

INTALINK ENHANCED PARTNERSHIP PLAN AND SCHEME



**Passenger Transport Unit
Growth and Environment**



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Part A: Enhanced Partnership Plan (1 April 2020 – 31 March 2030)

1. Definitions

In this Enhanced Partnership Plan and any Schemes made pursuant to it, the following capitalised terms shall have the meanings ascribed to them below:

1985 Act	Transport Act 1985
2000 Act	Transport Act 2000
2017 Act	Bus Services Act 2017
Bus Operators (or Operators)	All Large Operators, Medium Operators and Small Operators running Qualifying Bus Services taken collectively.
County Council	Hertfordshire County Council.
Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variation	This comprises either: (a) A formal variation of the relevant Enhanced Partnership Scheme as a result of the voting mechanism set out in section 7.1. or (b) An agreement signed by all relevant parties drawn up as a result of discussions between one or more Operators and the County Council, where both sides agree to perform agreed actions specified such agreement, as set out in section 7.3 (“Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variation Agreement”). Each of which will then constitute a formal variation of the relevant scheme for the purposes of s.138E(1) of the 2000 Act.
Facilities	Those facilities referred to in Part B, sections 8 and/or 9 which shall be deemed such for the purposes of s.138D(1) of the 2000 Act.
Intalink Board	The committee of selected Hertfordshire Bus Operator representatives, County Council representatives and district or borough council representatives responsible for considering recommendations put forward by the Intalink Forum and making decisions including specific Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variations using the mechanism in section 7.1.
Intalink Enhanced Partnership (or Enhanced Partnership)	The Enhanced Partnership covering the geographic extent of the administrative boundary of the county of Hertfordshire shown for identification purposes only edged red on the plan at Figure 1.
Intalink Forum	The committee of all Hertfordshire Bus Operators, the County Council, district and borough councils, responsible for considering all issues affecting the Intalink Enhanced Partnership, and making recommendations to the Intalink Board in line with the Intalink Enhanced Partnership governance arrangements.

Large, Medium or Small Operator	Any single Bus Operator with registered mileage representing the following proportions of total registered mileage for Qualifying Bus Services: • Large: equal to or greater than 10% • Medium: equal to or greater than 2.5%, but less than 10% • Small: less than 2.5%. For the avoidance of doubt, a list of Large, Medium and Small Operators will be published at the start of each County Council financial year.
Measures	Those measures referred to in Part B, sections 8 and/or 9 which shall be deemed as such for the purposes of s.138D(2) of the 2000 Act.
Non-qualifying Bus Service	Services excluded from classification as Qualifying Bus Services.
Qualifying Bus Service	A registered local bus service with one or more stopping place within the geographical area of the Enhanced Partnership, with the exception of: • Any schools or works registered local bus service not eligible for Bus Service Operators Grant • Any cross-boundary registered local bus service with less than 10% of its registered mileage within the Enhanced Partnership area • Any services operated under section 22 of the 1985 Act • Any registered local bus service which is an excursion or tour • Any other registered local bus service that the Operators (through the Intalink Board voting mechanism in section 7.1) and County Council decide should be excluded from all or specific requirements of the Enhanced Partnership Scheme. For the avoidance of doubt, a list of Qualifying Bus Services will be published at the start of each County Council financial year.
Requirements	Those requirements placed upon Bus Operators identified as such within Part B, sections 8 and/or 9 which shall be deemed as such for the purposes of s.138C 2017 Act.
Traffic Commissioner Powers	'Relevant registration functions' of Traffic Commissioners to the extent that they relate to a 'relevant service' both within the meanings given to them under section 6G(10) of the 1985 Act.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 The County Council and the majority of Bus Operators in Hertfordshire have been members of a voluntary quality partnership, Intalink, for 20 years. This partnership has led to various achievements, including multi-operator ticketing and extensive roadside publicity covering almost all bus stops in the county, some of which also have real time passenger information displays utilising data from Bus Operators' systems.

Following new powers introduced by the 2000 Act (as amended by the 2017 Act), the County Council considers the extension of the partnership into an Enhanced Partnership will offer benefits to the travelling public and wider community which could not be achieved with a voluntary arrangement. The principal objectives will be those contained in the County Council's draft Intalink Bus Strategy, in support of its Local Transport Plan 4 (adopted May 2018), as follows:

- Prioritising bus and coach services in traffic
- Improving the image of bus travel
- Upgrading bus infrastructure
- Closer integration of the bus network
- Smarter use of data and information.

The Intalink Enhanced Partnership will supersede the existing voluntary partnership and acquire substantially greater legal status. Benefits include the enhancement of quality standards and access to funding for investment in public transport-related projects and activities which might not otherwise be available.

The Intalink Bus Strategy, taken together with the Intalink Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme, will make a substantial contribution to the implementation of Local Transport Plan 4 policies. It will bring benefits to passengers using local bus services in Hertfordshire by improving the quality and efficiency of the public transport network and support the efficient use of the road network and the delivery of sustainable growth, limiting the impacts of additional traffic congestion and air pollution.

2.2 Drawing on the County Council's draft Intalink Bus Strategy and Local Transport Plan 4, this document fulfils the statutory requirements of an Enhanced Partnership as set out in the 2000 Act (as amended), including:

- A map of the geographical area it covers
- All the relevant factors that the parties consider will affect, or have the potential to affect, the local bus market over the life of the plan
- A summary of any available information on passengers' experiences of using bus services in the area and the priorities of users and non-users for improving them
- A summary of any available data on trends in bus journey speeds and the impact of congestion on local bus services
- What outcomes need to be delivered to improve local bus services in the plan area
- What overall interventions the partnership believes need to be taken to deliver those outcomes.

2.3 The Competitions and Markets Authority has reviewed this Intalink Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme and confirmed that it is satisfied that the Competition Test, as set out in Schedule 10 of the Transport Act 2000, is met.

3. Extent of the Intalink Enhanced Partnership

- 3.1 Both the Intalink Enhanced Partnership Plan and Enhanced Partnership Scheme 1 are proposed to extend throughout the full administrative county of Hertfordshire within its boundary (Figure 1). Any changes to this boundary will represent an Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variation, to be agreed as per section 7.1.

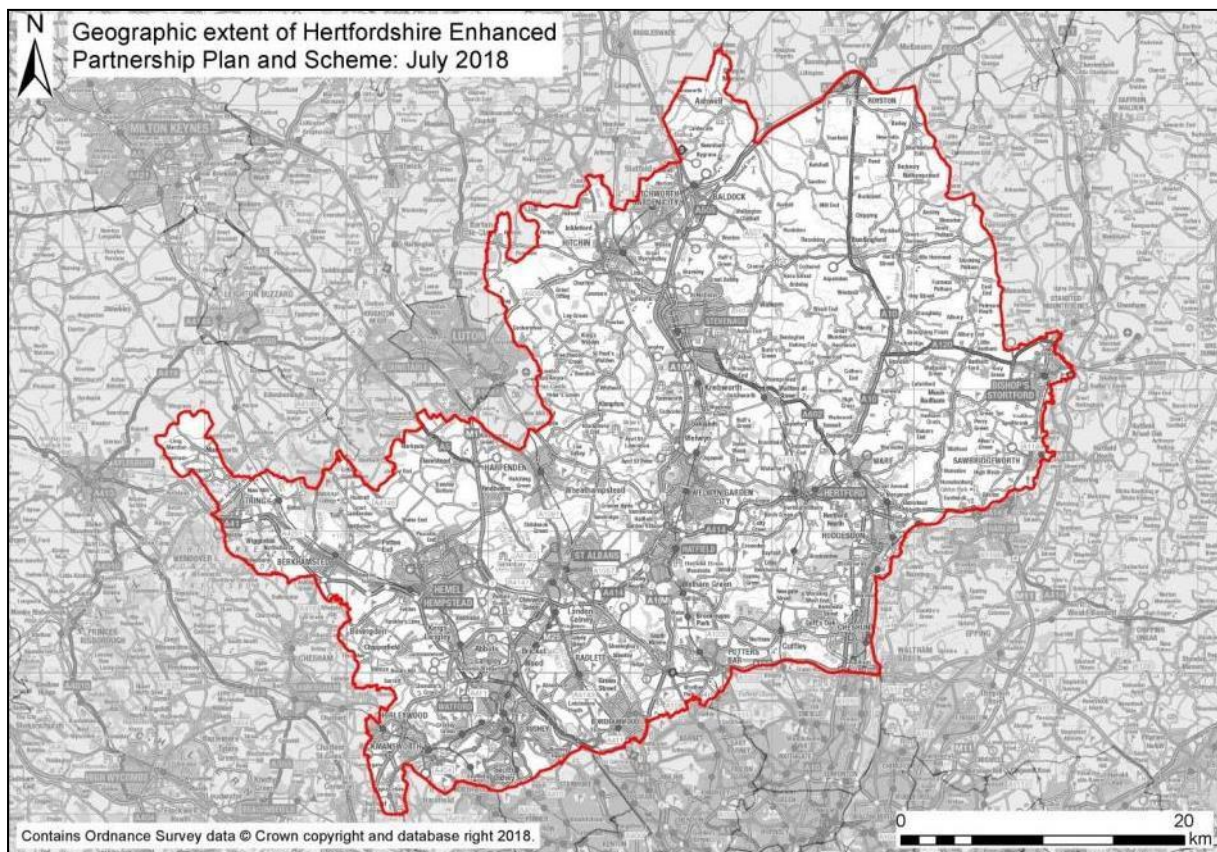


Figure 1: Geographic extent of the Intalink Enhanced Partnership

- 3.2 The County Council liaises with neighbouring authorities regularly to discuss cross-boundary bus issues. An Enhanced Partnership covering part or all of adjacent local authorities has been considered but will not be taken forward at this time. However, the partnership may consider this desirable in the future, for example if a neighbouring authority is proposing an Enhanced Partnership or in relation to cross-boundary bus services or development, and the partnership would wish to avoid a patchwork of inconsistent standards. Neighbouring authorities wishing to engage with the Intalink Enhanced Partnership would do so initially on a similar non-statutory basis as the Hertfordshire district and borough councils through the Intalink Forum.
- 3.3 This Enhanced Partnership Plan will be in place for 10 years from adoption (1 April 2020 to 31 March 2030). Enhanced Partnership Scheme 1 will be in place for 5 years from adoption (1 April 2020 to 31 March 2025). A full review of the effectiveness of the Enhanced Partnership Plan (including its extent, objectives and partnership governance) and Scheme 1 (including measures and facilities provided, and requirements imposed) and compliance of

both with competition legislation will take place during the 12 months prior to 31 March 2025, recommending changes to the Enhanced Partnership Plan and details of an Enhanced Partnership Scheme 2 for adoption from 1 April 2025 using the mechanism in section 7.1.

4. Bus network overview

- 4.1 The County Council has sought to consider its Local Transport Plan 4, Intalink Bus Strategy and accompanying Intalink Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme, all relevant factors that it and those parties consulted considered will affect, or have the potential to affect, the local bus market over the life of these plans.

This has included a review of relevant policies including those which informed LTP4 development (see LTP4 figure 2.2) and the policies of LTP4 itself, in particular Policy 6 “Accessibility” and Policy 9 “Buses”). The County Council also considered the bus registration information it manages in its policy development. In summary these factors are:

- Congestion and the impact of significant planned housing growth and travel demand, and its relationship with nationally declining bus usage
- The statutory framework and de-regulated bus market in England outside London, with the involvement of many Operators and authorities in commercially operated and contracted bus services
- Hertfordshire County Council’s Local Transport Plan 4 policies and the existing voluntary Intalink Quality Partnership
- New mobility services, technology and air quality.

- 4.2 Although the County Council and Bus Operators strive to engage with bus passengers (particularly through bus user groups), comprehensive passenger surveys have not been carried out in recent times in Hertfordshire. Bus passengers and user groups have been consulted during preparation of and throughout implementation (including during the reviews mentioned in 3.3) of the Enhanced Partnership. Passenger surveys including participation in the national Transport Focus annual bus user survey, and monitoring data associated with the Intalink Bus Strategy and Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme, will be used to evaluate the success of the partnership as it is implemented to inform reviews. It will also be necessary to further consult the public, in line with usual procedures, on specific proposals which are taken forward (for example, changes to highway infrastructure) in accordance with these proposals.

- 4.3 Amongst other factors, bus passengers particularly suffer from the effects of traffic congestion due to the inability of buses to use alternative routes on an ad hoc basis, because of the bus service registration system (except in special cases where flexible routing is specified). National research demonstrates a direct correlation between rising congestion and falling patronage, and the County Council’s Traffic and Transport Data Report 2018 demonstrates evidence of existing levels of traffic congestion. At present limited evidence of the impacts of congestion on bus patronage exists locally but will be gathered through the work of the partnership. In Hertfordshire, there is a significant population and development

growth means traffic is forecast to grow by 18% by 2031 on already congested roads (Figure 2). Average morning peak traffic speeds in Hertfordshire's urban areas are around 15 miles per hour, and as low as 13 miles per hour in some places, with bus speeds generally being lower than this. Worse still is the impact of daily or hourly variability in journey times, especially in areas affected by incidents on nearby motorways and major roads, making it difficult to plan and maintain achievable timetables.

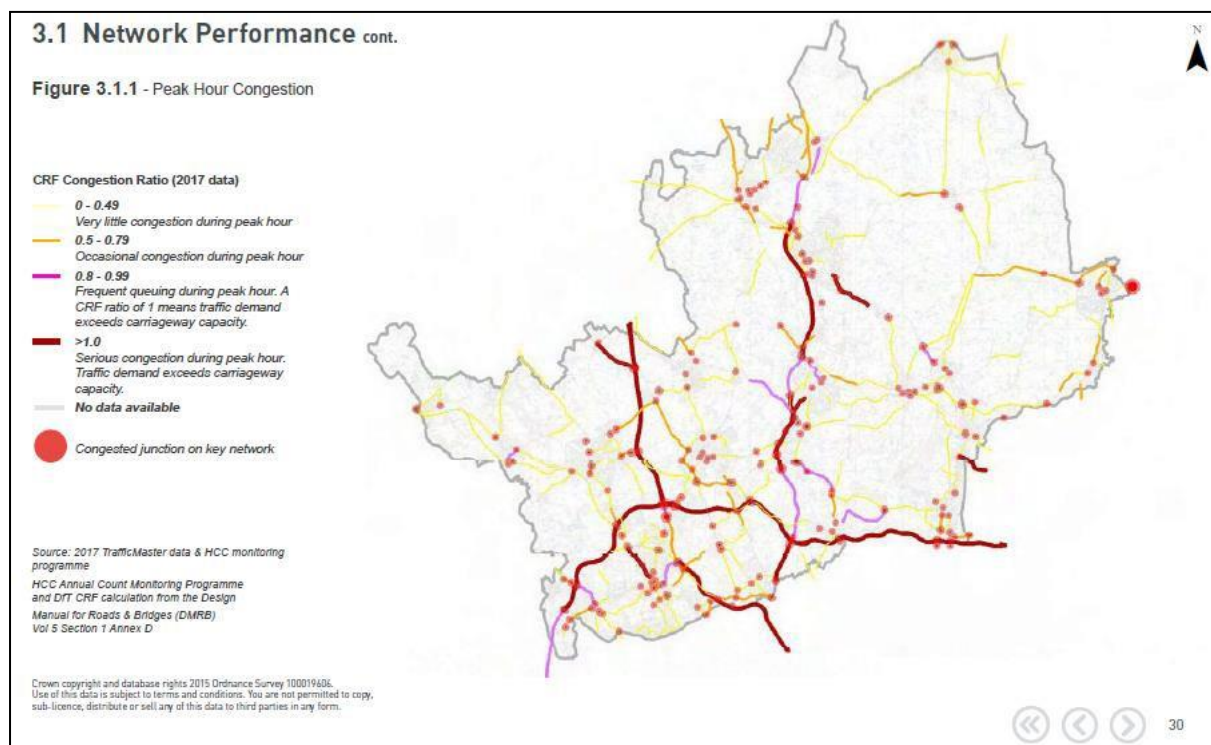


Figure 2: Congestion on the county's major roads¹

- 4.4 Increased congestion results in reduced reliability and punctuality, and increased journey times require increased resources to maintain a given frequency, with associated costs. Both outcomes reduce the profitability of services and undermine Bus Operators' ability to run routes effectively and invest in improvements in the level of service provided to passengers. Recent national research indicates a direct correlation between bus operating speeds and usage, suggesting with no bus priority investment, a 10% decrease in speed reduces usage by at least 8 to 10%².
- 4.5 Roadworks have a similar effect on the road network to general traffic congestion in that they impede the flow of traffic and increase bus journey times, also impacting service reliability and punctuality. Where these are planned passengers and Operators can be forewarned and appropriate temporary arrangements established.
- 4.6 In the view of the County Council, the above evidence, taken together with the Intalink Bus Strategy objectives, makes a compelling case for strengthening the existing voluntary Intalink Quality Partnership. Using statutory Enhanced Partnership powers, the County

¹ Hertfordshire County Council "Traffic and Transport Data Report", 2018

² Greener Journeys "Impact of congestion on bus passengers", 2016

Council and the Bus Operators will work together to identify and implement schemes designed to reduce journey times and increase reliability, as well as undertake other activity to increase the attractiveness of local bus services.

- 4.7 These initiatives are intended to stabilise and grow the market for commercial bus services in Hertfordshire by encouraging modal shift from the private car. It will not be acceptable in environmental, social or economic terms to sustain the substantial planned population growth in Hertfordshire through continued car reliance. Increased use of the bus network will contribute significantly to mitigate and reduce this effect.

5. **Intalink Enhanced Partnership Plan**

- 5.1 The Intalink Enhanced Partnership Plan has the following objectives, which align with the Intalink Bus Strategy (Table 1), and support the County Council's Local Transport Plan 4.

Table 1: Intalink Enhanced Partnership Plan objectives

Intalink Bus Strategy Objectives	Approach
1. Prioritising bus and coach services in traffic	a) Address bottlenecks impacting services (quick wins) b) Identify opportunities for bus priority packages (longer term interventions) c) Mitigate the impact of roadworks
2. Improving the image of bus travel	a) Raise and enforce quality standards b) Develop and implement a five-year marketing plan c) Take a consistent branding approach
3. Upgrading bus infrastructure	a) Co-ordinate infrastructure improvements along core corridors b) Protect and enhance bus interchange capacity
4. Closer integration of the bus network	a) Review the range of multi-operator tickets and evaluate smart ticketing products to meet evolving passenger requirements b) Encourage co-operation between the local authorities, Bus Operators and other transport providers c) Co-ordinate publicity and information
5. Smarter use of data and information	a) Expand real time information b) Upgrade website and app c) Share development planning data d) Pilot emerging technologies

The objectives and approach of the Intalink Bus Strategy have been selected to achieve the following outcomes for passengers:

- Objective 1 will reduce bus journey times and improve reliability, making services more operationally efficient
- Objective 2 will make the network more attractive, with higher standards and marketing to a wider audience
- Objective 3 will focus on a tangible improvement in accessibility to bus services with

- quality infrastructure to enable passengers to more easily use them
- Objective 4 will make the network more coherent and simpler to use, and ensure that partnership activity is co-ordinated
- Objective 5 will use modern technology to make the bus network easier and more attractive to use and use evidence to inform partnership decisions.

5.2 Funding arrangements

The Enhanced Partnership will draw on multiple funding sources to deliver the desired outcomes of the Enhanced Partnership Scheme:

- County Council capital funding
- County Council revenue funding
- Developer contributions
- Reinvestment of operator revenue generated by schemes
- Other external funding opportunities.

6. **Enhanced Partnership governance arrangements**

For decision-making purposes, the Intalink Enhanced Partnership will be governed by two primary bodies:

- a) Intalink Forum – in which all Operators will be entitled to participate and be invited, although attendance by individual Operators is voluntary
- b) Intalink Board – established by the Enhanced Partnership with the mandate to take decisions using an Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variation mechanism (section 7.1) on issues put to them by the Intalink Forum, and other issues identified as being relevant to partnership delivery.

6.1 Intalink Forum

The Intalink Forum will provide opportunities for discussing issues of all kinds affecting the Hertfordshire bus network, consulting with and building consensus across the various stakeholders and making recommendations for decisions to the Intalink Board.

Membership of the Intalink Forum will comprise the following:

- All Bus Operators running Qualifying Bus Services
- Hertfordshire County Council (Passenger Transport and Highways)
- All Hertfordshire district and borough councils
- All Hertfordshire train operating companies.

In addition, from time to time other external organisations may be invited to join the Intalink Forum on an advisory basis for fixed periods to provide specialist expertise. From time to time (not more than once per financial year) a wider conference of all relevant parties, including representatives of organisations such as bus user groups, businesses and the Local Enterprise Partnership, in addition to Intalink Forum members may be invited to review and discuss the progress of and future opportunities for the partnership.

Intalink Forum Annual General Meeting (AGM):

The final Intalink Forum meeting of each financial year will be the designated Intalink Forum AGM. All Operators will be invited to self-nominate or nominate other willing Operators for Intalink Board membership, to represent themselves and all other Operators in their category, ahead of the Intalink Forum AGM. A ballot will be organised by the County Council at the Annual General Meeting to select Operators' preferred Intalink Board representatives (section 6.2).

Meeting arrangements:

Intalink Forum meetings will take place not less than twice per year, normally six calendar weeks before each Intalink Board meeting. Intalink Forum meetings will be arranged, chaired and minutes taken by the County Council and normally held at County Hall. Meeting length will vary according to agenda content but ordinarily expected to be one to two hours.

Agendas and meeting papers (including a copy of minutes and outcomes of decisions taken at the previous Intalink Board) will be circulated by the County Council no less than one week in advance of each meeting, and draft minutes circulated no more than two weeks after each meeting. Draft minutes will be approved at the next Intalink Forum meeting.

6.2 Intalink Board

The Intalink Board will be the decision-making body of the Intalink Enhanced Partnership.

Certain decisions of the Intalink Board may constitute Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variations pursuant to section 7.1 hereof if the requirements therein are met. Membership of the Intalink Board will comprise the following representatives:

- 2x Large Operators (voting)
- 2x Medium Operators (voting)
- 2x Small Operators (voting)
- 2x Hertfordshire County Council (1 each from Passenger Transport and Highways) (decision veto)
- 2x Hertfordshire district or borough councils within Hertfordshire (non-voting)

Board meetings will require a quorum of four Operator representatives, with a minimum of one per category (Large/Medium/Small) and one County Council representative from each of

the departments mentioned. An Operator representative may, if necessary, arrange for an alternate or deputy from the same category to participate with voting rights. District or borough council representatives will rotate in relation to the relevance of agenda items but will not be entitled to Intalink Board voting rights.

Operator representative selection:

Operators representing each of the categories of Operator membership above will be invited to self-nominate or nominate other willing Operators in writing to the County Council's Passenger Transport Unit prior to each Intalink Forum AGM. Where there are more than two nominees for any single category, all Bus Operators in the same category will be given the opportunity to vote by secret ballot undertaken among those present at the Intalink Forum AGM for a preferred representative. Voting will be on the basis of one vote per Operator (where Operators are part of the same holding company or group, they will only be entitled to one vote between them). Operator representatives will be reselected on an annual basis.

The voting procedure for membership selection will be a simple majority and be administered by the County Council. Where there is a tie, a run-off vote will take place between the leading tied Operators.

In the event that an Intalink Forum AGM ballot fails to select Operator representatives for one or more Operator category, the default Operator objection mechanism set out in the Enhanced Partnerships and Schemes (Objections) Regulations 2018 will be used to determine the views of Operators in that category for the purposes of Intalink Board votes (in terms of objection or otherwise to the proposals) set out in section 7.1.

Role of Intalink Board members:

Operator representatives will be acting on behalf of all Operators in that category, not on behalf of their own company alone. Representatives will be responsible for ensuring attendance at all Intalink Board meetings in that year, and ensure they have:

- (a) fully reviewed and understood all meeting papers in advance of attendance
- (b) the required mandate from the Operators they represent.

Intalink Board decision making:

Decisions of the Intalink Board will be made by way of a vote through a show of hands. Unless stated otherwise in this document, decisions will be passed by way of a simple majority of all members of the Intalink Board entitled to vote (on a one Operator representative, one vote basis). Operator representatives not exercising their vote will be deemed to be voted in favour of the proposal.

Operators will be entitled to make known their concerns in writing to the County Council's Passenger Transport Unit if they object to a particular vote of the Intalink Board. The County

Council will review the circumstances and consider whether these are such that use of its veto is required as provided below.

County Council veto:

These controls ensure that the voting system does not allow an individual Operator to influence the Enhanced Partnership to its own commercial benefit or to harm competitors; there is no opportunity for a group of Operators to vote in a coordinated manner to mutual benefit on a sustained basis; there is no discrimination between Operators; and that actual or potential competition, entry to new services and by new Operators, or innovation, is not inhibited. The County Council may, in exceptional circumstances, exercise a veto over Intalink Board decisions which it may reasonably believe or suspect as having anti-competitive implications or being otherwise significantly against the public interest.

Meeting observers:

Any other Bus Operator, County Council and district and borough council representatives will be able to attend the Intalink Board meetings as observers but will not have the right to vote. Observers may be invited to make comments or ask questions of the Intalink Board at the Chair's discretion or invited to defer these until the next Intalink Forum meeting.

Meeting arrangements:

Intalink Board meetings will take place not less than twice per year at regular intervals between each Intalink Forum meeting, with provision for additional meetings as required to take decisions which in the opinion of the Chair cannot be deferred to a scheduled meeting, provided that a quorum can be achieved, with not less than one week's notice being given. Meetings will be arranged, chaired and minutes taken by the County Council and will normally be held at County Hall. Meeting length will vary according to agenda content but ordinarily be one to two hours.

Agendas and meeting papers will be circulated to all Board members no less than one week in advance of each meeting date, and draft minutes circulated no more than two weeks after each meeting. Copies will also be distributed to all Intalink Forum members so any issues or concerns can be discussed with the relevant Operator representative, to be raised at the Intalink Board meeting. Draft minutes will be approved at the next Intalink Board meeting.

6.3 Enforcement

Where the County Council has delegated to it Traffic Commissioner Powers, the following arrangements will apply to relevant local bus service registrations.

If a Bus Operator should fail to observe or perform any of the Requirements of this agreement (specifically the area-wide Requirements for branding, participation in ticketing schemes in section 8 or a reciprocal Requirement agreed through an Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variation Agreement) or meet the Punctuality and Reliability standards, to the reasonable satisfaction of the County Council, then the County Council shall be entitled to

serve a written warning notice on the Bus Operator. The warning notice will detail the failure to observe or perform the Requirements or Punctuality or Reliability standards in question with sufficient detail as the Bus Operator may require to enable it to understand and identify the alleged failure(s) (a 'Warning Notice'). The County Council may also, at its discretion, invite the Operator to participate in discussions about any specified failures, before a Warning Notice is issued.

In the event that a Warning Notice is served on a Bus Operator which, in the opinion of the Bus Operator (acting reasonably) is factually inaccurate, is unfair or unreasonable, or has been issued in error, the Bus Operator shall be entitled to provide evidence to support their claims. The Operator may also request a face-to-face meeting with the relevant representatives of the County Council to discuss the evidence and express its concerns in person. The parties shall meet as soon as reasonably practicable at a mutually convenient location and discuss the Warning Notice and the Bus Operator's concerns in good faith. In the event that the County Council is of the view that the Bus Operator's concerns are valid, it shall withdraw and cancel the Warning Notice with immediate effect. Such withdrawn and cancelled Warning Notice shall not be deemed a valid Warning Notice for the purpose of calculating the number of Warning Notices issued against a Bus Operator as below.

The Warning Notice shall state on its face that it is a Warning Notice, and shall set out the measures which the County Council requires the Bus Operator to take (acting reasonably) to ensure that the Requirement(s) or Punctuality or Reliability standards are met, that they do not occur again, and the reasonable timescales within which the Bus Operator is to effect such measures. The Bus Operator shall use all reasonable endeavours to comply with the terms of the Warning Notice. In the event that the County Council serves more than three Warning Notices on a single Bus Operator within any continuous twelve month period, or the Bus Operator fails to remedy a Warning Notice within the specified timescales without reasonable excuse, the County Council shall, subject first to the outcome of the statutory appeals process available to the Bus Operator if engaged, be entitled to cancel the local bus service registration.

In arriving at a decision regarding the issuing of a Warning Notice or cancelling a bus service registration, the County Council will take into account the effects of any agreed scheme or improvement which was anticipated to have a beneficial effect on the Bus Operator's operations, but which has not been delivered or materialised, to the extent that the delivery of such scheme or improvement was outside the Bus Operator's control.

6.4 Implications for small and medium sized operators

Given the variety of bus operators involved (in terms of market share, fleet size, company turnover and structure), it is important to ensure that the effects of the partnership do not unduly impact upon smaller operators' ability to engage or to comply with requirements.

The Intalink Board will therefore allocate operator votes based on a small, medium or large market share, measured as a proportion of total registered mileage. In addition, Bus Operator Requirements will not be placed upon certain categories of service (Non-qualifying Services), which represent many smaller operators' main commercial interests.

Part B: Enhanced Partnership Scheme 2 (2026-2030)

7. Scheme variation

7.1 Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variations

Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variations to Scheme2 described in section 8 will be subject to a bespoke voting mechanism as set out in section 7.1.

The following process (Figure 4) will be used to adopt Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variations in place of the default objection mechanism that is required to be used when the Enhanced Partnership Plan and Scheme is made under s.138G of the 2000 Act.

Any Enhanced Partnership Variation requires both of the following conditions to be met:

- A simple majority vote of the Intalink Board in favour of the same; and
- County Council veto on the Intalink Board has not been invoked in response to such a vote.

As above, if an Operator representative for one or more Operator category has not been selected, the votes of that/those categories will be determined using the default Operator objection mechanism, specified by the Enhanced Partnership Plans and Schemes (Objections) Regulations 2018.

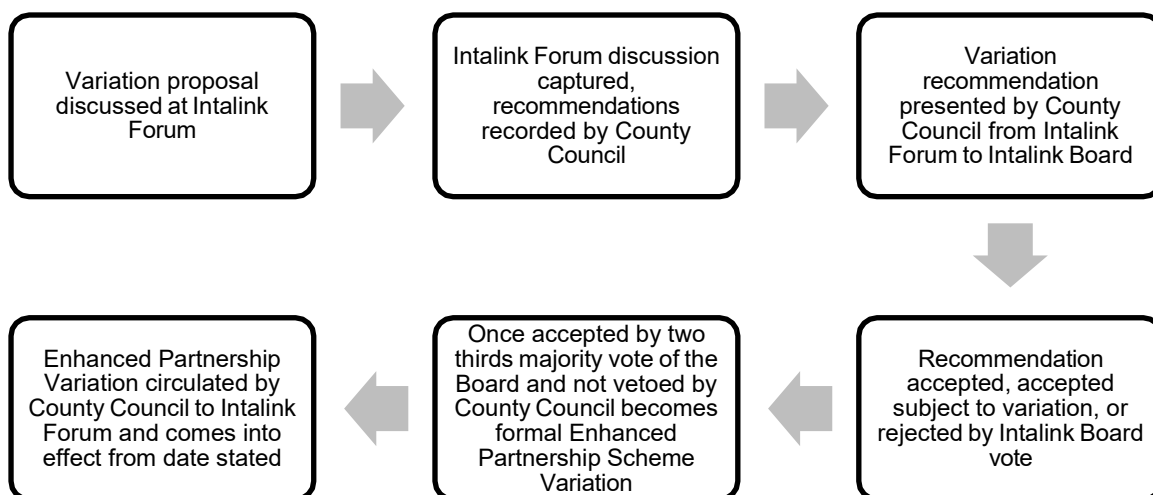


Figure 4: Process of Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variation (for section 8)

This process will also be the normal process for making decisions on behalf of the partnership which do not constitute formal Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variations.

In the event that a number of Operators which would trigger the default Operator objection mechanism (as set out in the Enhanced Partnerships and Schemes (Objections) Regulations 2018 as may be varied from time to time) raises concerns in writing to a minimum of one subsequent Intalink Board meeting about a previous decision of the Intalink

Board, the decision making process for Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variations will revert to the default Operator objection mechanism contained in those regulations to review that decision and as appropriate for future decision making purposes.

7.2 Enhanced Partnership Scheme revocation or other variations

The Intalink Board will review the governance arrangements of the Enhanced Partnership following the first 12 months of operation, and may suggest variations for adoption using the section 7.1 process on the following matters:

- Definition of Large, Medium and Small Operators
- Processes in sections 7.1 and 7.3 for Enhanced Partnership Variations
- Intalink Board structure and Operator representation

A summary of monitoring measures for all elements of the Enhanced Partnership Scheme will be reported by the Intalink Board to the Intalink AGM at the end of each financial year. If the Intalink AGM considers that any elements of any Enhanced Partnership Scheme do not meet the defined outcomes of the relevant Enhanced Partnership Scheme, recommendations will be made to the Intalink Board for action to address them. The Intalink Board must consider these recommendations and use the voting mechanism defined in section 7.1 to determine whether to make formal variations of a defined Enhanced Partnership Scheme to address these recommendations.

In accordance with the section 7.1 process, should a variation be recommended, which may pose conflict with competition legislation, the County Council will invoke its veto in response to such a vote.

In the event that the Intalink Board recommends through a section 7.1 vote that appropriate action would be to revoke the Enhanced Partnership, the default Operator objection mechanism set out in the Enhanced Partnerships and Schemes (Objections) Regulations 2018 may be varied from time to time will be used to determine if that course of action should proceed.

7.3 Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variations (for bus priority Facilities and reciprocal Requirements)

As outlined below (Figure 5) bus priority feasibility studies will be undertaken by the County Council to identify areas or corridors where investment by the County Council could help the overall performance of the bus services operating on routes serving those areas or corridors. It is vital that these studies provide outputs that assist Bus Operators with reciprocal investment decisions on those routes. Operators will therefore set out the required outputs for each scheme that will assist them with an investment decision.

The bus priority Facilities identified by the bus priority feasibility studies, and reciprocal Operator investments through Bus Operator Requirements will be agreed on a case-by-case basis (for the avoidance of doubt those in section 9). The Intalink Board will annually review the portfolio of identified schemes in order to undertake a ranking process for future schemes to inform the County Council's prioritisation for scheme delivery.

Once the package of investment (both bus priority Facilities and reciprocal Requirements) is agreed between County Council and the Bus Operators, an Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variation Agreement will be signed by the parties concerned. This agreement, once signed, will represent a statutory variation of the relevant Enhanced Partnership scheme under s.138E of the 2000 Act.

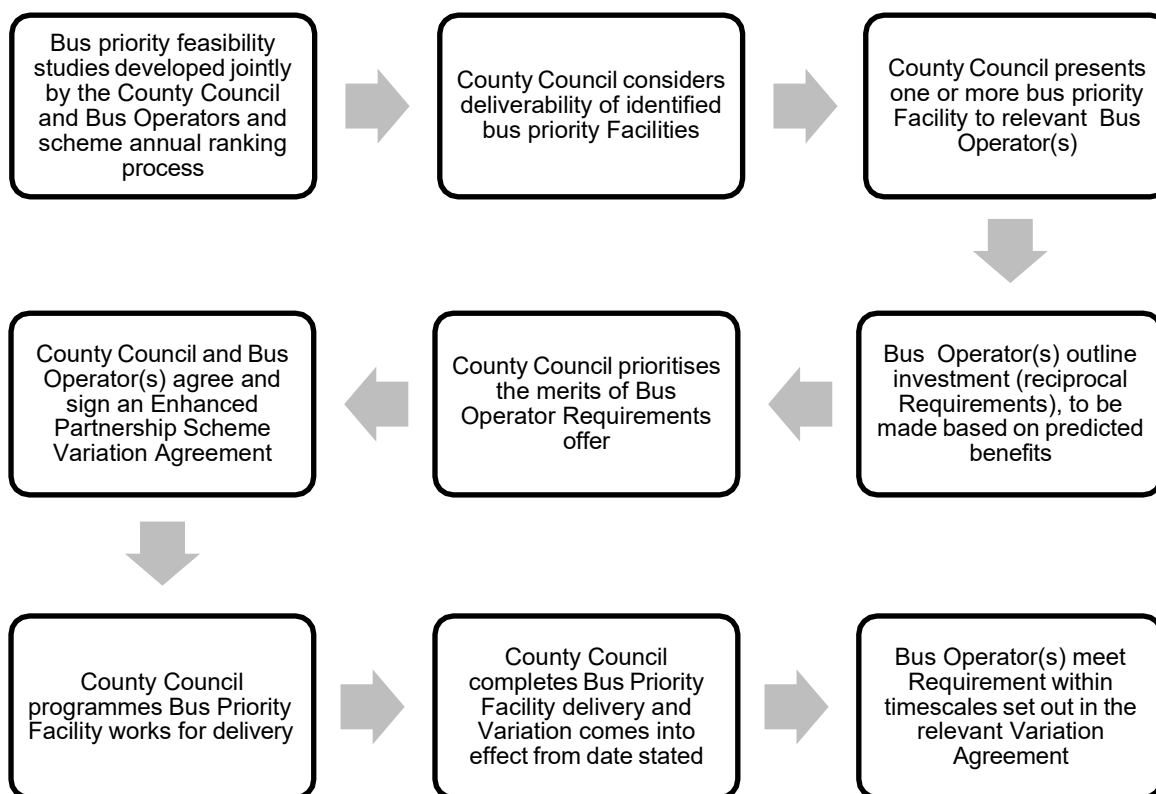


Figure 5: Process of Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variation (for section 9 bus priority Facilities and reciprocal Requirements)

7.4 Any other variation proposals

For the avoidance of doubt, any other variation proposals not covered in 7.1, 7.2 or 7.3 will follow the default Operator objection mechanism set out in the Enhanced Partnerships and Schemes (Objections) Regulations 2018 as may be varied from time to time, to determine if that course of action should proceed.

8. Scheme 2, Measures, Requirements and Responsibilities

The County Council's enforcement approach for area-wide Operator Requirements is set out in section 6.3.

Reliability and Punctuality

These targets have been updated to aspirational targets that can be adhered to. Recording and monitoring the percentage of buses that turn up and depart on time.

The HCC enforcement team will record data across different locations spread out across the county to cover majority of routes, across commercial and contracted services. (5,000-10,000 recordings per year).

Monitor:

Date	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
% of Reliability and Punctuality	85	85	85-90	90	90-95

Real Time Information

We want to deliver “live” real time information to Hertfordshire’s residents. This will enable bus users to gauge when they can expect their next bus on information screens for a better customer experience. To deliver this we need to gain good quality data to produce “live” real time information.

Operators will need to agree to provide the “live” information to feed into the real time information screens around the county. The ticket machine must also be capable of providing the Service Interface for Real Time Information (SIRI) feeds for the Automatic Vehicle Location (AVL) and Real Time Passenger Information (RTPI) system.

Herts County Council will be responsible for the data cleaning and roadside output. Due to the importance of delivery and reliance on collaboration, this will be enforced with a financial penalty for operators and a deduction toward marketing and/or publicity contributions for Hert County Council, which will be agreed via a variation agreement between all parties (through the section 7.1 mechanism), if either party do not comply.

Monitor:

Date	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
% of Services producing real time (per service/route)	90	90-95	95	95-100	95 -100

if operators fall below target, there will be an investigation into Hertfordshire’s County Councils responsibility on data cleaning and roadside output. A report will be shared on the findings.

Vehicle Emissions Targets

Air quality improvements will be driven by Operator fleet replacement programmes, County Council investment in Bus Priority Facilities and Operators’ reciprocal Requirements, and contributions of external funding. District and borough councils will be encouraged to include these targets in their Air Quality Action Plans, and the County Council will procure its contract services in line with these targets.

With funding, such as the ZEBRA funding, we are able to improve fleets with electric vehicles. Along with the implementation of ULEZ zones, this contributes to improving the air quality across the county and contributes to supporting us in achieving the set targets below.

Monitor:

% of fleet operated in Hertfordshire by vehicles of at least	Financial year				
	2025/26	2026/27	2027/28	2028/29	2029/30
Euro IV standard or better	98	100	100	100	100
Euro V standard or better	75	80	85	90	95
Euro VI standard or Better (inc electric)	55	60	65	70	75

To inform monitoring of overall fleet profile, Operators will provide the County Council a statement of fleet profile information on an annual basis.

Other infrastructure

- The County Council will carry out bus route corridor improvements (such as kerb upgrades, footway improvements etc) to improve customer experience. This can be measured by works programme and in-year delivery. We will review any shortfalls in the provision of enhanced bus stops, on existing bus corridors between towns or within towns. From this we will develop a programme of works based on these findings.

Monitor:

2x corridors per annum

- The County Council will continue with an annual programme of new or replacement bus shelters, which respond to public requests, and deal with shelters lost due to Road Traffic Collisions (RTCs), (Bus Shelter Programme).

Monitor:

Publishing the number of shelters being installed per calendar year vs (feasible) requests.

- The County Council will audit bus shelters in the county to identify possible bus shelters to retrofit with solar power, reducing the reliance on grid electricity and therefore more sustainable. The county council will also look to save on energy by switching off real-time information screens at suitable bus shelters, when services stop running. Bus shelters suitable for "living roofs", will be identified to improve biodiversity of the area.

Monitor:

10x per annum

- The County Council will replace old information points with new totem units over the next two years. These totems will allow information to be updated remotely, ensuring any changes to the bus network can be updated quickly for customers.

Monitor:

Minimum 5x per annum, over next two years.

Number of timetable change dates

Bus Operators will limit significant timetable changes for Qualifying Bus Services to the 13 service change dates per annum, these will be based around public holidays, school term times and railway timetable changes.

Maintain 13 service change dates for operators to utilize in county services. Introduce a date deadline for receiving Christmas and New Year service information from operators

Monitor:

Ensure dates are sent to operators by end of September, proceeding with the next year of dates. Monitoring incoming, services operating within the county only (not cross boundary) and aim for 95% rate of, in county changes will follow agreed dates (minus emergencies etc).

Accessibility awareness

Campaigning on the network and within depots to raise awareness for accessibility. Areas of focus, but not limited to;

- Improve awareness of network accessibility products including the orange wallet scheme and national schemes, through promotion across the network, online and via the Intalink vehicle which travels around the county sharing Intalink information.
- Raise accessibility awareness with the public through online and at “bus stop information” campaigns
- Work with external accessibility groups to improve awareness and understanding of accessibility needs on the network for bus drivers and operators
- Under the “other infrastructure” schemes, audio announcement technology will be included at bus stops/shelters where applicable.

Monitor

Using public engagement surveys and surveys to bus drivers to measure the impact of campaigning and training on accessibility awareness.

Roadworks management

The County Council will undertake the agreed process, detailed below, for sharing roadworks disruption information between the County Council’s Highways Network Management team, Passenger Transport unit, Bus Operators and the general public, in order to mitigate the impacts of disruption and maintain wherever possible the County Council’s stated accessibility standards for all affected bus stops.

Monitor:

Roadwork issues reported by Operators will be logged by Service Disruption and discussed with Network Management where appropriate and any needed actions will be undertaken.

If access cannot be maintained for school services, service disruption will notify the Network & Infrastructure Team and School Ticketing, allowing these teams to notify the relevant schools and school service operators.

Roadworks notification processes

<u>Minor schemes: planned works</u>	<u>Major schemes: planned works</u>	<u>Minor schemes: emergency works</u>
1. Network Management to send weekly spreadsheets of upcoming closures to Service Disruption Publicity, at least two weeks in advance, where applicable. Service Disruption Publicity investigates impact of closure: a. Diversion route options b. Bus stops affected c. Requirement for temporary stops 2. Service Disruption Publicity will consult with Network Management and/or the works promoter to negotiate mitigations: a. Varying dates/times of closure to minimise impact on bus services b. In particular, aim to maintain access for school services 3. Service Disruption Publicity consults with Bus Operator(s) and notifies/agrees diversionary and temporary stopping arrangements 4. Service Disruption Publicity arranges temporary stops as required and publicity notices for display: a. At stop, b. On Intalink website c. Through X formally Twitter d. RTI screens as required e. QR codes as required	1. Network Management send weekly spreadsheets of upcoming closures to Service Disruption Publicity, at least two weeks in advance, where applicable. Service Disruption Publicity to consult with Network Management to ensure arrangements for bus services are properly considered. This may include provision of special services or shuttles to ensure that connectivity for passengers is maintained. 2. Service Disruption Publicity consults with bus Operator(s) and notifies/agrees diversionary arrangements, adjustment to routes and timetables as necessary 3. Service Disruption Publicity arranges for temporary stops as required and publicity notices for display: a. At stop, b. On Intalink website c. Through X formally Twitter d. RTI screens as required. e. QR codes as required	1. First notification may be from Network Management or from a bus Operator 2. Service Disruption Publicity investigates impact of closure: a. Diversion route options b. Bus stops affected c. Requirement for temporary stops 3. Service Disruption Publicity consults with bus Operator(s) and notifies/agrees diversionary and temporary stopping arrangements 4. 5. Service Disruption Publicity produces publicity notices for display: a. On Intalink website b. Through X formally Twitter c. At stop (only if more than 48 working hours)

Website and app upgrades

The County Council will continue to make improvements to the Intalink website, and the continued review of the new Intalink smartphone app including, but not be limited to:

- Service timetables for all registered local bus services in Hertfordshire for download
- Maps to illustrate main towns, villages and road served, and a network overview map
- Journey planning
- Working to improve and add to fares information
- Mobile ticket purchasing functionality
- News and events information
- Access to real time information

Monitor: ongoing review of contents, updates on any changes will be given at the Intalink EP Forum to members.

Bus Priority Facilities and Reciprocal Requirements

Based on evidence from bus priority studies or other sources, the County Council will work with bus operators to agree investment plans for each bus priority scheme after consultation and once it's scheduled for implementation. The level and type of investment from bus operators will depend on the expected impact of the scheme. Once agreed, the County Council will deliver these measures based on how easy they are to implement and the impact of joint investment, guided by an annual operator ranking

The County Council and Bus Operators will sign an Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variation Agreement. This allows the Council to put in place the agreed bus priority facility, while operators commit to improving bus services in the area for a set minimum period.

Bus Operator reciprocal Requirements may include, but not be limited to:

- Improved vehicle specification
- Installation of new technology
- Additional branding specification
- Other relevant improvements that are within the Enhanced Partnership powers conferred by the 2000 Act.

The County Council and Bus Operators may also reach a separate voluntary agreement concerning an agreed level of service frequency or other relevant improvements.

To evaluate the effectiveness of bus priority Facilities delivered by the County Council, Bus Operators will share a representative sample of Automatic Vehicle Location and patronage data, for all Qualifying Bus Services operating in the study area before and after works are completed.

The County Council's enforcement approach taken is that set out in section 6.3.

Monitor: journey time on bus services operating in the scheme area of influence (direction: reduce).

Bus Priority Feasibility Studies & Project Validation

Subject to funding the County Council will commission three bus priority feasibility studies or project validation reports per annum throughout the life of the partnership to identify bus priority Facilities, for schemes to be prioritised and delivered as above. The County Council will facilitate the close engagement of Bus Operators and other stakeholders such as district and borough at appropriate stages in the development of each study.

Operators, through the section 7.1 mechanism, will have the opportunity to influence the selection of the feasibility studies and will be kept informed of the progress and outcomes and given the opportunity for feedback at key stages of the studies. Where there is a requirement to vary the nature of the feasibility studies, such as necessary input and output information, this will also be agreed by Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variation (section 7.1).

To inform of these studies Bus Operators will share a representative sample of Automatic Vehicle Location and patronage data, for all Qualifying Bus Services operating in the study area.

County Council data on bus services, highway infrastructure, traffic flow, development planning and Intalink Infrastructure Pro Formas will also feed into the study evidence base.

In relation to availability of Bus Operator and County Council data, the feasibility study outputs will include as a minimum for each Bus Priority Facility identified:

- Description of works
- Area of influence
- Services affected
- Potential impact on journey times

The feasibility study and/or project validation outputs will also feed into County Council Growth and Transport Plans, the HERT project and any other relevant plans or projects, where longer term interventions are identified.

Bus Operators will have the opportunity to feed into the selection of study areas. The programme of feasibility study development will be adopted each year by Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variation (section 7.1). Where external funding allows, bus priority feasibility studies may be brought forward in addition to this adoption process.

Monitor:

three feasibility studies or project validations progressed per annum

Branding

All vehicles operating Qualifying Bus Services will carry internal and external branding to promote the Intalink Enhanced Partnership. This will be subject to development of detailed design guidelines and changes adopted by Enhanced Partnership Scheme Variation (section 7.1).

Where cross-boundary services run into adjacent bus partnership or franchising areas, appropriate arrangements will be agreed with the Bus Operator and neighboring local authority. Other than the use of short-term loan vehicles, vehicles used on Qualifying Bus Services will clearly identify the fleet name of the Operator of the bus.

The County Council will prepare and supply all branding materials for vehicles. Bus Operators will ensure vinyl's are always displayed appropriately. In general, to account for vehicles on short-term loan or other exceptional reasons, each Operator will meet a minimum level of 95% compliance.

Bus Operators will include the Intalink logo and acknowledge the Intalink Enhanced Partnership in all timetables and other paper and electronic publicity they produce which related to any Qualifying Bus Service, as well as on their websites. The County Council will also apply the Intalink Enhanced Partnership branding to all relevant printed publicity, bus stop infrastructure, roadside displays and electronic information points.

Monitor:

% of fleet carrying Intalink branding. This will be monitored via spot checks.

Ticketing schemes

Operators already involved in such schemes will be expected to continue their involvement on the current basis under the Transport Act 2000, wherein competition concerns are mitigated by the involvement of the County Council as scheme promoter.

Extensions to multi-operator ticketing and other types of ticketing innovation, including alternative reimbursement arrangements, will be considered by the Intalink Forum and Intalink Board through the mechanism in section 7.1, and the terms and conditions of any such scheme will be negotiated between the County Council, those Operators and other partners affected.

For monitoring purposes, Bus Operators will submit to the County Council monthly sales returns for all ticketing schemes in which they participate, separated by type and period

Bus Driver Training: The County Council will implement a training suite on available ticket offerings. To ensure customers are given the correct and most cost-effective ticket, bus

operators are to provide training to all new and current bus drivers.

Operator reimbursement:– for all ticketing reimbursements, the County Council will produce a periodic payment schedule agreed by all members, this will also include a breakdown of the data relating to the payment.

Franchising (notification and engagement)

In the event that partial franchising is pursued within the County, the County Council will ensure that all affected Bus Operators are formally notified and appropriately engaged in advance of any changes. The Council will work collaboratively with Operators to provide clear guidance on the implications of franchising within the relevant areas, including operational, contractual, and service-related impacts. This approach aims to support a smooth transition, maintain service continuity for passengers, and uphold the principles of the Intalink Enhanced Partnership.

9. Non-statutory aspects

There are a number of aspects which the Intalink Quality Partnership facilitated which cannot or will not be incorporated in a statutory Enhanced Partnership, for example because a more nuanced approach is appropriate or in some cases because the Bus Services Act 2017 does not provide for Local Transport Authorities to place a mandatory requirement on operators to directly fund certain partnership activity. Operators are therefore invited to participate on a voluntary basis with aspects in this category as described below.

Publicity and information (non-statutory aspects)

The County Council will provide publicity and information to promote the Hertfordshire bus network in an integrated way under the Intalink Enhanced Partnership, to comprise the following roadside information and printed guides:

- Stop-specific timetable displays showing departure times for each registered local bus service calling at each stop
- “Onward Travel” posters at key sites
- Twice-yearly bus guides
- Timetable leaflets for all County Council contract services operated
- Plusbus information
- Network fillers and information at stops

The above materials are provided through recharging for roadside posting.

Stop-specific timetable updates resulting from changes to commercial services will be charged to the Operator to cover posting costs at the current (2026) rate of £7 per service per stop. If cost increases are required, these will be in line with the Customer Price Index (CPI) of that year.

Where Operators produce printed publicity (including timetable leaflets and booklets) for their own commercial services (subject to the branding Requirements), they will provide supplies to the County Council for inclusion within its distribution network and the Intalink promotional vehicle.

Materials will be distributed by the County Council across Hertfordshire to tourist information centers, libraries, town halls and other outlets on a four-weekly basis using the County Council's appointed contractor. This is funded by the County Council.

In the event there are delays of 4 weeks or more to roadside posting, a 10% discount will be issued for the affected posting. E.g. if posting is delayed by 4 or more weeks for the months of January, July and November, a 10% discount will be applied to services changing in those months. This will not apply to registrations received at short notice, which will be included in the posting for the following month.

Monitor

Annual roadside recharge costs will be revised annually in line with CPI and sent to operators within the 1st financial quarter of the following year (alongside marketing contributions). Along with reviewing dates of roadside posting to find delays of 4 weeks or more.

Marketing and Communications (non-statutory aspects)

The County Council will co-ordinate and deliver a SMART3 marketing and communications programme seeking out initiatives which will improve the image of bus services, by engaging with all demographics to deliver targeted campaigns which encourage modal shift and behavior change. The County Council will take a collaborative approach, adopting the plan using the mechanism in section 7.1.

Operators will each nominate a marketing lead to be the key point of contact for informing the development of marketing campaigns in a newly established marketing working group, supporting their implementation and monitoring the impact of outcomes achieved.

The marketing plan will encompass a review of all marketing channels, identifying potential development opportunities, including but not limited to:

- Use of new marketing innovations and initiatives
- Marketing tools, such as Gov Delivery email bulletins, departure screens advertisement and social media
- Annual market research programme, as well as the development of continuous

customer feedback functions.

- Four product campaigns per annum
- One annual awareness or behaviour change campaign
- Twelve-month marketing and campaigns calendar
- Detailed marketing plan for each campaign
- Quarterly dashboard reporting
- Marketing toolkits to be created for all stakeholders
- Seek out opportunities for localised campaigns in collaboration with members, including match funding if government funding is available.

Marketing activity will continue to be funded through a joint fund (Table 6), subject to variation using the mechanism in section 7.1.

This fund is secured by all parties on a voluntary basis and supports the work of the partnership. All Operators, district and borough councils, and train operating companies will be invited to sign an agreement with the County Council to confirm payment terms.

Current (2026) marketing fund rates

	Total marketing fund	Bus Operator Contribution	Train Operating Company contribution	District and borough council contribution
Calculation	Total fixed amount £ "x", apportioned across the Intalink Enhanced Partnership	Total fixed amount "y" divided amongst Operators per vehicle mile based on the mileage of Qualifying Bus Services as operated in February of each year, prior to the subscription year	£200 per station (£10,000 divided by 50 stations in Hertfordshire)	£750 each (£7,500 divided by 10 authorities)
Proportion of fund	100%	73%	18%	9%

Total contribution	"x" = £55,000	"y" = £40,000	£10,000	£7,500
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Monitor

- Submission of all marketing contributions each financial year.
- Annual discussion of increases with members based on CPI annually at IEP forum, as well as the increase of £250 per annum for district and borough councils.
- Updates given to via the Intalink EP Forum on implementation of proposed campaigns.

Role of district and borough councils (non-statutory aspects)

Some elements of the Enhanced Partnership can only be delivered with the support of district and borough councils, including with respect to powers or duties for planning, parking, some highway schemes and air quality management. These powers are likely to be important in delivering effective bus priority through the feasibility studies and project validation.

In addition, it is expected that district and borough councils will make a proportionate funding contribution to marketing activity and engage actively in the Intalink Forum and Intalink Board as appropriate.

The County Council will encourage each district and borough council to enter a Memorandum of Understanding to demonstrate shared support for the principles of the Enhanced Partnership.