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Your Ref:
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Date: 10 June 2014

Dear Sir / Madam

**Tyne & Wear Integrated Transport Authority (“ITA”) – supplemental consultation April 2014 re proposed Tyne and Wear Quality Contracts Scheme pursuant to the Transport Act 2000 (as amended) (“Act”)
Response from Northumberland County Council**

I am responding on behalf of Northumberland County Council (NCC) to Bernard Garner’s letter of 9th April 2014 inviting participation in the supplemental consultation regarding the proposed Quality Contracts Scheme for Tyne and Wear (QCS Proposal).

NCC’s response to the supplemental consultation is as follows. The following are in addition to our response to the original consultation, as set out in my letter of 25th November 2013, which Mr Garner’s letter states need not be repeated. The paragraph headings, page numbers etc quoted below are those in the Supplemental Consultation (2014) document published by Nexus.

2. FARES AND TICKETING (pp 6-9)

NCC has no comment as it affects only passengers travelling in part of Gateshead, and the overall effect on scheme revenue is minimal.

3. CONTRACT STANDARDS (pp 10-13)

NCC supports the proposed relaxation of requirements on emission standards, vehicle ages, branding standards and on-bus quality improvements. NCC agrees with Nexus’ view that these changes would give operators of Quality Contracts more flexibility and thereby make a QCS more affordable.

4. PROCUREMENT OF QUALITY CONTRACTS (pp 14-18)

NCC supports the proposed alternative 11-lot structure for the procurement of Quality contracts, based around existing depots in Tyne and Wear, and the other changes set out in paragraphs 4.2.4 to 4.2.7. NCC agrees with Nexus’ views on the impact of these changes. In particular, NCC believes that the increased ability of operators to run services outside Tyne and Wear, the reduced risk of depots being “stranded” and the increased contract opportunities will all make any QCS more affordable and reduce the risk of negative impacts on neighbouring Authorities.

5. BUS COMPANY EMPLOYEES (pp19-28)

NCC has no comment.

6. GOVERNANCE (pp29-31)

NCC requests that it should be invited to meetings of the proposed User Consultative Forum in respect of QCS cross-boundary services. This would seem only reasonable in view of the Combined Authority.

7. OTHER (p 32) and APPENDICES (pp33-52)

NCC remains concerned at the impact of any QCS on those cross-boundary services that are still proposed to be included. I would therefore refer to the concerns expressed in my letter of 25th November 2013.

I would furthermore repeat that the guarantees given to NCC by Nexus to underwrite the financial impact of any QCS on Northumberland and its residents are therefore welcomed, and indeed seen as essential. Mitigation of any risks to NCC or its residents is a crucial factor in our willingness not to oppose any QCS for Tyne & Wear. We note that negotiations on the wording of the Cross-Boundary Agreement are still continuing at officer level, and we must therefore point out that maintenance of our current stance regarding the QCS proposals is entirely dependent on an outcome of these negotiations that is acceptable to NCC.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Ian Swithenbank
Policy Board Member for Streetcare and Environment

Enc:

Northumberland County Council Consultation Response November 2013

Northumberland County Council Consultation Appendix November 2013