

## TEMPORARY ARRANGEMENTS FOR VARYING LOCAL BUS SERVICES (ENGLAND)

### Who should read this note?

- Those within local authorities, who are responsible for the provision of local bus services.
- Bus operators providing local bus services that are registered with the traffic commissioner.

### Purpose of this note

This note is intended to explain temporary arrangements which have come into force with immediate effect, to assist operators seeking to make variations to registered services which are impacted by the current Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. It is divided into two parts:

Part 1 - Key changes

Part 2 - A step-by-step guide to how the temporary arrangements are intended to work

### Part 1 - The key changes

The Public Service Vehicles (Registration of Local Services) Regulations 1986 provide that an operator must provide notification to local authorities at least 28 calendar days before they submit an application to the Traffic Commissioner to register, vary or cancel a local bus service, where the service has a stopping place in that authority's area.

In light of the challenges posed by the outbreak, the Government have asked local authorities to agree a process whereby 24 hours (one working day) is considered acceptable notice for those variation applications which require to be made on a temporary basis as a result of the outbreak.

An operator can send the notification requesting the short notice temporary variation to the Office of the Traffic Commissioner and relevant local

authorities at the same time with details of how registered particulars are being varied to help make the notification and decision process faster.

The standard fee for the variation of a service will **not apply** on condition that the service is intended to return to the same timetable that was previously registered.

## **Part 2**

How to submit an application for a temporary variation of a service affected by coronavirus (COVID-19).

### **Step 1**

To relieve the administrative burden on operators the traffic commissioners have agreed to allow for a change in the usual registration process. Until notified otherwise operators seeking to make applications, variations or cancellations to local bus services can do so by emailing the Office of the Traffic Commissioner with more limited information as set out below. The email addresses are:

[PSV-continuations@otc.gov.uk](mailto:PSV-continuations@otc.gov.uk) (England and Wales)

[Steven.Jones@otc.gov.uk](mailto:Steven.Jones@otc.gov.uk) (Scotland)

In all cases where short notice dispensation is being requested the operator must give provide detail of the grounds that it is being applied under and the justification.

### **Varying an existing service**

Operators are encouraged to make use of the provision to temporarily vary a service registration by either not running it for a period of time, changing the frequency of the timetable or altering the route.

- Amended frequency – the operator should provide an email advising of the proposed date of amendment and the date when the previous registered service is to recommence. A timetable should also be included of the revised service.

- Amended route – in addition to the email set out above the operator should include a revised timetable and route map.
- Temporary cessation of service – the operator must provide the date of the proposed introduction of the change and the date that the previously registered service is intended to recommence.

On the basis that the duration of the outbreak is unknown, the suggested timescale for the variation is:

‘until notified otherwise, or until 31/8/2020 **whichever is the earlier**’

The suggested period allows for a finite end point for administrative purposes, whilst allowing operators the flexibility to return to the previously registered timetable earlier if that is possible

If the variation is not time limited (as set out above) or there are any proposed permanent changes to the previous registered timetable on recommencement the operator will be required to provide further details at a later date. The Office of the Traffic Commissioner will contact you with the requirements.

If an operator uses the Electronic Bus Service Registration system they can notify the traffic commissioner of temporary variations using the method set out above.

### Cancelling a service

Permanent cancellations of services can be applied for using email alone.

### Registering a new service

If an operator wishes to register a new service they are encouraged to complete an ‘Application to Register a Bus Service’ PSV350 form and submit it electronically by email along with the registered particulars usually required.

- Payment

Given the exceptional circumstances that operators are experiencing the traffic commissioners have decided to waive the fee for all applications that seek to temporarily vary a local bus registration. **This is on condition that the service is intended to return to the same timetable that was previously registered.**

A request to register a new local bus service is currently subject to the appropriate fee. Once the traffic commissioner has recorded the application an email will be sent to the operator advising that payment can now be made on-line. It would be helpful to allow for efficient administration if operators could make full use of the ability to pay on-line. If an operator wishes to pay over the telephone they should respond to the email stating this preference. They will then be contacted.

## **Step 2**

If a relevant local authority/authorities wishes to make representations, they should do so within 24 hours (i.e. within one working day) of the application being lodged with them. Any representations should be sent, at the same time, to the Traffic Commissioner by email to [PSV-continuations@otc.gov.uk](mailto:PSV-continuations@otc.gov.uk) and the operator by way of the contact details they have given on submission of the variation application.

In the absence of any objections being lodged by a relevant local authority/authorities within the 24 hour period from the receipt of the application, the Traffic Commissioner will consider the notification requirements in Regulation 3A of the Public Service Vehicles (Registration of Local Services) Regulations 1986 to have been met.

On expiry of the 24 hour period, operators can assume deemed grant of the application to temporarily vary the registration by the Traffic Commissioner.

## **Step 3**

Confirmation of the Traffic Commissioner's decision in relation to the application will be sent, in due course, to the operator and to the relevant local authorities by email.