

Rough Minutes - First Bus - Iain Gray Meeting

RELBU meeting with Iain Gray & Paul Thomas, Managing Director, South East Scotland First Bus - 31st January 2011

RELBU attendees - Peter Armstrong, Hassan Syed, Jill Thomson

RELBU raised the issues of:-

Elderly passengers no longer having a day time service between Asda and the High Street,

Problems with access for the disabled, infirm and parents with pushchairs.

High single fares for occasional passengers, part time commuters and low paid workers.

Lack of publicity and availability of paper timetables

No direct links to Tranent/Musselburgh

Lack of timetables in St Andrew Sq and York Place

Paul Thomas explained reasons for changes to timetables, including longer journey times, required as First Bus have been fined £125,000 by Transport Scotland for late running times in West Lothian in the past. They must meet very difficult targets set by Transport Scotland. Also discussed the withdrawal of the grant which funded the X8 service. He explained the 22 minute standing time in Dunbar High St was to allow for delays in arriving in Dunbar.

He expressed disappointment that only 6 East Lothian Councillors attended the Consultation with First Bus in October 2010. He confirmed that First had made two changes to the timetable already following complaints (for the convenience of school pupils returning home) with full approval from ELC.

Regarding disabled access, all drivers have been trained to use "chair lifts" although there are grey areas with Health and Safety of drivers. Any disabled passenger who cannot access a coach would be entitled to a taxi journey home at First's expense (clarification required)

First have "Mystery Shoppers" on most buses feeding back information to the Directors and he would be happy to have someone from Dunbar within this group.

First confirmed their promotional weekly fares will be continuing for some time. that they are looking at 10 journey tickets and promotional fares for families during school holidays and for teenagers at weekends. There will be rises in fares in 2011 but not to the Dunbar area, who had a large rise in single fares last year.

Paul stated that both the Trains and Lothian Buses fares are heavily subsidised at present and they find it very difficult to compete.

In 2012 Real Time Bus displays will be introduced to East Lothian, but it is the local authority decision as to how and where these will be displayed. At present each First Bus Depot only has one employee present, so facility at present to let passengers know if buses are running on time (text/telephone)

First would be willing to attend a public meeting but only if it was constructive.

Paul Thomas's secretary can be contacted at alison.hall@firstgroup.com or John.gorman@firstgroup.com - Operations Director

Iain Gray confirmed that due to budget restraints ELC will be substantially cutting their Transport Budget. He will also keep feeding back complaints to First Bus from his constituents.