



Lochaber Transport Forum

Co-chruinneachadh mu ghoireasan - siubhail Lochabair

Bus User's Group

Minutes of Meeting

11.30, Tuesday 26th March 2019

Duncansburgh MacIntosh Church Hall, Fort William

Present;

Brian Murphy – Chairperson	BM
Benny MacDonald – Lochaber Transport Forum	BMcD
Arthur Cowie – LDAP/SATA	AC
John Barnes – Friends of the West Highland Lines/Lochaber Transport Forum	JB
Greig MacKay – Bus User's Scotland	GMcK
Julie McDonald – bus user	JMcD
David MacGillivray – Shiel Buses	DMcG
Donald Stewart – bus user	DS
Ian Langley – West Highland CRP & bus user	IL
Kate Willis – Lochaber Environmental Group	KW
Viki Sutherland - Glencoe & Glen Etive CC	VS
Sally Morris – Bus user, Kentallen	SM
Christine Hutchison – Kilmallie CC	CH
Ali MacDonald – Highland Council	AMcD

1. Welcome

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

The Chairperson also issued a statement saying there have been complaints about how meetings are managed and the tendency for some items to dominate proceedings. "I've always attempted to create an atmosphere where everyone can have their say and to allow as free a flow of discussions as possible. After discussions with the Executive Committee I'm proposing the following;

- Everyone wishing to speak must indicate to me as the chairperson that they wish to do so.
- I will ask that person to speak when I consider it to be the appropriate time.
- Forum members will be allowed to ask a question or make a point, and should then wait for an answer.
- I will then allow that member to ask one supplementary question, or make a point of clarification. I will then move on to the next person who has indicated that they wish to speak.
- Before moving on to the next item I will ask if anyone wants to make a final point in view of the discussion that has taken place.

I believe this will enable our meetings to be more focussed and efficient."

Lochaber Transport Forum
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2. Apologies;

Flora McKee – Voluntary Action Lochaber

Kate Forbes, MSP

Councillor Denis Rixson – Highland Council

Kath Small – Ballachulish Community Council

Iain Erskine - CalMac

John Fotheringham – Spean Bridge, Roy Bridge & Achnacarry CC

Tony Dobson – Headway Highland

Julie Cromarty - HITRANS

Councillor Allan Henderson – Highland Council

Stewart Grant – bus user

Councillor Andrew Baxter – Highland Council

Laura Cheetham – Lochaber Action on Disability

Peter Knight – Scottish Citylink

3. Confirmation of previous minutes

Minutes of the previous meeting held on 14th December 2018 were approved by Ian Langley and seconded by Arthur Cowie. There were no amendments.

4. Matters arising from the minutes

At No 4, Matters Arising; IL checked the 41 route and timetables have been updated to show the 18.20 service is included. There is no 41 timetable at the bus station stance 3/4, passengers at the station can only see 41 journeys on the Real Time Board. Some timetables can't be read easily due to the perspex covers being marked and clouded over.

Regarding the issue of passengers having difficulty accessing a bus due to the number of child buggies DMcG said there have been no more complaints.

AC asked about the use of an out of service bus to test for accessibility, this had been mentioned at the September meeting.

DMcG agreed to supply a vehicle.

There has been a lot of clearing work completed on overhanging branches and buses around pavements and bus stops.

Regarding the issue of problems with using a Citylink Explorer Pass at Fort William Station, Peter Knight responded by email. He said he didn't have sufficient details and the problem wasn't reported to Customer Complaints so can't deal with it further.

Regarding larger timetables required for Ballachulish bus stops, AMcD said they have been ordered.

DMcG – Shiel Buses would like to use a full perspex window at each bus stop to show all timetables required for that particular stop.

IL has issues with timetables which say School Holidays or Not School Holidays. Many people, especially visitors don't know which dates this relates to.

AC – The Access Panel and Transport Forum have been reporting missing timetables for many years.

AMcD – there are problems in many areas of Highland Region and we are working with HITRANS to make improvements.

DS – there are four organisations involved with timetables, HC, HITRANS, bus operators and the Real Time Boards operator. HITRANS don't attend meetings, the Ballachulish signs are a shambles and there are always delays to improving timetables.

5. Bus Services

• Shiel Buses

DMcG – contactless payments will be available soon on services, with a maximum of £30.00.

IL – has there been any decisions on circular tour buses for visiting cruise ship passengers.

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DMcG – we've been very busy and not managed this but we have a new Transport Manager starting next week which will help us.

There was a general discussion on where and how the tour buses could operate. Cruise ship operators organise tours but many passengers feel this is too expensive.

VS asked how much income comes to the area from visits.

IL – passengers and also crew members spend well when on shore.

- **Citylink**

It was noted there was no one present from Citylink

BM – the Forum received details of summer timetables commencing on 20th May which are currently with Highland Council for Consultation. The 919 shows an extra service at 10.30 departing Fort William. There is also a new 913 direct service for Edinburgh/Fort William. This departs Edinburgh at 07.45 and departs Fort William at 16.00. The route is via the Forth Road Bridge to Perth, Broxden Park & Ride, Crieff, Comrie, Lochearnhead and Crianlarich.

There was further discussion on the new timetables, especially as the new 913 does not have a morning departure from Fort William.

AC asked about integrated ticketing.

DMcG – at present our system is not compatible with Citylink. It is available on our own services.

CH asked about an instance she saw when passengers were waiting for a coach and they were refused on because they had a dog.

GMcK – this is the policy of Citylink, only guide/support dogs are carried on coaches.

- **West Coast Motors**

There were several inquiries about discussion from the December meeting regarding a third daily 918 service during the summer for Oban/Fort William. Also, JMcd had previously reported many issues of delays due to the service carrying school pupils and passengers.

SM travelled recently when the bus was full and passengers were waiting at Connel.

BMcd – I had hoped Chris Hoon would be attending this meeting as a follow up to all the issues raised at the December meeting. There's been no further notice from WCM.

DS – there is no timetable for the school bus at Ballachulish.

Action - AMcd noted this.

The same issues are still causing problems.

SM - I offered to help and discuss improvements but I've not been contacted.

BMcd – there have been discussions between HC and Argyll & Bute Council when this was previously raised. The outcome was the service will be looked at when retendering of contracts is necessary.

Action – the Forum will contact WCM.

SM – CalMac start new summer timetables on 29th March so this may increase passenger numbers on coaches.

AC – both HC and A&B Councils have worked on these services together. HITRANS also work with transport covering both Councils. Allan Henderson has said he'll raise this.

Action – the Forum to contact Allan Henderson and Councillor Roddy McCuish.

6. AOCB

BM – when this Bus Group started we were having many problems with new HC contracts just beginning and complaints rising on how Stagecoach were operating in the area. There are now much less major problems and although we don't have what we want there's no spare money to make improvements. Following discussion at the Executive Committee Meeting we are proposing to wind up the Bus User's Group Meetings. Issues can still be raised during quarterly Transport Forum Meetings.

IL – I understand the Forum doesn't have authority or power to make change and has a small budget. Is there a better way to report the issues, we're not getting achievements?

BM – austerity is causing problems, cuts are UK wide. Scottish Government figures show a drop of almost 100m bus journeys since 2008, while car and train journeys are increasing. Funding for bus

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services continues to drop and services are poor. The new Bus Bill is very weak and timid, and in my view will not reverse the downward trend.

JMcD – there is money available. I’m aware of successes under section 106 in the Midlands where services have been revamped. We have a good start with Shiel Buses operating reliable services. We need to support the cruise ships, etc. People need bus services so we keep trying for improvements.

KW – we need the transport representatives here to discuss all these problems.

DS – I agree with Julie, I don’t want to give up. I’ll contact Councillor Henderson and ask why HITRANS don’t attend.

CMcK – Stagecoach provide a good service for cruise ships visiting Orkney which is done commercially. It’s taken a while to get right but it works very well.

JMcD asked Shiel Buses about any support for providing services for local events.

DMcG – the Chamber of Commerce have offered some support.

There was discussion on Section 22 which allows community minibuses to provide services.

JMcD gave notice of a community transport meeting next week in Ballachulish, AMcD will be attending.

JMcD – there is about to be millions invested in this area, where do we go for transport support?

AC – it has to be included at the planning stage.

AMcD – the HC Public Transport team are involved with all planning to add bus stops, etc.

DS – what is the best way to get a service for Fort William to Badenoch?

BM – I’m not sure of the demand for this service. HITRANS have some limited funding for trying out new services but there must be evidence of need.

CH – the Fort William Traffic Congestion Study report was completed in August 18, what’s happening with it?

BM – I’ve been involved with this, it’s ongoing and the Transport Minister may make an announcement soon.

BMcD – I found a copy of the recent HITRANS Newsletter on their website and Allan Henderson is writing to the Transport Minister about progress on upgrades for the A82.

CH – there isn’t much information about public transport services for the new houses on the Blar Mhor.

It was suggested AMcD would know more about this but he had just left the meeting.

AC – the Lochaber Disability Access Panel have met with the developer.

7. Date of next meeting

There will be a meeting of the Transport Forum on **Tuesday 14th May at 11.00 in the Duncansburgh Church Hall.**

There are no further meetings of the Bus User’s Group arranged.

From the Executive Committee Meeting 17th September 2019

Meeting of the Bus User’s Group held on 26th March 2019. As this was the last meeting of the group the minutes were approved by the Committee.

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Contact details


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

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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

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.

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