

## **RELBUS**

### **Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2016**

Present:

Barry Turner, Chairman; Iain Gray, MSP; Gavin Booth, Bus Users Scotland; Jacqui Bell; Sheila Sinclair; Morag Haddow; Harry Barker; Sarah Beattie-Smith.

Barry Turner opened the meeting advising that the primary purpose was to discuss the withdrawal of all First Group services from East Lothian and the closure of both Musselburgh and North Berwick depots. An acceptance of the minutes of the previous meeting was agreed.

A matter arising from these was bus/rail connectivity at North Berwick and Harry Barker updated the meeting indicating that ScotRail was supportive of the proposals put forward by the Community Rail Partnership (CRP), and the CRP was obtaining support from the various tourist outlets that would benefit from bus/rail connectivity and would then approach East Lothian Council with a fully worked out timetable (which has been completed) in order to gain their support for implementation. There are issues with ensuring that The Equality Act (2010) is adhered to in that provision for disabled passengers to use the facilities and in this connection an approach to ScotRail to make very minor changes to the Saturday timetable of the North Berwick train service has been refused for reasons not accepted by the CRP. As bus/rail connectivity is an integral part of the ScotRail franchise, the matter is to be referred to Transport Scotland.

#### First Group withdrawal from East Lothian

There was much discussion on the future of bus services following First Group's intimation they were withdrawing from the County with effect from 14<sup>th</sup> August. In summary, no specific details were available regarding replacement bus services, but there was general expectation that there would indeed be replacements, and possibly of a higher quality than First had provided. Barry Turner had received no information from East Lothian Council on the current state of negotiations with potential new operators. In order to allay the real fears of existing passengers who could be faced with no alternative and hardship and isolation, it was agreed that a press release be issued with the backing of Iain Gray and Michael Veitch and this hopefully would be covered in the local press.

Harry Barker indicated that it was the ideal time to achieve bus/rail connectivity at Longniddry enabling the villagers of Gullane and Aberlady to connect into trains to Edinburgh, and out of trains from Edinburgh at Longniddry with any new timetable.

There was a universal view that identification of the potential new operators was time critical in order that RELBUS and other stakeholders could influence the new timetables to handle local requirements, including movement of schoolchildren (East Linton to Dunbar being specifically mentioned). Failure to do so could result in an inappropriate timetable being introduced on day one, and changes to reflect passenger needs only being introduced a few months later.

It was agreed that RELBUS would co-ordinate the public responses to this situation through their website.

### Future of RELBUS

Barry Turner has previously intimated that he would be standing down as Chairman of RELBUS at the AGM on 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2016. Harry Barker has indicated he would be willing to take over as Chairman subject to approval at the AGM.

Attendance at regular meetings has been poor of late, and it is acknowledged that the withdrawal of First Group ought to result in a significant improvement in the County bus services and reduction in passenger complaints, thereby meaning that the necessity for regular meetings would become less. On that basis, the AGM will discuss our future method of operation which may involve fewer meetings, but making ourselves available to have one should a specific problem be identified. Communication with Community Councils and the public, the latter possibly through advertisements in the local press of how to contact us in the event of an issue, will be required and Harry Barker advised that it should be possible to include RELBUS contact details on Community Rail Partnership notice boards once they had been approved by Scotrail (no time scale available).

### Provisional date for AGM

Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2016. Please note in your diary now.

HB