

# **Bracknell Forest Bus Partnership: Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme**

December 2021

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## Definitions

In this document, the following capitalised terms shall have the meanings ascribed to them below:

1985 Act	Transport Act 1985
2000 Act	Transport Act 2000
2017 Act	Bus Services Act 2017
Bus Operators (or Operators)	All providers of Qualifying Bus Services
The Council, Bracknell Forest Council or BFC	Bracknell Forest Council
Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variation	A formal variation of the relevant Enhanced Partnership Scheme(s) as a result of the mechanism set out in section 4, which will then constitute a formal variation of the relevant scheme for the purposes of s.138E(1) of the 2000 Act.
Facilities	Those facilities referred to in Part B which shall be deemed such for the purposes of s.138D(1) of the 2000 Act.
Bracknell Forest Bus Service Improvement Plan (or Bracknell Forest BSIP, or BSIP)	The Bus Service Improvement Plan published by Bracknell Forest Council.
Bracknell Forest Bus Partnership	The committee of Bracknell Forest bus operator representatives, council representatives and stakeholders responsible for considering recommendations put forward for inclusion in Enhanced Partnership Plans, Schemes or Scheme Variations.
Bracknell Forest Enhanced Partnership (or Enhanced Partnership or EP)	The Enhanced Partnership covering the geographic extent of the administrative boundary of the Borough of Bracknell Forest, shown for identification purposes at Figure 1.
Measures	Those measures referred to in Part B which shall be deemed as such for the purposes of s.138D(2) of the 2000 Act.
Non-qualifying Bus Service or exempt service	Services excluded from classification as Qualifying Bus Services

<p>Qualifying Bus Service</p>	<p>A registered local bus service with one or more stopping places within the geographical area of the Enhanced Partnership, with the exception of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Any schools or works registered local bus service not eligible for Bus Service Operators Grant</li> <li>• Any cross-boundary registered local bus service with less than 10% of its registered mileage within the Enhanced Partnership area</li> <li>• Any services operated under section 22 of the 1985 Act</li> <li>• Any registered local bus service which is an excursion or tour</li> <li>• Any other registered local bus service that the Operators and Council decide should be excluded from all or some requirements of the Enhanced Partnership Scheme.</li> </ul> <p>For the avoidance of doubt, a list of Qualifying Bus Services will be published at the start of each Council financial year.</p>
<p>Requirements</p>	<p>Those requirements placed upon Bus Operators identified as such within Part B, which shall be deemed as such for the purposes of s.138C 2017 Act.</p>

# 1. Part A - Enhanced Partnership Plan

**The Bracknell Forest Enhanced Partnership Plan for Buses is made in accordance with Section 138G(1) of the Transport Act 2000 by Bracknell Forest Council.**

**The Plan comes into effect on 1 April 2022 and will remain valid until revoked.**

## Introduction

- 1.1 The National Bus Strategy provided a welcome focus on improving bus services across the country. The requirement to develop a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), gave a real opportunity for Bracknell Forest Council to come together with its local bus operators to collectively consider the current bus service offer to residents and how it could be enhanced. The formation of a Bus Partnership has given a useful forum to highlight issues, discuss ideas and put forward potential solutions.
- 1.2 High car ownership and use, coupled with dispersed journey patterns, make for challenging conditions for bus services in Bracknell Forest. The bus is not viewed as an attractive option for those with a choice. Residents who do not use buses say that services are not frequent enough and do not run at the times they need them. However, for those who rely on buses, services are well regarded, albeit that any enhancements would still be welcomed.
- 1.3 Despite the challenges, Bracknell Forest has a relatively stable network of commercial and supported bus services run by four operators. Buses are well presented and services are promoted by operators. This has helped to attract users back to buses after the pandemic, with recovery better than in some parts of the country. Therefore, this is a strong foundation on which to build up the network. The Bus Partnership agreed early on that the starting point needed to be a focus on commercial services – those that already carry a large proportion of passengers. These offer the best opportunity to attract more use through modest frequency and other enhancements. This will in turn increase revenue and allow operators to invest in further improvements; therefore, establishing a virtuous cycle of growth and improvement.
- 1.4 This approach is captured in the Bus Service Improvement Plan vision **“to develop a viable and stable bus network that supports the local economy, provides better choice and improves quality of life in a safe and healthy environment”**. This is underpinned by objectives of service development and improvement, operational efficiency and better passenger experience.

- 1.5 Four workstreams are envisaged to deliver the aspirations of the BSIP:
- **Building up the network** – enhancing and developing services
  - **Building efficiency** – by tackling delays and pinch-points
  - **Building value** – through easier ticketing and fares discounts
  - **Building up confidence** – by improved information and passenger infrastructure
- 1.6 Within each of these are a series of measures and schemes that, if supported with additional Government funding, will introduce improvements that will make buses more attractive.
- 1.7 Alongside enhanced frequencies and extended times of operation of some commercial services, these routes will be the focus for improved bus stops and information, as well as targeted fares promotions and discounted travel for young people up to the age of 25. Pinch-points that impact on smooth bus operation, highlighted by operators and their drivers, will be tackled to speed up journeys.
- 1.8 In parallel, attention will also be given to supported services. The dual aims of this will be to try and make some of these commercially viable and also to develop their role in supporting the existing commercial network. With neighbouring authorities, there is a desire to try demand responsive transport in the area, to understand how it can contribute to the overall service network. This might be in terms of serving areas that have little or no bus service, or in tapping into new markets, such as providing direct links to employment areas or railway stations. Equally, semi-scheduled responsive services could connect people into the main fixed route bus services.
- 1.9 The Bracknell Forest Bus Partnership has provided the focus for collaborative working and forms the basis of the Enhanced Partnership. This will in turn facilitate the successful implementation of the planned measures, once levels of funding secured from Government are known.
- 1.10 With a relatively modest injection of funds sought through the BSIP, some meaningful improvements to the bus network in Bracknell Forest will be possible.
- 1.11 Drawing on the BSIP, this document fulfils the statutory requirements set out by the Bus Services Act 2017 of an Enhanced Partnership (EP) Plan for Bracknell Forest. Initially, this will facilitate the introduction of an EP Scheme aimed at supporting and developing bus services across Bracknell Forest, with the aim of starting to achieve the objectives set out in the BSIP.
- 1.12 In accordance with the statutory requirements for an EP Plan, this document includes:
- Overview and map of the geographical area covered



- Factors affecting the local bus market
- Summary of passengers' experiences in using bus services and the priorities of users and non-users for improvements
- Trends in bus journey speeds and the impact of congestion on bus services
- Objectives that are sought for bus service provision
- Interventions needed to achieve the desired outcomes
- Governance arrangements
- Competition test assessment
- An approach to gather feedback on the effectiveness of the EP

## 2. Bus travel in Bracknell Forest

### What do people think about local bus services?

- 2.1 A telephone survey of residents was undertaken in June/July 2021. 524 people were interviewed, chosen to be representative of the overall population. 80% of respondents were non-bus users, whilst 7% used a bus at least once per week. Over half of those who used a bus regularly travelled only on 1 or 2 days per week. A higher proportion (26%) of younger people (18-34) were bus users than other age groups. Residents in Bracknell town used the bus more than those outside.
- 2.2 About half of non-users indicated that they could have made their trips for shopping or to visit friends and family by bus.
- 2.3 The main reason for not using the bus was the preference for using a car. 72% of non-users and 24% of users indicated this. 11% of respondents said the main reason was that buses didn't go where they needed to go.
- 2.4 In considering the impact of the pandemic, 35% of bus users said they were less likely to use a bus than before the pandemic. However, 49% said that they had not changed their use of the bus, which indicates their reliance on the bus for their day-to-day needs.
- 2.5 82% of bus users were satisfied overall with bus services, whilst only 42% of non-users were satisfied. Generally, there was more satisfaction amongst those residents without a car and those holding concessionary travel passes with free travel.
- 2.6 The proportion of bus users who were satisfied with various attributes of bus services was as follows (in decreasing order):

Table 1 Bus user satisfaction

Attribute	% of bus users who were satisfied
Standard of driving	93%
Comfort whilst travelling	87%
Ease of working out bus times	85%
Ease of finding bus times	83%
Cleanliness	83%
Choice of destination	81%
Length of journey	81%
Ease of paying	77%

Running on time	76%
Condition of stop	76%
Customer service	73%
Information at stops	69%
Frequency of service	63%
Value for money	60%
When buses available	57%
Facilities at stop	51%
Ease of working out cost	48%

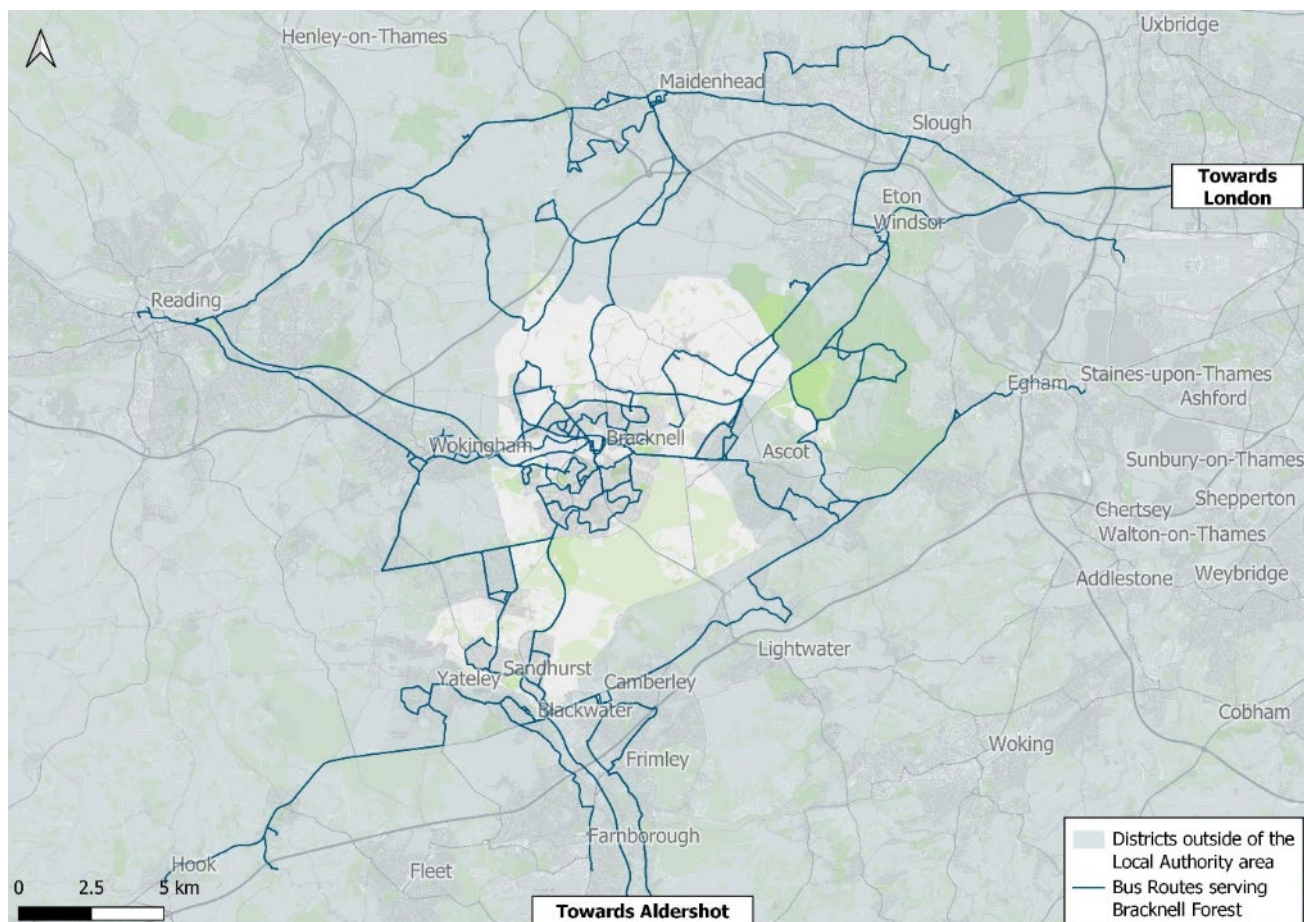
- 2.7 When asked what sorts of things might lead them to use the bus more, people cited cheaper bus fares, a ticket to use across different operators, more frequent buses, increased times of operation (early morning and evening) and more destinations served. Non-users said they may be encouraged to use the bus if fares were cheaper, or service availability and frequency were improved. 50% of those non-users who prefer to use the car said that nothing would encourage them to use bus rather than car, unless motoring became significantly more expensive.
- 2.8 Bracknell Forest is not included in the Transport Focus National Bus Passenger Survey. However, Reading Buses and Thames Valley Buses were included. In 2019, the overall satisfaction with journeys on their services was at 92% and 94% respectively, amongst the best in the country. Satisfaction with value for money stood at 67% and 62% respectively, again reasonable performance against other operators.

## Bus network

- 2.9 The bus services operating across Bracknell Forest are provided by 4 operators:
- Thames Valley Buses (part of Reading Buses)
  - Reading Buses
  - White Bus
  - Stagecoach South
- 2.10 Most of the network, including all contracted services supported by Bracknell Forest Council, is operated by Thames Valley Buses and parent company Reading Buses.
- 2.11 There are a number of town-based services operating within the Borough. Those to the southern parts of Bracknell town, including services to Crowthorne and Sandhurst, operate commercially, whilst the northern residential areas rely entirely on supported services. A number of other services provide links to neighbouring areas, including Wokingham, Reading, Camberley, Windsor, Heathrow Airport, Maidenhead and

Slough. Two cross-boundary services are financially supported jointly with other authorities.

Figure 2-1 Bracknell Forest bus services in the wider regional context



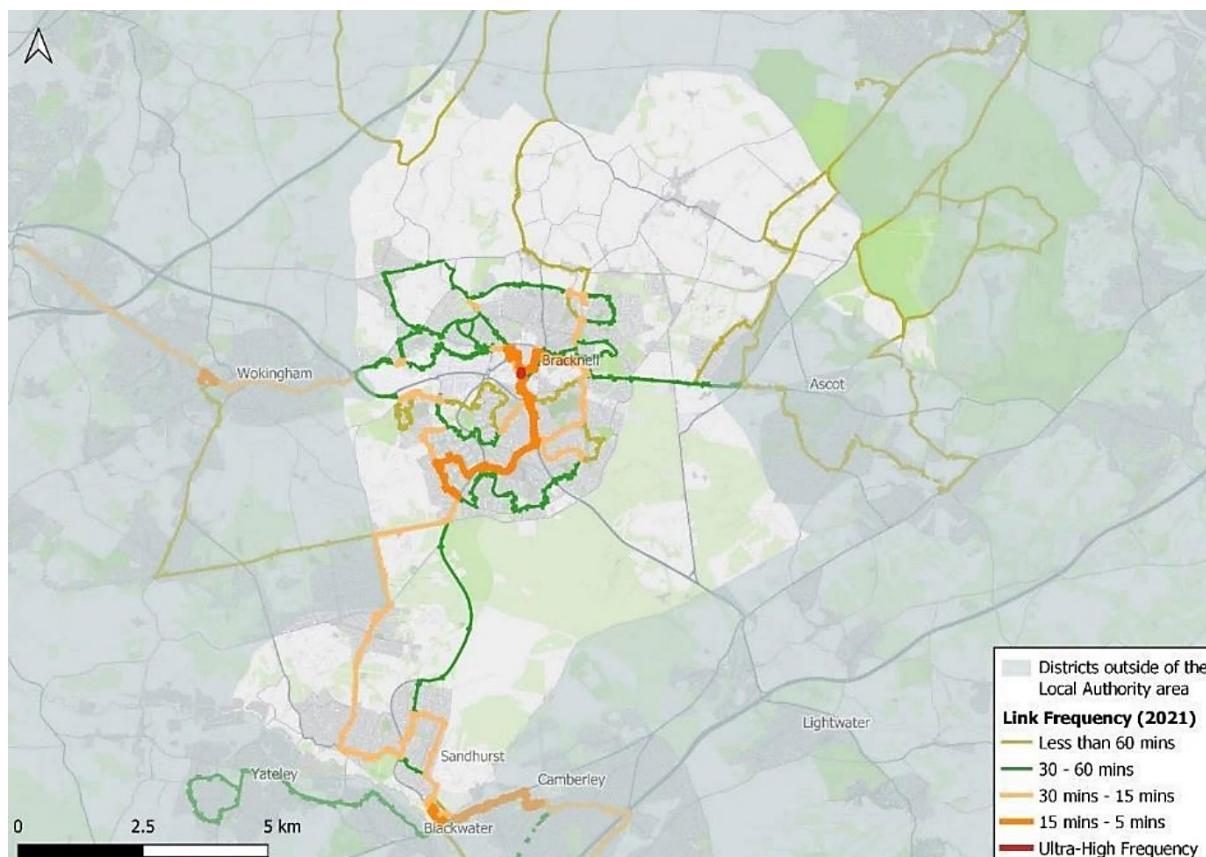
- 2.12 A community transport scheme, Keep Mobile, provides door-to-door transport for mainly elderly and disabled residents who are unable to use public transport services, and Crowthorne Community Minibus provides a similar service exclusively for Crowthorne residents. There are also a number of voluntary car schemes operating in the borough.

### Service levels

- 2.13 Most services operate half hourly or hourly, except for service 4/X4 between Bracknell, Wokingham and Reading, and the 171/172 clockwise and anti-clockwise loops of the southern residential areas of the town that each operate half-hourly, creating an overall frequency of 15 minutes. There are clear inconsistencies in the levels of service provided to different parts of the town, with frequencies for parts of the north of the town half those of services in the south.

- 2.14 Figure 2-2 shows overall levels of provision across the area, expressed as link frequency. Link Frequency shows the number of buses running along a road, regardless of service number or operator.

Figure 2-2 Link Frequency



- 2.15 There are limited Sunday buses, and many services only operate until mid-evening Monday to Saturday. Later evening services are provided on the 4/X4,171/172 and 194, serving the south of Bracknell and there is one late evening service (N1) serving the north of Bracknell.

## Bus Stops

- 2.16 There are 544 bus stops. However, some of these are not currently served or are only used by school services.
- 2.17 Not all stops have a bus shelter. There are around 160 bus shelters in the borough, with two thirds of these supplied and maintained by Clear Channel in return for the right to place adverts in the shelters, and the remainder are maintained by Town and Parish Councils.

## Patronage levels

2.18 The following table sets out overall patronage totals for Bracknell Forest taken from the DfT's Bus Statistics (extracts from tables Bus0109a, Bus0113, Bus0110a).

Table 1 Bus patronage in Bracknell Forest

Year	Total passenger journeys on local bus services (million)	Number of journeys by elderly or disabled concessionary pass holders (million)	% of overall journeys made by elderly or disabled concessionary pass holders	Passenger journeys on local bus services per head of population
2009/10	2.1	0.8	41%	18.5
2010/11	2.1	0.9	45%	18.2
2011/12	1.9	0.9	45%	17.0
2012/13	1.7	0.8	44%	14.8
2013/14	1.9	0.8	41%	16.1
2014/15	2.3	0.9	40%	19.1
2015/16	2.1	0.8	39%	17.9
2016/17	2.1	0.9	37%	17.3
2017/18	1.8	0.7	39%	14.8
2018/19	1.8	0.7	40%	14.8

2.19 Between 2009/10 and 2018/19 bus passenger journeys fell by 14% and concessionary passenger journeys dropped by 12.5%, indicating a greater fall in fare-paying passengers. Over that same period, passenger journeys by local bus service per head of population fell 20% from 18.5 to 14.8. This latter measure was below the South East average of 38.0, and in line with neighbouring authorities Wokingham (16.9) and Windsor & Maidenhead (9.3).

2.20 A relatively high proportion (40%) of overall passenger journeys are made by elderly and disabled concessionary pass holders, compared with the average across England of 22%.

2.21 80% of overall patronage is accounted for by the 3 main commercial services:

- Bracknell – Wokingham – Reading (4/X4)
- Bracknell – Bracknell southern estates (171/172)
- Bracknell – Camberley (194)

## Bus modal share

- 2.22 Census data (2011) indicates that 68% of all journeys to work were undertaken using the car (66% in urban areas, 70% in rural areas). Bus travel accounted for just 1.5% of journeys.

## Bus service density

- 2.23 82% of the population is within 400 metres of an hourly bus service. Only 34% of people are served by a frequent bus service, defined as a bus every 15 minutes or better.

Table 2 Population within 400m of a bus route

Service frequency (morning peak)	Population within 400m of bus route (2019)	As a percentage of Bracknell Forest population (2019)
15 minutes or less	41,600	34%
30 minutes or less	84,575	69%
60 minutes or less	100,750	82%
All fixed services	102,542	84%
All Bus Stops	113,980	93%

## Average bus speeds

- 2.24 Taking the route length of each service and applying the end-to-end journey times from published timetables, average bus speed for the morning peak was calculated as 15.7mph (25.3km/h), rising to 16.7mph (27km/h) between peak times.

## Punctuality

- 2.25 In 2019, 91.4% of services were recorded as running to time (defined by the DfT as between one minute early and five minutes fifty-nine seconds late), which was above the South East as a whole (81.8%) and England (83.0).

## Availability of information

- 2.26 Many bus stops are equipped with timetable display cases and operators are responsible for updating the information in them.
- 2.27 Some stops, including Bracknell bus station, are equipped with real time information displays. The system is maintained and funded by the authority.

2.28 Bus operators each have full information about service timetables, fares and tickets on their websites. Operators also have smartphone apps allowing passengers to track buses in real time and purchase mobile tickets.

### Bus fleet

2.29 Across the 4 operators, a total of 38 vehicles are required to provide services across Bracknell Forest, including cross boundary routes. 75% of those deployed on these services are between 5 and 10 years old. 55% of buses meet Euro VI emission standards. There are no zero emission buses currently operating in Bracknell Forest.

2.30 Two operators have indicated that they have new vehicles on order that will be deployed on Bracknell services from later this year and early next. Currently, operators do not consider it appropriate to move to electric buses in Bracknell for a number of reasons. Many of the existing vehicles are not due for renewal, local depot facilities cannot accommodate electric charging infrastructure, and such a move would not be viable without support towards the additional vehicle purchase costs. This position will be reviewed each year when the BSIP is updated.

Figure 2-3 Vehicle age

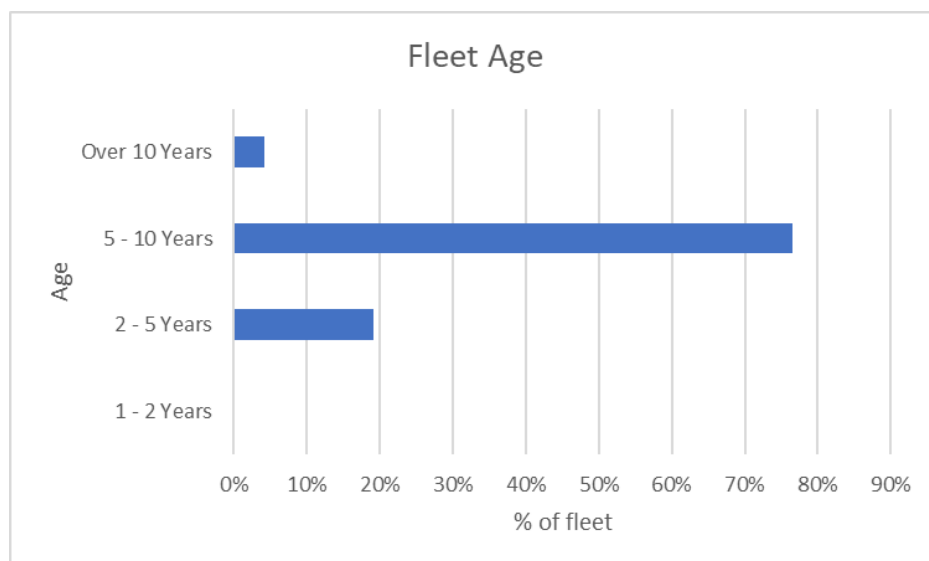
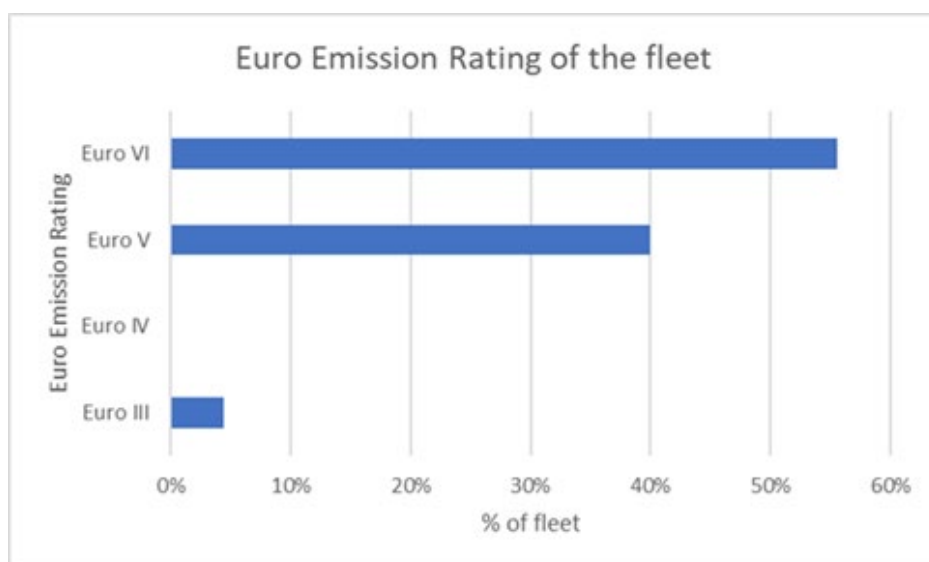




Figure 2-4 Euro emission rating



### Parking management and provision

- 2.31 Bracknell Forest Council's Enforcement and Parking Management Strategy 2019-2024 highlights that the area is one of the least deprived in the country, where property prices and car ownership are higher than the national average.
- 2.32 There is significant car parking provision in Bracknell town centre, with a total of 5,200 spaces, of which 3,350 are in Council operated car parks.

### Summary of issues affecting bus service provision

- 2.33 The following summary provides an analysis of factors that influence bus service provision in Bracknell Forest. Clearly, the EP needs to focus on building on the strengths and opportunities and introducing measures to address the weaknesses and threats.

Table 4 Strengths and weaknesses of bus service provision in Bracknell Forest

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some strong commercial services on which to build</li> <li>• Authority continues to financially support a number of bus services to areas that would otherwise be unserved</li> <li>• Good levels of satisfaction amongst bus users</li> <li>• Operators focused on providing good services</li> <li>• Good bus/rail interchange in Bracknell town centre</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High proportion of concession usage</li> <li>• High car ownership and use</li> <li>• Plenty of reasonably priced car parking in Bracknell centre</li> <li>• Parking available at many businesses</li> <li>• Many businesses located away from Bracknell town centre and operate their own employee shuttle transport</li> <li>• Some services not frequent enough to attract new users</li> <li>• Poor evening and Sunday provision</li> <li>• Difficult to serve rural areas with small population</li> <li>• Variable levels of service, with supported ones generally more limited</li> <li>• No single source of information</li> <li>• No single ticket valid across all services</li> <li>• Layout/land use make effective bus provision difficult in places</li> <li>• Obstructive parking hinders bus operation</li> </ul>
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population growth</li> <li>• New model for securing developer contributions from residential developments to promote bus services</li> <li>• New travel patterns and behaviours post-pandemic</li> <li>• Provision of employee shuttles indicates demand for transport</li> <li>• Scope to raise the profile, availability and benefits of bus services among non-users</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rising traffic levels and greater congestion</li> <li>• Reductions in levels of financial support</li> <li>• Patronage fails to recover to pre-pandemic levels</li> </ul>

### 3. Policy context

- 3.1 The EP forms a Bus Strategy document that sits with the Bracknell Forest Local Transport Plan (LTP) 3 2011-2026, which sets out aims and objectives to address issues surrounding transport and climate change, with the aim to create economic, environmental and health improvements throughout Bracknell Forest.
- 3.2 The LTP recognises that transport systems play a huge role in *'facilitating a high quality of life, by meeting the needs of the individual and remaining responsive to the changing needs of business'*.
- 3.3 Policy TP3 looks specifically at buses, with the aim of **increasing the use and availability of buses, and to continue improving passenger satisfaction and bus punctuality** through:
- Encouraging and securing high quality, readily accessible bus services that focus on local communities and Bracknell Town Centre.
  - Continuing to ensure good access to community facilities, such as community hubs and health centres.
  - Where feasible, procuring services that are not provided by the free market.
  - Partnership working with bus operators and other interested parties.
  - Improving infrastructure and priority measures where real benefits can be achieved.
  - Maintaining access to the highway network for buses throughout the year.
  - Active dialogue with developers to ensure bus services are effectively provided in new development.
  - Promoting bus travel and making up-to-date information including real time information available.
  - Promoting easy and efficient ticketing for bus use.
  - Seeking to improve connections between bus and train services.
  - Encouraging bus operators to use alternative fuels and greener buses.
  - Facilitating and providing concessionary travel where appropriate.

## 4. Enhanced Partnership Plan

- 4.1 The Bracknell Forest Enhanced Partnership (EP) Plan covers the whole of Bracknell Forest.

Figure 4-1 Bracknell Forest



- 4.2 The Plan provides the backdrop for specific EP Schemes that will detail actions and developments to be taken jointly by partners to deliver improvements in bus services in Bracknell Forest that will help meet the following goals and objectives.

### Vision, goals and objectives

- 4.3 The Enhanced Partnership seeks to facilitate the delivery of the vision and objectives, as follows.

## Vision:

**“To develop a viable and stable bus network that supports the local economy, provides better choice and improves quality of life in a safe and healthy environment.”**

## Objectives:

The vision will be achieved by addressing the following objectives, to:

- Maintain and develop the bus network and its use.
- Focus on the main commercial services as the ones with greatest potential to grow, thus improving viability and enabling investment and improvement
- Ensure appropriate supported services meet identified needs not served by commercial services.
- Create more of a single network view.
- Improve the efficiency of bus operations.
- Improve all aspects of passenger experience – information; fares; bus stops; service levels; journey times.

## Funding sources

4.4 The Enhanced Partnership will draw on multiple funding sources to deliver the desired outcomes of the Enhanced Partnership Scheme(s), as appropriate. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Funding provided by Central Government
- Council capital funding
- Council revenue funding
- Developer contributions
- Operator investment
- Reinvestment of operator revenue generated by schemes
- Other external funding opportunities

## Governance

4.5 Following the launch of the National Bus Strategy in March 2021, Bracknell Forest Council convened a Bus Partnership, to which all bus operators were invited and have

attended. This met monthly to oversee the development of the Bus Service Improvement Plan, published at the end of October 2021.

4.6 The Council published its notice of intent to develop an EP on 27 June 2021.

4.7 The Bus Partnership comprises representatives of:

- Bracknell Forest Council
- Thames Valley Buses (part of Reading Buses)
- Reading Buses
- White Bus
- Stagecoach South

4.8 These organisations are all signatories to the EP Plan.

4.9 The Partnership has so far been supported and chaired by an independent industry expert.

4.10 The Partnership has continued to meet monthly to oversee the development of the EP Plan and Scheme.

4.11 In addition to the formal organisational framework, BFC officers have liaised with neighbouring authorities to ensure that plans are compatible.

4.12 As required by the EP guidance, the following have been formally consulted on this Plan:

- Transport Focus
- Traffic Commissioner
- Chief Officer of Police
- Competition and Markets Authority
- Neighbouring authorities
- Local MPs

## Small and medium sized operators

4.13 Given the variety of bus operators involved (in terms of market share, fleet size, company turnover and structure), it is important to ensure that the effects of the Enhanced Partnership do not unduly negatively impact smaller operators' ability to engage or to comply with requirements.

- 4.14 As such, the needs of small and medium-sized operators (SMOs) have been considered in the development of the Enhanced Partnership, with opportunities for all bus operators to participate throughout, either through individual discussions or through attendance at the Partnership meetings. The Plan seeks to support improvements in all aspects of bus provision, regardless of the size of operators providing services.

## Competition

- 4.15 The Enhanced Partnership has been subject to the Competition Test as set out in Part 1 of Schedule 10 of the Transport Act 2000. The assessment, undertaken by Bracknell Forest Council concluded that there will be no adverse impact on competition. The implementation of an Enhanced Partnership Plan and associated Scheme is aimed at delivering improvements to bus services for passengers in a deregulated environment. The Enhanced Partnership will not impact on competition, as operators will be free to amend and introduce services in the area, provided that the standards that apply to all operators are met.

## Reviewing the EP Plan

- 4.16 Once the EP Plan is made, it will be reviewed by the Bracknell Forest Bus Partnership annually. BFC will initiate each review and it will take no longer than 3 months to complete.
- 4.17 The review will include consideration of:
- The arrangements for consulting passenger representatives on the effectiveness of the EP
  - The objectives set for improving the quality and effectiveness of bus services
- 4.18 Feedback from the public and interested stakeholders on the effectiveness of the EP and delivery of the objectives and ambition, will be encouraged on a continuous basis through existing engagement channels, such as community and neighbourhood forums. Equally, the Bus Passenger Charter will encourage feedback on all aspects of bus service provision and will promote the webpage for details of the BSIP and EP. There will be an opportunity for anyone visiting that page to provide comments.
- 4.19 All feedback and comments will be used to inform the annual review of the BSIP and any subsequent amendments to the EP.
- 4.20 Monitoring reports for the BSIP will be produced every 6 months to demonstrate progress towards the objectives and targets set. These will be made available on the

Council's web pages. Again, it will be possible for anyone to provide feedback on this information.

## Variations to the plan

- 4.21 Consideration will be given to potential EP Plan variations highlighted either by one of the organisations represented on the Bracknell Forest Bus Partnership or by any operator of a qualifying bus service. The proposer of a variation should demonstrate how this might contribute to achieving the objectives set out in the EP Plan and current local transport policies. Such requests should be set out in writing and submitted to the Enhanced Partnership administrator.
- 4.22 On receipt of a valid request for a variation, BFC will reconvene the Bracknell Forest Bus Partnership, giving at least 14 days' notice for the meeting, to consider the proposed variation. Any proposal to proceed with the variation will lead to the Council notifying stakeholders and operators of the intention to vary the EP Plan. The planned variation will then be subject to the operator objection and consultation processes set out in s138L of the Transport Act 2000. Having passed through these, BFC will make the EP Plan variation, subject to the approval of the Council.

## Revocation of the EP Plan

- 4.23 If, for some reason, it becomes necessary for the EP Plan to be revoked, the Bus Partnership will be reconvened and follow the same process as outlined in the section 'Variations to the Plan' (noting that the agreement will be for revocation and not variation).
- 4.24 If the EP Plan is revoked, then any associated EP Schemes will be revoked automatically, as a Scheme cannot exist without a Plan. Equally, if all associated Schemes are revoked, the EP Plan would automatically be revoked.
- 4.25 If at any point in the future, the EP Plan area is included in a Bus Franchising Area, the relevant requirements set out in this EP Plan document will cease to apply from the commencement date of the Franchising Scheme.



## 5. Part B – Enhanced Partnership Scheme

**The Enhanced Partnership Scheme (1) for Buses is made in accordance with Section 138G(1) of the Transport Act 2000 by Bracknell Forest Council.**

**The Scheme comes into effect on 1 April 2022 and will remain valid until revoked.**

### EP Scheme content

- 5.1 This document fulfils the statutory requirements for an EP Scheme as set out in s138 of the Transport Act 2000. It includes sections on:
- Scope of the EP Scheme and commencement date
  - Requirements on the local authority
  - Requirements in respect of qualifying local bus services
  - Details of EP Scheme management
- 5.2 The EP Scheme can only be put in place if an associated EP Plan has been made. Therefore, this document should be considered alongside the associated Bracknell Forest EP Plan.
- 5.3 The EP Scheme has been jointly developed by Bracknell Forest Council and bus operators that provide local bus services in the EP Scheme area. It sets out obligations and requirements on both the Local Transport Authority and operators of local services in order to achieve the intended improvements, with the aim of delivering the objectives of the associated EP Plan.

### Scope of the Enhanced Partnership Scheme (1)

- 5.4 The EP Scheme will facilitate the improvement of local bus services operating in Bracknell Forest.
- 5.5 The EP Scheme covers the same area as the Bracknell Forest EP Plan, namely the entire administrative area of Bracknell Forest Council (BFC). The Scheme includes all qualifying local bus services, which are those registered local bus services operating within the Bracknell Forest boundary, except those that are exempt as indicated below in the 'Exempt services' section.
- 5.6 For the avoidance of doubt, a list of qualifying local bus services will be published at the start of each Council financial year.

Figure 5-1 – Bracknell Forest Enhanced Partnership Scheme (1) Area



## EP Scheme duration

- 5.7 The EP Scheme will commence 1 April 2022. It will have no specific end date but will be reviewed at least annually.

## Exempt services

- 5.8 The following services are exempt from the requirements of the EP Scheme:
- Any schools or works registered local bus service not eligible for Bus Service Operators Grant
  - Any cross-boundary registered local bus service with less than 10% of its registered mileage within the Enhanced Partnership area
  - Any services operated under section 22 of the Transport Act 1985
  - Any registered local bus service which is an excursion or tour
  - Any other registered local bus service that the Bracknell Forest Bus Partnership decides should be excluded from all or parts of the Enhanced Partnership Scheme.

## Requirements of Bracknell Forest Council

- 5.9 Bracknell Forest Council will provide various facilities and measures as set out in Column C of the following table.

## Requirements in respect of qualifying local bus services

- 5.10 Operators of qualifying local bus services will be required to meet the requirements set out in Column D of the following table.

Table 5-1 Bracknell Forest Enhanced Partnership Scheme – requirements on BFC and all operators of qualifying local bus services (i.e. all registered local bus services that are not exempted within the EP)

Column A Element	Column B Description	Column C Authority commitments (facilities and measures)	Column D Operator commitments
<p><b>Network balancing</b></p> <p>(subject to DfT funding)</p>	<p>Whilst usage of buses has risen, it is unlikely to have fully returned to pre-pandemic levels by April 2022 when central Government funding is scheduled to cease. However, it will be vital to retain services as this will provide a foundation for the introduction of improvements to the network.</p> <p>Funding will be used to support core services, which offer the best opportunities to generate longer term growth and improvement.</p> <p>The Enhanced Partnership process will be used to ensure any routes with both supported and commercial services operating will have ticket interoperability and be for the general benefit of bus users.</p> <p>As bus services start to recover it may be desirable to improve frequencies on key routes. If these improvements cannot initially be justified on a commercial basis, funding may be used to augment services if</p>	<p>Using data/evidence from operators, identify likely opportunities in service provision post-April 2022.</p> <p>Work with operators to identify services on key routes which may benefit from service enhancement.</p> <p>Work with operators to establish a funding mechanism that satisfies both legal and competition requirements.</p> <p>Define actions needed to build on identified opportunities.</p> <p>Procure additional services to fill gaps.</p>	<p>Provide appropriate data and evidence to BFC relating to those services offering opportunities for development.</p> <p>Work with BFC to identify services on key routes which may benefit from service enhancement.</p> <p>Work with BFC to establish a funding mechanism that satisfies both legal and competition requirements.</p>

	a legally and commercially acceptable mechanism can be agreed.		
<b>Targeted free or discounted travel</b>  (subject to DfT funding)	These will be specific initiatives at certain times or in particular areas, with the aim of encouraging people to try the bus. For example, this might include free travel in Bracknell town centre pre-Christmas, or to encourage use of new or improved evening and Sunday buses.	Co-ordinate initiatives and work with operators on the introduction of specific and targeted promotions.  Evaluate the success of the promotions.	Suggest initiatives and work with BFC to design specific promotions.  Participate in and deliver specific promotions.  Assist in evaluating the success of promotions.
<b>Inter-operable tickets</b>	The position of Bracknell within wider bus networks beyond its boundary make it difficult to develop and promote a Bracknell-specific multi-operator ticket. Therefore, the intention is to work with operators to gain agreement on accepting one another's tickets for travel within the Bracknell Forest area.	Co-ordinate discussions with operators to understand what can be done either in situations with or without new funding.	Work with BFC to agree what can be achieved with or without funding, with the aim of introducing at least some improvement on the current offer.
<b>Real time information (RTI) displays at Bracknell Bus Station</b>	Ensure the continued provision and maintenance of RTI displays at Bracknell bus station.	Continue to provide and maintain the RTI displays.	Provide appropriate data feeds to ensure up-to-date and accurate information is displayed.  Provide apps which offer real time bus tracking options.
<b>Bus information portal</b>	BFC will introduce an on-line portal providing information on travel by all sustainable travel modes. It will signpost to operators' websites for details of bus timetables and fares.	Commission and manage the provision of a bus information and sustainable travel portal	Co-operate with BFC in respect of providing information and weblinks to use in the portal.
<b>Addressing pinchpoints</b>	Operators have highlighted locations where delays can occur, including highway layout,	Co-ordinate the programme to address highlighted pinch-points.	Work with BFC to prioritise locations for consideration.

<p>(subject to DfT funding)</p>	<p>junctions and obstructive parking. An assessment of these will be carried out to consider ways of overcoming the issues, with a programme of schemes taken forward.</p>	<p>Carry out assessments at each location and identify measures to overcome those issues. Put forward proposals to agree a preferred approach with operators.</p>	<p>Provide insights and evidence for the assessments.</p> <p>Discuss and agree actions at each location.</p> <p>Monitor and evaluate the impact of any measures implemented.</p>
<p><b>Traffic signal priority</b></p> <p>(subject to DfT funding)</p>	<p>Following an outline assessment of the feasibility of introducing priority at signals, more detailed work will be undertaken to assess the likely benefit for buses. Funding is sought for feasibility and implementation.</p>	<p>Undertake/commission feasibility study.</p> <p>Implement bus priority at traffic signals where feasibility study shows there is a benefit.</p>	<p>Provide insights and evidence for study.</p> <p>Monitor impact of any priority on journey times.</p>
<p><b>Stop and shelter improvement programme</b></p> <p>(subject to DfT funding)</p>	<p>The intention is to introduce an on-going programme of bus stop improvements, providing consistent facilities (standardised bus stop pole, flag and information display) with shelter (including lighting and seating) where appropriate and protected with bus stop clearways. QR codes will be provided at key stops without real-time information. There will be a rolling programme of improvements, commencing with those stops on the 3 main commercial routes. Operators will work together to provide combined information displays at bus stops.</p>	<p>Co-ordinate and implement a programme of bus stop improvements, commissioning works as required.</p>	<p>Provide inputs into all considerations regarding bus stop locations and the provision of appropriate facilities at each.</p> <p>Work together in respect of co-ordinating provision of information at each stop, with agreement over which stops each operator will take on responsibility for.</p>
<p><b>Demand Responsive Transport (DRT)</b></p>	<p>Working with neighbouring authorities of Wokingham and Windsor &amp; Maidenhead, it is intended to trial a form of DRT service. In</p>	<p>With neighbouring authorities, undertake/commission a feasibility study to define the most appropriate DRT model.</p>	<p>Provide insights and data for feasibility study and help shape parameters for potential DRT scheme, including</p>

<p>(subject to DfT funding)</p>	<p>Bracknell Forest this will be targeted at areas that are not well served by bus (feeding into the main bus network) and providing links to Crowthorne railway station. Similar provision will be used to serve rural areas to the north. Opportunities for improving access to the Western and Southern business areas will also be investigated.</p> <p>The service will be designed so that it complements the main bus network, avoiding any abstraction.</p>	<p>Develop service specification and undertake procurement exercise.</p> <p>Explore innovative funding models in new residential developments to deliver new DRT services.</p>	<p>interactions with the conventional bus network.</p> <p>Co-operate in discussions with BFC to consider how through ticketing can be achieved between DRT and fixed route bus services</p>
<p><b>BRT feasibility studies</b></p> <p>(subject to DfT funding)</p>	<p>Bracknell Forest Council will contribute to the commissioning of a feasibility study to look at Bus Rapid Transport options for the Bracknell/Wokingham corridor. Transport for South East will also investigate options for BRT on the Bracknell/Blackwater Valley corridor as part of the Inner Orbital Area study.</p>	<p>Part fund and contribute insights to feasibility studies.</p>	<p>Co-operate with studies, providing insights and data as required.</p>
<p><b>Passenger Charter</b></p>	<p>A document that will set out what passengers using any bus in Bracknell Forest can expect. The Charter will be reviewed annually.</p>	<p>Co-ordinate the development of the Charter, ensuring that it is published by 31 March 2022. Promote the charter. With the operators, review the document each year.</p>	<p>Agree the charter. Promote it and adhere to it. With BFC, review the document each year.</p>

## EP Scheme management

### Governance

- 5.11 The Bracknell Forest Bus Partnership, consisting BFC officers and bus operators, has overseen the development of the EP Scheme.
- 5.12 The Bracknell Forest Bus Partnership operates in accordance with established terms of reference.

### Review of the EP Scheme

- 5.13 Once the EP Scheme is made, it will be reviewed by the Bracknell Forest Bus Partnership annually, following the review of the BSIP. BFC will initiate each review and it will take no longer than 2 months to complete.
- 5.14 The review will include consideration of:
- The arrangements for consulting passenger representatives on the effectiveness of the EP
  - The objectives set for improving the quality and effectiveness of bus services
- 5.15 Feedback from the public and interested stakeholders on the effectiveness of the EP and delivery of objectives and ambition, will be encouraged on a continuous basis through existing engagement channels, such as community and neighbourhood forums. Equally, the Bus Passenger Charter will encourage feedback on all aspects of bus service provision and will promote the webpage for details of the BSIP and EP and associated monitoring reports. There will be an opportunity for anyone visiting that page to provide comments.
- 5.16 All feedback and comments will be used to inform the annual review of the BSIP and any subsequent amendments to the EP.
- 5.17 Monitoring reports for the BSIP will be produced every 6 months to demonstrate progress towards the objectives and targets set. These will be made available on the dedicated area of BFC's website.
- 5.18 Feedback from all sources will be collated and considered at each meeting of the Bus Partnership.



## Variations to the EP Scheme

- 5.19 Consideration will be given to potential EP Scheme variations raised by one or more of the representatives on the EP Board. The proposer of a variation should demonstrate how this might contribute to achieving the objectives set out in the EP Plan and current local transport policies. Such requests should be set out in writing and submitted to the designated EP Scheme Administrator.
- 5.20 On receipt of a valid request for a variation, the Council will reconvene the Bus Partnership, giving at least 14 days' notice for the meeting, to consider the proposed variation. If the proposed variation gains unanimous support at the meeting, BFC will make the EP Scheme variation, subject to the approval of the Council. Stakeholders not represented at the meeting will be deemed to be abstaining from the decision.
- 5.21 If there is not full agreement of all parties present, then the proposed variation will be put to the operator objection mechanism, but with a reduced objection period of 14 days replacing Part 2 of the Transport Act 2000 section 138L (2) (c). The proposed variation will be advertised on the Council's website and emailed to operators of qualifying local services in the EP Scheme area. If the proposed variation passes the operator objection mechanism, the Council will make the EP Plan variation, subject to the approval of the Council.

## Revocation of the EP Scheme

- 5.22 If, for some reason, it becomes necessary for the EP Scheme to be revoked, the Bracknell Forest Bus Partnership will be reconvened and follow the same process as outlined in the section 'Variations to the Scheme' (noting that the agreement will be for revocation and not variation).
- 5.23 If, for some reason, the EP Plan is revoked at any time, the EP Scheme would automatically be revoked, as it cannot exist without an associated EP Plan in place. Equally, if this Scheme (and in the absence of any other Schemes) was revoked, the EP Plan would automatically be revoked, as it cannot exist without a Scheme.
- 5.24 If at any point in the future the EP Scheme area is included in a Bus Franchising Area, the relevant requirements set out in this EP Scheme document will cease to apply from the commencement date of the Franchising Scheme.