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For Immediate Release

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## LAUNCH OF NEW DERBYSHIRE CONNECT BUS SERVICE

Passengers are being offered a week's free travel to mark the launch of a new-style Derbyshire County Council bus service.

'Derbyshire Connect' goes into service on Monday 13 February around the wider Ashbourne area. And for the first week, all passengers can benefit from free travel to any destination.

In advance of its official launch the bus is also going on tour at various venues around Ashbourne and in Wirksworth.

Derbyshire Connect will run along the principles of a 'Demand-Responsive-Transport (DRT) service – the first of its kind in Derbyshire.

This means it can be more flexible than conventional 'turn up and go' services. These generally have the same start and end destinations with fixed, timetabled stops along the way.

Journeys on Derbyshire Connect will need to be booked between a week and up to two hours before the time of travel. But because journeys are pre-booked, routes can be planned to cater to individual passengers' needs meaning many more pick up and drop off points can be offered on different days of the week.

Bookings can be made by calling 01335 342951 or by email at [bookings@derbyshireconnect.org.uk](mailto:bookings@derbyshireconnect.org.uk)

Derbyshire Connect is initially being run as a trial for up to a year. It will be operated by Ashbourne Community Transport and serve villages north of Ashbourne and to the east as far as Wirksworth.

It will run 7am to 6pm Monday to Friday and 8am to 6pm, Saturday. There is no Sunday service.

Any kind of passenger will be eligible to use Derbyshire Connect for any type of journey, including current users of conventional bus services, community transport users, young people, older people, visitors and groups. It may also be used for non-emergency patient transport.

After the initial free travel period fares will be £2 adult single, £3.80 return, £1.20 child single, £2.40 return.

Gold Card holders will travel free-of-charge after 9.30am weekdays and anytime Saturdays. b\_line2 cardholders will get 25% discount off adult fares and primary school pupils will pay the appropriate fare or travel free as an entitled student.

Derbyshire County Council Cabinet Member for Highways, Transport and Infrastructure Councillor Dean Collins, said: "This is a first for Derbyshire and will provide people with the opportunity to tailor journeys to suit their individual needs. It will be a bus for everyone from passengers needing to get to essential services to residents and visitors wanting to make leisure trips.

"Because we have never run this type of service before we are piloting it to see if we need to make any changes but in the longer term the aim is to roll out other Derbyshire Connect services in other rural parts of the county."

Tour dates for the bus are:

- St Oswald's Hospital, Ashbourne, Monday 30 January, 9am to 12 noon
- Ashbourne Market Place, Thursday 2 February, 9am to 12 noon
- Shawcroft Car Park, Ashbourne, Thursday 2 February, 1pm to 4pm
- Carsington Water Visitor Centre, Saturday 4 February, 10am to 2pm
- Wirksworth Market Place, Monday 6 February, 9am to 12 noon
- M&S Car Park, Ashbourne, Wednesday 8 February 9am to 12 noon
- Sainsbury's Car Park, Ashbourne, Wednesday 8 February 1pm to 4pm

**For media enquiries please contact the press office on 01629 538205.**