Engineering Services

Bus Strategy

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ISLE of WIGHT COUNCIL

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A. Introduction

A.1 Buses for the Whole Community

In the development of local transport strategies and policies buses have always had a role to play but they have taken on a new priority with the duty under the Transport Act 2000 for local authorities to prepare a Bus Strategy. This Bus Strategy for the Isle of Wight covers the period 2006-2011 and it is an integral part of the Council's Local Transport Plan.

Buses can be the most flexible, adaptable and economic mode of transport at a local level. They have the ability to replace many individual car trips by carrying large volumes of people effectively and efficiently. Buses can also provide valuable links for rural areas with their local towns and provide reliable connections to enable interchange with other modes of transport. There were 4.6 billion journeys made on local bus services in Great Britain during the year 2004/05.

The use of buses has significantly declined as car ownership has increased against a background of increasing prosperity, changing land use patterns, work patterns and greater demand for travel. More recently there has been a slowing of the long-term downward trend nationally, which has variously been attributed to deregulation, privatisation and more recently Quality Partnerships and new government funding. In recent years the long-term decline in bus patronage in Great Britain has been reversed. There was an increase of 1 per cent in local bus patronage in 2004/05 (although evidence suggests this growth was predominantly in London).

In its Ten Year Integrated Transport Plan the government is seeking to increase the mode share of buses by 10% across the whole of England and Wales. In its first Local Transport Plan, the Isle of Wight Council set a target of a 20% increase by 2010 in bus usage. This has proven, to date, to have been an ambitious target, and which, to achieve, will require concerted effort and the application of increased investment, staff and financial resources.

The availability of high quality local bus networks should be considered as an essential element in meeting the demand for sustainable travel and providing choice for the wider community. This provision should be considered both quantitatively and qualitatively, to enable the Isle of Wight Council to deliver policies and initiatives that reduce the need for travel by car. In quantitative terms the Council will seek to secure local bus services that would not be provided commercially and could consider developing targets for bus service frequency to key locations, for example. However qualitative measures will also be required to improve the attractiveness of public transport on key corridors and increase patronage through offering greater choice.

There are also unique issues to be considered in the context of providing bus services on the Isle of Wight, reflecting what is sometimes described as the "Island Factor". This mixture of unique opportunities and constraints has a bearing on what is possible in developing sustainable transport solutions on the Island, reflecting access to the mainland, seasonality, service patterns, competition and demographics.

In a wider context, through its general transportation policies, the Isle of Wight Council is promoting sustainable travel and it will need to work with its partners to establish a high quality public transport network that meets both current and future travel demand. Buses have a key role to play in the delivery of the IOW Local Transport Plan (LTP) and the development of this Bus Strategy is integral to the wider transport objectives of the Council.

This Bus Strategy for the Isle of Wight has considered the policy background for bus travel, reviewed the area's demographics and local travel patterns, identified key issues through consultation and review, developed objectives as a framework for action, identified key measures and established a five year programme for buses on the Island

B. National, Regional and Local Policy Framework

B.1 National Policy

Transport White Paper 1998 - In 1998 the DETR (now the DfT) published its Transport White Paper "A New Deal for Transport: Better for Everyone". It set out the Government's policies for future transport development and its aims are to create a sustainable, integrated and socially inclusive transport system. Seeking to extend choice in transport and to secure mobility for the whole community, to develop alternative travel modes and an integrated transport policy are the essential components of the framework. Therefore, the White Paper highlights the need for a co-ordinated approach to be developed through partnerships amongst local authorities, transport operators, developers, major employers and individuals. The role of the bus in providing local access and increased mobility is central to its proposals for both urban and rural transport.

From Workhorse to Thoroughbred (1999) - The DETR's paper "From Workhorse to Thoroughbred; A Better Role For Bus Travel" was published in 1999 in support of the Transport White Paper. It sets out in more detail the Government's plans for bus transport, which has been reflected in the Transport Act 2000. The stated objective is to provide better bus services through Quality Partnerships, Quality Contracts, joint ticketing initiatives, better consultation with the public, improved timetables and enhanced passenger information.

Transport Act 2000 – The Transport Act 2000 provides a statutory basis for a number of measures in the Integrated Transport White Paper, including the preparation of a Bus Strategy by each local authority. In preparing their Local Transport Plans, development plans and determining planning applications, local authorities should identify key routes for bus improvements and priority measures, and the actions that will be taken. Other measures established by the Act include the introduction of a statutory concessionary fares scheme, a new framework for Quality Partnerships and the option of Quality Bus Contracts to achieve service improvements.

Transport 2010: The 10 Year Plan - In 2000 the Government published "Transport 2010: The 10 Year Plan". This document is a strategy for £180 billion private and public sector investment to create an integrated transport system, with targets for growth in all sustainable transport modes. While much of its emphasis is on major infrastructure projects and particularly railways there is a clear recognition that buses have a key role in meeting local transport mode shift targets. The Plan seeks a 10% increase in bus use in the plan period, 2001 – 2011, which represents an extra 370 million passenger journeys annually. The Plan reaffirms previous commitments to improved passenger information (including Traveline), Quality Partnerships, Rural and Urban Bus Challenge funds, the retention of Rural Bus Subsidy Grant and new incentives for greener engine technology. Both revenue and capital funding is expected to be primarily through private investment (particularly by the major bus groups), government grant and Local Transport Plan settlements.

Urban and Rural White Papers (2000) - Both of these key planning strategy documents referred back to the 1998 Transport White Paper and the 10 Year Plan to underline a commitment to the use of buses to reduce social exclusion and to offer choice of travel mode for both urban and rural areas. In particular the opportunities to innovate through developing projects with Urban and Rural Bus Challenge funding was highlighted, as well as the emerging role of Rural Transport Partnerships.

Planning Policy Guidance (PPG) - Government policies are reflected through Planning Policy Guidance notes (PPGs), which provide specific planning guidance for various policy areas such as housing, retail and office developments, as well as General Policies and Principles (PPG1). Planning is an important part of the overall transport policy making process and can help in promoting more sustainable travel choices and reducing the need to travel.

PPG13 Transport (March 2001) - emphasises the integration between land use planning and transport, as policies regarding the scale, location and mix of land uses can significantly affect the need to travel. In addition, it promotes reduced reliance on private cars and it highlights the importance of Travel Plans and the need for good interchanges to provide wider public transport choices. PPG13 has a key role in ensuring that all development makes proper provision for access by public transport and it provides a policy framework for integrating buses with other transport modes. Thus, local authorities require planning applications to be accompanied by Transport Assessments, Green Travel Plans and effective traffic management measures at local level, which will reallocate road space to buses and give them priority. Planning obligations can provide the funding for local public transport enhancements, benefiting the development and the wider community. In managing travel demand the PPG13 advice is that local authorities should use their planning and transport powers to improve public transport in ways that will reinforce the effectiveness of location policies in the development plan. The aim should be to establish a high quality, safe, secure and reliable network of routes, with good interchanges, which matches the pattern of travel demand in order to maximise the potential usage of public transport.

The "Future of Transport" White Paper (2004) - looks at the factors that will shape travel and transport over the next thirty years and sets out how the Government will respond to increasing demand for travel – maximising the benefits of transport whilst minimising negative impacts to people and the environment. With regard to buses, there is a requirement for services to be "reliable, flexible, convenient and tailored to local needs." This is to be delivered through a combination of improved planning, greater use of quality transport partnerships, innovative ideas (for instance – demand responsive services) and integrating bus services with other modes of public transport. The Government's main target is to reverse the long term decline in bus patronage that is evident in most areas outside London.

B.2 Regional Policy

Regional Planning Guidance (RPG) - To assist in the co-ordination of transport and land use planning, Regional Planning Guidance notes (RPGs) include the preparation of regional transport strategies covering all transport modes. They provide a strategic framework for transport policies and proposals to be included in the local authority development plan and in the Local Transport Plans. RPGs also cover environmental priorities and strategic policy objectives of regional planning bodies.

The Regional Transport Strategy – This strategy replaces the transport section of RPG9 and has been developed through the South East Regional Assembly. The Regional Transport Strategy is the framework that will ensure that the investment programmes of local authorities, transport providers and other key stakeholders in the transport sector complement and support the wider regional objective of delivering a more sustainable pattern of development

B.3 Local Policy

Unitary Development Plan - In 1997 the Isle of Wight Council published its Deposit Draft Unitary Development Plan and the UDP was adopted on 18th May 2001 The fifteen year strategy incorporates what were the current Transport Policies and Programme objectives and strategies, which have led to the subsequent development of Local Transport Plan (LTP) objectives. Issues include encouraging greater transport choices such as walking, cycling and public transport. It is recognised that the Local Transport Plan should be fully integrated with the Unitary Development Plan. In its objectives and policies the bus is recognised as being a key mode in making local trips more sustainable. The Local Development Framework (LDF) will shortly replace the UDP.

Local Transport Plan (LTP) – Local Transport Plans are statutory documents that identify strategies and detailed plans for transport in the local area for a period of 5 years. It is the prime transport policy document for a local authority and the focus for development of new policies, initiatives and community involvement. They are a method for local authorities to have their transport strategies approved and funded by central Government, and as such replace the previous bidding mechanism established by the Transport Policies and Programme document.

The Isle of Wight Council's first Local Transport Plan 2001 – 2006 was published in July 2000. With respect to the provision of a wider choice of transport modes, the plan promoted the integration of transport with key issues including education, air quality, crime, Local Agenda 21, health, social exclusion and travel awareness within a funding timescale of 5 years. The aims identified for the first Isle of Wight LTP were:

- **To help widen travel choices and provide real alternatives for car owners**
- **To enhance the quality of Island life**
- **To encourage the provision of a safer and more secure transport system**
- **To make the best use of the existing transport infrastructure**
- **To encourage travel by sustainable means**
- **To include measures to reduce social exclusion**
- **To develop a framework by which future transport investment can be made**

These Aims remain central to the LTP for 2006 – 2011.

In the LTP buses are considered in detail, with a review of the existing levels of provision and scope for improvement. The Council also sets outs its objectives for Public Transport:

- **Convenient** – for public transport users
- **Accessible** – for all sectors of the community including those with mobility problems
- **Information** – so as to allow for and encourage public transport use
- **Encourage value for money** travel through competition
- **Integration/ Interchange** – allowing easy access between modes
- **Ensure that services are attractive** to transport users

The key themes for buses as outlined in the 2006 – 2011 Local Transport Plan include:

- **Quality Bus Partnerships**
- **Service Provision and Network Development**
- **Rural Bus Issues**
- **Bus Priority Measures**
- **Accessible Vehicles**
- **Concessionary Fares**
- **Improving Interchange Opportunities**
- **Personal Safety and Security**
- **Publicity and Information**

These themes are covered in more detail in later sections of this Bus Strategy. Other sections of the LTP, such as rural transport, accessible transport and journeys to school and hospitals, also have relevance to the proposals being developed and have been taken into account in preparing an overall strategy for buses. The 3 area based strategies (North East Triangle, Coastal Resorts and Rural Areas) and the identification of a "Sustainable Transport" budget for the five years of the LTP also have direct relevance to bus service provision.

Island Futures – The Community Strategy – This corporate plan for the period 2002 to 2012 covers all aspects of life on the Island and specifically considers access and travel. It builds on "Island Voices –Speak Out for the Future" and the Island Agenda 21 Strategy, to deliver a strategy for enhancing opportunities for Island people, delivering sustainable growth and protecting the environment. In the Transport section it seeks the views of the community on the balance between car use and improved public transport. It identifies specific solutions, such as park and ride, to ascertain priorities and preferences. It asked whether cash raised from parking charges should be used on improving public transport and creating cycle ways and bus priority schemes, for example. It also sought views as to whether better public transport would encourage you to use your car less.

The results of this survey are seen to be very helpful in supporting the aims of the Bus Strategy.

The Council has developed a wide range of plans, policies and strategies that should also cross refer to the Bus Strategy. These include, to varying degrees:

- Agenda 21
- Air Quality Strategy
- Bus Information Strategy
- Community Plan
- The Community Safety Plan
- Health Improvement Plan
- Housing Strategy
- Rail Strategy
- Social Inclusion Strategy
- School Travel Plan Strategy
- Tourism Development Plan
- Rural Development Programme Strategy
- Regeneration Strategies
- Village Design Statements

Ensuring Best Value – It is important that we spend our money wisely and that we ensure the highest quality and best value in terms of the services we deliver. The Council must now report how well we are delivering services and these are measured against a range of nationally agreed indicators. The areas we report on include Social Services, Information and Communications Technology, Education, The Fire Service, Economic development, Planning, Public Safety, Leisure Services and Transport.

The indicators relating to public transport, our targets and our results for 2003-04 are shown below:

Indicator No.	Indicator	Target	Result
BV102	Passenger journeys per year on local bus services	5.8m	5.76m
BV103	% respondents satisfied with P.T. information	70%	55%
BV104	% respondents satisfied with local bus services	70%	56%

C. The Bus Network

C.1 Demographic and Geographic Context

The Isle of Wight's demographic and geographic context is particularly important to the development of this Bus Strategy. By the nature of its Island location, the operation and development of bus services is different to that found elsewhere in the south east region. The Solent ensures that, for example, a higher number of visitors make use of the islands public transport system than equivalent holiday destinations on the mainland, but it also prevents competition for services developing from nearby operators. As always the "Island Factor" has its plusses and minuses.

The Island comprises large rural and semi-rural areas with a number of villages, small towns and established urban areas. It has a total resident population of 133,719 (2001 census) and its main local centres are Cowes, Newport, Ryde, Sandown, Shanklin and Ventnor.

With its mix of urban areas mainly on the coast and low density populations in its rural areas the local bus network needs careful coordination to ensure all needs are met. The Islands compact nature offers the opportunity for higher frequency bus services to operate, particularly on key links between the main towns. In recent years the availability of Rural Bus Grant and Rural Bus Challenge funding has enabled many rural areas on the Island to sustain basic levels of service, but clearly much could be done to enhance this level of provision.

In its demographics the uniqueness of the Island and the impact that has on the provision of bus services is brought into focus. Many of these factors influence and lead to high levels of social exclusion for residents of the Island. In national rankings the Isle of Wight is ranked 126th (2004) most socially excluded out 354 local authority areas, but within this figure there are great variations and there is considerable multiple deprivation in particular wards.

These factors combine to create an area that would traditionally be seen as likely to be a good market for public transport and specifically local bus operations, because of relatively low incomes, high unemployment, seasonal patterns and an elderly population. However this assumes only a social welfare role for public transport, yet local bus services also have an increasingly important role in offering a solution to increasing traffic levels and congestion. It is therefore essential to plan for the enhancement of both rural and urban networks through the framework of a Bus Strategy.

C.2 Historic Context

Public Transport in the form of horse drawn coaches had existed between the main Island towns since the early 19th Century but it was not until after the end of the First World War that motor services began to flourish. Dodson & Campbell Ltd commenced bus operations between Newport, Cowes and East Cowes in 1921 and rapidly expanded their route network adopting the fleet name 'Vectis' in 1922.

In 1923 the Southern Railway, which had been created as one of the 'Big Four' rail companies by the 1921 Railways Act, took control of the majority of the railways in Southern England including the Island railway system. They were concerned with the general trend of more passengers choosing to travel by bus rather than rail and therefore set about acquiring a number of bus companies and in 1929, combining it's own name with that of the 'Vectis' bus fleet , registered the name 'Southern Vectis Omnibus Company Limited' and bought the 42 vehicle 'Vectis' business. This business was subsequently sold on to the Tilling Group.

The Southern Railway had introduced 'Runabout' tickets to encourage travel across the Island network of rail services and these were continued by British Railways until the closure of the Cowes and Ventnor lines in 1966 rendered them superfluous, however from the summer of that year Southern Vectis made available a 'Rover' ticket covering all their bus services and the Ryde to Shanklin railway line.

Southern Vectis opened its first bus station at Shanklin in 1956 followed by Newport in 1962 and Ryde in 1974.

After periods of state control under first the British Transport Commission, then the Transport Holding Company and finally the National Bus Company, Southern Vectis was eventually returned to private ownership on the 7th October 1986.

In June 2005, the Southern Vectis bus business was acquired by the Go-Ahead Group, a nationwide company with existing bus operations distributed from the North East of England to London and on the South Coast. The early indications are that the Group will want to fundamentally revise routes and frequencies of bus services on the Island. It is recognised that the Council's Bus Strategy will need to evolve as the Go Ahead Group's strategy for the Island itself unfolds.

A number of other smaller local operators have provided bus services on the Island over the years, most recently as a consequence of the deregulation of the bus industry in 1986, but none has developed or sustained a significant market share and Southern Vectis has remained the dominant provider of Island bus services.

C.3 The Current Bus Network

Southern Vectis, as the main bus operator on the Island, provides the majority of both the commercial and financially supported network of local bus services on the Isle of Wight. Southern Vectis has, since acquisition, stepped up its investment in new vehicles substantially, with the result that the fleet age profile is now getting closer to the Government target of 8 years for local bus services. Their fleet continues to contain a significant number of double deckers reflecting the need to accommodate high summer loadings and meet schools demand, and which has also ensured excess capacity has been available to meet increased demand through, for example, off peak service promotions. The Go Ahead Group has however shifted its emphasis to seeking to provide higher frequency, but lower seating capacity operations on key commercial corridors. This change of emphasis has begun to be rolled out from April 2006.

Southern Vectis carried over 5.6 million passengers in 2005, with approximately 20% of these qualifying for half-fare concessions. This represents 97% of all Isle of Wight bus trips. The level of concessionary travel reflects the demographics of the Island but also the "social welfare" role that bus services on the Island are expected to play. However the Island has seen a decline in bus trips per capita over the 1986 – 1996 period, with over 30% reduction according to DETR Stats 100A data.

Wightbus, which is the Council's in-house fleet of buses and coaches, also provides a small number of commercially viable local bus services to complement its substantial schools service operation.

Southern Vectis have for some years provided frequent services into and out of the main towns such as Newport, Ryde, Cowes, East Cowes, Sandown and Shanklin, although buses have only served some of the less populated parts of the Island once every two hours. It is estimated that approximately 80% of the Island population has had access to half hourly or more frequent service. The Go Ahead Group strategy for the Island however appears to envisage even higher frequencies (up to 8 buses an hour) on key commercial corridors, with some service level improvements on secondary routes. It is not yet clear, whether in the currency of this Bus Strategy, a greater percentage of the Island's population will have access to an half hourly or more frequent service.

Whilst around 80% of the current network has been commercially provided by Southern Vectis, the remaining 20% of timings have been regarded as "socially necessary" services that have been funded, following competitive tendering, either by the Isle of Wight Council directly or through application of Rural Bus Service Grant or Rural Bus Challenge funding.

Since deregulation, and until the acquisition of Southern Vectis by the Go Ahead Group, commercial bus services can be generally have been characterised as follows (with some exceptions):

● Daily Services	From 0700 until 1900 on principal inter-urban corridors in the North and East of the Island
● Evening Services	In the North of the Island (Cowes – Newport – East Cowes – Ryde)
● Summer Seasonal	Open top bus services
● 'Nightclubber' services	Friday and Saturday nights

Non commercial services can be generally characterised as follows (with some exceptions)

- Evening services   On most Island routes other than in the North of the Island
- Virtually all Sunday services   Outside of the North and East of the Island
- Deep Rural Services   For remote villages away from inter-urban routes
- Most town services

Care has been taken by the Council, when inviting tenders for non-commercial services, to add to the base commercial network by seeking to extend the times and days of operation on existing routes rather than by creating a different network that may be confusing to potential users. There is a core non-commercial network, well used by passengers, but not to such an extent that there is commercial viability, that has been provided since 1986. This core network of non-commercial services has been subsequently supplemented by further services funded by Rural Bus Service Grant.

The Council also submitted successful bids for Rural Bus Challenge funding to provide experimental Demand Responsive Services on two routes on the Island and which commenced in Spring 2004. Current patronage of these services leaves them some way from commercial viability.

The core network on the Island, both commercial and non-commercial, over the past few years has been very similar both winter and summer with the exception of the addition of summer seasonal open top bus services largely to satisfy the tourist market. It remains to be seen whether seasonality will become an increasingly important commercial consideration for the Go Ahead Group.

Another key feature of the Island network has been that the majority of scholars who are eligible for a term ticket to and from school have been provided with a term ticket for travel on registered bus services operated by Southern Vectis. The revenue to the operator from scholars term tickets has helped keep what may have been marginal or non-commercial timings on some corridors commercial, with the added advantage that these services also been available for use by workers and shoppers as well.

The Island has to date only had a very limited night network, geared around the requirements of younger people attending night clubs on Friday and Saturday nights. An aspiration of the Council has been to improve the days of operation and frequency of night buses on key corridors. It seems likely that the Go Ahead Group may pilot some trials of additional night services on a commercial basis on some principal routes.

Southern Vectis remains committed to replacing its fleet with low floor vehicles over the next few years. The Council is working closely with Southern Vectis to ensure that kerbs at bus stops on routes served by low floor vehicles are built to an appropriate height, and that any traffic calming measures on these routes are low floor bus friendly.

C.4 Fares and Ticketing
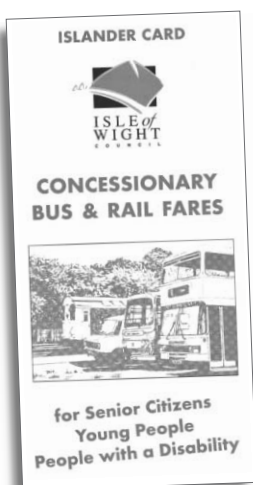
Isle of Wight bus fares are perceived locally as being high although further research is required to confirm the actual position.

In most bus markets there is a relationship between fare levels, competition and patronage, where high fares are often matched by low patronage and lack of competition. On the Isle of Wight there is little or no competition to Southern Vectis other than the car. Both local residents and visitors can enjoy significant bus travel discounts through purchase of Rover Tickets, but occasional bus users perception is of high single fares. It should be noted that the tourism market is shrinking as increasingly visitors are bringing their cars onto the Island as ferry operators compete to offer attractive fares and car ownership generally increases.

The Council provides fares concessions as required by statute for Senior Citizens and people with a Disability through the Islander card scheme. However, the Council has sought to stimulate bus patronage further by providing concessions for young people aged 14-18 and by enabling half fare concessions on the local

Island Line rail service. The Council has historically also provided relaxations, beyond statutory requirement, in terms of hours of availability.

The Council has piloted, with success, the Youth Mover scheme that provides free travel to students aged 14-18 after 5pm. This scheme has been recently re-promoted at Island High Schools and represents excellent value for money. Free travel after 5pm, for a year, can be purchased for a payment of a nominal fee.

Whilst Southern Vectis provide at their commercial discretion, a network ticket scheme (Rover Ticket) which is valid on their own bus services, the acceptance of Rover Tickets on other operators services is inhibited by there being no guarantee of equitable recompense to the other operators for any such acceptance. It is seen as desirable, and to complement this Bus Strategy, that there be an Islandwide network ticket scheme that any operator could participate in as a matter of right, and that the right to participate should extend an expectation of equitable recompense from sales of network tickets on the basis of the proportion of journeys undertaken on that operators services. Such a network scheme could either be based upon the existing Rover Ticket scheme or set up as a new scheme. Any such scheme may also benefit from management by a third party.

D. The Aim and Objectives of The Strategy

D.1 The Aim

The aim of the Bus Strategy is that as a consequence of understanding :

- the local demographic and geographic context
- the local market for bus services
- the needs of users and potential users
- the legislative framework
- the aspirations of operators
- the opportunities provided by new technology
- the locations and causes of congestion

opportunities to develop the bus network, its co-ordination with other modes and its cost to users, can be fully exploited in order to encourage significantly greater use of buses and achieve incremental modal shift away from cars on the Isle of Wight.

D.2 Three Overarching Objectives of The Bus Strategy

The first over-arching objective is to increase the number of passenger journeys made on buses and other public transport modes, in order to achieve incremental modal shift away from the car

The second over-arching objective is that the bus should form part of a co-ordinated public transport network and should link effectively with connecting rail and maritime services.

The third over-arching objective is to provide and promote provision of affordable bus travel.

D.3 Twelve Supportive Action Areas

D.3.1 First Action Area

To support the first over-arching objective, the overall network of services available on the Isle of Wight should be sufficiently comprehensive in order to cater for the needs of the following groups of people (not in order of priority):

- People completely lacking access to private means of transport.
- People without access to private means of transport some of the time due to, for instance, the family car being in use elsewhere.
- People unable to make use of private means of transport such as the young, the elderly and those with a disability.
- Those choosing to use public transport in preference to private means
- Those whom we need to persuade to use public transport in preference to private means.

The three key drivers to much current public transport policy are:

- **Addressing social exclusion. The availability of good transport is often key to people accessing opportunities for work, healthcare and learning. The rural nature of much of the Isle of Wight adds to the potential for social exclusion to occur.**

- **Environmental concerns. Public transport, and principally the bus, will have to take a principal role in attracting modal shift away from car use, and the Council would wish to see that operators ensure, in their vehicle replacement programmes, that new buses for use on the Isle of Wight are equipped with environmentally efficient engines.**

- **Regeneration. Attractive public transport facilities can play an important role in helping secure economic regeneration – for example a high quality bus network is likely to be one of many considerations leading to decisions on inward investment.**

Defining a "sufficiently comprehensive" network of bus services is a key factor in meeting the Council's network objectives, mindful that the network is always liable to change according to the commercial pressures affecting operators.

The Isle of Wight Council has established a reputation for strong and cost effective support for public transport support in its area. A major part of this has been through its efforts to sustain a relatively high level of service in an essentially rural operating environment, and that the financial support provided has been used to complement the commercial network in a way that meets local needs.

A substantial budget is allocated for non-commercial services to supplement the commercial network in order to achieve an acceptable level of overall provision. However, as tender prices increase above general inflation (as identified by the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers Price, Competition and Expenditure Survey 2004) it has becoming increasingly difficult for the Council to maintain existing levels of service within the same budget.

Decision making in respect of support for non-commercial services has been mindful of a range of factors, but due to the relative stability of the commercial network, it had generally in the past been a primary consideration that continuing support be given for non-commercial bus services that have demonstrated sufficient patronage over the previous years of financial support. The opportunity to fund services that are new or innovative has largely been dictated by the availability of external funding whether through Rural Bus Service Grant or Rural Bus Challenge.

Given the constant financial pressures, the Council in 2006 adopted a more rigorous and transparent approach to identifying where and to what level it will apply its non-commercial bus service budget. This has entailed the establishment of an hierarchic ranking system – a "Local Bus Service Performance Management Framework" , where factors such as:

- **Subsidy per passenger journey;**
- **Number of passengers per subsidised journey;**
- **The availability of alternative public transport services;**
- **Indices of multiple deprivation within wards served by a route;**
- **Journey purpose – including employment, education, health and access to shops;**

are assessed in respect of every subsidised service in order to ensure that the Council most effectively utilises available funds.

With the accessibility agenda in mind, the Council will also wish to be increasingly mindful of maximum walking distances to bus stops for the majority of the local populace and may additionally wish to set targets for a minimum frequency of bus service provision available for a high proportion of residents.

D.3.2 **Second Action Area**

To support the second action area, that of network co-ordination, the Council must encourage bus and other public transport operators to optimise opportunities for passengers to benefit from seamless inter-modal travel.

This can be in the form of co-ordinated timetabling or through-ticketing opportunities.

As an Island community, there are unique cross-modal challenges and opportunities to address. These include:

- Ferry – Bus;
- Ferry – Rail;
- Rail – Bus;
- Bus – Bus;
- Park and Ride – Rail;
- Park and Ride – Bus;
- Park and Ride – Ferry.

There have been a number of excellent working examples of network co-ordination set in place already on the Isle of Wight:

- The long established commercial bus service provided by Southern Vectis that links Newport with the Red Funnel fast catamaran to Southampton at Cowes, and recently (2004) the Council.
- The Rail Link bus service, part funded by the Council, Island Line and others connecting the Ventnor area with the Island Line railhead at Shanklin and which has very quickly established a broad base of regular passengers throughout the day.
- The connection between the Wightlink fast catamaran service and Island Line trains at Ryde Pier Head.
- Park and Ride bus connections to the ferry at Cowes provided by Southern Vectis.
- Park and Ride facilities at Ryde St Johns Rail Station.
- Park and Ride bus connections provided by Wightbus during Cowes Week.
- Park and Ride bus facilities provided by Southern Vectis to the annual Music Festivals held on the Island and which attract up to 30,000 attendees.

There is much more that can be achieved in terms of inter-modal network co-ordination at locations such as Yarmouth and East Cowes, and indeed at other Island Line rail stations and between buses at bus interchange points

Availability of through ticketing between modes is highly desirable and a useful start has been made on the new Rail Link service where tickets issued from any station in the national rail network can be issued to any point on the Rail Link bus route between Shanklin and Ventnor. This through ticketing also includes the ferry crossing upon Wightlink Ferries service between Ryde and Portsmouth. The Council's desire to see through ticketing initiatives rolled out further in the Island's bus network have been met by the Go Ahead Group as a consequence of its acquisition of Southern Vectis

D.3.3 **Third Action Area**

The Council will, during the lifetime of this Bus Strategy, utilise the opportunities provided by the current legislation for the development of Quality Bus Partnerships (QBP's) with operators. The Council believes that initially a key route corridor approach would be appropriate to pursue. An explanation of the concept of QBP's is provided as Appendix A to this Strategy. The principal

corridors that the Council would wish to initially examine, in partnership with Southern Vectis, as the subject of QBP's, would include:

- Cowes – Newport;
- Sandown/ Shanklin – Newport;
- Ryde –Newport;
- East Cowes – Newport;

it is worth considering in due course, that an island-wide network of QBP's might be set up. It may be prudent initially, however, for prospective QBP partners to develop an understanding of the full implications of their respective commitments through experience of an initial corridor QBP or QBP's, rather than through a single island-wide QBP.

Amongst the contributions that the Council can make to QBP's can be in developing and providing bus priority measures that will give advantages to buses over other road users, and in providing quality bus waiting facilities and kerb heights suitable for low floor vehicles. The latter two points are covered in sixth action area.

Operators see bus priority measures as critical to their ability to compete with the car and to operate services on time. A range of schemes have been identified by the Council in consultation with Southern Vectis, and a number have been introduced. These include the bus and taxi contraflow lanes in central Newport and the bus "gate" at Mayfield Road in Ryde.

The Council has also enabled Southern Vectis buses to be fitted with transponders that trigger green lights at a number of key traffic light junctions.

The Council will wish to build on this useful start and develop further priority measures as part of a roll-out of QBP's.

D.3.4 D.3.4 Fourth Action Area

Encouraging the provision of affordable public transport on the Isle of Wight is an action area that supports the third overarching objective. Whilst it is recognised that the Transport Act 1985 empowered bus operators to determine fares levels upon their commercially provided services, there is still much that can be achieved, firstly through commitment by the operators to affordable fares, secondly through commitment by the Council to concessionary fares support, thirdly, through partnership working with the Council and operators to participate in an Island-wide network ticket scheme and fourth to examine the potential for the use of smartcard technology. Adoption of such a fares strategy would have the result of encouraging increased patronage of public transport and thereby would support the objectives of the Local Transport Plan and the Bus Strategy. These then are the essential components of a fares strategy for the Isle of Wight:

- Affordable commercial fares levels;
- Concessionary fares;
- Network ticket availability;
- Smartcards.

The Council will seek to encourage local bus operators to adopt a commercial fares structure that is attractive to existing and potential new passengers. This could take the form for instance, of the adoption of a much simplified fares structure along the lines of a single local fare for all bus journeys. The Council is committed to initiating a £1 flat fare on the Isle of Wight. This type of fares structure has driven patronage up in a number of locations in the UK, most notably Brighton, and it could be anticipated that the effect would be similar on the Isle of Wight. Of concern to operators, however, would be that there might be an initial shortfall in income generated by such a fares structure to meet the costs of providing the services upon which the scheme was available.

A second strand to a local fares strategy for the Island would be the commitment by the Council to the ongoing funding of local concessionary fares schemes that exceed the minimum legislative requirement. The Council currently funds two concessionary fares schemes:

- **The Islander Card scheme.**This scheme for many years provided half fares (subject to time restrictions) for people aged 60+, and for people with a handicap (without a time restriction) and for young people aged 14 and 15 (subject to time restrictions) This scheme exceeded the legislative minimum requirement in three respects – firstly in that the time restrictions were less onerous than set out in the legislation, secondly that the availability of the scheme was extended to the Island Line rail service between Shanklin and Ryde, and thirdly that it included young people aged 14-15 for whom no provision at all is made in the concessionary fares legislation. The introduction of mandatory free fares on buses for people aged over 60 and for people with a handicap has caused the Council to positively re-examine the opportunities for scheme enhancements and extensions beyond the statutory minimum criteria.

- **The Youth Mover scheme**. This scheme offers free travel after 5pm (subject to some date restrictions) and half fare travel at other times (subject to time and date restrictions) for young people aged 14-18. This is a wholly discretional concession on the part of the Council as the legislation does not make any demands upon local authorities for schemes to include young people.

Local age demographics, with a relatively high percentage of older people resident locally, indicate the great potential value of the free fare scheme to the Island, which value is reflected in the actual take up and usage of it.

The third strand for an Isle of Wight fares strategy is full network ticket inter-availability among all operators of local bus and train services on the Isle of Wight.

The market for provision of local bus services on the Isle of Wight is both historically and currently dominated by a single operator, Southern Vectis. Their long established and commercially provided Rover Ticket scheme encourages not only local regular bus users, but also visitors to the Island, to use Southern Vectis services and offers these users a discounted rate rewarding frequent travel. However, a by-product of the Rover Ticket scheme being the only network ticket scheme available on the Isle of Wight is that it can act as a powerful tool in deterring entrance to the market for the supply of bus services on the Island. For operators other than Southern Vectis to participate in the scheme, and to receive equitable financial recompense in exchange for accepting Rover Tickets on their services, they must have the agreement of Southern Vectis, who will determine how much, if any at all, that level of recompense should be.

The Council, using powers under the Transport Act, can seek to work in partnership with all providers of local bus and rail services on the Island to set up a new and independently administered and managed network ticket scheme for the Island. This scheme would guarantee a right of participation to all prospective operators and would also seek to ensure a guarantee of equitable recompense for accepting passengers with new scheme tickets. It is recognised that there are some very significant issues to be addressed, not least the ensuring of a fair allocation of revenues from potentially complicated arrangements.

Introduction of a new network ticket scheme in no way precludes Southern Vectis from continuing to offer their own Rover Ticket as a commercial scheme, but Southern Vectis would also be obliged to participate in the new scheme and accept for travel bearers of the new scheme's tickets.

Although the Act does not satisfactorily cover the inclusion of a local rail operator into such a scheme, the value of inter-modal ticket inter-availability in the local context should nevertheless encourage all parties to establish a framework that enables it to happen.

The fourth strand of a fares strategy looks to the evolution of smartcard technology. Within the life of this bus strategy It should prove possible to introduce smartcard technology to bus services on the Isle of Wight. There are potential benefits to users, operators and the Council. For users this will overcome the need to find cash. For operators it will reduce the need to count cash, it will cut loading times, reduce fraud and provide valuable passenger intelligence. for local authorities. It can provide valuable information in respect of use of supported services and the take-up of fares concessions. It would require a partnership approach to bring a smartcard scheme into being on the Island and the Council would wish to give full encouragement and assistance to any operator wishing to bring a smartcard scheme to fruition on the Isle of Wight.

D.3.5 Fifth Action Area

Interchange can be defined as the process by which customers move between journeys within one mode of public transport, or between one mode of public transport and another public or private mode either at the start or ending points of a journey on the public transport network. Easy interchange can therefore give the public transport user the opportunity to access a wider public transport network than would otherwise have been possible, and hence allows more journey opportunities and wider journey horizons.
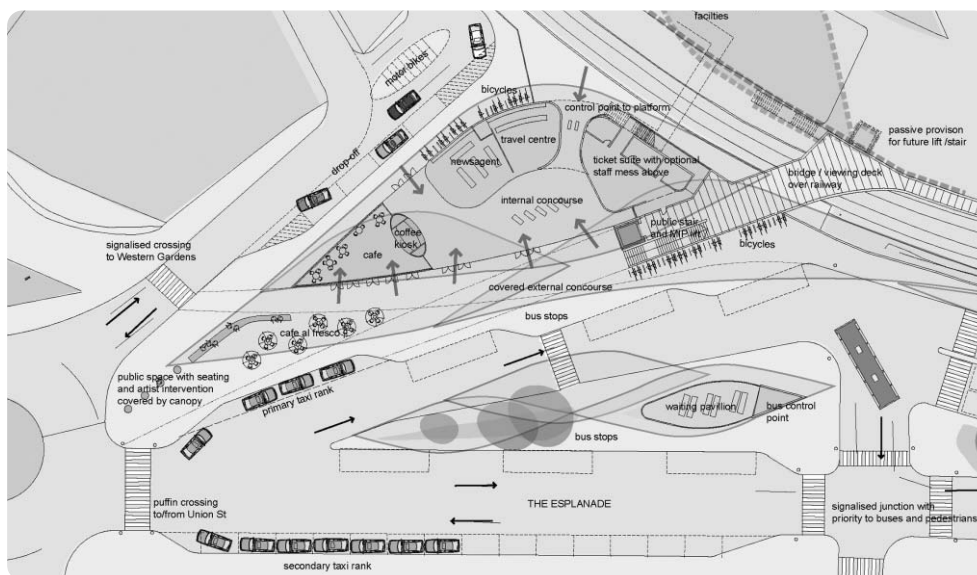
Draft Ryde Interchange proposal for full details see www.projectryde.org

As employment, leisure and retail facilities relocate to edge of town or out of town locations, effective interchange at interchange hubs increase in importance.

The physical effort in walking, waiting or carrying to effect an interchange can be perceived as a deterrent to use of public transport. The mental effort involved in planning and monitoring the progress of a journey via an interchange and the emotional effort in terms of worries as to whether a journey will be successfully completed also stand as impediments.

There may also be a fares penalty if a journey has to be made where there is not a single through fare for the whole journey.

The Council sees the following as contributing to enhancing interchange:

- Availability of printed timetables and the use of Traveline to enable pre-planning of journeys;
- Good quality waiting facilities, staff presence, real time information and CCTV at interchanges;
- Good signage to facilities and bus arrival and departure points;
- Good access for mobility impaired.

Current projects with which the Council have involvement include the new Ryde Interchange and the redevelopment of the Newport bus station site. The Council will seek to ensure that the potential barriers to interchange enhancement are minimised at these and any future interchange development.

D.3.6 Sixth Action Area

The sixth action area is to provide and maintain high quality waiting facilities at bus stops. The bus stop environment should provide shelter from the elements, seating, lighting, bus departure time and operator information as well as contact details for the Traveline public transport information service. The Council will work with Southern Vectis to ensure that at all bus stops on the Island the unique SMS location code is shown. Customers at any stop can text this unique location code and receive by return the next timed departures from that stop.

Where there has been vandalism at bus stops it should be speedily and effectively dealt with through prompt maintenance.

Kerb heights should be raised at bus stops to enable those with a mobility difficulty, or who travel in a wheelchair, to be able to board low floor buses via a ramp. This also assists parents with buggies or people with shopping trolleys to access the network without impediment.

D.3.7 Seventh Action Area

There is recognition that the demographics of the Island make the seventh objective, that of improving vehicle accessibility, a high priority. The recent introduction of low-floor buses by Southern Vectis and by Wightbus represents a significant advance in improving mobility for local residents and visitors.

The long term impact of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) and new Construction and Use Regulations can be more readily assessed as the overall proportion of mobility compliant buses operated on the Island increases.

The Council will encourage operators in their replacement of vehicles to ensure that the opportunity is taken to introduce DDA compliant buses.

The Council can also consider giving preference to tenderers for provision of non-commercial bus services who undertake to supply low-floor DDA compliant vehicles to undertake the contract

D.3.8 Eighth Action Area

The eighth action area is that all opportunities for developing Park and Ride services on the Island should be fully examined.

The Council has, since 1985, been providing a very successful park and ride scheme at Cowes during the Cowes Week yachting festival with almost 22,000 car passengers making use of the free park and ride service during that week in 2004.

The Council has also recently partnered Southern Vectis in the establishment of a year round park and ride facility outside Cowes that is served by buses operating on the busy Newport to Cowes corridor. Whilst usage of the facility has initially been light it has subsequently increased to an encouraging level.

Park and ride facilities have been established at three Island Line rail stations. The facility at Ryde St John's Station is now used close to its capacity, whilst those at Shanklin and Sandown stations still offer spare capacity.

The annual music festivals held annually near Newport, and which attract attendances at around the 30,000 level, have in part evolved successfully because of the effective park and ride schemes that have been encouraged by the Council and have been provided by Southern Vectis. As the Island seeks to enhance its image and potential for the hosting of major events, plainly the availability and effective delivery of park and ride schemes in conjunction with them, will be important components in ensuring their success

D.3.9 Ninth Action Area

The ninth action area is to encourage, through School Travel Plans, the use of more sustainable and safer modes of travel by students. Amongst other sustainable modes, the bus can have a valuable role in contributing to overall bus use targets with the possibility of reducing private car congestion in the vicinity of schools and thereby potentially making a positive contribution to child safety.

D.3.10 **Tenth Action Area**

The tenth action area is to encourage the registration as local bus services, so far as is practicable, of services that are engaged to convey children from home to school so that they can form part of the registered local bus network and therefore be available to use by members of the general public. Whilst this is most likely to be achievable where services are commissioned on behalf of students with a statutory entitlement to transport, efforts should be made to encourage the use of public transport by students who have no statutory entitlement either by providing some or all of them with a discretional concession for travel that will encourage use of public transport.

It has been the Council's policy over a number of years to purchase term tickets from Southern Vectis (for broadly two thirds of all the qualifying students) to help financially underpin commercial provision of the rural and inter-urban bus network. The Council's current approach has been demonstrated to provide cost effective home to school transport as highlighted in the Department for Education and Skills Home to School Transport Survey dated February 2004 that demonstrated that the Isle of Wight enjoyed the lowest cost per pupil for transport to mainstream schools of any county in England in 2001/02.

The staggering of school hours so as to provide a cascade of bus service provision at a variety of school start and finish times can not only ensure effective use of vehicle resources but also will contribute to thinning congestion at school peaks. The Council will liaise with school headteachers and governors to promote the benefits of travel to school by public transport.

The combined benefits of cost effective home to school transport whilst helping to support the Island bus network provide a synergic system that should not only continue to be exploited locally but also could stand as a model for other authorities to investigate and implement

D.3.11 **Eleventh Action Area**

The eleventh action area is to encourage, through Workplace Travel Plans (WTP's), the use of more sustainable modes of travel by employees travelling to and from work. Whilst some useful research work has been undertaken locally with bus operators and major employers to understand patterns of demand, there is still much to do before there is a significant migration of workers from the car to more sustainable modes. It may be that encouragement can be given to employees through the provision of discounted bus tickets, the discount perhaps being underwritten by the employer as an incentive to modal shift and in reducing demand for parking space at their premises. The commitment of bus operators to support WTP's through appropriate levels of service provision is also essential.

D.3.12 **Twelfth Action Area**

Personal safety and security is the twelfth action area. A perception of good personal safety is an essential element in promoting an attractive public transport system that can contribute to modal shift. Equally importantly, for those people who have no alternative to public transport, concerns over safety whilst travelling can reinforce social inclusion by limiting travel opportunities.

At the bus stop, the perception of safety can be addressed by a variety of means such as high quality infrastructure, rigorous maintenance, real time information, lighting, telephones and CCTV.

On-vehicle, of prime importance will be the attitude of staff and their ability to minimise sources of conflict and to deal with any circumstances that arise. It is therefore important that operators have a published safety policy backed up by a customer care training programme for drivers that includes safety aspects. Vehicle quality will also contribute to a positive journey experience, as will the availability of CCTV on-bus.

Promoting and ensuring good behaviour on school buses is a key activity of the Council in terms of delivering a safe and high quality transport service for pupils and other road users.

E. Research and Consultation

E.1 Research

The Isle of Wight Council will have prepared the final Bus Strategy having undertaken extensive desk-top research and liaison with colleagues in other local authorities.

E.2 Consultation

The key methodology that was employed to engage key stakeholders within the process was consultation.

Consultation has been undertaken on an individual and group basis, in stages. Initial interviews and brainstorming sessions with the Council's own technical staff resulted in the identification of a number of key issues for consideration and further research, which key issues formed the basis of the Draft Strategy that was issued for consultation purposes in August 2005

The Draft Strategy was offered to consultees for challenge, for identification of additional related issues, and to identify opportunities for innovative action.

Consultation was undertaken with the following:

- Councillors
- Government Office for the South East
- The Traffic Commissioner for the Western Traffic Area
- IOW Bus Users Group
- Quality Transport Partnership
- Isle of Wight Association of Parish & Town Councils
- Bus and Coach Operators
- Community Groups
- Isle of Wight Tourism
- Isle of Wight Chamber of Commerce
- The General Public (through local libraries and on www.iwight.com)

E.3 Results of the Consultation

Consultee responses covered a wide range of issues which included:

- Improving frequencies and days of operation of services;
- Fares;
- Access to Services;
- Bus Stops and Shelters;
- Network Ticketing;
- Quality Bus Partnerships;
- Ryde Interchange;
- Park and Ride;
- Bus Priority Measures;
- Inter-Modal Connectivity;

Full consideration has been given to all the responses received and as a consequence many sections of the Bus Strategy have been revised from the original draft. The consultation responses have assisted in defining the Aim, the Over-Arching Objectives, the Action Areas and therefore the Targets and Action Plan.

Sincere thanks are offered by the Council to all of the consultees who have offered their valuable insights within their responses.

F. Targets and Monitoring

The Local Transport Plan 2006-11 details three Indicators in respect of buses for which it is mandatory for the Council to set targets. These indicators are in respect of:

- Bus Patronage;
- Bus Punctuality;
- Satisfaction with Local Bus Services.

These will form the three principal target areas for the Council.

F.2 Bus Patronage

This is a Best Value indicator (BV102) which requires the Council to report the number of bus passenger journeys made on the Isle of Wight annually. In common with most parts of the country outside London, the Isle of Wight has experienced long term decline in bus passenger numbers.

The target that has been set by the Council is:

- By 2010-11, to achieve a 12.1% increase in bus passenger journeys based on 2003-04 levels.

The table below sets out the annual targets.

Year	Actual Passengers	Target Passengers	Annual % Increase
2003-04	5,774,000	n/a	n/a
2004-05	5,783,000	n/a	0.2
2005-06	n/a	5,980,000	3.6
2006-07	n/a	6,129,000	2.5
2007-08	n/a	6,282,000	2.5
2008-09	n/a	6,345,000	1.0
2009-10	n/a	6,408,000	1.0
2010-11	n/a	6,472,000	1.0

Numbers of passengers recorded against the target will be actual numbers as supplied by operators.

F.2 Bus Punctuality

This is a new mandatory indicator for the Council. Baseline data is being collected during 2005-06.

The target that has been set by the Council is:

> • To achieve 90% bus punctuality by 2014-15.

There is no historic data upon which to build a trajectory for growth to the target. Using as a baseline the data collected during 2005-06, an even annual growth to the target will be plotted.

The 90% target set reflects the "satisfactory" target from the LTP Guidance.

The detailed definition relating to this Indicator is "The percentage of scheduled bus services on the Isle of Wight departing timing points within the window of 1 minute early to 5 minutes late, as a proportion of all services surveyed".

To monitor services, the Council and Southern Vectis have provisionally selected 25 monitoring points across the Island. These points have been selected to give a good representative sample of rural/urban locations and a mixture of start, intermediate and non-timing points.

Monitoring will be by manual surveys undertaken by the Council in conjunction with the bus company over a period of 2 months in the summer and 2 months in the winter period. Results will be monitored for all operators providing services at these locations during these periods.

F.3 Satisfaction with Local Bus Services

This is a Best Value Indicator (BV 104) which requires the Council to report the percentage of people satisfied with local bus services.

The target that has been set by the Council is:

> • By 2009-10, to increase to 65% the percentage of people who are satisfied with local bus services on the Isle of Wight.

This indicator is monitored tri-annually as part of wider Best Value satisfaction surveys. The surveys are carried out in accordance with BV Guidelines.

The baseline figure in 2000-01 was 46% satisfaction, but by 2003-04 the figure had risen to 56%. The target seeks to raise to at least 58% the satisfaction level when monitoring is undertaken in 2006-07 and up to at least 65% by the monitoring undertaken in 2009 -10.

G. Action Plan

The Action Plan seeks to achieve the following:

- To deliver the Targets for:
  - Bus Patronage;
  - Bus Punctuality;
  - Satisfaction with Local Bus Services.
- To support the Three Over-Arching Objectives of this Bus Strategy in respect of:
  - Increasing Modal Shift away from the car;
  - Public Transport Co-Ordination ;
  - Affordable Fares.

The Action Plan has also to relate and interface with LTP objectives :

- To increase accessibility for all;
- To encourage and support economic regeneration and prosperity;
- To make Island roads safer;
- To improve local air quality and the environment;
- To tackle congestion;
- To ensure effective management of the highway network;
- To achieve value for money solutions.

Twelve Action Areas have been identified that will assist in the delivery of the Targets and of the Bus Strategy and LTP Objectives. These are:

- Maintenance of a sufficiently comprehensive bus network;
- Developing seamless inter-modality;
- Quality Bus partnerships;
- Provide affordable fares;
- Easy Interchange;
- Improving bus waiting facilities;
- Accessibility for all;
- Development of Park and Ride;
- Develop School Travel Plans;
- Registration of school services;
- Develop Workplace Travel Plans;
- Improve personal safety.

Achievement within Action Areas can help towards delivery of either individual or multiple Targets and Objectives.

Within these twelve Action Areas the Principal actions by which the Council can deliver these Targets and Objectives within this Bus Strategy term will be:

- Development of a local transport environment that provides encouragement for operators to grow the commercial bus network in terms of frequencies, coverage, cost, quality and accessibility.

- Develop a Quality Bus Partnership approach on key corridors initially with Southern Vectis.

- Continuing financial support for non-commercial elements of the local bus network.

- Efficient targeting of funding available through use of the Local Bus Service Performance Management Framework.

- Encouraging provision by public transport operators of inter-modal through ticketing.

- Improving inter-modal connectivity through encouraging a co-ordinated approach to timetabling and scheduling.

- Improving affordability through enhancements to concessionary fares schemes for over 60's, young people and people with a disability.

- To introduce a £1 flat fare scheme.

- Develop an all-operator network ticket scheme.

- Seek, in partnership with bus operators and others, to utilise Smartcard technology on Island public transport.

- Complete the Ryde Interchange project as a modern efficient passenger friendly gateway to the Island.

- Promote awareness of Traveline bus information.

- Raise kerb heights at bus stops to encourage use of low floor buses.

- Improve waiting facilities at bus stops.

- Increase the number of bus shelters provided.

- Maintain existing Park and Ride schemes and evaluate and implement opportunities for new schemes where cost effective and desirable.

- Promote and assist a comprehensive scheme of School Travel Plans.

- Promote and assist the development of Workplace Travel Plans.

- With enforcement and public protection agencies, seek to reduce the fear and incidence of crime on public transport.

Each of these actions can individually, or in concert with other actions, enable the Council to meet its overall Aim of encouraging modal shift away from the car. Many of the desired outcomes that can emerge from the actions are deliverable only in part within the term of this Bus Strategy, but incremental improvement via these actions will over a period of time provide the impetus for delivery of the aim.

H. Conclusions

Will be drawn after the research is completed and the consultation responses have been evaluated.

It is a very significant challenge to the Isle of Wight, as it is to the rest of the country, to arrest and reverse the decline in the use of public transport and to therefore reduce use of cars.

There are significant opportunities in the term of this Bus Strategy to deliver that halt in decline of use of the bus.

There is a strong opportunity to work, within the framework of Quality Bus Partnership, with the principal bus operator to improve frequencies and to develop the commercial network.

Legislative change in respect of free concessionary fares, together with the Council's own initiative in respect of a £1 flat fare will yield affordable fares to all.

Engagement, through consultation, with our stakeholders will ensure that we are able to focus on customer needs.

The next five years are as significant a challenge to the Council and to bus operators as there has been since the deregulation of the bus industry in 1986, but there is much ground for optimism within that term.

Appendix A
Quality Bus Partnerships

Explanation of Concept

1. The Reason for Partnerships

The conventional commercial bus product (or bus system) is not entirely within the control of either the bus operator or the local authority. For example, the bus operator does not control the public highway on which its buses operate. The local authority cannot directly influence the vehicle component of the bus product, and has only limited influence over the service level.

Some operators and local authorities have sought to address their objectives independently. They have had mixed levels of success using this approach. Each operator and authority has been limited in what it can achieve independently. No one organisation controls the entire bus product, so each can only address certain aspects of the bus product's development and improvement.

QBPs provide a process by which actions can be taken to meet objectives that affect the whole bus product. They exist to deliver solutions in such a way that each of the partners:

- contributes to the delivery of solutions which aim to meet objectives - this does not necessarily imply a direct financial contribution

- co-ordinates their actions to maximise the benefit of those actions and/or avoid wasteful duplication

- exchanges information and understanding of factors affecting the bus product, with a view to creating solutions which meet objectives, and broadening the scope of the QBP.

2. QBP Definition and Terminology

QBPs are:

'agreements (either formal or informal) between one or more local authorities and one or more bus operators, for measures to be taken up by more than one party to enhance (mainly commercial) bus services, in a defined area, to meet the strategic objectives of the partners'.

The term QBP can be applied at three levels:

- A **tool** - a QBP as a transport policy or business development tool. The tool can be applied in order to achieve objectives, or not applied if other tools meet these objectives better. The tool cannot necessarily be applied to all bus services. The tool will not necessarily meet all objectives.
- A **process** - a QBP as a strategic framework, an 'umbrella' relationship between partners.
- A **scheme** - a QBP as a specific scheme or initiative which delivers improvements to the bus product.

The QBP tool is a means to deliver strategic objectives. It is used to set up the QBP process. The QBP process provides the framework by which QBP schemes are delivered. QBP schemes deliver results that contribute to the meeting of strategic objectives.

3. Appropriate Objectives

The QBP process provides a framework and mechanism to deliver the strategic objectives of the partners. To be considered as part of the QBP process, these objectives should fit one of three categories:

- **Common objective** - an objective common to both partners. For example, 'to improve bus services'.

- **Converging objective -** a sole objective of one partner, or group of partners, which, in that objective being met, another partners seek to benefit. For example, 'mode shift from car to bus' being achieved results in 'increased patronage'.

- **Trade-off objective -** a sole objective of one partner, or group of partners, in which that partner takes an action. That action allows another partner to act in such a way to meet the first partner's objectives. For example, an operator wants greater bus priority. The operator registers previously supported services as commercial. The authority no longer has to finance the supported services, and can now finance greater bus priority.

A number of individual tools or techniques may be applied within the context of the QBP, in order to meet objectives. The most common has been to increase the 'quality' of the bus product. However, others may be considered. For example, improving the linkages between provision of the bus product and land use planning may be considered within a QBP.

4. Application

It is inherent in the definition of a QBP that more than one party should make a contribution to meeting the objectives, within a spirit of partnership. For most practical purposes this relationship of partnership can only be achieved between the operator of commercial local bus services and the other parties.

QBPs based primarily on secured services (referred to in Quality Bus Partnerships - a Survey and Analysis as 'social partnerships') do not meet the full definition of a QBP. These arrangements are 'primarily contractual'. This guidance does not specifically provide advice on 'primarily contractual' arrangements. Many aspects of the overarching ethos of QBPs can be applied to the relationship between operators and local authorities. A 'Good Practice' Guide is available for procurement of local bus services (Local Authority Procurement of Local Bus and Community Transport Services - A Guide to Good Practice).

5. Relationship to the Local Transport Plan and Bus Strategy

Under the Transport Act 2000, local transport authorities have a statutory duty to produce a Bus Strategy. This strategy document will provide a policy template for making the best use of an authority's powers and duties in respect of buses. Bus Strategies will form a core part of Local Transport Plans (LTPs). There is a requirement on authorities to consult bus operators or their representatives with regard to the bus strategy.

The March 2000 Guidance on Full Local Transport Plans advises a stronger role for local authorities in the bus sector. The role of filling the gaps in the market through supported services and the operation of concessionary fares schemes should be augmented by authorities working in partnership with operators to influence overall bus provision.

QBPs are relevant to LTPs and Bus Strategies in two regards:

- The QBP process provides a suitable framework for consultation with operators, involving operators fully in an authority's strategic planning process. There is a degree of overlap here with the LTP process.
- Where the QBP tool is likely to be used to implement portions of the Bus Strategy/LTP, the strategic planning process needs to be common to both the Bus Strategy/LTP and the QBP process.

If local authority Bus Strategies are to be successfully implemented they need to recognise and build on the actions, plans and strategies of local bus operators. The most successful Bus Strategies are therefore likely to be those that involve operators most closely. The framework that underpins the QBP process provides suitable mechanisms for achieving this involvement.

Strategic planning of the improvements, implemented as part of a QBP, is essential to a QBP process in the medium to long term. Bus Strategies/LTPs require local authorities to produce detailed five-year plans. Where the QBP tool is to be used to deliver portions of the Bus Strategy/LTP, synergy is needed between plans in a Bus Strategy/LTP and plans to deliver improvements as part of a QBP. The most effective means of achieving this synergy is to combine the QBP strategic planning process into the Bus Strategy/LTP planning process.

For most local authorities the QBP process should be directly linked to the Bus Strategy and LTP.

Local authorities' bus procurement strategies should relate to the Bus Strategy. Other aspects of the LTP (such as policy on other modes and local area strategies) should also relate to the Bus Strategy.