

What can Hope Valley Climate Action learn from Transport for Cornwall Webinar March 6th 2024

Cornwall Council has been a leader in improving rural public transport. They have pioneered integrated transport [bus and rail] under the Transport for Cornwall (TfC) brand

<https://www.transportforcornwall.co.uk/>

Speakers: **Miriam Binszok** - Transport Coordination Service Manager, TfC & **Gemma Hall** - Integrated Network and Partnerships Manager, TfC.

- **Key message – good communication is as important as funding**

Cornwall Council (CC) declared a climate emergency in 2019 and began refreshing its Local Transport Plan (LTP) to focus on modal shift to public transport and behavioural change in order to tackle carbon emissions. Key to integration of public transport was a single, unifying brand for public transport in Cornwall. Key dates on the journey:

2020 An 8-yr contract with Go Cornwall bus operator – previously shorter contracts so 8-yrs was a gamble; couldn't market the contract due to the Covid pandemic

2022 Enhanced Partnership with all operators which was vital for BSIP and delivery of bus fare pilot. GWR & Chamber of Commerce part of the steering group

‘Interoperability’ of tickets any ticket any bus; very confusing beforehand

Bus fare pilot funded by DfT £23.5m

Tap and cap on all services

Joint communications for all operators – timetables/map of all bus routes/info at all bus stops (5,500 owned by TfC) and 300 RTI

2023 £2 fare cap introduced by central government

Challenges

- Rural area, dispersed population
- Seasonal population change from 500k residents to twice that number in holidays
- High cost of bus travel
- TfC subsidising 50% of services at cost of £12m/year but need a sustainable network throughout the year, so tendered services have to step in for local communities
- Circa 13,000 scholars to transport daily on 100 routes – integrated 150 school services with the local bus network. CC purchases season tickets or pay the daily rate.
- Electronic communications not accessible to all, with poor mobile signal in many areas
- Road closures 500/yr leading to diversionary routes. Buses not considered priority even by highways
- Tree strikes at cost of £100k to operators
- Must make sure don't fall off a cliff when funding ends

Overcoming challenges

- ‘Interoperability’ of tickets any ticket any bus; very confusing beforehand

- Bus Fares Pilot & £2 fare cap scheme – increased patronage
- Shared corridors and no duplication through expert network planning
- Improved onward connections and integration; reliability is essential – customer must trust the services. Have seen passenger satisfaction go from 57% to 80% with a 20% increase in patronage. Not sure yet if this is modal shift or regular bus users increasing use
- Community Transport Operators very important for plugging the gaps; funded by CC and Cornwall bus gave ticket machines and advice on managing routes.
- Integration of bus and rail and rail digitisation – pay as you go ticketing since Nov 2023 covers mid-Cornwall to Lands End and branch line, by early 2025 whole network covered. But doesn't cover all Network Rail services, only GWR [not Cross Country]
- Joint Communications see below
- Collaboration with all operators e.g. over road closures and diversions; now using a mapping system for tree strikes so can proactively rather than reactively address them
- Enhanced partnership was right thing for Cornwall at the time. Need to identify peculiarities and priorities for the area and work in partnership as a collective, with passengers at the heart of the deal. Franchising was explored but was too expensive, the business case did not stack up. Learning from others such as Norfolk and Manchester; will look carefully at SYMCA franchising proposal; and wait for direction from (new) Government.
- Huge cash investment (£23.5m on the pilot, small amount from BSIP, £3.9m on capital and £4m on revenue £12m on subsidies) – low fares increased patronage by 20%; what about wider benefits?

Joint Communications

- One Timetable Book covering all operators bus and rail
- Network Map covering all routes & service
- Bus Station Information – keep it simple
- TfC Website – are in process of upgrading this with a new 'one stop shop' app to access bus tracking and timetables for buses and rail services
- TfC branding on whole fleet - New livery 194 red buses with e ticketing and wifi
- Roadside information
- Presence at events/shows to promote the services
- Comms to customers for network changes – all released at the same time and same info through operators
- Presence at All Member Briefings with operators present – ahead and after every network change so can ask questions
- MoU with operators to underpin all of the above and ensure funding
- Marketing contract with ITP & Diva

Anne Robinson

6th March 2024

Key points for HVCA/Hope Valley

- Importance of branding and communications
- Raise the ambition as to what's possible
- Integration of services; partnership with operators

- Include community transport and any school services
- Work on network planning and reliability
- Develop our partnership with TfGM and SY
- Get customer feedback and measure impact
- Certainty of adequate funding over a consistent time frame