

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY PROPOSED NEW SUPPORTED BUS NETWORK FOR NORTH EAST SOMERSET

URGENT ACTIONS TO RESOLVE CURRENT CRISIS

- 1) **Co-fund the current contract for the 94 (Trowbridge to Bath) with Wiltshire County Council using BSIP funding – this service is cost effective and with the right support from the Transport Authority could have a pathway to commerciality**
- 2) **Extend the 672 Chew Valley contract which is due to expire end July using WECA's new £500k supported bus fund**
- 3) **Regularise Westlink services to cover the 179/768, using timetabled services and larger vehicles to serve the morning & afternoon rush hour and school times, then invest in a new route "777" to cover the 179/768 villages**
- 4) **Reroute the 522 to cover Timsbury, Camerton, and Tunley**
- 5) **Co-fund with Somerset CC to extend the 414 to cover the 82 bus route from Frome to Paulton**
- 6) **Investing in a new Bath to Wells express route to include Farmborough, Timsbury, Tunley**

1) **94 (Trowbridge to Bath) co-fund with Wiltshire County Council**

Work urgently with Wiltshire County Council to pay for half the 5-year £115k pa contract to 31/3/26 with Libra Buses. Currently Wiltshire CC is paying the full cost but is unwilling to do so beyond July 2023. This well-used bus with nearly 13,500 passenger journeys p.a. cannot be replaced by Westlink as it goes across the B&NES/Wiltshire border into Bath, serving schools and communities with no other form of transport. With joint funding from Wiltshire CC, it is good value for WECA and has high social amenity value. Support using LTF funding.

2) **672 (Chew Valley) extend contract to cover new school year**

Urgent as the contract with Eurotaxi finishes on 31st July 2023. It needs extending beyond the autumn, as has been made clear by the Chew Valley Sustainable Transport Group, with evidence that Westlink cannot replace this service. It serves several remote rural communities linked by narrow rural roads which are not suitable for walking or cycling. It delivers pupils to schools and is a vital link to Bristol for employment. Whilst it is unlikely to be commercial, it has very high social amenity value and pre-covid had 16,000 passengers per year. Support using LTF funding.

3) **179/768 Radstock/MSN to Bath via Tunley, Camerton, Timsbury replace with regular Westlink**

Both these well-loved and much used services run by CT Coaches have now ceased, the buses sold, drivers made redundant and over 10 villages have lost these regular services. It will take some investment and time to restore them. As the passenger figures were around 14,000 per year before the cuts, this could potentially be a commercial service, supported by BSIP funding.

There are two options:

- i) Short term: regularise Westlink services along their routes, using timetabled services and larger vehicles to serve the morning & afternoon rush hour and school times, to help restore trust and connectivity, make Westlink more profitable, and rebuild passenger numbers.
- i) Medium term: a new peak hour bus covering these routes (the "777") could be commissioned, potentially from CT Coaches, which could also provide an addition service to Clandown and Camerton. Route variations could go via Midsomer Norton, Radstock, Clandown, Camerton, Timsbury, Tunley, / Welton, Paulton, Radford, Timsbury, Tunley; and Tunley, Priston, Nailwell, Englishcombe, Southdown, Bath / Tunley, Odd Down, Bath

4) 522 Bath to Bristol via MSN etc – reroute from via Hallatrow, Timsbury, Tunley, Camerton Meadgate to Bath

Newly commissioned by WECA from First, this is now a commercially run route. It has issues with driver numbers and reliability. It also takes a long time far longer than previous 179. (e.g. now 2 hours from Farmborough to Bath on 522 vs 30 mins on 179; over 60 mins from Tunley to Bath on 522 vs 15 mins on the 179). If it was rerouted via Hallatrow, Timsbury, Camerton Meadgate, Tunley along the B3115 into Bath, it would be quicker, include under-served communities and link the A37 and A367, rather than via MSN and Peasedown St John which already have good bus services.

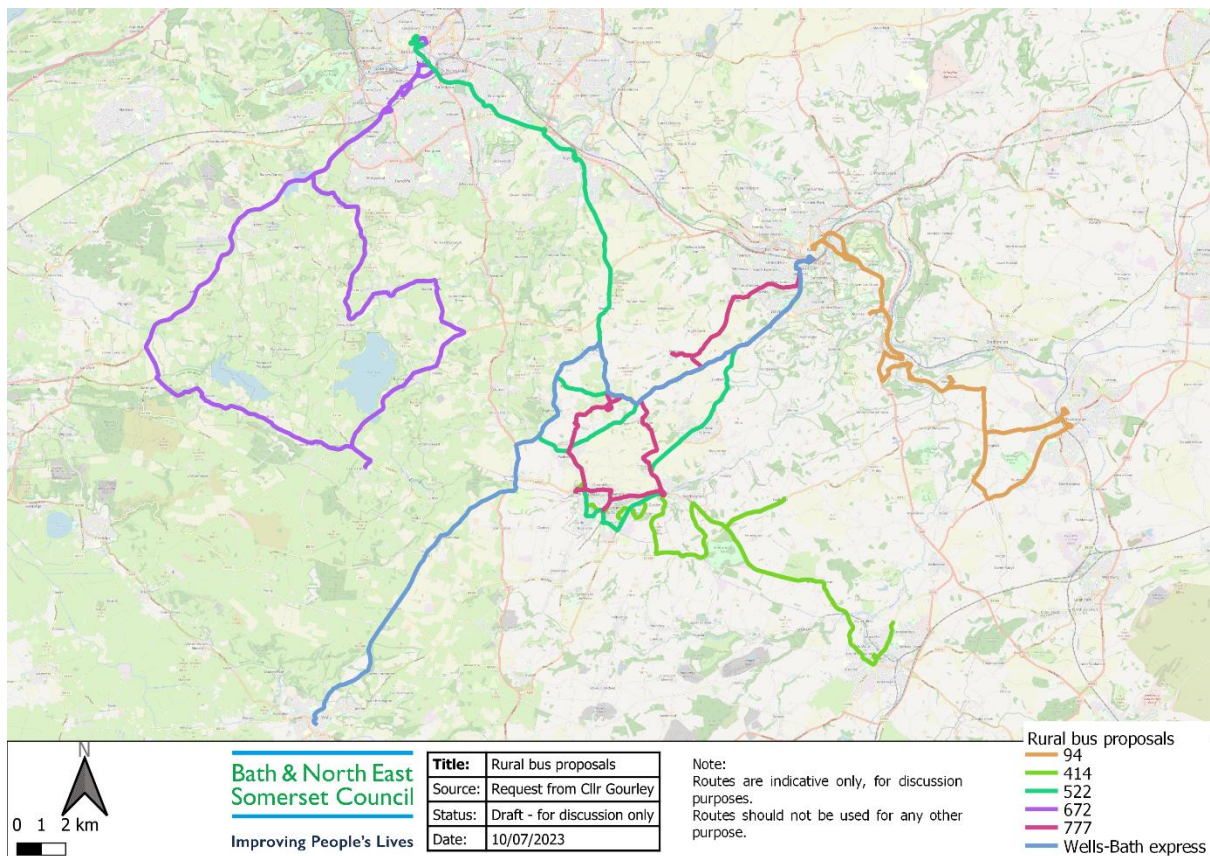
5) 82 Radstock to Paulton – replace with 414, jointly funded with Somerset County Council

The 82 Radstock, Westfield, Midsomer Norton, Paulton, operated by Tom Churchill, stopped June 2023, served several areas of deprivation and older estates in Westfield and Paulton so it had high social amenity value. However, the Fromebus 414/424 covers a similar route: Frome, Buckland Dinham, Writhlington, Kilmersdon, Radstock, Westfield, Midsomer Norton. It offers a Monday to Saturday on a similar 2 hourly frequency with some driver slack time so it can be extended to Tescos at Old Mill and Paulton. Somerset County Council (SCC) hold the existing contract, so this is an opportunity to share costs, making is good value for money for WECA, as well as straightforward with an ongoing contract, and could be appropriate for the LTF underspend funds.

6) Bath to Wells co-fund with Somerset new Bath to Wells Express linking A37 & A367

Proposed: Wells, Chewton Mendip, Farrington Gurney, High Littleton, Farmborough, Timsbury, Tunley, Bath. New more direct and rapid services between Bath and Wells (1hr 15mins) which connecting communities which have lost 179 to Bath and Wells and creating a fast link between A37 and A367 corridors Could be jointly funded by WECA & Somerset CC as a new potential commercial service plus offering good social amenity and value for money, valuable to tourists, residents, and workers.

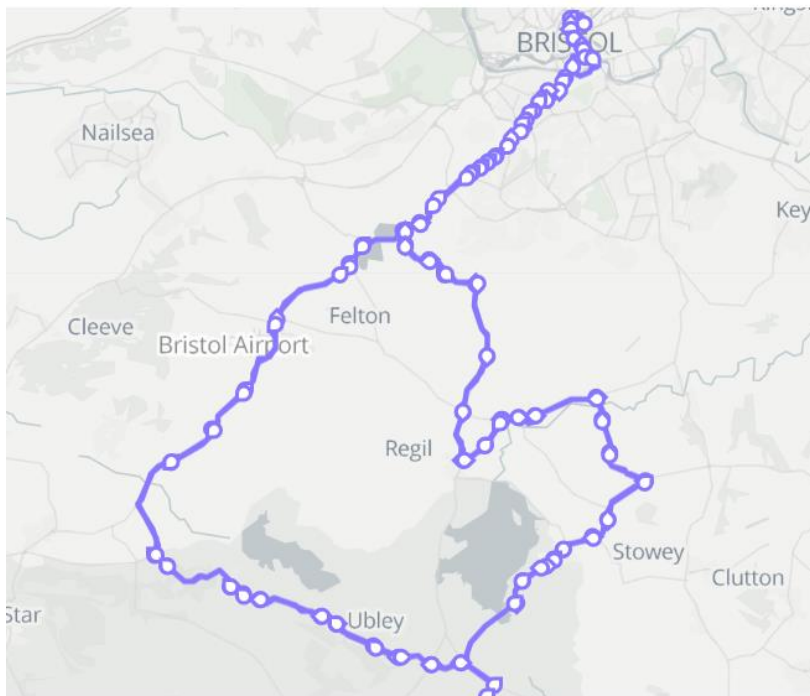
Network of Proposed Supported Bus Routes



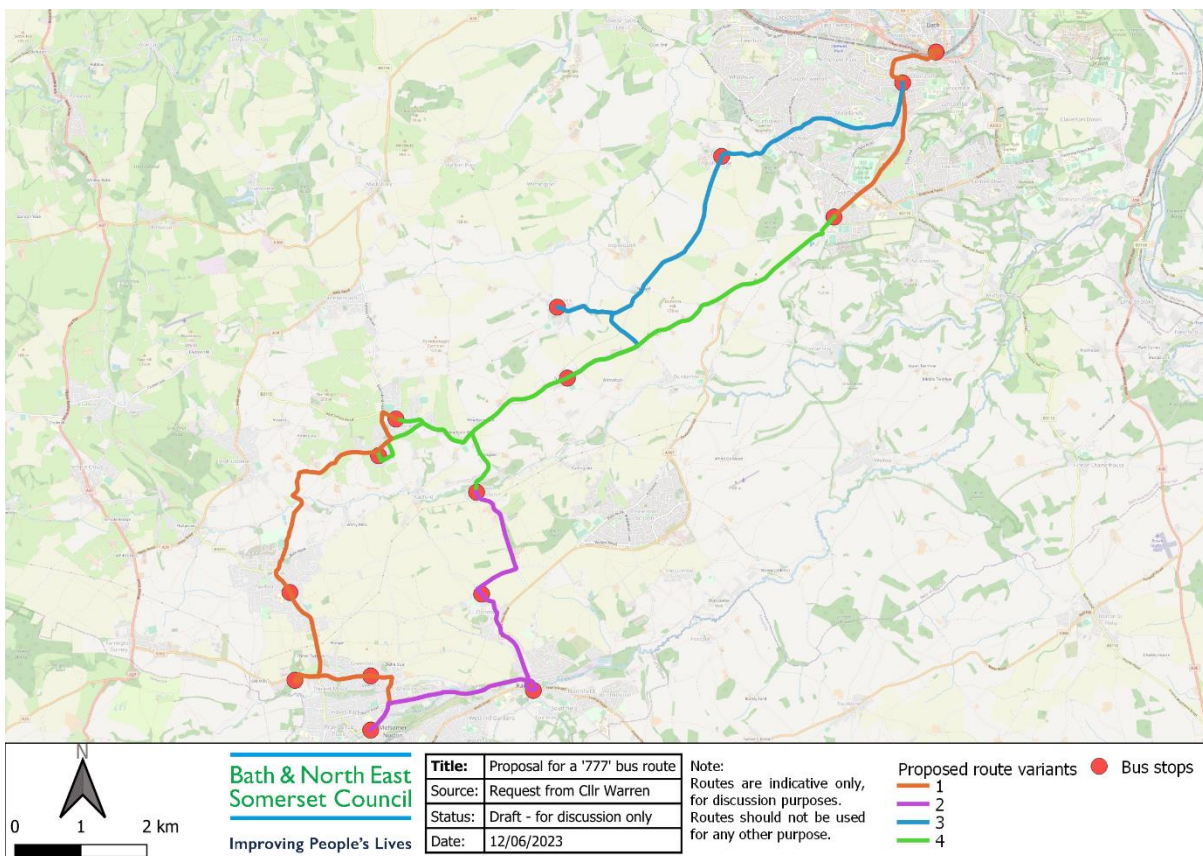
1) 94 Trowbridge to Bath



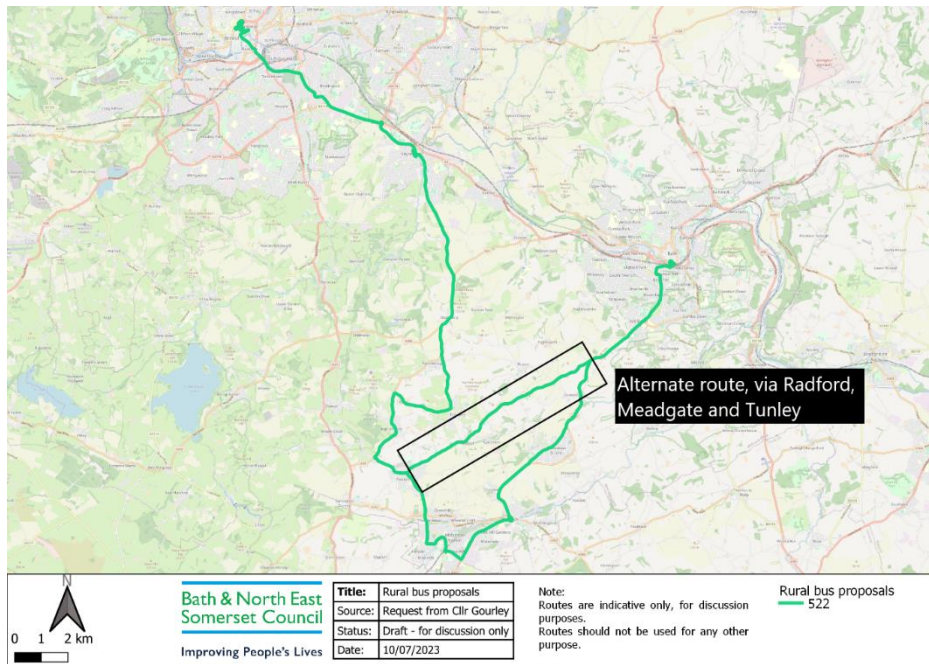
2) 672 Chew Valley to Bristol



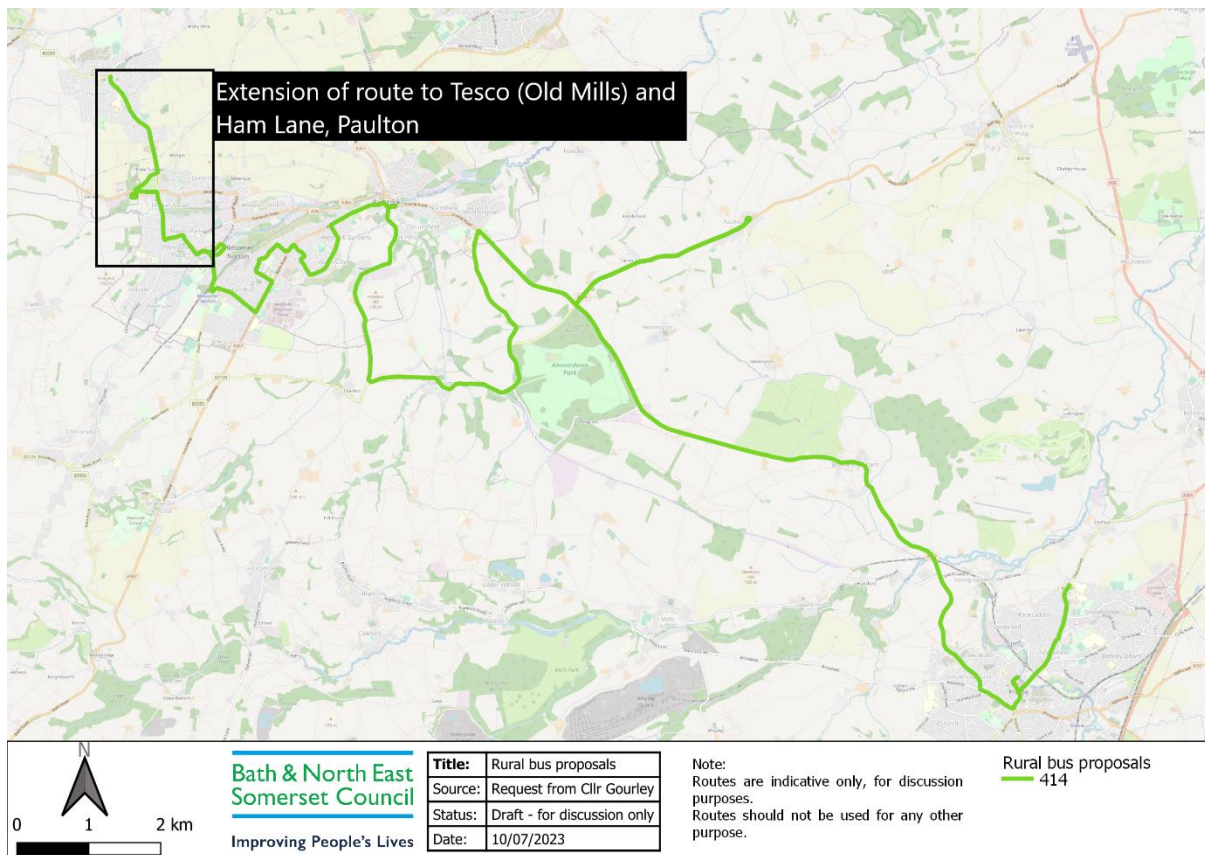
3) 179/687 = "777" Radstock/Midsomer Norton via Timsbury/Tunley to Bath



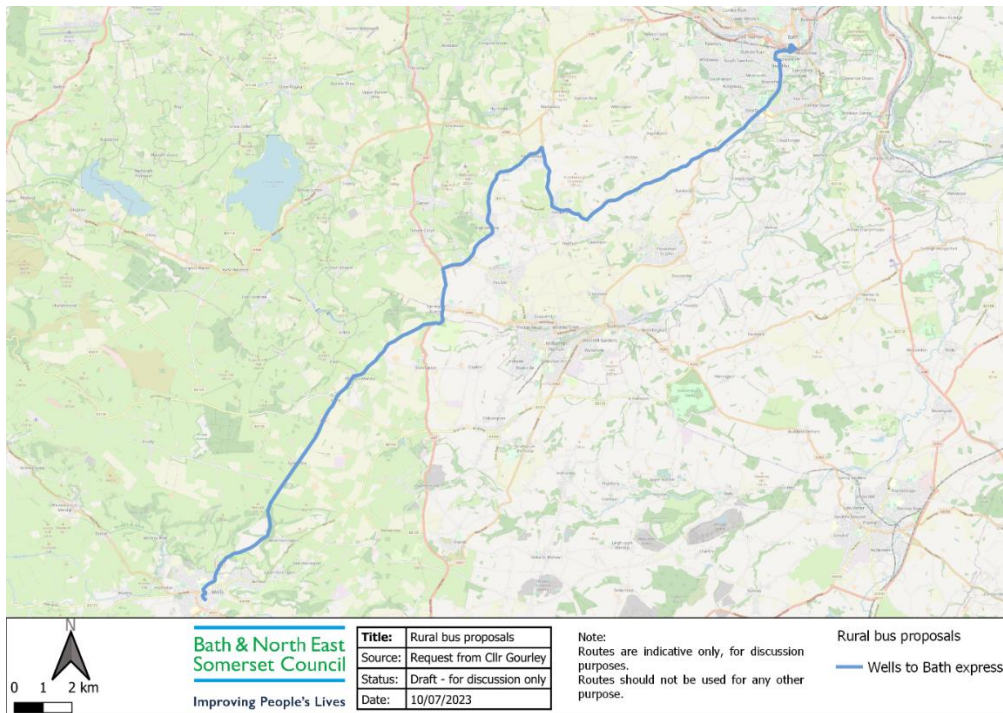
4) Rerouted 522



5) Extended 414 to replace 82



6) New Bath to Wells Express



Councillor Fiona Gourley
Member Advocate for Rural Communities
Bathavon South
07803015886
Fiona_gourley@bathnes.gov.uk