

DOVER QUALITY BUS PARTNERSHIP

AGREEMENT

3 APRIL 2009

A Protocol between Kent County Council, Dover District Council and Stagecoach in East Kent

The partnership to achieve quality local bus services in the Dover District

1. Statement of Principles

Kent County Council, Dover District Council and Stagecoach in East Kent share the common objectives of:

- 1.1 Creating a public transport network acknowledged by local residents, visitors and the business community as an increasingly attractive alternative to private car use.
- 1.2 Seeking increased use of local bus services to assist in achieving a sustainable and self-sufficient transport system, capable of meeting the needs of the 21st century, enriching the quality of life in the Dover District, attracting investment, and enhancing work and leisure opportunities.

All three parties to this protocol acknowledge that these objectives require high quality reliable public transport that can only be delivered through working in partnership, with a commitment to co-ordinated investment and complementary initiatives.

2. Framework for Action

- 2.1 The bus network within Dover District has been identified as being appropriate for a joint commitment to invest and to upgrade facilities and operations, together with improved and imaginative marketing, which can contribute to the target growth.
- 2.2 The projected development and growth in Dover during the next decade will provide opportunities for the provision of high quality public transport services, enhancing the Dover District and encouraging sustainable transport options whenever possible.

3. Agreements of this Protocol

The three parties to this protocol agree to:

- 3.1 Work together to implement a substantial improvement to bus operating infrastructure, including stops, shelters, passenger information, accessibility
- 3.2 Work together and introduce innovations such as alternative environmentally friendly fuels, market sensitive fares including innovative ticketing (recognising that the level of fares in Dover District is below the UK average) and improved information, including where appropriate “real time” systems, to ensure that the aims, measures and targets of the protocol are delivered
- 3.3 Seek to deliver, through market research and similar consultative measures, opportunities for the introduction of new or revised local bus services, which would increase the use of public transport
- 3.4 Seek to identify through market surveys and public attitude studies the means to increase the quality and availability of public transport services in the Dover District
- 3.5 Seek to co-ordinate the development of the public transport network with land use planning to maximise the opportunities for local bus and rail services
- 3.6 Seek to co-ordinate the public transport network with other forms of transport to achieve maximum travel opportunities for the Dover District
- 3.7 Seek to implement a Punctuality Improvement Partnership
- 3.8 Work with Dover Town Council, Deal Town Council, Sandwich Town Council and Parish Councils within the District of Dover, and with other representative organisations, to exchange information and assist in the improvement of infrastructure and local transport information
- 3.9 The KCC Sustainable Transport Team will undertake the responsibility of organising and administering the meetings of the Partnership

4. Dover District Council and Kent County Council will:

- 4.1 Plan and progressively introduce, where possible, a series of bus priority and other measures, to improve the timing, punctuality and reliability of local bus services
- 4.2 Support new or improved public transport infrastructure and/or services where appropriate from both existing and new developments, to provide an accessible local bus service network for journeys to and from the present town centre, commercial locations and residential areas of the District
- 4.3 Seek funding for public transport facilities in support of investment and other measures taken by Stagecoach in East Kent to improve local bus services

- 4.4 Secure, implement and maintain suitable attractive and appropriate arrangements for the provision of information and roadside furniture (stops and shelters) to a standard agreed between the partners; Kent County Council to be responsible for damaged bus stop posts & hardstanding, and Dover District Council to be responsible for maintenance of its shelters
- 4.5 Assist in identifying new market opportunities for local bus services and support new initiatives to encourage greater use of public transport, including Green Travel Plans for employers and education establishments
- 4.6 Give advance notice of roadworks affecting bus services and make every reasonable endeavour to safeguard bus access in cases of road closures or diversions
- 4.7 Provide any other relevant infrastructure to improve bus access to stops (Kent County Council); and provide resources for bus stop clearways and parking enforcement (Dover District Council).

5. Stagecoach in East Kent will:

- 5.1 Work and consult with both Dover District Council and Kent County Council over the design, planning and implementation of a viable and sustainable network of local bus services, establishing appropriate co-ordination with other public transport services
- 5.2 Work with both Kent County Council and Dover District Council to provide input into the Local Transport Plan so that the benefits of improvements introduced through this protocol can be measured in terms of patronage figures
- 5.3 Introduce where commercially feasible improved local bus services in line with the introduction of priority measures, automatic vehicle location systems and other new features which contribute to more efficient public transport operation
- 5.4 Seek to maintain all services in the Dover District area with minimum lost mileage and to a professional standard. As a minimum standard Stagecoach in East Kent will aim to achieve standards of operation set by the Traffic Commissioner in accordance with NI 178
- 5.5 Invest where commercially feasible in new and fully accessible vehicles, as well as presenting existing vehicles in an attractive manner, using environmentally friendly fuels
- 5.6 Consult with Kent County Council and Dover District Council on any significant proposed fare changes
- 5.7 Continue to develop higher standards of training and education amongst staff, including an understanding of passenger transport operation and customer care
- 5.8 Provide adequate management and supervision of services to uphold standards as well as being able to deal with emergencies and other unforeseen circumstances quickly and efficiently

- 5.9 Be responsible for timetable displays, timetable display cases and bus stop flags at bus stops served only by Stagecoach routes. Bus stops on routes served by KCC-tendered services will be maintained by the appointed Roadside Infrastructure Unit contractor.
- 5.10 When services are disrupted by road works, ensure that the public are adequately informed of alternative arrangements by means of information on stops and buses and via Traveline.

Important Note:

This is a Voluntary Partnership Agreement in accordance with the provisions of the Transport Act 2000 and the Local Transport Act 2008. As such it is an agreement in which each of the parties is a voluntary partner.

Therefore, nothing in this agreement is designed or should be concluded as being legally binding on any of the parties, or in any manner being restrictive to the commercial or operational activities of Stagecoach in East Kent or any other organisation.

DOVER QUALITY BUS PARTNERSHIP

Signed this _____ day of _____ 2009

Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste
Kent County Council

Chief Executive,
Dover District Council

Managing Director
Stagecoach in East Kent

6. Aims and Measures of the Quality Bus Partnership

All three parties to the protocol agree to work together using the following aims and measures of the Quality Bus Partnership:

(M1) Percentage increase in number of passenger journeys since 2008

The very large increase in the number of passenger journeys since 2008 has been due to a number of factors, principal among them being the significant improvement in the level of service offered and the introduction of concessionary fares, which was first introduced county-wide in 2006 and England-wide in 2008. However, there are serious funding issues relating to the latter of these factors which are still to be resolved. The target figures predict a modest growth in passenger journeys on the very high baseline in 2008.

Target is 7.5% increase during the first three years

(M2) Percentage increase in number of multi-journey ticket sales since 2008

The very successful marketing undertaken by the operator has generated a significant growth in the sale of multi-journey tickets, especially the day explorer ticket and the weekly Megarider ticket. The expected growth in passenger numbers would also be expected to increase these sales further.

Target is 9% increase during the first three years

(M3) Increase in passengers expressing satisfaction with service provided since 2008

Bus passenger satisfaction rates would be expected to grow alongside the planned improvements that the QBP seeks to implement during the next three years. The parties to the agreement will seek to arrange a passenger satisfaction survey at an appropriate time.

7. Targets for Next Three Years

All three parties to the protocol agree to work together towards achieving the following targets for each of the next three years:

(T1) Percentage of services operating on time

Poor punctuality is due to many factors, including the increasing number of vehicles on the road and inconsiderate parking and loading at bus stops. We need to focus on better enforcement of illegal parking at bus stops and more rigorous monitoring of why and when delays happen, so that problems causing late running can be resolved.

Target is to build up to 95% within the first three years, as determined by NI 178 of not less than 1 minute early and not more than 5 minutes late

(T2) Number of stops with raised kerbs and bus stop clearways

Raised kerbs give better access at bus stops, especially for passengers with limited mobility and for parents with children in buggies. The standard measurement for raised kerbs should be 160mm, which meets the requirements of the highway authority and of the bus operator, especially with the increase in the number of low-floor buses which can be prevented from accessing the bus stop parallel to the pavement if the raised kerb is higher than this. The provision of more bus stop clearways is paramount, and these will continue to be introduced at all urban bus stops as soon as resources permit.

KCC is committed to providing a high level of bus stop improvement measures through its Integrated Transport programme, which should enable the trunk route stops between Dover and Folkestone, and many of the Dover town stops, to be completed. The rolling target for improved bus stops reflects this.

Target of new stops with raised kerbs and bus stop clearways is 50 in year 1, 100 in year 2, and 150 in year 3

(T3) Number of departure stops with timetable information

The provision of clear and accurate timetable information at the majority of bus stops is an essential part of public transport provision, and the operator has commenced a considerable improvement in the provision of timetable information in the Dover area. The completion of this project should enhance the attractiveness of local bus services, and increase patronage.

Target is 142 stops in year 1, 182 stops in year 2, and 222 stops in year 3

(T4) Bus stops with new or replacement shelters

The provision of shelters at all principal pick-up stops is an important facility for encouraging an increase in bus passengers. Combined with the elements of roadside infrastructure described above, a bus shelter provides essential protection from inclement weather, especially for the elderly, for those who are less mobile, and for parents with young children. There is a high level of bus shelter provision in Dover District at present, and where resources and physical limitations permit Dover District Council will increase their provision.

(T5) Projected dates for conversion of local routes to low-floor access vehicles

*Routes 12/711 in April 2009
Routes 14 and 89 as soon as funding permits*

(T6) Percentage of drivers with NVQ Level 2 in Road Passenger Transport

The investment provided by the operator in its workforce reflects their commitment to a reliable, customer oriented service, and is to be welcomed and encouraged

Target is 40% in year 1, 50% in year 2, and 60% in year 3

8. Additional Improvements to the Bus Network

All three parties to the agreement will work towards the following additional improvements to the bus network insofar as the provision of funding permits:

- 8.1 Stagecoach in East Kent and Kent County Council to ensure that service quality and reliability is maintained
- 8.2 Kent County Council to ensure that service performance of financially supported services continues to be monitored
- 8.3 Dover District Council to encourage developer contributions for public transport infrastructure, information and services
- 8.4 Kent County Council and Dover District Council to review the proposal for interchange improvements in South Street, Deal to reinforce the improved image of bus travel that the Diamond initiative has brought; and to improve accessibility by construction of a build-out with raised kerbs. The bus stops would need to meet the KCC bus stop hierarchy standards
- 8.5 Kent County Council and Dover District Council to improve the busy stops in Queen Street, Deal in accordance with the KCC bus stop hierarchy standards
- 8.6 Kent County Council to carry out an audit of all remaining bus stops as part of the Roadside Infrastructure Unit contract
- 8.7 Kent County Council and Dover District Council to ensure that the Pencester Road, Dover bus hub is upgraded, primarily funded through developer contributions, other funding through Dover's Growth Point status, and the KCC Integrated Transport programme 2006-11
- 8.8 Dover District Council will ensure that the requirements of public transport are considered in any proposals arising from the Dover Transportation Study which has been developed as part of the Council's regeneration plans and Local Development Framework
- 8.9 Kent County Council and Stagecoach in East Kent (SEK) to explore inter-availability of certain SEK tickets on non-SEK services
- 8.10 Kent County Council to investigate revisions to road layout in the Melbourne Avenue area in Dover, to enable low-floor buses to operate on routes 88 & 89
- 8.11 Dover District Council to consider the provision of a Park & Ride facility in the context of the Whitfield development plans
- 8.12 To agree a programme for the introduction of real time information to key stops across the area

9. Conclusions

- 9.1 This agreement sets out some benchmark aims, measures and targets which form the basis of a Quality Bus Partnership for Dover. Provided there is commitment from all three parties to the protocol, the bus passenger network in the Dover area should enjoy significant new initiatives, improvements and investment in the immediate future.
 - 9.2 This agreement will then set in place the foundations necessary for further developments envisaged in association with regeneration plans for the Whitfield and Western Heights areas of Dover, which could see the expansion of the existing bus network to incorporate a new Dover Express Service linking these areas, and new Park and Ride terminals, with the town centre, High Speed rail station and the Dover Community Hospital.
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