

WHPC Meeting 7<sup>th</sup> July 2026

Agenda Item 26/199

West Hill + Bus Service 44a

**1. Purpose of this Item**

- a. To decide a response to request for changes to the route through West Hill.
- b. To receive an update (if available) on service provision during the temporary closure of West Hill Road (between West Hill and Ottery St Mary) for National Grid works between 14th September - 10th October inclusive.

**2. Request to Amend Route of Bus Service 44a**

Following requests from residents Ward Member Jess Bailey asked DCC's Devon Bus team to investigate the possibility of amending the route of the bus service 44/44a to serve West Hill Road. DCC's full response is attached as appendix 1.

In summary, DCC advised that the current timetable cannot accommodate a longer route through West Hill. A full review of the service 44/44a timetable will consider:

- The findings of a risk assessment to be undertaken by the service operator to determine the suitability of the revised route.
- Financial viability: Is an additional vehicle necessary to serve a revised route and timetable?

The most likely date for changes, if approved, would be January 2027.

It should be noted that WHPC and DCC Devon Bus has received correspondence raising concerns regarding the safety of the proposed new route serving West Hill Road.

- **For consideration:** Does the Parish Council support changes to the 44/44a bus route through West Hill?

**3. Service Provision + Temporary Closure of West Hill Road.**

During June- November 2026 National Grid will undertake works to improve the power network serving West Hill. They have advised that West Hill Road will be closed (except for homeowner access) between West Hill and Ottery St Mary during 14th September - 10th October inclusive. (Further details – appendix 2)

The Parish Council has contacted the service provide Stagecoach and DCC's Devon Bus team to request details of the service provision during this period.

If available, their response will be reported to the Council meeting.

Anne Oliver, Parish Clerk  
29<sup>th</sup> June 2026

Correspondence - DCC Devon Bus response to DCC Cllr Jess Bailey  
11<sup>th</sup> June 2026

“Any request to amend an existing supported route or request a new bus service raised with the Public Transport Team is considered via the following process:

1. The practicalities of the request is considered – For instance can a bus get to the location/turn-around if required? How many people would the change benefit? If the change is to amend an existing service, is there the time in the schedule to do this?

If the change is likely to benefit a number of people and cause minimal disruption to existing passengers, and can be achieved in a sensible way within existing vehicle and financial resource then we will look to introduce the change at the next change date (usually Easter, September and January).

Unfortunately, in this case the existing timetable can not accommodate the longer route in West Hill. Whilst this would only be a few minutes in each direction, there is not the time in the current schedule to accommodate this. It should also be highlighted at this stage that the route has not yet been risk assessed by an operator, who would have to deem if the new route is suitable to serve. Pending this, and as we can see the merits in this particular request, we would then continue with the following:

2. At this stage we would consider if an additional vehicle could be used to accommodate the request. An additional all-day vehicle Monday-Saturday generally costs the Council in the region of £180,000 per year. Expected usage generated by the change would then be used to give an estimated cost per passenger per journey. At this stage assumptions on passenger growth are also taken into account. In reality however, due to the high cost of operating a bus, it is unlikely that any proposal or suggestion would meet this threshold as no area of significant demand is currently without a bus service

In this case, the cost per passenger would not justify the additional cost. Even if this was the case, the third stage would involve seeing if there is funding available to support the additional cost. Whilst local bus services have received substantial funding from the DfT in recent years through BSIP and more recently LABG, at the same time the number of supported services has dramatically increased, as has the operating costs for bus services meaning that public transport budgets are already stretched.

Having gone through this process, the only realistic way that additional areas of West Hill could be covered, is by a full recast of the 44/44A timetable and journey patterns. We are currently undertaking detailed surveys on the route analysing customer journeys. This is taking slightly longer than anticipated due to other unexpected time critical tasks, most notably wider service changes being implemented by commercial operators.

Following a review of this data we will analyse the current 44/44A services to see if how they currently operate is still benefiting residents/being used. It is as part of this process that we will include the request for a re-route in the West Hill area to see if this can be accommodated as part of any wider changes. It is possible that the analysis might find that the current 44 service is the most suitable way forward for the service as a whole.

As the registration date for September changes is in 10 days time, the most likely date for any changes is now expected to be January 2027.

Furthermore, it should also be highlighted that after the last Parish Council meeting we have received correspondence against the route change.”

