

RURAL EAST LOTHIAN BUS GROUP (RELBUS)

Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday June 12th 2019 in the Meikle room, Town House, Haddington at 1400hrs.

Attendees: Harry Barker, Chair; Jacqui Bell, Dunbar Community Council and Area Partnership; George Rapson, East Saltoun resident and bus operator.

Apologies were received from Ian Malcolm and Morag Haddow.

Current services:

George Rapson raised the limited provision of bus services in East Saltoun which in view of new housing in both East Saltoun and in Pencaitland (the latter not served by passing East Coast Buses services) makes a review essential, particularly as both 'looked to' Tranent and Edinburgh for day to day activities rather than Haddington. Harry Barker indicated that following him attending a community council meeting held in Fletcher Hall, East Saltoun in June 2017, RELBUS had secured an agreement for ELC to introduce a service from Humbie to Tranent via Glenkinchie, West Saltoun and East Saltoun, connecting at Pencaitland Park with East Coast 113 and also serving New Winton. There would be sufficient time in Tranent for shopping and other activities, unlike the previous service which only allowed three minutes before returning on the Gifford circle. This was to have been run using the minibus from the grossly underused 109 Haddington – Humbie route. At the Bus Forum 2018, ELC said they had not had time to prepare the application to the Traffic Commissioners to run the service but would do so. However, at the Bus Forum held in March 2019 Harry Barker raised the issue again to discover that no application had been made and because funding for the Haddington to Humbie service had run out, with arrangements in place for it to be renewed, it was unlikely to be introduced in the near future. The 109 is still operating, however.

It was agreed that Harry Barker would approach East Coast Buses seeking a meeting to discuss options, which had to be realistic, to extend selected journeys on their 113 to East Saltoun, the specific route to be discussed. George Rapson indicated that he would wish to attend if a meeting was arranged.

ACTION HB / GR

Eve 130 Dunbar local

Jacqui Bell has had resident(s) from the far end of Brodie Road contacting her following the change to the school day in Dunbar. A bus currently leaves the Molly Keith area around 0845 but does not get the children to school until 0905, too late for the school start time. It is said to be too far to walk to catch the 120 to in Middlemass Road. Jacqui has raised this with Andrew McLellan but has had no response. All she wants is the 130 to run earlier on this particular journey. Harry Barker said he would try to get Morag Haddow to contact Andrew McLellan to get him to respond.

ACTION HB / MH

Harry Barker listed changes to other services including the introduction of the 122 Haddington – Gullane circular as a result of curtailing the 111 service to ERI at Longniddry, resulting in an improved hourly service from Longniddry to ERI, the 122 covering the less well used part of the route. The minibus used has come from the Haddington town services which have been reduced in frequency due to low usage. In addition Prentice has introduced a new 108 from Longniddry to The Fort via Prestonpans.

Bus Forum held on 22 March 2019

ELC indicated that they were putting the entire subsidised route network out to tender as the five year term would expire shortly. Andrew McLellan said that there would be changes, but did not elaborate on any of them.

East Coast Buses were challenged on the seemingly increasing practice of disembarking all passengers in Musselburgh on 113 and 124 services onto another bus when there appeared to be nothing wrong with the existing bus, but without a satisfactory response.

Comments on the 109 are noted above.

A new bus map is in course of being designed, although whether it will be delayed to incorporate the retendering exercise is not known.

The Bus Charter is being revised to include information on how to hail a bus following instances of passengers being so engrossed on their mobile phones that they can let their bus pass as they simply are not paying attention when it arrived. RELBUS indicated some time ago that it had to be the operators who agreed on a simple and effective sign to the bus driver. There appears to have been little or no progress on this matter.

The open top East Coast Tours service has not reappeared this year and East Coast Buses were unable to say if it would be reintroduced in 2019 at all. It was very poorly used in 2018 largely because it was insufficiently advertised.

An obstruction in turning into Dunbar Grammar school is resulting in damage to larger buses – particularly Borders Buses. (Jacqui Bell advised at the meeting this has still not been attended to).

Edinburgh Users Bus Group (EBUG)

At the invitation of the Group, Harry Barker attended the inaugural meeting on behalf of RELBUS. There were around 70 plus persons present. Whilst it was readily recognised that Edinburgh has one of the best bus services in the UK, recent events have angered, probably unnecessarily, regular and committed passengers.

Prior management teams at Lothian had recognised some years ago there was a conflict between those using a bus with a wheelchair and mothers with buggies, who often use the wheelchair space (one of which has to be legally provided on all buses). They therefore reduced seating by two on double deckers and introduced a buggy area in addition thereby addressing the issue in a popular constructive way. With the introduction of 64 second hand buses from London, and new six wheel double deckers with dual doors, for use of routes 7,11,16 and 31, plus the Airport route 100, there is no specific buggy space, and in addition wheelchairs find that navigation of the narrow passage on the new six wheelers difficult to pass through. Also, because all passengers have to exit by the centre door, wheelchairs also have to do so and there are major issues due to the extra length of these buses in getting the centre door aligned with the Kassel (raised) kerb, and one accident has already occurred.

Edinburgh had two management representatives at the meeting, one very senior. Unfortunately they gave the impression of being aloof, unconcerned and refused to meet the disability and mothers groups present in what was a major PR disaster with disbelief coming from the floor. Lothian claimed their buses were 'legal' and they were not making any changes.

This group now provides members with the fleetnumbers of buses which do not carry buggies, and potential passengers can use the Lothian APP in order to avoid these particular buses. The fact that this issue has got to this stage beggars belief and it is clearly not going to go away, the Group having involved Lesley MacInnes, Chair of Lothian Buses and the Council representative responsible for Transport.

RELBUS will have to be alert to a similar practice being introduced in East Lothian and spring into action if appropriate.

Other matters

Roadworks and congestion: ELC have mapped out all bus routes in an effort to try to minimise restrict the number of works on any one route at a time. This will rely on the goodwill of other authorities.

Belhaven bus stops; the current situation is still unsatisfactory but Jacqui Bell advised that ELC are in course of providing new stops.

Harry Barker advised that RELBUS was investigating the publishing of a paper bus timetable covering the whole County. Meantime by using the website <https://bustimes.org/> it is possible to see all buses operating in the whole of the UK – this seems to be bang up to date.

HLB