

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL

COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES

COMMITTEE:	Community Committee																																		
MEETING DATE AND TIME	27 June 2024 7pm	LOCATION	Congleton Town Hall																																
REPORT FROM	Jackie MacArthur, Communities and Marketing Manager and Deputy Chief Officer																																		
AGENDA ITEM REPORT TITLE	9 CEC Bus Strategy Consultation																																		
Summary	<p>Cheshire East Council is reviewing its supported bus services (click the link to go to the consultation on Cheshire East Council website). The closing date for the consultation is 3 July. This paper sets out the comments that the Integrated Transport Working Group has previously made on bus use in Congleton, including the results of a survey carried out in April 2023. If accepted, the draft response in appendix A, along with any additional comments approved by the committee, will form the committee's response to the consultation.</p> <p>This Committee is asked to consider the response under the Terms of Reference 4.3 Work with the local authority and service providers to lobby for improved public transport (bus and train) provision.</p>																																		
Background Detail	<p>The Cheshire East bus network consists of 37 bus services, of which 21 services are fully supported by the council (57%), and a further 8 are partially supported by the council (22%), such as evening journeys. 8 services (22%) operate on a fully commercial basis. Cheshire East Council currently spends £2.5m supporting bus services which are not commercially viable but are deemed important and socially necessary.</p> <p>The buses operating in Congleton are shown below along with CEC performance ranking between 1 – 26 (1 is the best performing, 26 worst):</p> <table><tbody><tr><td>• 38</td><td>Crewe – Macclesfield</td><td><u>D & G Bus</u></td><td>13/26</td></tr><tr><td>• 42</td><td>Crewe – Congleton</td><td><u>D & G Bus</u></td><td>6/26</td></tr><tr><td>• 90</td><td>Congleton - Bromley Estate (Circular)</td><td><u>Hollinshead Coaches</u></td><td>16/26</td></tr><tr><td>• 91</td><td>Congleton - Mossley (Circular)</td><td><u>Hollinshead Coaches</u></td><td>17/26</td></tr><tr><td>• 92</td><td>Congleton - Buglawton Estate (Circular)</td><td><u>Hollinshead Coaches</u></td><td>14/26</td></tr><tr><td>• 94</td><td>Newcastle – Congleton</td><td><u>D & G Bus</u></td><td>20/26</td></tr><tr><td>• 94A</td><td>Newcastle – Congleton</td><td><u>D & G Bus</u></td><td>20/26</td></tr><tr><td>• 318</td><td>Alsager – Congleton</td><td><u>D & G Bus</u></td><td>12/26</td></tr></tbody></table> <p>The CEC review looks for opportunities to encourage more bus use and get more services operating commercially, tweak services to improve performance and passenger uptake and ensure best value out of the council's spending on buses.</p> <p>Cheshire East has been awarded an additional £3.455m in 2024/25 for bus services (on top of its established budget). Options or improvements being considered in the review include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increased frequency of buses• Alterations/extensions to existing services• Additional evening services• Additional weekend service• Changes to the Flexi Link service to extend and enhance the offer.			• 38	Crewe – Macclesfield	<u>D & G Bus</u>	13/26	• 42	Crewe – Congleton	<u>D & G Bus</u>	6/26	• 90	Congleton - Bromley Estate (Circular)	<u>Hollinshead Coaches</u>	16/26	• 91	Congleton - Mossley (Circular)	<u>Hollinshead Coaches</u>	17/26	• 92	Congleton - Buglawton Estate (Circular)	<u>Hollinshead Coaches</u>	14/26	• 94	Newcastle – Congleton	<u>D & G Bus</u>	20/26	• 94A	Newcastle – Congleton	<u>D & G Bus</u>	20/26	• 318	Alsager – Congleton	<u>D & G Bus</u>	12/26
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	<p>Appendix A contains a draft response to the Cheshire East Council consultation on behalf of the Committee. This can be approved, amended or rejected by the Committee.</p> <p>Appendix B – CTC’s previous response to bus improvements for Congleton.</p> <p>Summary of the responses to the Bus Survey - this link takes you to the results of a bus survey monkey carried out by the Congleton Integrated Transport Working Group.</p> <p>Summary of the Bus Consultation (Appendix A)</p> <p>Most of the questions in the online consultation do not apply to us as a group as they are about individual experience of bus travel.</p> <p>Cheshire East is particularly interested in three areas. The first two we are not commenting on. The first is about bus changes in the rural Nantwich area, the second is about bus changes proposed for Macclesfield, Poynton and Stockport. The third question is about changes to Flexi Link. Congleton Town Council has previously responded to a consultation on this and so the response to this latest consultation reflects the comments given in the Flexi Link Consultation held in October 2023.</p> <p>The consultation allows for wider comments on improvements to bus services. For this part of the consultation, I have drawn on the comments that Congleton Town Council has submitted over the past three years when asked about bus improvements. I will also send a summary of CTC’s findings from a survey monkey into buses held in April 2023.</p> <p>The survey closes on the 3 July.</p> <p>CEC received more than 1,000 responses by 14 June. The link to the consultation can be seen at https://surveys.cheshireeast.gov.uk/s/BusServiceReview2024/ Comments can also be emailed to BusServiceReview@cheshireeast.gov.uk.</p>
Proposal	The committee approves the draft Bus Services Review response, along with any amendments, to submit to Cheshire East Council by 3 July.
Financial Implications	There are no direct financial implications for the town council budget unless the town council were to wish to enter into a partnership to support additional buses.
Environmental Implications	A shift to public transport use is a major opportunity in combatting climate change. Well used, regular buses would have a positive impact on the environment. Bus services should be good enough to provide an incentive for people to use the bus in preference to private cars and taxis, reducing both traffic and pollution.
Equality and Diversity	Congleton has an ageing population and around 25% of households have at least one person with a disability. For families without access to a car, public transport and the flexi-link are essential for accessing services. Better bus services make life better for everyone, but especially those who for many reasons do not have access to a car.
Decision Requested	For the committee to consider the paper and appendix and approve a response to the Cheshire East Council’s Review of Bus Services.

9 A– Community Committee

Cheshire East Bus Review - Draft Response from Congleton Town Council

Congleton Town Council welcomes the opportunity to get feedback on public buses in its area as part of the Cheshire East Consultation on Supported Bus Services Review. The evidence for our response comes from previously submitted responses to Cheshire East about improving bus services in Congleton and a survey of bus use that the town council carried out in Congleton in April 2023

The Town Council congratulates Cheshire East on securing an additional £3.455m to improve bus services across the borough and for the improvements already made on the 38 route; introducing a Sunday Service and later evening services between Crewe, Sandbach, Congleton and Macclesfield.

Consultation Response

PROPOSAL ONE: Nantwich Rural Services) Congleton Town Council has not commented on this proposal as this is outside of our area and we have no detailed knowledge of the routes.

PROPOSAL TWO (Macclesfield – Poynton – Stockport Servies) Congleton Town Council has not commented on this proposal for the same reason as above.

PROPOSAL THREE Changes to Flexible Transport Congleton Town Council welcomes the proposals for the FlexiLink/ Go Too merger and increasing the offer of these services by extending the hours to include the evenings and Saturdays and making the service available to all age groups where there is no alternative or suitable service.

Key points raised by Congleton Town Council in the Flexi-Link Consultation in September 2023 are still relevant:

- a) What is the definition of no alternative or suitable service - there are many areas in Congleton where bus routes do not cover or are too far for the person to walk to the stop – do these areas qualify for Flexi-Link? The definition needs to be made clear.
- b) The Flexi-Link bus is rarely seen in Congleton. We believe residents are not comfortable booking a bus to come to their home, however, if they knew the Flexi-Link service was focused in Congleton on certain days or times, they may well choose to book it or arrange appointments at the hospital on that day/time – increasing the usage of the bus.
- c) According to Cheshire East Council Committee report in 2022/23 there were 26,658 passenger trips using the 10 Flexi-Link vehicles. Only 279 of these were paying customers, listing the total amount taken for the year as £837. Increasing the prices to £2 for concessions and £4 for full fare-payers may be too much too quickly and it would be better to offer reduced fares (half this price) to establishing the service.
- d) It would be useful if group organisers who arrange sessions for people who struggle with transport – eg a mobility class at the Leisure Centre or a luncheon club for people with isolation could book the transport for members of the class. This may enable more people to attend health and wellbeing events designed to aid movement or cut isolation.

- e) The service needs greater promotion. The Town Council is happy to help promote in our area.
- f) The service users should be kept under review. Although we understand the reasons for wanting to open the service to all users who may not have access to buses, people aged over 80, people with a disability or people without alternative means of transport were no-longer able to book because demand for the service outstrips supply.

GENERAL COMMENTS – Improvements to buses in Congleton.

While Cheshire East is reviewing buses, the Town Council would like to bring the following to the attention of Cheshire East

- a) The growth of Congleton Town and the surrounding parishes means many areas of Congleton are not within a 10-minute walk of a bus stop. We would like to see extensions and changes to the local bus services
- b) Extend and improve the round-town services (90,91,92...):
- c) Review routes so they go further into estates (like Henshall Hall and Bath Vale) so no house is more than 500m away
- d) Add a West Heath circular route (which has been lost)
- e) Add new round-town services for new housing estates e.g. off Manchester Road and Back Lane
- f) Add services to industrial estates like Radnor Park and Viking Way to facilitate local employment travel
- g) Add a bus service between the shopping centres in Congleton (Town Centre, Barn Road, West Heath)
- h) Offer more mini-buses aligned with needs e.g. lunch clubs, blood clinics, and on-demand services
- i) Implement connecting services from every part of town to the station without changing buses, to fit with key commuter trains from 7-9am and 5-7pm
- j) Align buses at Macclesfield and Holmes Chapel train stations to link with the last trains back from Manchester
- k) Create day/week/monthly passes that can be used for bus travel, regardless of the company
- l) Invest in tap-in, tap-out technology for travel
- m) Have clear information at the bus stops about the buses servicing that stop
- n) Have clear information about bus timing, ideally real-time information at the stop, but if not well-advertised bus apps with the real-time information.

In a recent survey carried out to better understand bus use in Congleton (completed by 257 people), 81.5% said they would consider using a bus if there was a frequent service within 5 minutes walk of their house. 56% said that a more frequent service would have the biggest impact on them using the bus. 52% said running into the evenings would make them use the bus (this is likely to increase if charging in the car parks is extended to 10pm) The top three reasons for not using the bus was that the bus doesn't go to where they want to go, the buses don't run at the time that they wish to travel or more convenient to use the car.

PLUS ANYTHING ELSE TO BE ADDED VIA THE COMMITTEE



Buses in Congleton

Status and Required Improvements

Congleton Town Council Integrated Transport Working Group

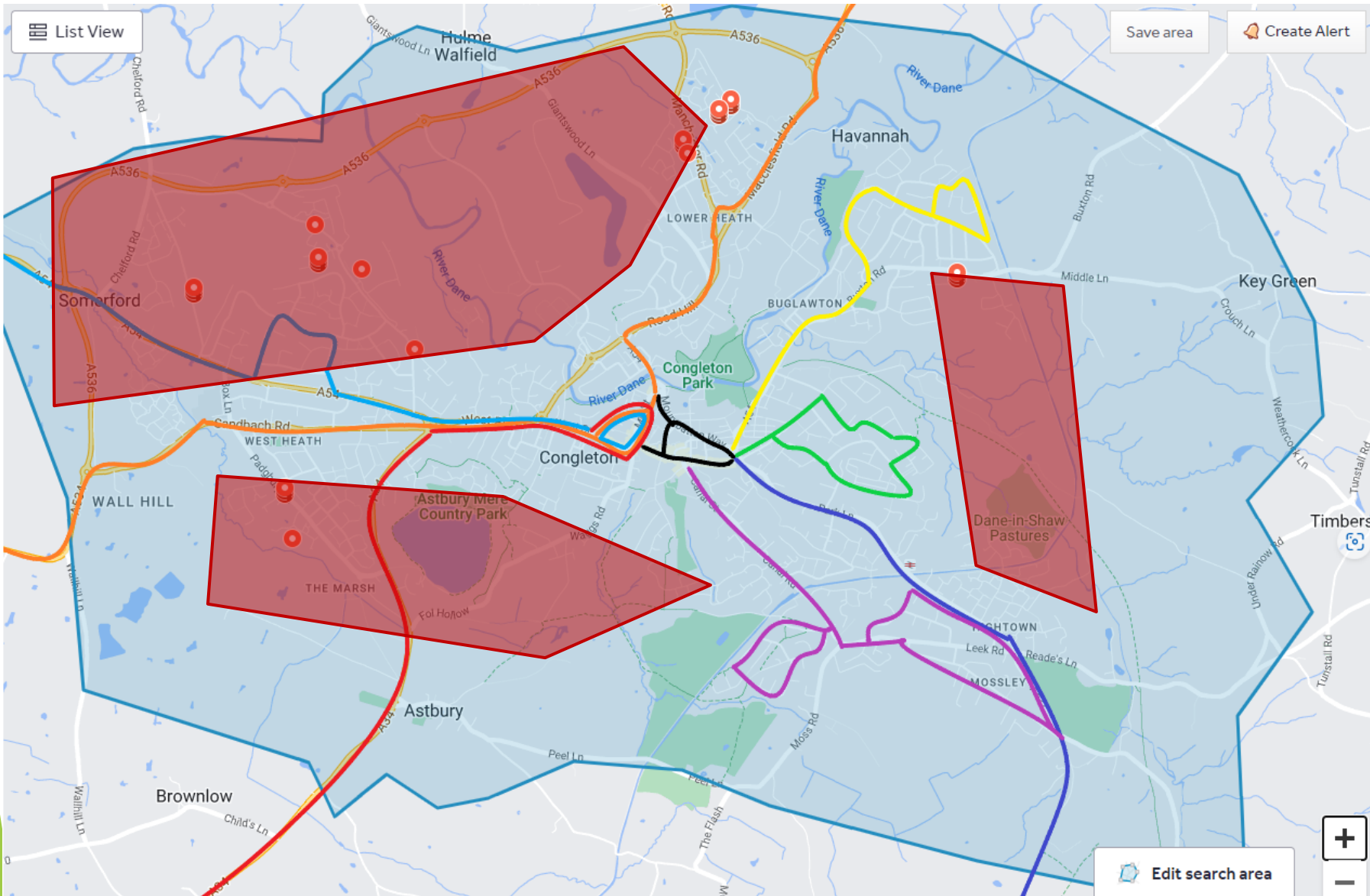
Original - April 2020

Version 2.0 - March 2021

Version 3.0 - October 2023

Most new (and old) housing areas of Congleton have no regular bus service within a 10-minute walk

No regular local bus service



- 38 Crewe-Macc
Mo-Sa Hourly.
- 92 Buglawton
Mo-Sa 30mins
- 91 Mossley
Mo-Sa 30mins
- 90 Bromley
Estate Mo-Sa
30mins
- 42 Middwich
Crewe Mo-Sa
90-120 mins
- 318 Astbury-
Alsager
Mo-Fr 120
mins
- 94 Bidulph -
Newcastle
Mo-Sa Hourly

NONE of Congleton meets the any of the 'Transport for New Homes' Bus Service Standards

All services operate 7 days a week and evenings?	NO
At least one frequent public transport service? (12 minute intervals)	NO
Provision is certain, including in the long term?	NO
All areas of development within easy walking distance (300m) of stops?	NO
Street layout provides unhindered movement of buses?	NO
Stops prominently and conveniently located?	NO
Priority over other traffic provided (including off-site)?	NO
Direct services available to key destinations from the development?	NO
Services well-advertised and/or branded, with easy ticketing?	NO
Services affordable and with discounts? (e.g. for youth, unwaged)	NO

WHY have developers not been compelled to provide good bus infrastructure and is Cheshire East not funding new services to meet these standards in our new housing estates?

Issues with bus services in Congleton

- ▶ Very expensive - e.g. £3 per person return from Mossley to Congleton (much cheaper to drive and park, especially if a couple/family)
- ▶ No evening services (except the number 38)
- ▶ No Sunday services (38 introduced Sunday Service from 9/6/24)
- ▶ No integrated timetables or 'bus app', no digital displays - if you get to a bus-stop you have no way of knowing if a bus is coming
- ▶ No connectivity with commuter trains at Congleton Station (or other stations) from anywhere in town by bus, rail users have to walk or drive
- ▶ No cross-town services e.g. Buglawton to West Heath, without changing buses
- ▶ No services for the new housing estates, or some of the older estates
- ▶ Many bus shelters are broken and dilapidated
- ▶ No connectivity between shopping centres

Congleton - Bus Service Improvements

- ▶ Encourage bus use
 - ▶ Make local buses complimentary for 6 months, then introduce low fares to encourage bus use - e.g. 50p for 'around town' fare
 - ▶ Run a campaign to change behaviour and get people out of their cars and on to buses
 - ▶ All tickets should be cross-company
 - ▶ Have multi-bus 'town hopper' tickets for a day/week/month - low-cost
- ▶ Improve frequency
 - ▶ Between-towns should be at least every 30 minutes
 - ▶ Round-town should be every 15 minutes
 - ▶ All services to run in the evenings and on Sundays
- ▶ Extend and improve the round-town services (90,91,92...):
 - ▶ Review routes so they go further into estates (like Henshall Hall and Bath Vale) so no house is more than 500m away
 - ▶ Add a West Heath circular route (which has been lost)
 - ▶ Add new round-town services for new housing estates e.g. off Manchester Road and Back Lane
 - ▶ Add services to industrial estates like Radnor Park and Viking Way to facilitate local employment travel
 - ▶ Add a bus service between the shopping centres in Congleton (Town Centre, Barn Road, West Heath)
 - ▶ Offer more mini-buses aligned with needs e.g. lunch clubs, blood clinics, and on-demand services
- ▶ Train links
 - ▶ Implement connecting services from every part of town to the station without changing buses, to fit with key commuter trains from 7-9am and 5-7pm
 - ▶ Bus link back from Macclesfield, Holmes Chapel stations to link with last trains back from Manchester
 - ▶ Free bus use with rail ticket
- ▶ Improve customer experience of bus use
 - ▶ Replace broken bus-stops
 - ▶ Add digital displays
 - ▶ Add bike racks/bike storage on buses
 - ▶ Have a local 'bus app' giving all timetables across companies and real-time information