

NOTE OF RELBUS MEETING

Wednesday 8 May 2013, 7pm, Town House, Haddington

Present:	Barry Turner	Chair
	Philip Immirzi	RELBUS Members/Press Contact
	Jacqueline Bell	RELBUS/Dunbar Community Council
	Colin Barnes	RELBUS
	Stuart Turnbull	Dunbar Community Council
	Ross Prentice	Prentice Coaches
	Cllr Michael Veitch	East Lothian Council
	Barry Hutton	Penciatland
	Morag Haddow	Sustaining Dunbar

Item 1 – Apologies

Allison Cosgrove, Sheila Jamieson, Peter Armstrong, Ralph Averbach, Gavin Booth, Cllr Stuart Currie, Cllr John Williams

Item 2 & 3 – Minutes and Matters Arising

Minutes of 21 February Meeting accepted. Matters arising are covered below.

Item 4 - Passenger Charter - establishment of short-life working group

Draft Passenger Charter has been circulated for comment.

Action: MV will convene a short-life working group including bus passengers and operators to refine and then present Charter to next Bus Forum.

Item 5 - Issues from Bus Forum, including Bus Investment Fund

MV reported that he was encouraged by the meeting and pleased that operators were present. It is a useful forum for discussion between operators, ELC and bus users.

The new Scottish Government Bus Investment Fund was discussed and a Haddington to Longniddry fastlink along the railway path was mooted, but subsequent discussion with officers has suggested that a more feasible option is a fastlink to the Park and Ride at Wallyford seems more feasible. The key criteria for the funding are: modal shift, partnership working and attracting match funding. RP has already met with Martin Hayman from Haddington Community Development Trust to discuss bus links to Park and Ride facilities.

Action: MH to contact Peter Forsyth to see if Sustaining Dunbar can help put together a proposal tying in the Haddington bus link, transport hubs, and potentially Community Bus Partnerships.

ELC is proposing to meet with supported service operators twice a year to discuss their routes, and any changes will be implanted following these meetings (i.e. supported service timetables will change at set times each year). It was hoped that the commercial operators would follow suit in limiting timetable changes to a common date. RELBUS and RP formally welcomed this development.

ELC is proposing to produce combined operator timetables for bus stops.

Item 6 - Iain Gray's Bill - consultation

BH pointed out that the view of the Competition Commission that 2 buses should run along the same route at the same time, may in the interests of stimulating competition, but is not in the interests of passengers. He thought this would be addressed in Iain Gray's bill. He also noted that experiments with running time information in Aberdeenshire had been unsuccessful because operators had been reluctant to share this information. MH pointed out that Prentice Coaches have recently started published their bus locations online.

BH noted that the Traffic Commissioners and VOSA have different responsibilities as things stand, and this can lead to conflicting pressures on operators. He feels a change in the regime is necessary to allow buses to work as a network and e.g. wait for connecting services at interchanges.

BT agreed that buses shouldn't be in competition, but should be connected and integrated with other forms of transport. BT noted that the proposals are likely to discriminate against small operators, although it offers the potential for partnership working between operators, though the law currently prevents this. MV felt that cross-subsidising of services is key, as commercial operators cherry-pick the profitable routes leaving local councils to support the less used services. BT pointed out, that someone still has to pay somewhere for the socially necessary services, and if expansion of commercial services beyond current profit-led levels is involved within the package then costs to the public purse will be higher than at present. Also, the franchise process will be complicated and is likely to require expertise that local councils don't necessarily have.

MV noted that Lothian Buses are deregulated but work very well as although they have complete commercial freedom they are implicitly expected to cross-subsidise unprofitable routes.

BT took issue with a couple of errors in Iain Gray's proposals but accepted that this was a first draft BT expressed confidence that the MSP would be open to suggestions and that what will eventually emerge will be thought out and sensible

BH raised the issue of through-ticking as being desirable. He noted that the 113 being run by a different operator to most of Edinburgh caused problems as the tickets were not transferable. He would like to see an Oyster-card type system for Scotland.

BT wondered if there was any role for Community Transport in a new regulatory regime. MH pointed out that the Scottish Government was consulting on that at the moment.

Action: BT to pull together formal response to Iain Gray's consultation on bus regulation. He will circulate a draft for comments and it will be finalised at the next RELBUS meeting

Action: MH to send link on Community Transport Consultation to BT

Item 7 - Community Bus Partnerships - Morag Haddow

MH summarised a proposal for Community Bus Partnerships along the lines of the very successful Community Rail Partnerships in England. Some lines have seen increases in patronage of 50% over 2 years through the increased promotion opportunities of working closely with communities along the route. The key has been improving access to stations and developing a route identity.

MH's paper on this is attached. It suggests ideas for transferring these ideas to buses, and MH feels that buses should find this in many ways easier as buses usually travel through the heart of local communities. She commended Prentice Coaches on their recent involvement with Haddington Market and suggested that buses and bus stops could become more involved in the promotion of local events either through leaflets/posters in the buses or at the bus stops.

BH named Alan Williams as a key player in the Whitby Community Rail Partnership, and felt it had been a success. He noted that local people take an interest in finding out local information (walks etc), but felt that it would be harder to foster the same enthusiasm for buses as there is for trains.

Item 8 - Current bus issues

CB raised issues with 2 bus routes in Dunbar (120 and 130) as having needlessly convoluted routes and did not meet trains. He suggested that the 120 should go straight to North Berwick without having to perform a 'town service' function, and should have a 'clockface' timetable which was easier for users to remember. CB stated that the existing situation suggests that no-one thinks about the way in which people use the buses, and RP confirmed that the same routes have been tendered for years without revision.

MV stated that he was aware of local desire of connectivity, and agreed that things could be improved. He said that discussions had already taken place with Eve' and he is hopeful of being able to announce improvements to Dunbar and Musselburgh services soon.

PI raised the issue of the bus service/tender consultation process and how bus users can make their views known before decisions are made. MV suggested that the best way to let him know personally, through Community Councils or through RELBUS meetings, and he would feed information back to ELC officers, and to operators via the Bus Forum.

Item 9 - ELC staffing issues

BT expressed concern at rumours that ELC would be making voluntary redundancies this year, and MV gave assurances that ELC would ensure they did not lose the expertise with their staff.

Action: BT will write to the Chief Executive of ELC on behalf of RELBUS to state this requirement in the strongest possible terms.

Item 10 - Any other business

Bus Stop Infrastructure – ELC is reviewing the state of this. MV also proposed putting the service number and operator on the bus flag. JB cited personal experience of dirty bus shelters and poor waiting facilities, and many of those present shared her concerns. CB pointed out that information is also very poor. PI noted that ELC seems to be taking responsibility for providing information and we should see the new combined timetable format within 6 months.

AGM: BH agreed to speak.

Action: RELBUS committee positions to be agreed before the AGM

Bank Account – JB has a £50 donation from Dunder Community Council (**check?**).

Action: MH to set up bank account for RELBUS

Item 11 - Date of next meeting

The next meeting of Relbus will be the AGM on 20/8/13.

Note of meeting prepared by MH 20/5/15