Inverclyde statutory Quality Partnership Scheme - 2015

What is an sQPS?

A Quality Partnership Scheme is a statutory agreement between parties to provide improved bus infrastructure and services.

The Transport (Scotland) Act 2001 (received Royal Assent on 25th January 2001) provides powers for local transport authorities to make statutory quality bus partnerships known as Quality Partnership Schemes (QPS) and also Quality Contracts (QC).

The 2001 Act was amended by the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005 (received Royal Assent on 5 August 2005 - section 51(2) amends section 48 of 2001 Act) to allow local authorities in the SPT area to have the same powers as SPT to make Quality Partnership Schemes and Quality Contracts.

An authority, or authorities acting jointly, may make a QPS covering a corridor or area, provided:

- the authorities are satisfied that the Scheme will to any extent implement the relevant policies to which it relates (relevant policies is defined in the Act) and either
- improve facilities and services to bring material benefits to users
- reduce or limit traffic congestion, noise or air pollution.

Inverclyde Council or SPT could therefore promote Schemes independently or together.

Bus operators wishing to participate in a QPS must give a written undertaking to the Traffic Commissioner that they will provide the specified standard of service when using the facilities. Adherence to this commitment then becomes a condition of continued registration. Some exemptions may apply, for example, for longer distance “express” services or “seasonal” services. The Traffic Commissioner is empowered to act against any operator who fails to meet conditions of registration.

What can be included?

Under a QPS, the authority provides ‘specified facilities’ and only those bus operators meeting ‘specified standards’ will be permitted to use the ‘specified facilities’. The specified standards may, for example, include vehicle requirements and minimum frequency of services. Specified facilities can typically include improved infrastructure, including shelters and bus priority measures.

The level of fares, timetables and frequencies (over and above any agreed minimum) and the routes served cannot be included in a QPS and will remain wholly controlled by the operators.
Existing facilities provided up to 5 years before the date on which consultation on the Scheme commenced can be included in a QPS. Facilities implemented between 5 and 10 years before this date can also be included subject to the consent of bus operators.

A QPS requires all facilities to be in place for a period of 3 months before the date for commencement of operation of the Scheme (though these can subsequently be varied). A Scheme may operate for a period from 3 to 7 years.

The Scheme must set out the procedures for determining disputes between the authority and operators.

**Consultation**

Best practice for the establishment of a QPS is for the proposing authority to enter into preliminary voluntary discussions with local operators during the first drafting of proposals. Having drafted a QPS, the local authority making it is obliged to publish it and undertake a formal consultation exercise in accordance with section 5 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2001.

If an operator considers that any obligation being placed upon it which would permit it to use the facilities provided under the QPS is unreasonable, in that it raises a barrier to entry which is considered to be excessive, then it may call for the application by the authority of the Competition Test.

**Procedure**

An authority wishing to make a QPS should:-

i. consider the extent of area or corridor in which it would like to see the QPS introduced;

ii. identify what the authority would bring to the QPS in terms of infrastructure and other measures, such as funding, promotion and monitoring;

iii. desirably undertake preliminary voluntary consultation with the affected parties as part of the scoping exercise and to assist in drafting proposals for the QPS.

iv. draft the QPS in detail;

v. publish a notice in at least one local newspaper, setting out the authority’s proposals for facilities and standards to be provided under the Scheme;

vi. consult with affected parties including bus operators, the Traffic Commissioner and any other relevant parties about the aims, quality standards and operation of such a QPS. (There is no set time limit for statutory consultation, but sufficient time should be allowed to ensure that those who are likely to have views have reasonable time and opportunity to make a considered response);

vii. review/re-consult;

viii. make the Scheme and inform. The legislation does not specify what is meant by ‘making’ a Scheme. However the effect of a Scheme being made is clear enough - it
means that the Scheme is finalised. This would generally mean that the approval of the Council’s Executive Committee has been obtained and the QPS has been signed by the Council’s legal representative;

ix. within 14 days of making the QPS, publish a notice in at least one local newspaper setting out the Scheme and stating where and in what form the Scheme may be inspected. This final Scheme, identified in the notice, should clearly specify:-

- the facilities and standards to be provided under the QPS;
- the date on which the Scheme comes into operation; and
- the period during which it remains in operation.

x. provide the facilities;

xi. Commence the Scheme, operate and monitor the QPS from the specified date of operation of the Scheme and submit annual monitoring reports thereafter to the Scottish Ministers on the performance of the QPS with regard to meeting the Scheme objectives. The specified date for commencement of operation of the Scheme has to be at least 3 months after a Scheme and any required TROs are made and after the date it will be reasonably expected for the authorities to provide the specified facilities and for operators to provide the specified services.

Ministers may by regulations make further provisions re procedures etc required.

**What are the broad objectives of the Inverclyde sQPS?**

- Improve access for all to facilities e.g. shopping, healthcare, education, leisure) within the sQPS area.
- Environmental improvements through attracting car drivers into using public transport more often thus improving bus patronage.
- Environmental improvements through improved bus journey times.
- Encourage modal shift to buses.
- Reduce traffic congestion and emissions and thus improve air quality.
- Improve bus quality.
- Better access to information relating to bus routes and timetables.
- Improve safety & security for those using buses (liaise with police).
- Regular and reliable operation and scheduling.

**What is proposed in the Inverclyde sQPS?**

The Scheme will apply within a designated area in and around Greenock, Gourock and Port Glasgow. Operators will be expected to provide specified standards of service in order to participate in the Scheme. These will relation to such things as (further details on these can be found within the document):-

**General:**

1) Punctuality of services
2) Network stability
3) Presentation of vehicles
4) Driver training
5) Customer care and journey promises
6) Journey promises
7) Driver appearance
8) Information
9) Fare revisions
10) Smoking
11) Provision of patronage data
12) Fleet list

Vehicle specification:

1) Accessibility – all journeys to use accessible low floor buses
2) CCTV – all journeys after 2000 hours to have a minimum of 3 cameras in each saloon
3) Communication – drivers must be able to communicate with depot after 2000 hours
4) Emissions – 50% of all journeys at commencement date to be operated by vehicles with Euro 3 engines (or Euro 2 with TfL approved CRT devices)
5) Heating and ventilation/climate control fitted to maintain passenger comfort
6) Lighting and ancillary equipment
7) Route and destination displays
8) Real Time Information – To actively co-operate with Inverclyde Council on introduction and development of RTI

Vehicle maintenance:

1) Obligation – Comply with VOSA standards and also swiftly investigate passenger complaints
2) Lighting and ancillary equipment
3) Exterior and interior vehicle presentation
4) Exterior and interior cleanliness
5) Litter
6) Notification of Faults

Vehicle Branding/Livery:

1) To improve passenger confidence and save passenger confusion

Services:

1) Service reliability
2) Breakdown and recovery
3) Last journeys

Driver standards:

1) General – drive in a safe and professional manner
2) Picking up/setting down arrangements
3) Passenger assistance – drivers provide assistance when requested for elderly/disabled etc
4) No Smoking
5) Distractions
6) Heating and ventilation – drivers to be fully conversant with all vehicle systems

Timescales for vehicle defect rectification:

1) Defects to be rectified within 7 days wherever reasonably practicable – this timescale will apply to all equipment specified in the Scheme document and will include CCTV, radio or telephone communication equipment.
Inverclyde Council in partnership with SPT and Transport Scotland will provide and maintain the following facilities for the duration of the Scheme:

1) Improve passenger Infrastructure and facilities (including key interchanges – Greenock, Gourock and Port Glasgow bus stations) selected bus stopping places – new shelters, poles, raised kerbs, bus boarders, lighting, and security. Further investigate the roll-out of CCTV monitoring and real time passenger information (RTPI).
2) Investigate Bus priority measures – including priority bus lanes, traffic signal priority, bus pre-signals and CCTV route monitoring.
3) Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) on routes and bus stop Clearaways and protections at bus stopping places.
4) Decriminalised parking enforcement.
5) Maintenance of facilities provided for the duration of the Scheme.

The Scottish Government has also produced a guide to implementation for Statutory Quality Partnership Schemes and this is available on the web. This document gives clear and concise detail on the background and reasoning behind sQP Schemes.


**Current Proposed Programme for Inverclyde sQPS**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Date</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Briefing note and draft to bus operators</td>
<td>September 2014</td>
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<td>2. Comments back from bus operators by</td>
<td>November 2014</td>
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<td>3. Publish Notice by</td>
<td>January 2015</td>
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<td>4. Formal statutory consultation</td>
<td>February 2015</td>
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<td>5. Review sQPS and re-consult during</td>
<td>March 2015</td>
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<td>6. Operators sign undertaking</td>
<td>March 2015</td>
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<td>7. Committee approvals</td>
<td>March 2015</td>
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<td>8. Inverclyde/SPT make Scheme</td>
<td>March 2015</td>
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