

Causeway Coast & Glens

District Council

To: **Shadow Council**

Date: **26th March 2015**

Consultation report

1. **Draft NILGA response to NILGA proposals for Rural Proofing Bill**

The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development (DARD) is seeking views on its Proposals for a Rural Proofing Bill.

NILGA has prepared a draft response to the proposals, attached for Council's consideration.

The papers will be considered by the membership of NILGA on 27th March, after which comments will be forwarded to the Department.

2. **Proposals for a New Regulatory Framework for Social Housing Providers in Northern Ireland**

The Department for Social Development has published a consultation paper entitled 'Proposals for a New Regulatory Framework for Social Housing Providers in Northern Ireland'. The proposals set out the framework that will be used to regulate housing activities and services provided by social landlords.

A series of public consultation events will be held as follows:

- City Hotel, Londonderry – 15th April 2015 at 10.30am;
- Belfast Central Mission, Grosvenor House, Belfast – 17th April 2015 at 10.30am
- Craigavon Civic Centre - 20th April 2015 at 2.30pm.

The consultation documentation can be accessed at or a copy can be made available to Members, on request.

<http://www.dsdni.gov.uk/index/consultations/consultations-regulatory-framework-for-social-housing-ni.htm>

The consultation period runs from 12th March 2015 to 10th June 2015.

3. **Translink Public Consultation Ulsterbus Services Changes**

Translink is inviting public and political stakeholder participation in the consultation to see how it can design its network to work within its allocated resources while protecting the routes most important to its passengers.

Details of the services being reviewed can be seen at www.translink.co.uk/servicechanges

The consultation is being promoted through the media, in stations and online. There will be printed copies of the questionnaires available at public bus stations and other local amenities to make it easy for people to participate. Local public station/community events are also planned.

A copy of the consultation document inviting Translink customers and stakeholders to put forward their views on current services and help plan network changes to be introduced later this year is attached.

The consultation period will be open until 3rd April 2015.



Draft NILGA response to DARD proposals for a Rural Proofing Bill

16 March 2015

The Minister for Agriculture, Michelle O'Neill has put forward proposals to develop a Rural Proofing Bill for Northern Ireland. The NI Executive acknowledges that no single Department has exclusive responsibility for rural areas and these proposals are put forward as a potential means of strengthening rural proofing practice across government departments, councils and other public bodies. The Department is keen to ensure that the proposals are developed into appropriate and workable legislation that will have a positive impact for rural communities.

These proposals have been put forward with a short consultation timeframe, during a particularly difficult period for local government in the run up to reform on 1st April 2015. Councils have therefore had an extremely limited opportunity to examine how these proposals may affect them.

The following paper, which builds on existing local government policy, will be considered by the membership of NILGA on 27th March 2015, after which any additions or amendments will be forwarded to the Department.

For further information or to discuss any of the issues highlighted, please contact Karen Smyth at the NILGA Offices: Email: k.smyth@nilga.org Tel: 028 9079 8972

**Derek McCallan
Chief Executive**

16th March 2015

1.0 Introduction

NILGA, the Northern Ireland Local Government Association is the representative body for district councils in Northern Ireland. The membership is currently comprised of the 26 local authorities and the organisation is supported by all the main political parties. NILGA will be reconstituted further to 1st April 2015 as a representative association for the 11 new councils.

NILGA is keen to work with DARD and other stakeholders to ensure that central and local government policy and service delivery are appropriate to local communities, both urban and rural. We are particularly keen to ensure that rural communities are not disadvantaged by the introduction of new policy and legislation that have not been adequately considered from the perspective of rural dwellers.

NILGA provided a paper to the Department in 2009, detailing key priorities for local government in the development of a rural white paper. Many of these priorities have not changed, and there remains a focus on the need to preserve the rural way of life and rural identity, with a particular need for improved local connectivity and equitable service delivery.

There are a number of significant opportunities in development, which will assist in encouraging 'joined-up thinking' on rural issues, including the new Political Partnership Panel and Community

Planning Partnerships, linked to a new performance regime and, longer term, the development of a new style of Programme for Government. The emerging focus on well-being in Northern Ireland will be critically important for all of this work.

NILGA is deeply aware of the challenge faced by the Department in attempting to embed 'rural thinking' across government, but would highlight a number of issues and concerns in relation to the introduction of a Bill as an instrument to achieve this aim.

2.0 Key Issues

It is clear from the consultation paper that the Department's stakeholders have high expectations of what a Rural Proofing Bill can achieve. It is the experience of local government however, that legislation such as this can become ineffective, and we would therefore strongly encourage the Department to research existing examples of statutory duties, how the legislation is worded, how these duties have been implemented and how effective the duties are perceived to have been.

Examples include:

- The Sustainable Development duty - Section 25 of the Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2006
- The Biodiversity duty - Wildlife and Natural Environment Act (Northern Ireland) 2011
- Additionally, a **Children's Services Co-operation** Bill is currently progressing through the Assembly, including a proposal for a duty to co-operate, the wording of which should be examined, and progress monitored, as it may set a precedent in relation to what can be legislatively required of Departments.

NILGA would be keen to highlight that if a duty is imposed, clarity is required on a number of issues:

1. Guidance in relation to the expectations of the Department;
2. How the Department intends to monitor and report on compliance;
3. What the sanction will be if there is inadequate compliance.

We would highlight that even if a light touch approach is taken and the Department is keen to report good practice examples, adequate resources will be required. It is extremely likely that councils will be keen to showcase good practice and may give a large number of detailed responses to the Department upon request. This was certainly the case in relation to the replies to OFMDFM to demonstrate compliance with the Sustainable Development duty.

If there is uncertainty in relation to Departmental expectations, combined with a situation where a large amount of information is provided and the Department is not resourced to cope, it would be difficult to prevent disillusionment growing within the local government sector, which could have long term implications for the success of the Rural Proofing Bill, once enacted.

2.1 Community Planning

The timing of this consultation is slightly unfortunate, as there has been a degree of overlap with a Department of Environment consultation in relation to Community Planning Guidance. The Department is encouraged to work closely with colleagues in DOENI, via the Interdepartmental

Community Planning working group to ensure that rural proofing guidance is provided as part of the community planning process.

The nature of community planning should ensure that all council service provision is rural proofed, almost as a matter of course, but it would be helpful if DARD and DOE could work together with councils to ensure an appropriate light touch performance/reporting mechanism can be developed.

Community planning should also provide a mechanism to give statutory partners a local focus, assisting in rural proofing of service provision. The impact that community planning will have on delivery of departments is less certain at present and is the subject of ongoing policy development.

It would be immensely helpful if the two policy areas (i.e. community planning and rural proofing) could be dovetailed, to assist in keeping bureaucracy to a minimum, whilst ensuring there are appropriate impacts and outcomes in communities.

2.2 Political Partnership Panel

NILGA would be keen to encourage the DARD Minister to attend Political Partnership Panel meetings, which are designed to enable the NI Executive Ministers to meet with representatives from each of the 11 councils and NILGA. A work plan is in development, and it is likely that this would be an extremely helpful mechanism to discuss the implementation of rural proofing across government – both central and local – at an appropriate time. In the interim, it would be helpful for the Agriculture and Rural Development Minister to be involved in the developing conversation and action on community planning, well-being, performance improvement, and preparations for a new Programme for Government/Local Government.

3.0 Consultation Questions

1: Do you support the need for change in line with DARD’s aspirations as outlined in the consultation document, i.e.:

- **rural issues would be embedded in the development and delivery of all government strategies and policies (including spending plans);**
- **rural needs and impacts would be identified and addressed appropriately as a matter of course across government;**
- **there would be transparency and availability of information on rural proofing; and**
- **government would establish and maintain a joined-up and collaborative approach to considering and taking account of rural needs when designing all services.**

Yes. NILGA supports these aspirations, but is concerned that there may be difficulty in implementing a statutory duty in a way that ensures they are achieved.

2: Do you think that placing a statutory duty on all government departments and local councils would help to ensure that the needs of rural dwellers are appropriately considered when policies and public services are being developed and delivered?

Possibly, dependent on the key issues outlined above. If stakeholder expectations are to be met and managed, the wording of the legislation, the Department’s resourcing of implementation and a clear plan to monitor and report on compliance will be absolutely vital.

As councils are to quite a large extent, dependent on Departments to produce appropriate legislation, policy and strategy, it will be extremely important to ensure Departmental compliance with the duty,

as by the time a policy has requirements for councils and council implementation begins, it may already be too late to effectively rural proof the outcome.

It is also noted that this Bill, when enacted, will not address 'reserved matters' which may be dealt with by some public bodies.

3: Do you think that such a duty should extend to non-departmental public bodies in addition to government departments and councils? If so, which bodies?

Yes. The Department is encouraged to examine the policy work surrounding other statutory duties and also the recent consultation on the draft Local Government (Community Planning Partners) Order (Northern Ireland) 2015 for comparative purposes.

4: Do you think that DARD should have a statutory role to promote and encourage other bodies to undertake rural proofing?

Yes. NILGA would be particularly keen to see the production of materials to assist with this, e.g. a 'rural proofing toolkit' for both policy development and service delivery.

5: Do you think that the proposed monitoring and reporting arrangements will help to improve the availability and transparency of information available about rural proofing?

It would be helpful if clarity could be provided on what 'regular reports' means; for example, is an annual report envisaged, will there be a two yearly cycle, or will there be one report per Assembly mandate?

NILGA would be keen for the Department to develop an outcome-focussed approach to rural-proofing, and the required format of the report will heavily influence achievement of this aim. We would encourage the Department to think carefully about how such a report is to be laid before the Assembly, and would suggest that consideration should be given about whether Department-specific reports should go to relevant Committees for examination. There is a danger that a composite report covering all departments and bodies might merely be noted, with few recommended actions for improvement.

While the performance of Departments is vital to the successful implementation of the Bill, NILGA would be keen to establish whether the compliance of councils and other public bodies would also feature in this report or whether a separate report would be published for them. If councils are to be included, would the (currently, Environment) Minister be held accountable for their performance, or would this responsibility fall to the Agriculture and Rural Development Minister?

6: Do you think that increased co-operation and collaboration between DARD, other government departments and public bodies is desirable?

Yes, this would be immensely helpful, but the Department is again encouraged to do some scoping on existing arrangements for Community Planning, and also to seek out the draft **Children's Services Co-operation** Bill for potential precedent in relation to wording of the Bill.

7: Do you agree with the strengthening of DARD's role in providing support for rural proofing?

Yes. Failure to provide training, advice, guidance and information would adversely affect the successful implementation of the requirements of the Bill. The Department must be clear in its intent, how rural proofing is to be more effectively applied by other departments and the kind of feedback it requires. The Department must also adequately resource the advice, training and monitoring required for the Bill to be successfully implemented.

8: Is there any other aspect of the proposals you wish to comment on?

It is noted that there is no mention of a sanction for non-compliance. This leaves all departments, councils and public bodies required to comply with the Bill, open to judicial review in cases of perceived non-compliance. The Department may wish to consider whether an alternative sanctions mechanism would be preferable.

9: Do you have any views on the conclusions reached by DARD to screen out from further assessment the impacts of a Rural Proofing Bill in respect of:

- (i) Equality Impact Assessment;
- (ii) Regulatory Impact Assessment; and
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No.

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DRAFT

Bus Services Consultation

Bus Services Consultation Exercise

Translink aims to provide all its customers with a high quality public transport service.

In order to do that we must ensure that our services are accessible and efficient while at the same time providing the best value for money.

We want to know what is most important to our passengers.

The purpose of this questionnaire is to better understand how you use our services, for example, how often do you travel by bus, is there another service you could use or could you travel at a different time or on another day.

In particular, in the Coleraine area we are reviewing:

Service 331

Ballycastle Town Service

Service 140A & B

Portrush to Portstewart to Coleraine Triangle

You can view our network map detailing services at www.translink.co.uk/networkmap

We will be holding local public information sessions at your local bus and train station over the coming weeks, for more details see in station or call our contact centre on 028 90 66 66 30.

Take our Survey:

All questions may be answered on your own behalf or for a member of your family or a dependent.

Please complete a survey form for each service you use
Respond by Friday 3 April 2015

1. Which service do you use:

2. How often do you use this service:

Almost every day At least once a week About once a week Once every few weeks Less often

3. Which day do you use this service (tick as many as you need)

Monday Tuesday Wednesday Thursday Friday Saturday Sunday

4. What time of day do you normally use this service

Before 0930 0930 to 1530 1530 to 1800 After 1800

5. Please tell us why you are making these journeys

	Education / Training	Employment	Health / Social Care	Leisure / Visiting	Shopping	Town / Local Centre
Morning (M-F)						
Daytime (M-F)						
Evening (M-F)						
Saturday						
Sunday						

6. Could you make the journey on a different day? Yes / No

If yes - which day / any day?

7. Could you make the journey on the same day at a different time? Yes / No

If yes - what time / any time?

8. What would the impact be on you if this route were reduced or removed

9. What do you think should be the most important priority when Translink is making decisions about which services to change or remove:

Total number of passengers on the service
(i.e. priority given to those services used by the highest number of passengers)

Maintaining existing network, even if it means buses running less frequently or on only a few days a week.

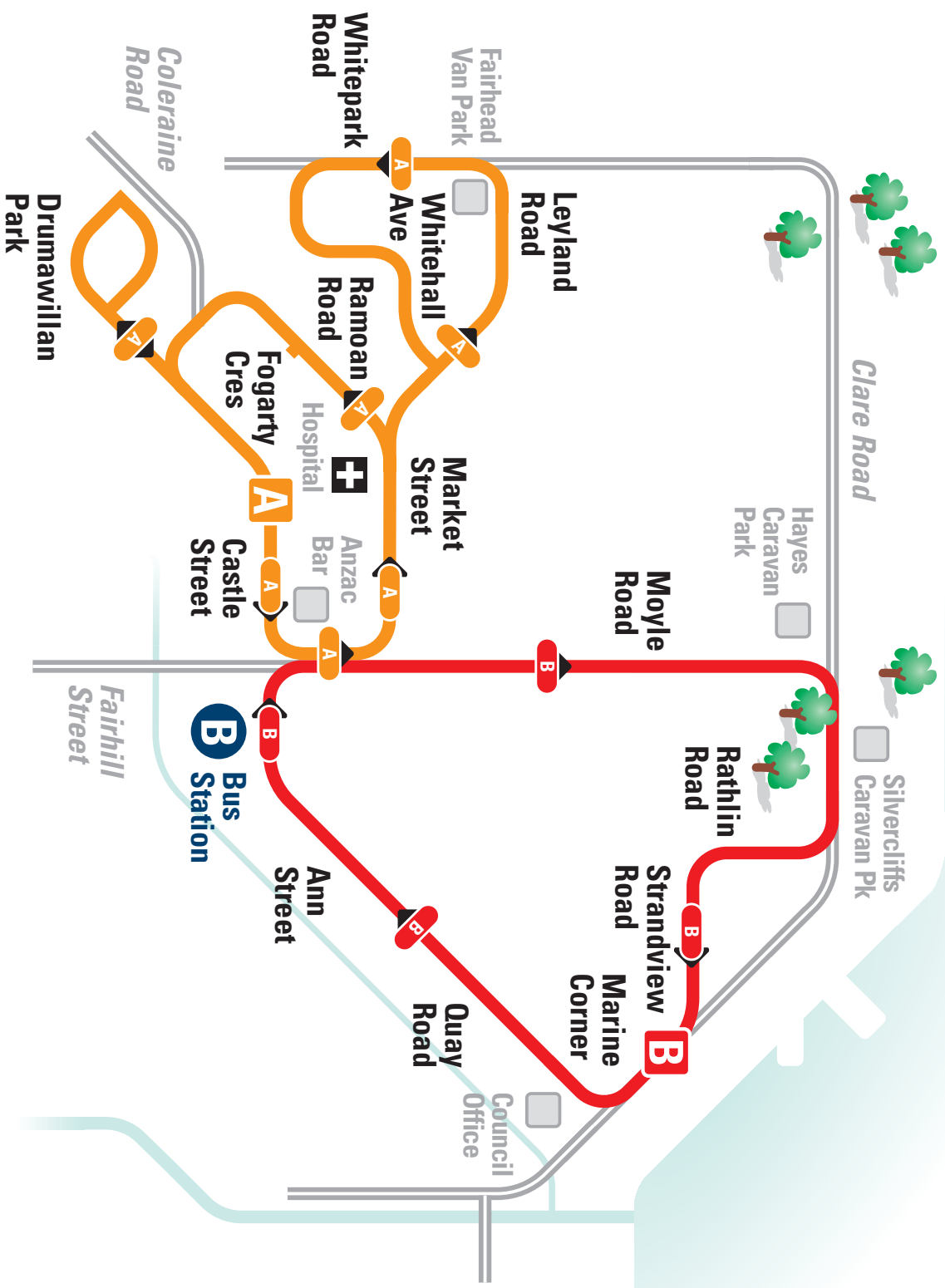
Maintaining bus services to / from villages where there are no local services (such as shops, post office, etc.), even if it means lower frequency on buses through the day or buses running on only a few days a week.

10. Are you a Smartpass user? Yes / No

You can also submit this survey online at www.translink.co.uk/servicechanges or return this completed form to the Ticket Office at your local bus or train station.

Thank you for taking the time to give us your feedback.

331 - Ballycastle Town Service



Key to Routes

- Route 331 A
- Route 331 B

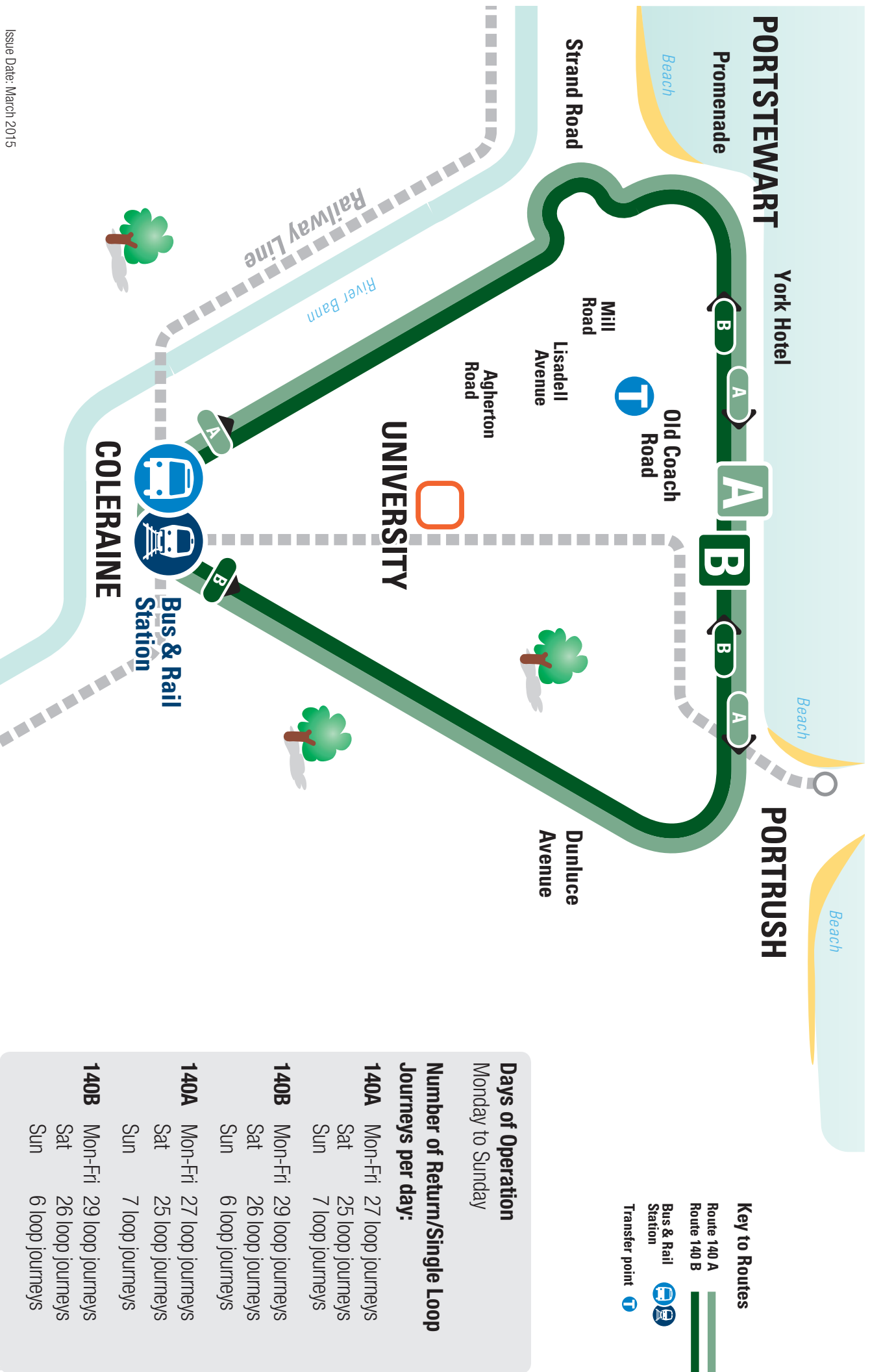
Main Roads
No town services operate on these routes

Bus Station **B**

Days of Operation
 Monday to Friday

Number of Return/Single Loop Journeys per day:
 331 16 return journeys

140 - Portrush - Portstewart - Coleraine Service



Days of Operation

Monday to Sunday

Number of Return/Single Loop Journeys per day:

140A	Mon-Fri	27 loop journeys
	Sat	25 loop journeys
	Sun	7 loop journeys
140B	Mon-Fri	29 loop journeys
	Sat	26 loop journeys
	Sun	6 loop journeys
140A	Mon-Fri	27 loop journeys
	Sat	25 loop journeys
	Sun	7 loop journeys
140B	Mon-Fri	29 loop journeys
	Sat	26 loop journeys
	Sun	6 loop journeys