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Option 24/7

Organisation description - September 2021

Management Overview

Option 24/7 is Wiltshire's county-wide bus user group, and a "bridge" between Wiltshire Council, and current or potential bus users in the community areas that Wiltshire bus routes serve. We aim to ensure that the views and aspirations of those current or potential bus users are fully and fairly reflected in the bus service improvement proposals that will result from the Department for Transport's Bus Back Better strategy, and in any future Wiltshire bus proposals from this point onwards.

Detail

1. What is Option 24/7

A Community group in and nearby Wiltshire to partner, promote and advocate (and occasionally campaign) in support of a "better" bus and other public and sustainable transport provision and operations to, from, within (and occasionally though) Wiltshire.

"Better" means services running where and when people want them. To run at fares they can understand and flex, which are an affordable cost to passengers and local transport authority, also making an income for operators that will ensure they want to provide those services and have them busy. Services and facilities to be safe, comfortable, and information easy to find and understand. To connect well into other public transport services in a network and have thorough reach to sources and destinations yet have journey times that encourage service use. To welcome all passenger irrespective of age, ability, and what they have with them.

Our intent is to build, maintain and grow a bridge between the Local Transport Authorit(ies), Bus Operators and the communities our members and reps cover. The communities include service users both current and potential / future, and "reason to travel" organisations including businesses, parishes, other government locally, clubs, societies and charities that make up our society and way of life outside the transport specification and operation realm.

2. What is expected in a local or specialist rep

We request that anyone advocating Option 24/7 in its name confirms their agreement with the principles above, but there is an acknowledgment that there are compromises required between the various elements, with a positive pragmatic partnership approach taken.

We request that local or specialist reps are bus users at present or well acquainted with the services in their area or specialty, and are willing to listen to, correlate and forward views from across their area, including views and conclusions that may be less than ideal for them personally.

Local area reps need to be accessible to and contactable by passengers so there is a requirement that their names and areas are published, together with at the minimum an email address. Option 24/7 is able to provide an email forwarding service should they wish (e.g. graham@option247.org.uk forwards to graham@wellho.net). Publication of another means of contact such as phone or post is strongly encouraged.

3. How local reps areas are set

We have started with Wiltshire Council's community areas as our geographic unit. However, there are places and pockets where the economic or 'real community' outlook or direction differs, and there is a practicality to appoint rep covering differing areas - as happens with neighbourhood plans, etc. Where a natural travel area or journey crosses out of Wiltshire or service overseen by our PTA run, we welcome reps for those.

In addition to local area reps, we welcome others who have knowledge, interests and skills in specialist areas. We very much welcome advisors who work for bus operators or LTAs, but they cannot represent areas at the risk of a conflict of interest.

4. How local reps are appointed

Initially by recommendation, suggestion and their interest. We need to add some sort of review and formality but basically we're a group of like-minded and articulate people who naturally fall together under this somewhat informal process. But please do note what we note and expect in item (2) above.

Local reps may be and are encouraged to work with others in their areas / expertise - much more a local co-ordinator for local groups of interested parties working along our and "Bus Back Better" philosophies.

In practical terms, our reps are tending to be knowledgeable communicators, well known within their home areas who already have contacts, and the time to volunteer for the role. And so many of them tend to be parish or town councillors, who when they walk up the street meet and greet their residents on a daily basis, and know their streets, town metrics as a whole and neighbouring streets. They tend to have far, far more interest in public transport than the average parish councillor - self-selecting from those who are interested in this transport.

5. How do Option 24/7 reps liaise

Primarily online between themselves. Whilst online is a good approach for our planning work and local reps are required to have good online presence, it is vital that there is use of current services, and advocacy via other routes such as local meetings and article in printed and broadcast media.

We have held early online conference (zoom) sessions and will do so from time to time in the future.

6. Changing reps / making sure they really are community reps

At this stage, the central team is the final arbiter - but very much working through and with everyone concerned in a positive way. None of us has a significant financial interest in any transport organisation or is currently with a service specifier, operator or regulator.

7a. Central team

Lee Fletcher (lee@option247.org.uk)
Graham Ellis (graham@option247.org.uk)
Peter Blackburn (peter@option247.org.uk)
Natacha Tagholm as advisor

7b. Local reps as at 11.9.2021

BRADFORD-ON-AVON - Tim Trimble
CALNE - Mark Edwards
CHIPPENHAM - Andy Conroy
CORSHAM - James Whittleton
DEVIZES – Richard Gamble
MALMESBURY - Catherine Doody
MARLBOROUGH – Nick Fogg
MELKSHAM - Graham Ellis
MERE - To Be Confirmed
PEWSEY - Dawn Wilson
ROYAL WOOTTON BASSETT & SWINDON CROSS BORDER - Michael Cotton
SALISBURY CITY & RURAL HINTERLAND - Margaret Willmot
TIDWORTH – Kayleigh Mooney
TISBURY – Gerry Murray
TROWBRIDGE - To Be Confirmed
WARMINSTER - John Syme
WESTBURY - Phil McMullen

Also:

SOMERSET/FROME CROSS BORDER - Peter Travis
WECA CROSS BORDER - Peter Blackburn
BUS OPERATOR LIASON - Natacha Tagholm
ELDERLY & DISABLED BUS USER LIASON - Lorraine Sencicle
SIGHT RESTRICTED BUS USER LIASON – Alan Whetherly
LTA & DFT LIASON - Lee Fletcher

8. What does/will the Option 24/7 Central team provide?

- * Expertise, data checks, etc
 - * Web site
 - * Facebook Page
 - * Help, advice and suggestions
 - + Liaison meetings and introductions
 - + Framework
 - + Branding
 - + Public explanation sheets and publicity
 - Organisation setup
 - Help organise surveys (* Online via our Limesurvey) and meetings
 - Data feed and occasional email news briefs
 - Conference meetings
 - Combined papers
- (* - very much there; + - somewhat there; - - embryonic)

9. Letter of appointment. Policies. GDPR.

Looking at model of Community Rail Partnerships in the form of Community BUS partnerships, but in the older mould of them being strongly biased towards getting mass transit rather than the more recent four pillars approach. We will probably need organisation insurance / finance / bank account and funding?

There may be a good case for staffing, fundraising, etc - however, the intent is to keep this relatively light and responsive - able to help in logical ways but to an assured pattern for our partners. They are the experts at actually running the buses and services - we are happy to help provide inputs, reviews thoughts and provide marketing and community ownership support.

10. Who are we doing this for?

Mrs A can no longer drive. She relies on the bus to get her from her home into the town centre where she meets friends and does her shopping.

Mr B works in X. He's unable to drive for medical reasons, and commutes by bus every day; sometimes he has to work late and catch a bus back in the early evening.

The C family send their daughter to school in Z - a journey of about 6 miles. It's not their nearest school, but it's the right one for her and she gets there by bus.

Miss D and her college friends want to meet up for a 'social' at the weekend or an evening; due to high insurance premiums none of them can afford a car, and in any case they want to be able to enjoy the evening without having to be awake (and sober) enough to drive safely home afterwards.

Mr E will be retiring in about 7 years - he's getting on a bit, shaky on his legs, and can no longer walk to the local railway station without it leaving him so tired he can't do his job properly.

Mrs F no longer has a bus to get to her doctors, so now she requires home visits.

Ms G had planned to go to college this September with a view to getting qualified and back into employment, but she's had to put these plans on hold because the bus that would get her home at the end of the college day doesn't run any more.

Mr H doesn't use the bus at all. But he can't get a car parking space in town / at work any longer as all the spaces are filled with people who used to use public transport, so he gets very frustrated and parks in residential streets to the annoyance of those residents.

Ms I is a health service / social services administrator, and she notices a severe strain on her 'customer transport' budget because she's now spending a lot of money (and organisation time) and arranging and paying for customers who used to use the bus.

Mr K now travels to his office 2 days a week rather than 5. With 4 journeys rather than 10 every week, he can afford to travel just a little slower, especially as it saves him so much in personal transport (car) costs.

Miss L is concerned about clean air and wants to travel as green as possible. She'll go by bus or train if only she can - especially if it's cheaper overall than running a car.

Family M are off to W this year on the South Coast for a holiday. Rather than have the nightmare of a car in the congested streets of this port, they're going by train then using the bus to get around locally.

Mrs N will commute to her work by bus and train once they connect at her local station.

Mr O finds that he can think, relax, read on the bus - quality time that's lost when he's behind the wheel of a car.

Ms P used to drive to the station - or sometimes all the way to work in Y. Increasing costs such as car parking, and the availability of a connecting bus from the end of her street, mean that she's now using that integrated transport.

Mr Q now takes the bus. He used to drive, but finds that even the short walk to the bus stop helps him keep fit and now that the bus takes him where he wants, he uses it regularly.

Mr R makes a short journey but not on a direct transport route. Interchangeable tickets, integrated information and the filling of some service gaps will make his total journey practical by public transport - and he's delighted.

Miss S has found employment as a bus driver. She loves meeting all (well - most) of her passengers and helping the economy and quality of life with the service she's helping to provide.

11. Some references and links

Bus Back Better

<http://www.passenger.chat/mirror/DfT-Bus-Back-Better-national-bus-strategy-for-England.pdf>

Our Facebook Group

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/option247/>

Our Web site

<http://www.option247.uk/>

Option 24/7 presentations

<http://www.passenger.chat/mirror/20210329.pdf>

http://option247.uk/o247_bbb_20210419.pdf



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12. Release History

Original (first none-draft) version	1.0	1 Sept 2021
Added extra area reps and release history	1.1	11 Sept 2021
Added rep for sight impaired	1.1a	12 Sept 2021