

BANFF AND BUCHAN AREA BUS FORUM

MINUTES OF MEETING ON WEDNESDAY 7th SEPTEMBER 2022

ROOM 1, DALRYMPLE HALL, FRASERBURGH

In Attendance

Councillor D Mair (Aberdeenshire Council) (Chair)

Neil Stewart (Principal Officer, Aberdeenshire Council)
Susan Watt (Senior Transport Officer, Aberdeenshire Council)
Marcin Kaminski (Commercial Analyst, Stagecoach Bluebird)
June Whyte (Rosehearty Community Council)
Alison Wyness (Fraserburgh Community Council & Bus User)
Mary Regan (Fraserburgh Community Council)
Bruce Taylor (Enable (Scotland))
Greg Pearce (Stagecoach Bluebird)

Apologies

Judith Taylor (Chairman of the Fraserburgh and District Older Peoples Forum)

1. Welcome and Introduction

Councillor Mair welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions were given

2. Minutes of Meeting on 21st November 2019

The minutes were approved.

3. Matters arising from the Minutes

Neil Stewart provided the update below:

- Solar powered e-paper information has been installed in the bus shelter on Broad Street (Fraserburgh) in May 2022.
- CCTV has been installed, along with the relevant notices, on Strichen Road (Fraserburgh), resulting in a decrease in vandalism.
- The complaint regarding the kerb on Victoria Street (Fraserburgh) being too low, is currently being progressed.
- The request for provision of a bus shelter at Buchan Road, Fraserburgh is currently being evaluated.
- Ellon Park and Ride has been completed, with positive feedback received.

Further positive feedback was received at the meeting, highlighting the solar panels and easy access to the site.

- It was raised that some people were unaware that Fraserburgh A2B dial-a-bus has been operating since Covid restrictions were lifted.

Susan Watt confirmed that Fraserburgh A2B dial-a-bus operates as follows:

Mon - Fri: Fraserburgh Town Service (0915 hrs – 1500 hrs, with reduced hours on Mon & Fri)

Mon & Fri: Rosehearty/Sandhaven – Fraserburgh shopper service.

4. Stagecoach Bluebird Update

Marcin Kaminski confirmed that the following update:

- Service 69C (Peterhead – Fraserburgh North East Scotland College)

Additional return journey (0747 hrs ex Peterhead - NESCoL Monday to Friday and 1615 hrs M-Th; 1600 hrs Fri ex NESCoL to Peterhead) direct via A90 on college days. It is operated by a double deck vehicle, with passenger demand increasing every week.

In response to a query as to whether the service could serve Inverallochy, Marcin Kaminski confirmed that the operation of a double deck vehicle round the village is risky due to trees and the direct journeys greatly reduce travel times. The current 69 and 69B services did not change and still operate via their existing routes.

- The company introduced new Service S61 (Cruden Bay – Ellon Community Campus) on 22 August 2022 in response to requests from several parents/carers of “out-of-zone” schoolchildren residing in Cruden Bay, but who attend Ellon Academy. At the same time, two journeys 0715 hrs ex Peterhead and 1500 hrs ex Union Square (additional 1420 hrs trip on Wed – Fri) on Service X60 (Peterhead - Ellon - Aberdeen) were extended within Peterhead and diverted via Ellon Community Campus to provide a similar facility for Ellon Academy pupils who reside in Peterhead. Such provision is based on these pupils using their entitlement cards under the Young Persons’ (Under-22) Free Bus Travel Scheme.

5. Aberdeenshire Council Update

Neil Stewart provided the following update:

- Early in the pandemic, a small number of services in the Fraserburgh Area were suspended following a review of supported services to contain spending within the allocated Budget for 2021-22. However, later in 2021, a revised Budget allowed reinstatement of all the journeys concerned.
- A tendering process was undertaken in 2021, predominantly in North Aberdeenshire. In the Fraserburgh area Watermill Coaches Ltd were successful with Service 51 (Fraserburgh – New Pitsligo – Ellon), Service 271/271A (Banff – Fraserburgh) and Service 273 (Banff – Gardenstown/ Fraserburgh), whilst Stagecoach retained the remainder.
- The Budget for 2022/23 is all but fully committed, which means that if there is a need to reinstate any journeys withdrawn from the commercial network, existing journeys or services subsidised by the Council would need to be withdrawn.
- The Under 22 Entitlement Scheme has been rolled out and the number of cards being issued continues to increase. The Council appreciates that this has led to increased and changing

demands throughout Aberdeenshire, most of which can be absorbed by the commercial network, but this is being monitored.

6. Public Transport Infrastructure / Information

- It was raised that the times displayed on the timetable on Broad Street (Fraserburgh) for Service 78A/78C can be confusing due to the letter “B” being listed alongside some of the times.

Neil Stewart confirmed that this would be investigated.

- Query as to whether the lady retiring at Fraserburgh Bus Station will be replaced.

Marcin Kaminski confirmed that this would be investigated.

- Query as to why the Fraserburgh Bus station was closed on Tuesday 6th September, when it was programmed to be open.

Marcin Kaminski confirmed that this would be investigated.

(Post meeting Marcin confirmed that the member of staff was on annual leave, and it would be normal practice for the Fraserburgh Depot Controller to provide cover. However, on this occasion, the Controller was required to provide emergency driver cover. Marcin apologises for the inconvenience caused.)

- Request for more paper timetables to be available.

Marcin Kaminski advised that these were put on hold through the worst of the pandemic and that he would enquire as to the current situation.

(Post meeting Marcin confirmed that the company is considering the reintroduction of printed timetables but can't give firm timescales on when these will be available.)

- Query as to the Stagecoach website domain for displaying timetables.

Both Greg Pearce and Marcin Kaminski confirmed that it was www.stagecoachbus.com, then type in timetables, or you can use the travel planner.

- Query as to whether Wi-fi is available on Stagecoach vehicles.

Marcin Kaminski confirmed that Wi-fi is available on the Peterhead/Fraserburgh to Aberdeen corridors.

(Post meeting Marcin confirmed that Wi-fi is currently unavailable on the company's vehicles and an update will be provided in due course.)

7. Physical Accessibility Matters

Neil Stewart confirmed that this section is added to provide an opportunity for disabled people and others with mobility concerns to raise and discuss any physical and other accessibility barriers to using bus services.

- On-going concerns raised regarding the vehicles allocated to the Peterhead/Fraserburgh – Aberdeen corridor, relating to only 2 seats provided downstairs and issues accessing the

stairway, resulting in those with restricted mobility experiencing difficulties in accessing seats.

Marcin Kaminski confirmed that additional handrails and bells were installed, as well as improvements to the stairways. He acknowledged the difficulties experienced for some passengers and that the company has learned from this.

- Query as to age of the vehicles allocated to the Buchan corridor, coupled with when they would be replaced.

Susan Watt confirmed that the current vehicles are 7 years' old, and they have an average life span of around 10 years.

Marcin Kaminski advised that there is no fixed date as to when they will be replaced.

8. Fraserburgh Services

- Request for the Fraserburgh Town Service to be extended to serve the beach area.

Marcin Kaminski confirmed that there were currently no plans to extend the service(s), but this request would be considered in the next service review.

- Query as to why there is a gap in the timetable for Service 76/77 late afternoon.

Marcin Kaminski confirmed that the gap was due to the vehicle being allocated to a school contract, but it will be looked at in the service review.

9. Fraserburgh – Aberdeen Services

- Query as to why the 0830 hrs ex Fraserburgh – Aberdeen (Service X67) frequently departs late (e.g. by 20 mins 31 August and 25 mins 07 September)

Marcin Kaminski confirmed that services have been affected by road closures, but he acknowledged that the journey has been operating late and this would be investigated.

(Post meeting, the Operations Manager for Buchan confirmed that punctuality has now improved.)

- Query as to whether driver shortages have affected services on the corridor.

Marcin Kaminski confirmed that due to a successful advertising and recruitment campaign by the company, the Buchan Area services has been largely unaffected, with currently only 5 vacancies unfilled.

- Query as to the departure time of the last journey from Aberdeen to Fraserburgh.

Marcin Kaminski confirmed that it was 2305 hrs Monday to Saturday (2215 hrs Sunday).

10. Fraserburgh – Banff Services

- Claim that Service 272 does not provide sufficient time in Banff for those wishing to travel there.

Neil Stewart confirmed that the service is slightly restricted due to the vehicle operating a school contract, but the timetable allows 4 hours in Banff.

11. Fraserburgh – Rosehearty/New Aberdour Services

- Request to fill the gap in the late afternoon between 1450 hrs and 1720 hrs ex Fraserburgh (1505 hrs and 1734 hrs ex Rosehearty)

Neil Stewart confirmed that this may be due to operating school contracts between these hours.

Marcin Kaminski confirmed that this would be looked at in the service review.

- Query as to whether a DRT type service, such as Ready2Go Around Inverurie, or Central Buchan A2B Dial-A-Bus, could help fill such gaps in services throughout the area.

Neil Stewart confirmed that there are currently no such facilities available in the area at these times. He added that the Ready2Go Around Inverurie demand responsive transport service will be under review until autumn next year, at which time there may be discussion on whether these types of services can be rolled out elsewhere in Aberdeenshire.

12. Fraserburgh – St Combs/Peterhead Services

- Query as to why a child was not allowed to travel with a scooter to the skate park in Peterhead.

Marcin Kaminski confirmed that certain types of scooters are permitted, depending on the space/storage available. He added that, unfortunately, it is not possible to investigate that particular incident, without having details of the exact time/date.

- Request to reinstate a journey to bridge the gap between 2145 hrs and 2330 hrs from Fraserburgh to St. Combs.

Neil Stewart confirmed that following a Council review, a number of evening journeys were withdrawn, due to extremely limited passenger demand.

13. Other Matters

- In response to a query on driver training, Marcin Kaminski and Greg Pearce confirmed that all drivers must undertake a Certificate of Professional Competence, which requires 35 hours of periodic training every 5 years. Disability and Equality Awareness Training includes courses on mental health, deaf and autism awareness.
- Query as to why buses have difficulties accessing stances at Union Square Bus Station in recent months, highlighting that long distance services are sometimes serving the Buchan Express stances, resulting in passengers missing their services. This was coupled with a request for the tannoy system to be utilised.

Marcin Kaminski confirmed that drivers should inform passengers when there is a change to their allocated stances and there is also a tannoy system in operation.

(Post meeting, the company confirmed that signs have been fitted for drivers at Aberdeen Bus Station to remind them to make passengers aware if they're not leaving from their allocated stance, as well as signs to advise passengers on stances).

- Query as to whether there are spare vehicles available in the Fraserburgh depot to cover breakdowns.

Marcin Kaminski confirmed that the Fraserburgh depot site is limited in capacity and their engineering function is located at Peterhead, from where spare buses can be dispatched.

- Councillor Mair, Mary Regan and Bruce Taylor thanked Neil Stewart for all his help and hard work over the years both at Bus Forums and in his daily job, following his announcement that he will be retiring in November 2022.

14. Next Meeting

It was confirmed that the next meeting would be in spring 2023. Date to be confirmed.