

## **SOMERSET BUS PASSENGER CHARTER**

### **Area covered by this Bus Passenger Charter**

This Bus Passenger Charter (BPC) has been produced for the Somerset County Council (SCC) area as part of the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). It covers all locally registered bus and coach services provided by all operators across the commercial and council-supported networks, including any services operated on a flexible or demand-responsive basis or provided by Community Transport operators through Section 22 operations.

### **Date and Validity of this Charter**

This BPC was ratified by all partner organisations and published on DD/MM/YYYY, valid for a period of 365 days. It will be reviewed every six months (180 days) to ensure it remains in line with current legislation.

### **Statement of Commitment**

This charter sets out a collective commitment from SCC and locally registered bus and coach service operators to work together to provide services which meet passenger needs across the BSIP area. It also sets out the rights passengers have under EU and UK legislation but does not affect your legal rights.

### **Your Rights**

This Customer Charter sets out our commitment to provide a good service which meets passengers' needs. You can request appropriate and comprehensible 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.

### **Passenger Entitlements**

Every time you choose to travel by bus in Somerset, you are entitled to a journey which is reliable and safe, on vehicles which are clean, comfortable, and accessible to all.

### **Safety & Security**

Safety of passengers and staff is of highest priority. We will do what we can to discourage unreasonable behaviour by other passengers on the bus. Each individual operator will manage their activities and co-operate with other bodies such as the police, to make your journey safe. Reasonable adjustments will be made to accommodate the individual needs of passengers while maintaining a reliable service. All (customer-facing) staff will undergo ongoing disability awareness training.

## **CCTV**

When passengers are recorded on any CCTV systems, each organisation will follow the CCTV code of practice as published by the Information Commissioner's Office.

## **Information**

All information provided for passengers will be as accurate and relevant as possible.

## **Information Displays on Buses**

All buses will clearly display a route number (or letter) plus the service destination or other indication of where they are going.

## **Information in Accessible Formats**

SCC and the operators will help to provide timetable and fare information in accessible formats on request. All information will be made available in large print, on audio cassette or in translation. This information may take time to produce and there may be a cost. Requests can be made by email at XXXXX or by post at YYYYY or by calling ZZZZZ (service available from/to XXXXX).

## **Timetable Information**

We will provide timetable information through the following channels:

- A new travel portal hosted by SCC.
- Through Traveline SW telephone: 0871 200 22 33 or at <https://www.travelinesw.com/>
- On the relevant operators websites where available
- Updates to information will normally be made available at least two weeks in advance
- The driver of your bus can provide further timetable information for your journeys

## **Fares**

Operators will provide fare information on their website, including details of discounted tickets and seasonal passes which can be used across the county.

**[Requires Board level Discussion]** On buses, please ask the driver for the best fare details for your journey(s) as there may be day tickets or other suitable options available.

## **Reliable Services**

Locally registered bus and coach service operators will strive to provide enough buses and staff to run timetabled services as advertised under normal circumstances.

When factors beyond either SCC's and/or the operators' control result in it not being possible to run a full service, collectively we will do all we can to minimise inconvenience and keep you informed. All operators aim to provide their services to meet standards set by the Traffic Commissioners - 95% of journeys will operate within a window of one minute early to five minutes late. Please do consider this when planning/making a journey.

### **Clean Travel Environment**

Operators are responsible for regularly cleaning and maintaining the interior and exterior of all their vehicles. SCC and partners to the EP Scheme will periodically undertake ad-hoc monitoring of bus stops and bus stations to ensure they are kept clean and tidy.

### **Comfort**

Operators check their vehicles to make sure the heating, cooling, and lighting systems are working as intended. All drivers are professionally trained to operate their vehicle to provide passengers with a safe and comfortable ride. Where suitable, SCC and partners to the EP Scheme will maintain shelters, seating and adequate lighting at bus stops and other key waiting facilities.

### **Ways We Can Assist Travel For All**

All locally registered bus and coach service operators aim to provide a welcoming travel environment and treat passengers with respect. SCC and operators of locally registered bus and coach services can make reasonable adjustments to meet the individual needs of customers upon request.

SCC works with locally registered bus and coach service operators to ensure that all staff providing registered bus and coach services have customer service and disability awareness skills by ensuring that staff receive initial and ongoing training in helping people with disabilities travel confidently and safely. **[Requires Board level discussion]**

SCC provides a dedicated helpline for people with disabilities. The contact number is XXXXXXXXX. Furthermore, SCC will issue Journey Assistance Cards that can help people with disabilities make staff operating locally registered bus and coach services aware of their needs. **[Requires BUS Group and Board level discussion]**

SCC will also work with affected passengers and operators of locally registered bus and coach services to enable where possible, use of certain "class 2" mobility scooters on buses and coaches following an assessment and the issuing of a permit for travel required before taking a mobility scooter on a bus or coach. **[Requires Board level discussion]**

Information relating to the carriage of wheelchairs, small prams and buggies are set out in each operator's individual 'Conditions of Carriage'. [Requires Board level discussion]

### **What to Expect When Things Go Wrong**

[Section to be populated using consultation with BUS Group and Bus Operators – this needs to include buses later than an accepted threshold, buses that fail to arrive, buses that break-down en-route, passengers missing connections to other bus or rail services, passengers missing the last bus and/or last buses failing to operate (see reasons above). Should recompense be compensation, taxi journey, alternative travel etc?]

### **Code of Practice & Complaints Procedure**

When you forward us comments, complaints, or suggestions regarding services, we will collectively use them to monitor performance and identify areas for improvement. We will respond in the following manner:

1. All complaints should be sent to the relevant operator in the first instance
2. For all complaints, an initial written reply will be sent within 10 working days;
3. If it appears that a reply cannot be sent in 10 working days, the complaint will be acknowledged within two working days and an expected timescale for a further response given;
4. Where either SCC or an operator fall short of the high standards set through this BPC, you will receive an apology and, where appropriate, relevant compensation will be sent
5. A copy of the full complaints and comments procedure is available from the individual operators. [Requires Board level discussion]
6. If you remain dissatisfied with how your comment has been dealt, you can contact the Bus Appeals Body, who will take an independent view of the matter. We agree to abide by any decision or finding.

### **If You Want To Contact Us**

SCC and all operators welcome feedback on bus service performance – good or bad. You can contact us by email, by post or on by phone. We aim to give you a response within 10 working days. If we are unable to do so within that timescale, the relevant organisation will contact you to outline expected response time.

## **Independent Appeals**

If you disagree with the response received to any complaint, you have the option of approaching Bus Users UK ([www.bususers.org](http://www.bususers.org) or 0300 111 0001) who will try to resolve the issue for you.

They may refer your complaint to the Bus Appeals Body ([www.busappealsbody.co.uk](http://www.busappealsbody.co.uk)). SCC and all operators agree to abide by the Bus Appeals Body's recommendations.

## **Your Rights**

In addition to our commitments above, you have a right for your complaint to be dealt with if it concerns any of the matters covered by the sections headed "Your rights" in this charter, provided you submit it within three months. We must respond to these complaints within one month of you submitting them and give you a final reply, stating whether your complaint is substantiated or rejected, within three months. You have the right to appeal these complaints to Bus Users UK if you disagree with our response. Bus Users UK is subject to a three-month time limit for dealing with appeals and must refer unresolved complaints to a Traffic Commissioner. If they fail to refer your complaint promptly when the time limit expires, you have the right to refer it to the relevant Traffic Commissioner yourself.

## **Bus Users UK**

The contact details for Bus Users UK are:

Bus Users UK, Terminal House, Shepperton, TW17 8AS.

Telephone: 0300 111 0001, Email: [enquiries@bususers.org](mailto:enquiries@bususers.org)