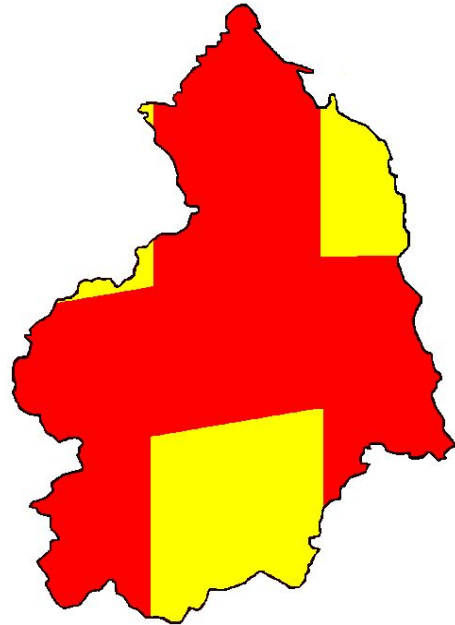


# Health and Safety Inspection Report

**NORTHUMBERLAND**

Northumberland County Council

## Hexham Bus Station



### HEXHAM BUS STATION

#### Health and Safety Inspection

#### 1. Introduction

Following the recent installation of new bus shelters at this site, a health and safety audit was requested by Sustainable Transport with a remit to report on health and safety matters associated with the new shelters, as well as the overall suitability of the facility as a working bus station. It should be noted that, as generalist Health and Safety Advisers, this report is limited to our sphere of expertise. Additional input from a Road Safety Engineer may be beneficial, particularly in relation to minimum turning circle requirements. The inspection was conducted on Monday 14 March 2014 by two Health and Safety Advisers from the County Council's Corporate Health and Safety Team, supported by the Health and Safety Manager for Go North East. The inspection comprised a visual examination of the external premises as well as consultation with Go North East representatives regarding any health and safety concerns they might have. The audit did not include an inspection inside the station building, as this is managed by Go North East as the

principal site user. The Health and Safety Manager and Leading Driver were very helpful and accommodating during the inspection.

## **2. Traffic Management**

2.1 The means of separating vehicle and pedestrian routes within the station leaves much to be desired. The ownership of Commercial Place is not clear and many disputes have arisen in the past regarding access rights. The painted pathway on the road along Commercial Place is also often used as a delivery bay. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that the owners of the vegetable shop often display produce on sale along the existing path. Despite the lack of proper separation, drivers seem to take care when entering the station and no accidents or near misses have been reported. Ideally, this path should be widened and kept clear of goods, removing any need for pedestrians to walk on the road.

2.2 The narrow width of the facility affords a very limited space to manoeuvre large buses. The one-way system is designed to eliminate or greatly reduce the need for vehicles to reverse. However, during the audit a car made a delivery to the café and, whilst parked, a bus entered the station. Whilst the driver was able to pass the parked car without difficulty he was forced to drive much closer to the central island than normal. Unfortunately, this reduced the turning radius available and he was forced to reverse a short distance in order to access the pick-up points at the other side. It was reported that, on occasion, vehicles still attempt to enter the exit junction. We recommend that the road markings are refreshed and that 'no entry' signs should be considered to make it clear that vehicles should not enter the site at this point.

In short, this demonstrates that buses can access this narrow fronted station, but any obstruction on Commercial Place is likely to result in unacceptable reversing manoeuvres.

2.3 There is a defined area for staff parking at the bottom of the station which is used by Go North East staff. There is at least one of the business owners on Commercial Place who uses the car park. This individual claims to have permission to do this through a previous agreement with Tynedale District Council aimed at avoiding the need for parking on Commercial Place and blocking the access route. It is no longer used by any members of the public following the posting of signs prohibiting this in 2007.

2.4 There is less of a tendency for longer term bus layovers at this site, though buses will often reverse into the layover bay provided in front of the staff car park for short periods. In 2010 several improvements were made in order to reduce the risk of reversing incidents. These

measures were seen as short term improvements due to plans at the time to create a bus station on an alternative site. These include bay markings; a keep clear hatched area and a raised kerb line. These measures appear to work well. Buses pull up straight in front of the bay and reverse slowly until the rear wheels hit the raised kerb line. The overhang at the back of the bus is then within the 'keep clear' hatched area. Whilst these arrangements fall well short of maintaining a totally pedestrian-free reversing area they seem to work without incident.

2.5 The site perimeter comprises a high brick wall and commercial buildings which restrict public access to the front of the site via the main street only. The road markings which define the pedestrian crossing point across both the entry and exit junctions with the main street are becoming worn and need to be refreshed. We also recommend that the detailed drawing showing a plan view of the depot is updated highlighting traffic and pedestrian routes, appropriate signage, crossing points and parking arrangements.

2.6 The owners of the Abbey Press premises to the rear of the site have rights of access over Commercial Place and also claim to have acquired rights of access to the Eastern side of the Bus Station building. The premises has recently been sold and, whilst the nature of the business operations are unclear, there would be no means of controlling access and there is a very real potential that this could involve delivery vehicles and increased pedestrian flow within the site.

### **3. Property Issues**

3.1 The Health and Safety Manager reported that the installation of the new stands went well and that monitoring suggests that they are being used by the public in a safe manner as intended. On the day of the audit, we observed people waiting in the stands as well as boarding and alighting buses; it is pleasing to report that no problems were witnessed. Pedestrians seemed to be using the defined access routes. All observed waited within the shelter. The high risk area outside of each stand at the kerb line has tactile paving and signage to discourage people from waiting in these areas.

3.2 The Health and Safety Manager also confirmed that statutory testing requirements within the station building are undertaken by NCC Property Services. He reported that repairs are also carried out by the Council, though there is a history of problems regarding the speed at which pot holes are repaired. We recommend that the arrangements for defect reporting are reviewed so as to improve this situation.

3.3 The asbestos management survey undertaken in 2009 indicates that there is no asbestos present. However, it should be noted that this is a management survey which is not invasive. We, therefore, strongly recommend that any minor works undertaken by Go North East within the station building are subject to approval from Property Services using

the N1 form. In addition, any maintenance contractors must be made aware of the asbestos report, a copy of which should be kept on site. If any invasive work is proposed, it is essential that a further refurbishment survey is undertaken.

- 3.4 Whilst the external condition of the building is serviceable, there is much peeling of paintwork on the underside of the roof canopy which destroys its aesthetic appeal. I recommend that this is repainted. The standard of housekeeping at the rear of the bus station is poor; litter and weeds are evident around the site perimeter. We also noted that surface water drainage of the bus concourse is blocked by vegetation and other debris. It is not clear who is responsible for resolving these housekeeping and maintenance issues.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The health and safety management arrangements at the bus station are generally very good. Go North East staff have good awareness of health and safety issues and there is ownership of the site stewardship which is highly commendable. There are obvious design issues at this site which present an on-going risk; however, efforts are being made to manage associated risks within acceptable parameters. We considered that, if the aforementioned actions are undertaken, everything possible is being done within the scope of what can be achieved on this site. However, the suitability of this facility is still very much in doubt given the narrow site and the disputed land ownership issues. If a bus did strike a pedestrian whilst reversing due to the design issues previously mentioned this could well result in litigation and enforcement action which would be difficult to defend.

If there are any queries relating to the content of this report the Council's Health and Safety Advisers should be contacted.

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**Corporate Health and Safety Team**

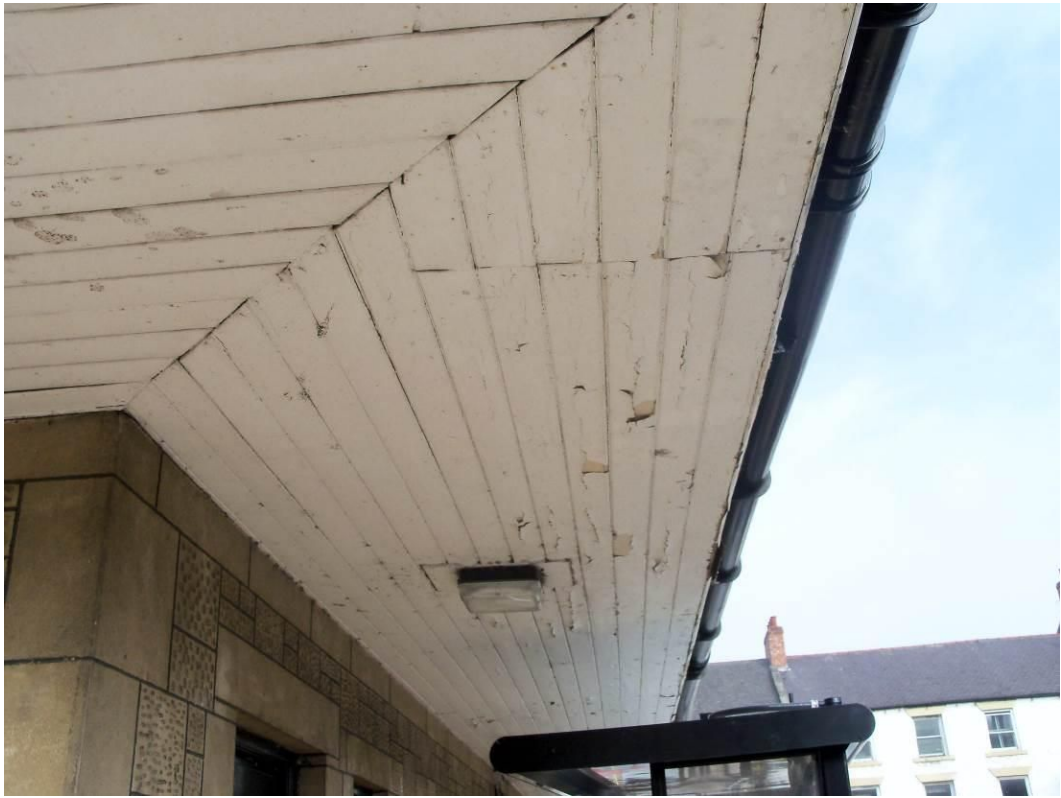
#### **APPENDIX 1**



**Photograph 1** - This shows the dedicated pedestrian route blocked by displayed produce and a designated path within the Highway.



**Photograph 2** - The raised kerb line and keep clear area for bus layovers



**Photograph 3** Peeling paint under the roof canopy



**Photograph 4** Car Park Signage



**Photograph 5** The standard of housekeeping in the bus stand is poor with litter and weeds evident around the site perimeter



**Photograph 6** – blocked surface drains

