

## **NOTE OF RELBUS MEETING**

**Thursday, 21<sup>st</sup> February 2013, 7pm, Town House, Haddington**

Present:	Barry Turner	Chair
	Philip Immirzi	RELBUS Members/Press Contact
	Judy Miller	Sustaining Dunbar
	Ralph Averbuch	Pencaitland Community Council
	Allison Cosgrove	Dunpender Community Council
	Stuart Turnbull	Dunbar Community Council
	Colin Barnes	Dunbar
	Sheila Millar	Gifford Community Council
	Robin Sinclair	Pencaitland Community Council
	Iain Gray	MSP
	Gavin Booth	Bus Users UK
	Elizabeth Hutchison	Muirpark and Steading View TRA
	John McMillan	East Lothian Councillor for Haddington and Lammermuir

### **Item 1 – Apologies**

Jacqui Bell, Morag Haddow, Peter Armstrong, Shena Jamieson, Barry Hutton, Councillors Michael Veitch, Shamin Akhtar and Jim Goodfellow.

### **Item 2 – Presentation by Iain Gray MSP**

IG introduced his proposal bring forward a Private Member's Bill to strengthen regulation of the bus industry.

Timescale/Procedure - The proposed bill is currently at an early stage and is due to be launched next week. The process involves launching a consultation document (12 week period), preparing a response to the consultation and a draft bill, seeking signatures (18 MSP's have to sign with cross party support). The proposed bill can be stopped by Ministers if they already have planned legislation which deals with the proposals. If Ministers do have planned legislation, it will be subject to consultation and its content can be influenced at this stage.

Reason for the Bill – The bus industry does not get enough attention from the Government; five times as many journeys are currently made by bus than train, yet there is only £250m public money spent on bus services in Scotland (£190m of which is used for concessionary travel) compared with £700m spent on rail services (£350m given as subsidies). The Bus Service Operators Grant has reduced by 17%, and funding for concessionary travel is also due to be reduced in three years time. Furthermore, the flaws of the deregulated system are showing themselves after 30 years.

Support for the Bill – Although Charlie Gordon MSP tried to bring forward a similar bill a few years ago which failed due to lack of cross party support, IG is confident his bill will progress further this time due to the recent reduction in bus services, particularly in East and Mid Lothian, and the expected support of the Green Party. In addition, Strathclyde Passenger Transport (SPT) has produced a comprehensive plan suggesting a number of changes to the current regulatory regime, similar to the proposed bill, and there are indications that the Government might be coming round to the idea that changes are needed.

Content of Bill – One of the main changes in the new bill regards franchising. At present, local authorities have limited powers and pick up market failure routes while commercial operators cream off the rest. It is proposed that commercial and non-commercial routes would be bundled together as one in the future and the local authority would have the right to specify the bundles.

This would create a system similar to that which currently exists in Edinburgh, effectively resulting in monopolies which cross subsidise less profitable services from more lucrative city centre routes. In essence, more equitable agreements are required between bus operators and local authorities, giving the latter more control over routes, timetables, quality of buses and fares.

Discussion – It was generally agreed that this was an opportunity to ensure that local authorities dictate provision of services rather than bus operators; services would effectively be regulated for the period of the contract and monitored with cause for redress if necessary.

The issues of rural bus services and the lack of connection between villages and towns were raised. It was suggested that local authorities could use their own vehicles to plug the gaps in rural services. Although current legislation does not enable local authorities to charge fares for these journeys, provision for this would be included in the proposed bill, together with safeguards to ensure driver and vehicle standards.

It was generally agreed that there is a lack of bus expertise in local and national organisations, but that local authorities are probably better placed to deliver bus services than regional partnerships, who do not currently have the statutory basis or funding.

**ACTION** – IG will present his proposed Private Members Bill at the next East Lothian Bus Users Forum.

### **Item 3 – Minutes of Last Meeting (8th November 2012)**

Accepted. It was noted that the local bus survey detailed in these minutes also covered Gifford, Pencaitland and Ormiston.

### **Item 4 – Matters Arising**

Finance – Funding has been received from Dunpender Community Council. Tom Shearer at East Lothian Council has been approached and confirmed that there is an avenue open for sources of funding.

Data Sources – The ELC employee travel survey data has been received, and will be used in the future.

First Bus Vehicles – First has not yet been contacted to find out why East Lothian services get old vehicles. It was however noted that there was a letter published in last week's East Lothian Courier stating that East Lothian will be getting newer, low floor buses.

Conference Outcomes – BT has now received the notes from 'Getting Around East Lothian – Community and Supported Transport Conference' held on 3/3/12.

**ACTION** – BT will pass these onto RA to be published online.

### **Item 5 – Feedback from Recent Meeting with Dundee Council Transport Planners**

BT/PI/MH met with representatives from Dundee City Council and Local Bus Operators on 10/1/13. It was a useful and interesting day; photos are on the Relbus facebook page. Dundee is a compact urban area with a big budget for public transport, but it has taken foresight, investment and 20 years to get a good bus network. Almost all of the services are run by large private operators such as National Express and Stagecoach. Dundee has a fully integrated public transport system which works; its bus stops are eye catching with good lighting, vandal proof glass and a high standard of information provided by the local authority which is integrated with tourism information, GIS technology.

### **Item 6 - Update on Transport Hub**

This is seen as being a relatively low cost way of getting a form of integrated transport in rural areas. It could be part of a quality partnership which influences operators to make buses meet

trains. A bus hub would need a shelter, good lighting, route maps and fare information as a minimum and could lead to an increase in patronage from the current all time low in rural areas. Although the strict legal position is that rail and bus provided by the same operator cannot integrate, in reality, this situation only applies in a very small number of cases in East Lothian. Short local bus journeys from rural areas to train stations would probably not be covered by this. Transport Hub Proposals for Dunbar – Morag Haddow from Sustaining Dunbar has been working on proposals to locate a high quality transport hub in Dunbar. These proposals have reached the final ten in the Green Transport Prize competition, run by Edinburgh College, which will award £50,000 to the winning entry and £25,000 each to two runners-up. Sustaining Dunbar recently met East Lothian Council to discuss the proposals; East Lothian Council is interested in upgrading bus stop infrastructure in East Lothian, and is responsive to the proposals for a hub in Dunbar. This was noted, and it was suggested that proposals for a similar hub should be included in the Strategy for Haddington.

### **Item 7 – Draft Charter**

At the recent East Lothian Bus Forum meeting, Relbus suggested that a bus passenger charter be produced for all parties to agree to. PI has produced a draft charter from the Relbus Discussion Document with the aims of being easy to understand and easy to sign up to. A discussion about possible additional points for the charter followed, including non-designated stops in rural areas and a section setting out the standard for passenger behaviour.

**ACTION** – The Draft Charter will be published online for Relbus members. Comments must be received by 31/3/13 to enable them to be incorporated and the revised and agreed document presented as an agenda item at the East Lothian Bus Forum meeting on 30/4/13. The Charter will then be put out to wider consultation.

### **Item 8 – Current Bus Issues**

113 Service – There has been some positive feedback about the vehicles on the 113 service, but the service is very slow and overcrowded; an express service is needed.

It is understood that Lothian Buses has no proposals for introducing an express commuter service yet, but usage of the 113 service is being monitored. It was suggested that local Community Councils should lobby hard for an express service.

**ACTION** – BT will ask MV to raise this issue with Lothian Buses again.

121 Service – This service arrives at Drem at 12.45, but there is no train service until 1.27 and no facilities at Drem Station; could the service be altered to allow a shorter wait?

It is understood that there have been some small changes to this service recently, there will be six monthly meetings with bus operators (Prentice in this case) to give Community Councils the opportunity to discuss these issues. It was noted that Prentice is listening to community concerns and changing services to meet the needs of its customers.

**ACTION** – JMc will raise this issue with Prentice.

### **Item 9 – Any Other Business**

The next meeting of the East Lothian Bus Forum will be 30/4/13

### **Item 10 - Date of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of Relbus will be on 8/5/13.

Contact Details:

[dave.rose@fsmail.net](mailto:dave.rose@fsmail.net)

[peter.hamilton555@btinternet.com](mailto:peter.hamilton555@btinternet.com)

[shenajamieson@aol.com](mailto:shenajamieson@aol.com)

[mocuthill13@btinternet.com](mailto:mocuthill13@btinternet.com)

[jacquie.bell50@googlemail.com](mailto:jacquie.bell50@googlemail.com)

[mveitch1@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:mveitch1@eastlothian.gov.uk)

[barryturner@f2s.com](mailto:barryturner@f2s.com)

[armstrongspott@btinternet.com](mailto:armstrongspott@btinternet.com)

[pi@sustainingdunbar.org](mailto:pi@sustainingdunbar.org)

[morag@sustainingdunbar.org](mailto:morag@sustainingdunbar.org)

[judy.miller@sustainingdunbar.org](mailto:judy.miller@sustainingdunbar.org)

[allison1314@gmail.com](mailto:allison1314@gmail.com)

[stuart@dunbarharbourdevelopments.org.uk](mailto:stuart@dunbarharbourdevelopments.org.uk)

[cib@bcs.org](mailto:cib@bcs.org)

[sheilamillar409@btinternet.org](mailto:sheilamillar409@btinternet.org)

[bigchiefmeister@btinternet.com](mailto:bigchiefmeister@btinternet.com)

[ralphaverbuch@gmail.com](mailto:ralphaverbuch@gmail.com)

[iain.gray.msp@scottishparliament.uk](mailto:iain.gray.msp@scottishparliament.uk)

[gavin.booth@btconnect.com](mailto:gavin.booth@btconnect.com)

[muirpark.steadingviewtra@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:muirpark.steadingviewtra@hotmail.co.uk)

[jmcmillan@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:jmcmillan@eastlothian.gov.uk)

[bjh1935@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:bjh1935@yahoo.co.uk)

[sakhtar@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:sakhtar@eastlothian.gov.uk)

[jgoodfellow@eastlothian.gov.uk](mailto:jgoodfellow@eastlothian.gov.uk)

Note of meeting prepared by JM 26/2/13, revised 4/3/13

Comments received and included from PI