



North Tyneside Council

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Briefing note

To: Cabinet Members

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Title of Briefing: Bus Service Changes

Purpose of note

This note provides an update to Councillors on the forthcoming changes to Bus Services in North Tyneside.

Background

Throughout the Covid pandemic public transport use has declined in part due to Government travel safety advice. As a consequence of this, Government supported local bus services through Covid grant payments, but this was replaced by the Bus Recovery Grant (BRG) in September 2021. Prior to the Covid pandemic, several bus services operating within North Tyneside were already marginal in terms of commercial viability with evening services secured by Nexus.

Payment of the BRG is expected to cease at the end of March 2022. Consequently, all commercial bus companies are proposing cuts to services in response to the funding pressure and subdued recovery in patronage levels.

Additionally, there continues to be a significant reduction in concessionary pass holders using the English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENCTS), with uptake only recovering to circa 60% at this time. In 2022/23, in accordance with DfT guidance, the reduction in concessionary journeys will require a reduction in concessionary fares reimbursement, which Nexus estimates at £7.5m. This introduces further financial pressure on bus operations.

Commercial bus companies operate 90% of bus routes in Tyne and Wear and decide where and how often these run. Nexus has powers to provide additional services, using funding from local authorities, where there are gaps in these commercial services which would otherwise leave people without access to public transport.

The three commercial bus companies – Arriva, Go North East and Stagecoach – each recently informed Nexus of plans to reduce their services in the Newcastle and North Tyneside areas to levels they consider to be financially sustainable as a consequence of the pandemic and in the absence of ongoing grant funding support. Bus companies are expected to make further changes in other parts of North East England, including Sunderland, Gateshead and South Tyneside, later in the spring.

The bus companies are currently experiencing passenger numbers that are around 75% of pre-Covid levels. This can be further broken down as non-concessionary travel reducing by approximately 20%, and ENTCS reducing by 40%.

Bus Operator Service Changes

The proposed changes to Arriva, Go North East, and Stagecoach services are summarised in the tables on the following pages. Appendix A of this note includes a network diagram highlighting which roads would be subject to service reductions.

Service changes are included in more detail in Appendix C but included below is a short list of the key withdrawals/service reductions with those Wards that are impacted identified.



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Service	Operator	Route	Change	Wards Impacted
1	Stagecoach	Slatyford - Benwell - City Centre - Heaton - Coach Lane	Stagecoach service 1 revised to operate between Slatyford - Coach Lane Campus only (Coach Lane Campus - Cobalt section cancelled).	Benton, Killingworth, Valley, Collingwood
1	GoNorthEast	Whitley Bay - Tynemouth - North Shields - Wallsend - Byker - Newcastle - Gateshead	Revised timetable which includes cancellation of the daily evening service .	Whitley Bay, Cullercoats, Tynemouth, Riverside, Chirton, Howdon, Wallsend
6/7/8	Stagecoach	Four Lane Ends - Freeman Hospital - Gosforth - Kenton - Kingston Park (6) / Kenton Bar Estate (7/8) - Newbiggin Hall - Westerhope - West Denton - Lemington - Metrocentre (6/7) / Central Station (8)	STG 6/7 route revised to operate between Freeman Hospital - Metrocentre only. Freeman Hospital - Four Lane Ends (6/7/8) and Lemington - Central Station (8) sections cancelled .	Longbenton, Benton
11	GoNorthEast	Whitley Bay - NTGH - North Shields - Royal Quays - Percy Main - East Howdon - Howdon - Wallsend	Cancellation: Service 11 cancelled.	Whitley Bay, Monkseaton South, Cullercoats,

				Collingwood, Preston, Riverside, Chirton, Howdon, Wallsend
19	GoNorthEast	North Shields - Royal Quays - Percy Main - Silverlink - Cobalt - Northumberland Park - Cramlington - Ashington	Cancellation: GNE M-Sa daytime and evening/Sunday (Nexus funded) service 19 cancelled.	Riverside, Chirton, Collingwood, Valley
41/41A	GoNorthEast	Wallsend - Hadrian Lodge (41a) - High Farm - Batte Hill - Hadrian Park	GNE services 41/41a revised to operate between Wallsend - Hadrian Park only. Alternate daytime trips will additionally serve Hadrian Lodge (Wiltshire Gardens/Wiltshire Drive). The new 41/41a will operate up to every 15 minutes M- Sa daytime. Secured evening/Sunday provision TBC. The current route east of Wallsend serving Howdon/Holy Cross is cancelled.	Wallsend, Northumberland, Battle Hill
42/42A	GoNorthEast	42: Wallsend - Hadrian Lodge - ASDA - Forest Hall - Killingworth - Dudley - Cramlington 42a: Wallsend - Hadrian Lodge - ASDA - FLE - Quorum - Killingworth - Dudley - Seaton Burn - Hazlerigg - Airport - Kingston Park	Cancellation: GNE trips on services 42/42a cancelled.	Wallsend, Battle Hill, Killingworth, Benton, Camperdown, Weetslade
55	Arriva	Newcastle - South Gosforth - Four Lane Ends - Forest Hall	Minor AM peak timetable alterations. M-Sa daytime frequency remains every 20, reducing to every 60 in the	Longbenton, Benton, Killingworth

			evening. Su daytime frequency reduced to every 60 and Su evening trips after 1830 cancelled.	
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Nexus Secured Network Changes

In response to the above proposed service reductions Nexus has drawn up a £4.5m plan, which includes the recently approved increase in their levy, to replace commercial services which would otherwise be lost in Newcastle and North Tyneside, or re-cast publicly-funded routes it already provides to mitigate the worst effects of cuts set to take effect.

Nexus uses a common criteria to assess where it will step-in to provide a publicly-funded bus built on the following priorities, which reflect consultation it has carried out with local people:

- A bus or Metro service within 400 metres of homes.
- Public transport at least hourly to essential shops, local services and local employment sites.
- A local service to a hub (such as a town centre or interchange) from which people can catch frequent bus or Metro services to a wider range of destinations.
- Reducing the time it takes to reach major employment sites and hospitals as far as possible, including changes.

Appendix B includes the resultant network plan where services will be retained (green) and those sections where service provision will be lost (red). To cover the significant network gaps that would result from the bus company proposals detailed above, it has been necessary to significantly revise the routes of many existing secured services. The following is a list of the secured services that need to be cancelled in their current form to release resource to allow for new/modified services to bridge the network gaps detailed. The vast majority of areas currently served by these secured services will remain so, but the routes, frequency and service numbers may differ.

Cancelled Services – 333, 359, K1/K2, W3

The proposed new services that will bridge the network gaps detailed above are complex. Nexus are currently preparing information campaigns for residents and Councillors that will illustrate the new routes and identify any changes in access to key amenities with advice on alternative travel arrangements where appropriate. Further details on this work will be presented at the forthcoming North Tyneside Bus Board in March.

The following [link](#) takes you to the Nexus press release on the proposed package of measures.

Communication and Timescales

As the bus companies will see the Bus Recovery Grant withdrawn at the end of March 2022, the proposed changes are planned to come into effect on the 27th March. Nexus and bus companies are working on information campaigns to make sure local people can find out what is changing, including Nexus replacing thousands of bus stop timetables.

North Tyneside and Nexus will be issuing a press release on Friday 18th February to inform the public of the proposed changes and how these seek to resolve the network gaps that would otherwise have formed due to the cuts planned by the bus companies.

Work will be ongoing with impacted residents between now and when the service changes come into operation at the end of March. This will include raising awareness of ticketing products such as the North Tyneside Smart Zone which offers unlimited weekly/monthly travel within the Borough across all operators. Further work between the Council, Nexus and bus operators around cross-operator ticketing is ongoing as we seek to ensure residents do not incur significant additional costs when undertaking the same regular journeys.