



Lochaber Transport Forum

Co-chruinneachadh mu ghoireasan - siubhail Lochabair

Bus User's Group

Minutes of meeting

11.30, Tuesday 22nd June 2018

Duncansburgh MacIntosh Church Hall, Fort William

Present;

Brian Murphy – Chairperson	BM
Benny MacDonald – Lochaber Transport Forum	BMcD
Arthur Cowie – Lochaber Transport Forum	AC
Peter Knight – Scottish Citylink	PK
John Barnes – Friends of the West Highland Lines/Lochaber Transport Forum	JB
Greig MacKay – Bus User's Scotland	GMcK
Stewart Grant – bus user	SG
Iona Grant – bus user	IG
Julie McDonald – bus user	JMcD
Christine Hutchison – Kilmallie CC	CH
John Fotheringham – Spean Bridge, Roy Bridge & Achnacarry CC	JF
Sally Morris – Bus user, Kentallen	SM
David MacGillvray – Shiel Buses	DaMcG
Donald Stewart – bus user	DSt
Ian Langley – West Highland CRP & bus user	IL
W MacPhee – bus user	WMcPh
Mike Cooper – Highland Council	MC
Julie Cromarty – HITRANS	JC
Chris Evans – Strontian resident	CE
Councillor Andrew Baxter – Highland Council	AB
Catriona Spence – Kinlochleven Community Council	CP
Kath Small – Ballachulish Community Council	KS
Councillor Denis Rixon – Highland Council	DR
Ewan MacLennan – Spean Bridge	EMcL
Elizabeth Smith – Spean Bridge	ES
Lorna Laverick – Spean Bridge	LL
Catriona Nicholson – Spean Bridge	CN
Rachel Barry – Fort William	RB

1. Welcome

The Chairperson opened the meeting and welcomed everyone. He asked for introductions around the room.

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Funded By 

2. Apologies;

Donald Cameron – MSP

Councillor Allan Henderson – Highland Council

Tony Dobson – Sunart Community Council/Lochaber Disability Access Panel

Flora McKee – Voluntary Action Lochaber

Maryrose Hall

Kate Forbes, MSP

Rhoda Grant, MSP

David Stewart, MSP

Chris Hoon – West Coast Motors

3. Confirmation of previous minutes

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 20th March 2018 were approved by John Fotheringham and seconded by Arthur Cowie.

There was one amendment. Chris Evans said she attended the meeting but her name is not on the list of those present. BMcD later checked the attendance list and it was not signed by Chris Evans though her name is on notes made at the meeting.

4. Matters arising from the minutes

At no.5, Stagecoach, bottom of page 2. DaMcG was asked if he has provided any more services covering the Corpach/Caol Fort William route which Stagecoach withdrew at the end of March. DaMcG – we don't currently have any spare vehicles to run additional services during morning peak times.

There was discussion on the current 41 service operated by Stagecoach between Fort William and Roy Bridge. The Spean residents in attendance had difficulty getting to this meeting as the 10.15 to Fort William did not turn up at the Altour Road bus stop. Several passengers walked to the Spean Crescent stop on the A82 to use the later Citylink service. Other passengers waiting could not access the Citylink service due to ill health/mobility problems therefore missed appointments at the medical centre and hospital.

JF said Stagecoach had not operated other services leaving people stranded. They still have obligations and should not pick and choose what they provide.

MC – these problems should be reported, I just heard recently about similar problems on the Kinlochleven route and heard of other issues this morning. HC hold the contracts and deal with these issues by penalising operators. I can also get another operator as a replacement. Complaints can go to the Traffic Commissioner but can be dealt easier by Highland council.

A later email from JF confirmed the 41 service did not operate at all during the day of the meeting.

There was an email reply from MC - The service 41 on Friday did fail to operate due to circumstances out of the company's control and when I had confirmation of this Shiel Buses were drafted in to cover the remaining journeys.

Stagecoach do have contractual obligations to Highland Council and now I am aware of the issues on Friday with the service 41 I will be taking contractual action against the company for the failing.

JMcD gave notice of a passenger being stranded at work in Onich and unable to return home to Kinlochleven as the 23.30 did not always operate.

At the top of page 3 there was a note about the 919 service providing a link with Roy Bridge. JF explained he had asked about this in case some services were removed following the departure of Stagecoach at the end of June and the issuing of new contracts. It will not be required at present with the temporary contracts in place but if Citylink want to look at this again we will be happy.

PK – I can consider this for next winter's timetable but there will be no changes before then.

IL would like it noted this is the second meeting held on a Friday and no MSP's are present.

5. Highland Council re-contracted services

MC – the full tenders have not been completed yet but letters will go out next week to inform operators. Along with the 41 and 44 services which were previously confirmed Shiel Buses will take over the contract until 18th August for the 47 evening service between Upper Achintore and Corpach which will be a continuation of the daytime service.

JF asked if new contracts will be the same as we've had or will there be cuts to services?

MC – I can't discuss anything about the tendering process. I have to follow EU procurement law.

There was a full discussion on the concerns of cuts, losing services and contracts which use public money.

AB – contracts usually come up during local ward meetings but we don't have a meeting within this timescale. Details will go to Allan Henderson as Council Vice-Convenor and Chair of the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee.

JF – we may need to look again at the item in Matters Arising when we discussed the need for the 919 service to provide a link for Roy Bridge, since we are unaware of what is being tendered.

SM – has there been any more action about public transport along the A828?

DS – I've raised this previously and Allan Henderson said he will look into it.

BMCD – this was in the minutes from a few meetings ago and I received an email from Neil MacRae, HITRANS which also included transport officers with Highland and Argyll & Bute Councils. There have been no further responses.

JC said she had forwarded the previous minutes on to her colleague and will say it's been raised again.

EMcL had an issue with coaches and buses stopping in Spean Bridge. There was discussion on 'Hail & Ride' which operates in many parts of the area where there are no bus stops.

Action – DaMcG will look into this.

6. Bus Services;

- **Stagecoach**

AB asked if there could be details at each bus stop for procedures to make complaints. I get a lot of issues which should go to operators or Highland Council. There is a list of contact details at the end of these minutes.

CE – feedback should also be given when things are going well. In all the work I'm involved with mental health and transport are high on agendas.

JF – Robert Andrew, Stagecoach Director should be invited to the next Bus User's Group Meeting. Though Stagecoach are withdrawing local services from the end of this month they will still be contracted by Citylink to provide journeys to Inverness. I have seen older coaches on this route recently and they are not reliable.

PK – Robert Andrew is also my boss. I'm not aware of older buses being used but will be watching so leave this with me.

Action – PK to check on vehicles used on route 919.

BM asked for clarification on who owns Scottish Citylink?

PK – Scottish Citylink is a merger of the Singapore Company Comfort Delgro who have 65% and Stagecoach who have 35%. All our services are contracted to various operators. Citylink don't own vehicles as they are a marketing company.

SG had an issue with accessibility on a recent trip in a Citylink coach to Campbeltown.

PK explained 24 hours' notice isn't compulsory but recommended for wheelchair users. Chairs can be removed on route if necessary.

DaMcG – we have a coach with a design fault so with notice we can ensure an accessible vehicle is used.

- **Shiel Buses**

CE asked about a service previously operated which did a circular route around Strontian and Acharacle. Can this be re-introduced? DaMcG said this had been a summer trail but wasn't viable.

BMcD had received an email regarding a Citylink/Shiel Buses coach to Glasgow. The booking was done in advance and the passenger is a wheelchair user who can transfer to a seat but has difficulty getting on the bus and wanted to use the lift. This was refused by the driver.

DaMcG explained the lift can only be used when a passenger is sitting on a chair and as the chair was put in the boot it cannot be used for carrying standing passengers.

BMcD also received an email from Chris Hoon, West Coast Motors. This included the following;

Firstly, to note that in follow up to customer feedback we have re-timed the 918 service to allow more time for passengers travelling from Fort William to spend in Oban. We still need to allow for passenger connections to Inverness, but we hope that this change helps a bit.

Also, please note that the 918 goes round Ballachulish anti-clockwise now, so the bus turns right at the first turning into the village, and then left back onto the main road at the other end.

Finally it has been brought to our attention that some of the bus stops in Fort William town centre show the 918 stopping there, when the route doesn't go through the town at all. We have had a few passengers on the phone complaining to us about this. Is this something you can forward to the relevant people to ensure correct signage is in place please?

Action – JC asked for the email to be forwarded on to check the timetable issue.

SM said 918 drivers are still getting used to the route around Ballachulish.

JF asked about late arrivals on Glasgow services, timings are wrong on Loch Lomondside.

PK & DaMcG both agreed times vary a lot depending on roadworks and amount of traffic.

DaMcG explained Shiel Buses have low floor buses for the temporary contracts on the 44 service.

SM – the new timetables for the 918 from Oban don't allow for a reasonable shopping trip to Fort William. I used the new timetable to go to Inverness but with delays and slow traffic I had 40 minutes instead of 90 minutes before returning.

SG – it's not easy to get to Oban from Kinlochleven as there is a 50 minute wait in Ballachulish.

There was discussion on what times would help residents along the A828. DaMcG said they need to be out with peak times. SM said 1.5 hours in Fort William would be useful for shopping.

- **Citylink**

PK – the next timetables will be for winter services in October. Shiel Buses have a new coach on the Glasgow route and the feedback is it's very comfortable.

AC – are the problems with the new coaches on the Inverness route being dealt with, are they more reliable?

PK – they are at present but the road conditions continue to cause problems.

7. AOCB

BM asked GMcK about the new Bus Bill Scotland. GMcK – though the bill is welcomed there is still a long way to go before it's implemented. There are some uncertainties over funding and exhaust emissions in built up areas.

DS – I tried to travel directly to Newtonmore by coach but there are no services from Spean Bridge. Visitor numbers have increased recently so there could be higher passenger numbers if trialled. Can HITRANS look at this?

JF – we previously asked Stagecoach to look at re-arranging the school service for Kinlochlaggan. If this began from Fort William and not Aviemore/Dalwhinnie as it has done there will be a link along the A86 and a link with trains.

DaMcG – we'd need feedback from the route before considering this, it's a big commitment with staff and vehicle costs which may be seasonal.

8. Dates for future Forum Meetings.

The next Bus User's Group Meeting is on Tuesday 11th September.

Before this there is a full Transport Forum Meeting on Tuesday 7th August, also in the Duncansburgh Church Hall.

From meeting 14th September

Confirmation of previous minutes

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 22nd June 2018 were approved by Ian Langley and seconded by W. MacPhee. There were no amendments.

Contact details

Complaints to Highland Council, telephone; 01349 886606, email; public.transport@highland.gov.uk

Scottish Citylink have a call centre operating 24/7 365 days a year call centre which also deals with complaints, telephone; 0141 352 4444 or email, info@citylink.co.uk. It's useful to have the coach service number. They work with many operators and pass on complaints to them.

Peter Knight can also be contacted directly, email; p.knight2@citylink.co.uk

Stagecoach can be contacted with complaints Monday to Friday, 9.00 – 17.00 through the main office in Inverness by telephone – 01463 233371, by email – highland.enquiries@stagecoachbus.com.

The disability helpdesk is, telephone – 01463 258933, by email – highland.disabilityhelpdesk@stagecoachbus.com

Shiel Buses can be contacted by telephone in Acharacle – 01967 431272, Fort William – 01397 700700, email – info@shielbuses.co.uk.

Complaints to West Coast Motors go to head office in Campbeltown by telephone – 01586 552319, email – enquiries@westcoastmotors.co.uk.

Complaints can be taken further by contacting Bus Users Scotland, the link to their website is; <http://www.bususers.org/scotland/about-us>. They can also be contacted through Greig Mackay, Deputy Director, Bus Users Group Scotland, Hopetoun Gate, 8b MacDonald Road, Edinburgh, EH7 4LZ. Greig Mackay greig.mackay@bususers.org The telephone no. is: 0300 111 0001.