would have had such a major impact. However, as this issue has now been resolved, following the decision to restore a base budget allocation of £2.8m for supported services, there is no reason why Derbyshire could not do the same, particularly as the new Bus Services Act 2017 makes it easier to develop meaningful partnership arrangements. There are also a number of more general factors which create potential opportunity for encouraging more bus use in our area, including-

- Young people staying in education longer and delaying when they learn to drive.
- Increasing numbers of older people, potentially increasing the demand for bus travel.
- Low wage growth, making car ownership less affordable, particularly for young people.
- General population growth.
- The potential to make better use of social media and ICT for information, marketing and fares initiatives.
- Centralisation of key services, such as health, meaning people need to travel further to access them, particularly in more rural areas.

5 The Plan

5.1 It is clear that bus services face a series of challenges, but that there are opportunities, as well, which other areas have been able to exploit to positive effect. Fundamentally, for the Plan to be a success, it needs to put the passengers at its very centre, providing the services they will **want** to use. It also needs to be **achievable** based on what we know has worked well in the past locally and in those areas which have managed to increase passenger number. This means we will have to change the way we do some things, and change can sometimes be hard. The Plan therefore needs to be something **which all the partners can support** and gives those who will be meeting the financial costs of implementing it the certainty and confidence they need to invest in the area. This will ensure that the network is **sustainable** in the longer term and continues to thrive, delivering the services which passengers want to use.

Aim 1. Improving the overall passenger experience - Making bus travel a more pleasant experience with high quality customer service, easy to understand information and a safe and clean environment at every stage of the journey.

Creating a modern customer experience, which encourages trust, confidence, and long term loyalty is fundamental.

Strategic Actions	Action	Who takes the lead	Starting when
1	Invest in more driver training so customers receive an excellent service during their journey.	Bus companies.	Ongoing
2	Install more electronic real time information signs at key bus stops and interchanges in pilot area.	Derbyshire County Council.	2018-19
3	Trial an all operator area wide real time bus phone app and other measures to present the bus services in Derbyshire as a clear single network.	Bus operators and Derbyshire County Council.	2018-19
4	Improving the passenger on bus experience, including on-board visual displays, audio announcements, speedy and reliable Wi-Fi connectivity, and phone and tablet charging capability.	Bus companies.	Ongoing as part of the rolling programme of fleet renewals
5	Develop and implement a consistent standard for the cleaning and maintenance of bus stops and shelters in a pilot area.	Derbyshire County Council, borough, district, parish and town councils.	2018-19
6	Continue programme of installing lighting in bus shelters.	Derbyshire County Council.	Ongoing
7	Sharing data and intelligence to understand and meet customer needs better.	Bus companies and Derbyshire County Council.	Starting Autumn 2018
8	Introduce a Customer Charter setting out the standards which people can expect with regard to service, information, fares and passenger care.	Bus companies and Derbyshire County Council and passenger groups.	Starting Autumn 2018

9	Reinvigorate travel planning and behavioural change activities linked to new housing and commercial developments to encourage greater bus use and market the services.	Derbyshire County Council, bus companies, borough and districts council	Ongoing
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Aim 2. Developing and sustaining a high quality core commercial network - A network of comfortable, punctual, convenient and affordable commercial services which meet most peoples' travel needs.

Strategic Actions	Action	Who takes the lead	Starting when
1	Continued investment programme in new buses, with commitments to improve vehicle emissions standards and improved passenger environment.	Bus companies.	Ongoing
2	Pump prime improvements to the routes and frequencies of existing commercial services using funding from commercial and residential developments.	Bus companies and Derbyshire County Council, borough and district councils.	2018-19
3	Targeted punctuality improvement infrastructure measures to make bus journeys quicker and more reliable.	Derbyshire County Council.	2018-19
4	Test demand for an affordable integrated all bus operator ticket by introducing a simple paper based day and weekly ticket in an area of Derbyshire.	Derbyshire County Council and appropriate bus companies.	2018-19
5	Targeted bus stop infrastructure improvements to upgrade key corridors.	Derbyshire County Council borough, district, parish and town councils.	2019-20
6	Trial camera enforcement of bus stop clearways and other bus delay hotspots.	Derbyshire County Council, borough, district councils.	2019-20
7	Seeking financial resources from external sources, such as the Local Enterprise Partnership, National Productivity Investment	Derbyshire County Council, bus operators,	Ongoing as funding schemes

	Fund or other central Government sources to support bus improvement schemes.	borough and district councils.	are announced.
8	Work with Midlands Connect on the development of the area wide account based ticketing scheme.	Midlands Connect, bus companies and Derbyshire County Council.	2019/20

Aim 3. A flexible modernised supported services network- Meeting the needs of passengers in the areas as well those which struggle to use conventional buses more generally, whilst maximising the potential of these services to support the wider bus network.

Strategic Actions	Action	Who takes the lead	Starting when
1	Review the existing network to ensure it still meets passenger needs, including the potential to incorporate the Derbyshire Connect demand responsive transport type model or some elements of it to other areas in partnership with operators.	Derbyshire County Council, bus companies and community transport operators, passenger groups.	2018-19
2	Maximise the potential for incorporating supported services into commercial network or to support it e.g. feeder services.	Derbyshire County Council, bus companies and community transport operators, passenger groups.	2018-19
3	Introduce flexible service tendering specifications allowing operators to exercise more commercial judgement to come forward with a range of alternative service options.	Derbyshire County Council, bus companies and community transport operators.	2018-19
4	Trial procuring services in a way which links up the various elements such as school bus, special educational needs, and local services into one package, rather than bespoke individual contracted services to maximise the impact of council spending.	Derbyshire County Council.	2018-19

5	Introduce a simplified fares structure for supported bus services which offers value for all users, complements commercial services and supports interchange between routes.	Derbyshire County Council as part of area review process	2018-19
6	Create a unified brand for all Derbyshire Connect and completely funded supported services to strengthen the identity of the network.	Derbyshire County Council, bus companies and community transport operators.	2019-20
7	Establish a budget for the supported network for the life time of the Plan and set criteria for future services, including maximum level of subsidy per passenger, and distance from existing services.	Derbyshire County Council.	2019-20

Aim 4 Strong partnerships to take forward improvements - Effective partnerships between stakeholders is the key way in which improvements can be achieved with the various parties committing to work together over the long term to increase passenger numbers and enhance service quality. The measures in Aims 1, 2 and 3 all help to create the environment and infrastructure for partnership structures to be formalised.

Strategic Actions	Action	Who takes the lead	Starting when
1	Establish Advanced Quality Partnership in at least 1 area of Derbyshire, with measures to include vehicle standards, service frequency, infrastructure, joint ticketing product, consultation arrangements for service changes, formalising the long term commitment of all parties to bus services.	Derbyshire County Council, bus companies, community transport operators and passenger groups.	2018-19
2	Develop Enhanced Partnership Plan for at least one area of Derbyshire as part of preparation for potential Enhanced Partnership Scheme being introduced.	Derbyshire County Council, bus companies, community transport operators and passenger groups.	2019-20

3	Dependent on item 2, introduce an Enhanced Partnership Scheme with measures to include, vehicle specifications, payment methods, ticketing structures, infrastructure, timetabling or roll out another Advanced Quality Partnership scheme in an area.	Derbyshire County Council, bus companies, community transport operators and passenger groups.	2020-21
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Some of these actions have a number of tasks related to them and will take time to plan and implement. Therefore, for the Plan to succeed it is essential that the partners commit to work together for its five year life reviewing and updating as required.

6 What will success look like?

Our vision for this Plan is that it will create a modern, integrated and innovative bus network which puts customers first. The core commercial bus network will be thriving with increasing numbers of people using the services on a regular basis, with the Council's supported services providing passengers with a high quality, modern way to get around in other areas. All of this will contribute to Derbyshire's wider economic, environmental and social goals. Our success will be measured by -

- Reaching 30.1m bus passengers journeys per year by 2023.
- Having the highest bus passenger satisfaction of any county council areas nationally by 2023.

Appendix 1 Partnership working group members

Arriva Buses

Ashbourne Community Transport

Bus Users UK

Campaign for Better Transport

Derbyshire County Council

Derby University

Erewash Borough Council

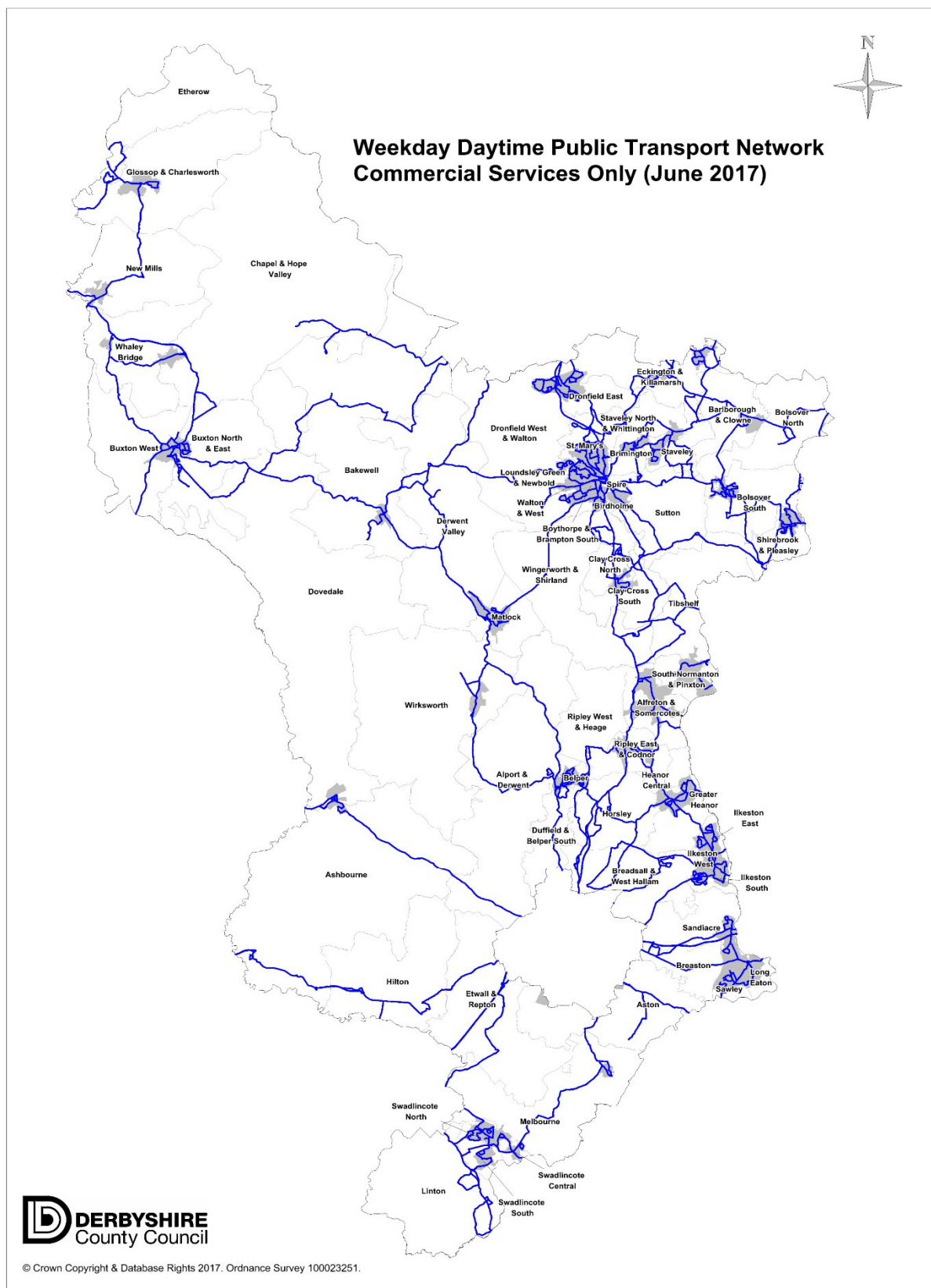
Royal Derby Hospital

Stagecoach Buses

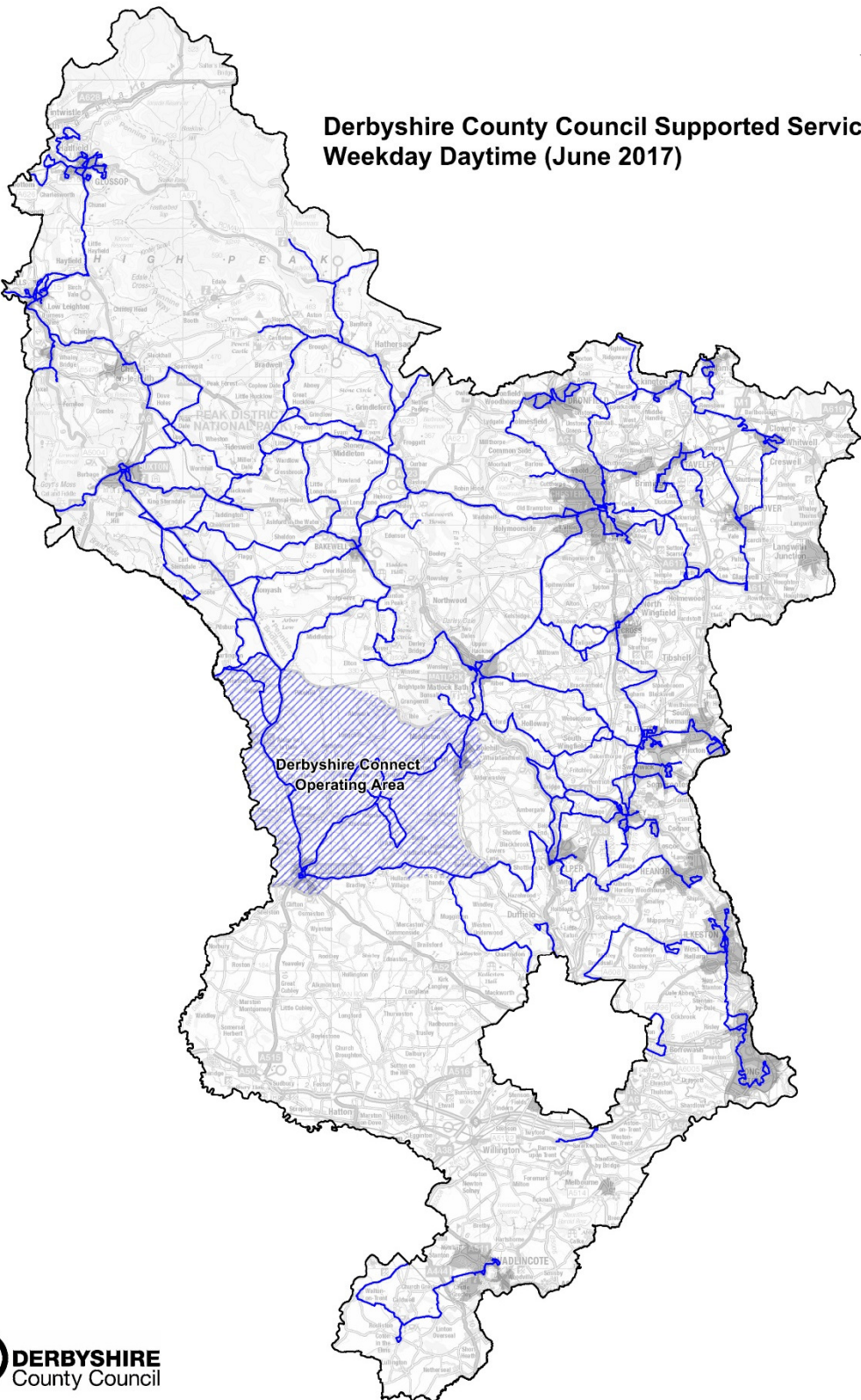
TM Travel

Trent Barton Buses

Appendix 2 Commercial weekday daytime services



Appendix 3 Supported weekday daytime services



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