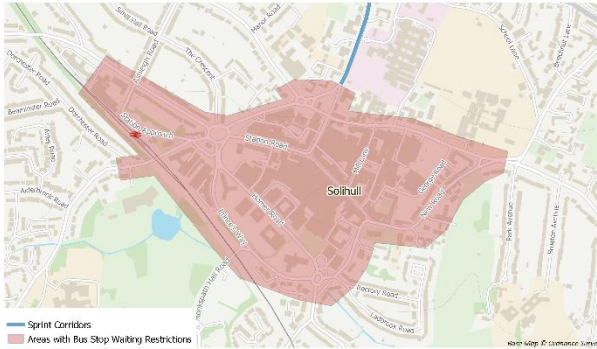


13th January 2023

Background

Where

The Solihull Advanced Quality Partnership Scheme (AQPS) applies to a zone surrounding Solihull Town Centre and Solihull Rail Station.



What

The AQPS enshrines minimum service standards for bus operators and the highways and transport authorities as relates to buses.

The Solihull scheme began in 2017 for a period of 10 years and has been successful in improving bus services, air quality and the passenger experience.

Why

Since the making of the AQPS, the West Midlands Enhanced Partnership Scheme has been developed and expanded. The EP Scheme is delivering on the Bus Service Improvement Plan which covers the entire WMCA area.

Due to the way the legislation is constructed, an AQPS and EP Scheme cannot overlap.

The standards set in the AQPS already exist (or will shortly come into effect) in the current version of the EP Scheme (Variation 002), the Customer Charter (March 2023) or exist in other extant legislation.

Furthermore, under an EP Scheme, it is possible for WMCA to have local bus service registration powers delegated to it (for services operating wholly within the EP Scheme area). This is not possible within an AQPS area.

Therefore, it is proposed that the AQPS is revoked.

Revocation will allow the service standards in the area shown above to be managed in a single scheme, for ease and simplicity. It will also allow WMCA to implement specific route requirements on particular bus services and, for applicable routes, use its delegated registration powers to independently enforce the standards set out in the EP Scheme.

The process for revoking an AQPS is the same as making the scheme and so stakeholder consultation was required.

Consultation

Who

Legislation requires the following entities to be consulted:

- Relevant bus operators
- Passenger representative groups
- Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council
- The Traffic Commissioner
- Chief of Police
- Transport Focus
- The Competition and Markets Authority
- The Public

How

This was largely done through email, with an offer of a meeting to discuss any concerns. It has also been mentioned at other meetings involving similar parties.

The exception to this is the public consultation, which comprised a notice in a local newspaper, social media posts and a webpage to submit feedback.

When

The public consultation ran from 16/10/22 to 10/01/2023. Consultation with other bodies above was carried out during this same period.

Summary of Responses

The following entities provided the following summarised response(s). Otherwise, there were no objections received:

Operators

It was expressed that the waiting time restrictions and stand allocations in the AQPS document were not representative of the currently agreed situation. We were asked to ensure that the status quo was preserved when the restrictions were moved to the EP Scheme.

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC)

Support the revocation of the AQPS to allow the EP Scheme to take effect.

The Public

Biggest theme was ensuring that equivalent standards are in place before the AQPS is revoked.

There were also some other comments that were not related to the proposed revocation.

Conclusion

There were no categorical objections received toward the revocation of the AQPS.

The limited feedback received was either supportive or conditionally supportive.

The pre-conditions requested were:

- the preservation of the status quo of bus waiting restrictions; and
- to ensure continuation of vehicle and service quality conditions.

Next Steps

Given the lack of objection and the lack of pertinent concerns that were expressed during consultation, and the benefits available by transferring the area into the EP Scheme, it is TfWM's intent to continue with the revocation.

There will be a short break (of a few weeks) between the revocation of the AQPS and the EP emissions standards coming into force on 1st May 2023. This delay is due to other dependencies.

Further Information

Martin Pyne
Bus Transformation Manager
Martin.Pyne@tfwm.org.uk