

BANFF & BUCHAN AREA BUS FORUM

MINUTES OF MEETING ON MONDAY 23RD MARCH 2015

MACDUFF TOWN HALL

In Attendance

Councillor J. Cox (Aberdeenshire Council) (Chair)

Therine Henderson (Rosehearty Community Council)
Graham Collie (Rosehearty Community Council)
Elly Morrice (Rosehearty Community Council)
Ian Williams (Banff and Buchan Community Council)
Ian Hardie (Banff and Buchan Community Council)
Judith Taylor (Fraserburgh and District Older People's Forum)
Mary Regan (Fraserburgh and District Older People's Forum)
Bruce Taylor (Enable - Scotland)
Richard Menard (Macduff Resident)
Jim Bruce (Bus User)
A. Bruce (Bus User)
N. Bruce (Bus User)
Lynn Menard (Deveron Coaches)
Ian Smith (Watermill Coaches)
Stephanie Barber (Operations Director, Stagecoach North Scotland)
Krystian Kaczala (Operations Manager, Stagecoach North Scotland)
Richard McKenzie (Public Transport Manager, Aberdeenshire Council)
Susan Watt (Senior Transport Officer, Aberdeenshire Council)

Apologies

Councillor M. Roy (Aberdeenshire Council)
Steve Walker (Managing Director, Stagecoach North Scotland)
Margaret-Jane Cardno (Banff and Buchan Area Manager, Aberdeenshire Council)
Agnes Taylor (Banff and Buchan Area Manager, NHS Grampian)
Margaret Gault (People First Fraserburgh & Rathens, Memsie and District Community Council)

1. Welcome and Introduction

Councillor Cox welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were given.

2. Minutes of Meeting on 15th September 2014

Richard McKenzie confirmed that Page 5 Item 4.4 iii) should have read: retain the twice weekly shoppers' service from Turriff to Fraserburgh, instead of withdrawal.

The remainder of the minutes were approved.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes

Susan Watt provided the following update on behalf of Aberdeenshire Council:

- 3.1 In response to the request for provision of a timetable case on Kessock Road (Fraserburgh), to serve the new swimming pool, she confirmed that this has been installed.
- 3.2 In response to the request for Fraserburgh Bus Station to be open to the public during the lunchtime period on weekdays, as this is often the only time some people can visit the facility, and for the facility to be accessible over a 24 hour period using a swipe card, she confirmed that following previous vandalism in the building, in particular the toilet area, the request for 24 hour access to the building has been declined.

It was queried from the floor whether part-time staff could be brought in over the lunchtime period.

Stephanie Barber confirmed that a solution has still not yet been found to accommodate the lunchtime request, however the provision of part-time staff would now be investigated, however as this would result in an additional cost it may not be feasible.

- 3.3 In response to the request for the provision of a bus stop on Buchan Road (Fraserburgh) at the junction with Old Strichen Road, she confirmed that following a site meeting, it was agreed that there were sufficient bus stop facilities in the area to meet the Council policy criteria of maximum 400m walking distance and also accommodates the current passenger requirements.

This was challenged from the floor, highlighting that passengers, in particular the elderly, have difficulty accessing the bus stops, due to the walking distance, which has increased following the re-routing of Service 76/77 (Fraserburgh Town Service).

Susan Watt confirmed that this would be further investigated again

- 3.4 In response to the repeated request for the provision of a bus stop at Garden Street (Banff), which has been ongoing for over 5 years, following site meetings with Local Roads and PTU officers, she confirmed that this has now been installed.
- 3.5 In response to the request for the provision of a bus stop on the A90 at Rathen Road end, on the opposite side of the road to where the current shelter is located, she confirmed that following discussions with Bear Scotland, the installation of a layby would be required to meet safety standards. However this has been refused due to cost implications. She also confirmed that the A90 is under the management of Bear Scotland and the Council has no influence on this decision.

It was raised from the floor that there are 2 regular passengers who currently utilise the bus service at this location, highlighting the necessity for a bus stop.

Given the current situation, Councillor Cox asked that the Council raise this again with Bear Scotland and in time, provide him with an update.

Stephanie Barber provided the following update on behalf of Stagecoach Bluebird:

- 3.6 In response to the claim regarding passengers finding it difficult to understand the new routes of the Town Services implemented on the 5 May 2014, coupled with a request for a map to be included in the next timetable booklet, she confirmed that the company have not received any feedback or complaints over the last 6 months.
- 3.7 In response to the claim regarding the toilet facilities on the vehicles frequently being locked, resulting in passengers being unable to access them, she confirmed that the company will be installing a toilet drop in Fraserburgh, to address the situation.

It was questioned from the floor, whether toilet facilities would be introduced on the Service 35 (Aberdeen – Banff – Elgin).

Stephanie Barber confirmed that the company were currently investigating the possibility of a toilet drop at Macduff depot and, if feasible, toilet facilities on Service 35 could be introduced by the end of 2015.

4. Bus Service Update

Stephanie Barber provided the following update:

4.1 Service 35 (Aberdeen - Banff - Elgin)

Following a review of the corridor, Service 35A (Oldmeldrum – Aberdeen via Great Northern Road) will be introduced on 20 April 2015, providing an hourly inter peak service on Monday to Friday, effectively creating an approximate 15 minute inter-peak service, along the corridor. She also confirmed that B12 type vehicles would be introduced into the corridor, providing additional capacity.

4.2 Buchan Corridor

The company has invested in 17 new vehicles, at a cost of £325,000 per vehicle, which will be allocated to the Buchan corridor as from autumn 2015, which will provide additional capacity on the corridor.

It was highlighted from the floor that the new vehicles were very comfortable, however the low head height for those accessing the seating upstairs was queried, coupled with a query whether there had been consultation undertaken with disability groups.

Stephanie Barber confirmed that they were currently investigating modifications to the vehicle, however the vehicles were DDA compliant and met the current disability criteria.

4.3 Service 10 (Aberdeen – Huntly – Elgin)

Following a review of the service, the route section via the Uryside development (Inverurie) will be withdrawn due to very low passenger usage. Minor timing changes, will also be implemented on 20 April 2015.

4.4 Advance Vehicle Location (AVL)

The company has rolled out its AVL programme throughout Scotland, which is a computer based vehicle tracking system, which will provide an actual real-time position of the company's buses. This will then be accessible through various outlets, including Real-time display screens at specific bus shelters in Aberdeenshire, which are currently being installed by the Council.

Richard McKenzie confirmed that the Real-Time passenger system, which is being developed in partnership with operators, is in the final testing stages, prior to being signed off in the next couple of months. The system will provide real time, arrival time information for passengers at interchange points, displays at a small number of key bus stops, and also be available through smartphone applications and websites.

Richard McKenzie provided the following update:

4.5 Passenger Transport Review and Tendering Process

Following the Aberdeenshire Council Passenger Transport Review, the service proposals highlighted in the previous minutes were agreed by the Aberdeenshire Council Passenger Transport Strategy & Polices Steering Group and have been incorporated within the on-going tender process, with a view to new contracts being implemented on 16 August 2015.

4.6 Fraserburgh A2B Service

He confirmed that Fraserburgh A2B dial-a-bus is currently being reviewed, with only minor amendments being envisaged, however he asked that any comments or suggestions regarding the service would be appreciated and asked that anyone wishing to provide feedback or comments, to contact Denise May on 01224 664747 or email a2bdialabus@aberdeenshire.gov.uk.

4.7 Bus Passenger Satisfaction Survey

A survey of bus users in Aberdeenshire is currently being undertaken over spring 2015, with passengers being asked questions about various aspects of bus travel, including reliability, cost of travel, information, conditions of buses and shelters and also the conduct of staff. The results will be published over the coming months and an update will be provided at the next Area Bus Forum.

5. **Bus Service Requests / Development**

Susan Watt referred to the papers circulated, detailing pending and fulfilled service requests in the Banff and Buchan Area. In addition to the requests which are currently being considered by Stagecoach Bluebird in their review, she advised the following:

- 5.1 The request for the 1220 hours ex Fraserburgh – Rosehearty (Sunday) on Service 74 to be re-instated to depart at 1200 hours, has been fulfilled by Stagecoach Bluebird, with effect from 5 May 2014.

- 5.2 The request for a peak return journey from Banff for workers travelling to Fraserburgh on Service 272 (Fraserburgh – Banff) has been incorporated by Aberdeenshire Council into the current tender process.
- 5.3 The request for the 1702 hours ex Banff – Fraserburgh (Monday to Friday) on Service 272 (Fraserburgh – Banff) to be retarded to accommodate those working until 1700 hours, has been incorporated by Aberdeenshire Council into the current tender process.
- 5.4 The request for an express peak return journey on Service 35 (Aberdeen – Banff – Elgin) arriving in Aberdeen at 0830 hours and departing at 1730 hours (Monday to Friday), has been ruled out by Stagecoach Bluebird as it is not commercially viable.
- 5.5 The request for the 1915 hours ex Fraserburgh – Rosehearty (Monday to Friday) on Service 74 to be retarded to ensure connections with the 1735 hours ex Aberdeen – Fraserburgh (Service 67) at Fraserburgh Bus Station at 1914 hours, has been implemented by Stagecoach Bluebird, with the same vehicle operating both services.

This was challenged from the floor, highlighting that the services continue to be operated by 2 vehicles, resulting in the services, at times, not connecting.

Stephanie Barber confirmed that this would be re-investigated.

6. Public Transport Infrastructure / Information

- 6.1 Query as to whether the Real-Time display unit will be re-installed into the new shelters recently installed at Union Road (Macduff).

Richard McKenzie confirmed that this will be investigated.

- 6.2 Request for an update regarding the complaint that buses on Service 35 (Elgin - Banff - Aberdeen) often arrive at the same time in both directions on Union Road (A98), Macduff, outside Stagecoach Bluebird's depot and layover for a few minutes, leading to traffic coming to a standstill, coupled with a suggestion that either the timetable be amended or consideration be given to re-locating one of the bus stops.

Stephanie Barber confirmed that westbound buses utilise the layby, resulting in vehicles having a clear vision of on-coming traffic.

This was challenged from the floor, as the eastbound bus stop is located on a bend, and therefore creating a safety issue for those overtaking the stopped vehicle.

Stephanie Barber confirmed that this would be re-investigated, however felt there was not going to be a solution, as many bus stops do not have lay-bys.

It was queried from the floor, whether a road sign could be erected prior to the bus stop, alerting traffic of buses stopping.

Susan watt confirmed that this suggestion would be passed to the Council's Roads service for consideration.

Councillor Cox asked that the comments be taken on board by Stagecoach Bluebird and Aberdeenshire Council.

- 6.3 Complaint regarding the length of time the shelter on Low Street (Banff) has been damaged, following the matter being reported to the Council, on various occasions coupled with allegations of complaints not being responded to.

Richard McKenzie confirmed that this matter would be investigated.

- 6.4 Query as to why the shelter on Shore Street, opposite the Town Hall (Macduff), has been replaced with a smaller facility, which is open ended, resulting in passengers having no protection to adverse weather conditions, coupled with a complaint regarding the seating being removed and replaced by a "bumbar", which has also been installed too high.

Richard McKenzie confirmed that these issues would be investigated.

- 6.5 Query as to why the shelter on Shore Street, at the Town Hall (Macduff), has been replaced with a facility, with shorter sides, and the seating replaced with a "bumbar", which has been installed too high, coupled with the claim that the timetable case has been positioned too high, resulting in passengers not being able or access the timetables or see on-coming traffic. It was also raised that there is a large gap at the bottom of the shelter, resulting in passengers being soaked by passing traffic.

Richard McKenzie confirmed that these issues would be investigated.

Councillor Cox asked that these comments are taken back and that he is provided with an update.

- 6.6 Query as to the opening times of the Ellon Park and Ride, coupled with the claim that buses do not stop if passengers are not waiting in the bus shelter, resulting in those waiting in the Park and Ride facility missing their bus. It was also raised, that an email had been sent to Ian Bell (Buchan Manager, Stagecoach Bluebird) regarding this matter but no response had been received.

Richard McKenzie confirmed that the Ellon Park and Ride is open from 0630 hours to 1800 hours and construction work would be undertaken to improve the facility once a compulsory purchase order has been completed by the Council's Legal Services.

Stephanie Barber confirmed that the proposed improvement works will alleviate this issue.

7. Service 35 (Aberdeen – Banff – Elgin)

- 7.1 Request for an express service between Banff and Aberdeen during the peak, with limited stops.

Stephanie Barber confirmed that this was not commercially viable at this time.

8. Service 74 (Rosehearty – Fraserburgh)

- 8.1 Query regarding whether the 1200 hours ex Fraserburgh – Rosehearty (Sunday) continues to operate, following the introduction of the 1230 hours at the last service change.

Susan Watt confirmed that the journey does currently operate.

9. Service 300 (Banff/Macduff Town Service)

- 9.1 Repeated request for the service to be re-routed within Macduff, to serve the High Shore area.

Susan Watt confirmed that this had been previously investigated by the operator Deveron Coaches, and found to be unsafe due to parked vehicles and insufficient space to safely perform a turning manoeuvre. This was confirmed by Lynn Menard from Deveron Coaches.

10. A.O.B

- 10.1 Claim regarding insufficient information being available to passengers when vehicles break down on service and the lack of information on whether a replacement vehicle has been sent out to cover the journey.

Stephanie Barber confirmed that a replacement vehicle will be sent out if the breakdown cannot be rectified within a given time, however this may take up to 30 minutes to arrive at the destination. She highlighted that real time information system will provide information to waiting passengers under such circumstances.

- 10.2 Claim, that at times, staff are not available at Fraserburgh Bus Station to book tickets for onward travel, resulting in passengers having to travel to Peterhead Interchange.

Stephanie Barber confirmed that this would be investigated.

- 10.3 Query as to the how the new Banff school facility will be served by Public Transport once completed, coupled with a request for evening transport to/from the Academy.

Richard McKenzie confirmed that this would be investigated.

- 10.4 Claim regarding buses displaying incorrect destination on their screens, e.g. Service 76/77 (Fraserburgh Town Service) displaying a street name instead of Asda.

Richard McKenzie confirmed that operators and the Council utilise the standard national Naptan system for naming bus stop, based on street names.

11. Next Meeting

Susan Watt confirmed that the next meeting of the Forum will take place in Fraserburgh in autumn 2015.