

# BUCHAN AREA BUS FORUM

MINUTES OF MEETING ON THURSDAY 16<sup>th</sup> MAY 2019

MINTLAW ACADEMY, MINTLAW

## In Attendance

### **Councillor N. Smith (Aberdeenshire Council) (Chair)**

Councillor J. Ingram (Aberdeenshire Council)

Councillor S. Calder (Aberdeenshire Council)

Myra McCredie (Mintlaw Community Council)

Anne Johnson (Cruden Community Council)

Stuart Johnson (Cruden Community Council)

Anna Gillanders (Fetterangus Community Association)

Lesley Brown (Bus User)

William Mainus (Commercial Manager, Stagecoach North Scotland)

Neil Stewart (Principal Officer, Passenger Transport Unit, Aberdeenshire Council)

Susan Watt (Senior Transport Officer, Passenger Transport Unit, Aberdeenshire Council)

## Apologies

Councillor D. Beagrie (Aberdeenshire Council)

Joan Whyte (Mintlaw Community Council)

Pauline Willox (Bus User)

Julie Pickering (Chair/Secretary Crimond Area Tenants and Residents Association)

Jim Pickering (Member of Crimond Area Tenants and Residents Association)

## **1. Welcome and Introduction**

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

## **2. Minutes of Meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> September 2019**

It was raised that the minutes should read Cruden Community Council and not Cruden Bay Community Council.

Susan Watt confirmed that this would be corrected. The minutes were then approved.

## **3. Matters arising from the Minutes**

Neil Stewart provided the following update on behalf of Aberdeenshire Council:

- 3.1 In response to Councillor Ingram's request for the provision of a bus shelter on High Street (New Pitsligo), he confirmed that the facility has now been installed.

Councillor Ingram expressed his thanks for this.

- 3.2 In response to the concerns raised regarding the positioning of the bus stops and shelter, outside and opposite the entrance to the above new Aldi store in Peterhead (Kirk Street), he confirmed that no complaints have been received from Aldi, store customers or Stagecoach Bluebird. He queried whether this was a parking issue?

Councillor Smith also confirmed that he has not received any complaints and no comments were received from the floor.

- 3.3 In response to Councillor Ingram’s request for the provision of a bus shelter on the southbound carriageway of A952 (New Leeds). He confirmed that the site investigation found the footpath to be too narrow to allow the installation of any type of shelter which would provide adequate cover. He also advised that the land behind the shelter is limited, meaning no immediate option to widen the footpath.

Councillor Ingram expressed his disappointment with the outcome.

- 3.4 Regarding the court case in relation to the *Buchan Xpress* coaches, Councillor Ingram confirmed that the hearing had been deferred on 3 occasions and a new date is still to be announced.

- 3.5 In response to Councillor Calder’s request for information regarding satisfaction levels on the accessibility of vehicles on the Buchan corridor, he confirmed that the results were emailed to everyone on the distribution list. Summary below:

<b>INDICATOR</b>	<b>BUCHAN CORRIDOR (% positive satisfaction)</b>	<b>ABERDEENSHIRE (% positive satisfaction)</b>
Ease of getting on/off bus	80%	85%
Time given to get to seat	84%	85%
Time taken to board bus	90%	91%
Provision of grab rails in the bus	73%	76%
Nearness to kerb/stop	92%	93%

He pointed out that the only significant difference in positive satisfaction levels was in the category “Ease of getting on/off bus” but, of course, the survey only covered people who were travelling on the bus, so doesn’t give a full picture.

Councillor Ingram echoed this, referring to people with walking disabilities or parents/carers with pushchairs, who may not be able to utilise the service.

Councillor Calder asked what the life span of the Buchan Xpress vehicles is and why this type of vehicle was chosen for the corridor.

William Mainus confirmed that the vehicles have a life span of approximately 10 years and they were introduced to provide increased capacity. He also confirmed that the manufacturers and operators have learned from the experience.

Councillor Ingram referred to Stagecoach acquiring a new, more accessible, fleet for Service X7 (Aberdeen - Dundee - Perth), with additional seating downstairs.

William Mainus confirmed that he was not aware of this and also advised that Service X7 is operated by Stagecoach East Scotland, based in Fife.

William Mainus provided the following update on behalf of Stagecoach Bluebird:

- 3.5 In response to the claim regarding frequent late running of the 0710 hours ex Aberdeen – Fraserburgh when it reaches Mintlaw Interchange (Monday to Friday), in particular on schooldays, he confirmed that the journey had been monitored and found to be 3 minutes late on a regular basis, therefore it will be amended at the first opportunity.
- 3.6 In response to the claim that some drivers operate “too fast” over the speed cushions within the Waterside development (Peterhead), with particular reference to around 1100 hours on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2018, he confirmed that this matter has been raised with drivers and no further complaints have been received.
- 3.7 Regarding the request for Service 66/66A (Maud/Stuartfield) to serve the new Aldi store on Kirk Street/West Road (Peterhead), this has been ruled out due to insufficient time within the timetable and there is no wish to divert away from Morrisons store.

#### 4. **Stagecoach Bluebird Update**

William Mainus provided the following update:

- 4.1 Aberdeenshire Council has undertaken a review of supported Local Bus services (see 5. below), which resulted in subsidised journeys/services operated by Stagecoach being withdrawn. As a consequence of this, there were minor revisions to the commercial bus network on 15 April 2019, but there will be further changes in August 2019, following the tendering of supported services in South Aberdeenshire.

#### 5. **Aberdeenshire Council Update**

Neil Stewart confirmed that the Council had to undertake a review of supported Local Bus services to contain spending within the approved Revenue Budget for 2019/2020, resulting in savings of £560,000 across Aberdeenshire. Services in the Buchan Area were as below:

Service	Route	Revisions & Comments
51	Fraserburgh - New Pitsligo - Ellon	Saturday service withdrawn. Alternative services provided to and from Fraserburgh (Stagecoach Service 270) or to/from Ellon via Mintlaw (Central Buchan A2B).
66 / 66A	Stuartfield - Peterhead	2245 hrs from Mintlaw to Peterhead (Saturday) and 2320 hrs from Peterhead to Stuartfield (Saturday) withdrawn. Last bus from Peterhead now departs at 2015 hrs as Stagecoach have withdrawn 2220 hrs from Peterhead to Mintlaw (Sat).
67 / 68	Aberdeen - Fraserburgh	1910 hrs and 2010 hrs from Fraserburgh to Aberdeen via Ellon (Mon - Fri) replaced by one departure at 1940 hrs. 2105 hrs and 2205 hrs from Aberdeen to Fraserburgh via Ellon (Mon - Fri) replaced by one departure at 2135 hrs.
69	St Combs - Fraserburgh	1940 hrs, 2100 hrs and 2205 hrs from Fraserburgh to St. Combs (Mon - Fri) withdrawn but 1910 hrs and 2145 hrs from Fraserburgh to Peterhead (Mon - Fri) rerouted via Inverallochy and St. Combs to provide some alternatives.

Service	Route	Revisions & Comments
69B	Peterhead - St Fergus - Fraserburgh	0645 hrs from Fraserburgh to Peterhead (Saturday) withdrawn; No alternatives. Stagecoach have withdrawn the positional journey at 0600 hrs from Peterhead to Fraserburgh (Saturday). 1910 hrs and 2145 hrs from Fraserburgh to Peterhead (Mon - Fri) will no longer serve Lonmay (see above).
81	Peterhead - Boddam	0518 hrs from Peterhead to Boddam (Saturday) and 0530 hrs from Boddam to Peterhead (Saturday) withdrawn.
82A	Peterhead - Meethill - Boddam	0730 hrs from Peterhead to Boddam (Saturday) and 0747 hrs from Boddam to Peterhead (Saturday) withdrawn
84	Peterhead Town Service (Middle Grange)	1853 hrs from Chapel Street (Monday to Friday) and 1850 hrs from Chapel Street (Saturday) return journeys withdrawn.
253	Turriff - Mintlaw - Fraserburgh	0903 hrs from Turriff to Fraserburgh (Tue & Fri) and 1320 hrs from Fraserburgh to Turriff (Tue & Fri) withdrawn; Alternative services available, for all intermediate settlements affected, to their nearest market towns.
272	Banff - Fraserburgh	0720 hrs from Fraserburgh to Banff (Mon - Fri) and 1705 hrs from Banff to Fraserburgh (Monday to Friday) withdrawn.

## 6. **Bus Service Requests / Development**

### 6.1 Request for Service 252 (New Deer - Fraserburgh) "college" bus to be re-instated.

Neil Stewart confirmed that there are no plans to re-instate the service but the operating times of the Central Buchan A2B dial-a-bus service were extended to allow passengers travelling from the areas affected, to connect with another "college" bus at Mintlaw, thus still being able to make the journey albeit with interchange.

## 7. **Public Transport Infrastructure / Information**

### 7.1 Councillor Calder referred to the Real Time display unit on King Street (just north of St. Machar Drive) indicating buses every 20 minutes, with "phantom" buses counting down to

zero but none appearing. He confirmed that he had to wait for well over an hour on one occasion.

William Mainus confirmed that the ticket machine sends a signal to communicate with the Real-Time display unit, providing the arrival time on the display screen. If there is a bus breakdown or the driver has not cancelled the machine, then this can result in scheduled time being displayed.

Neil Stewart confirmed that the suppliers, local authorities, and operators, are working together to improve the reliability of such information.

7.3 Request for provision of a bus shelter on the A952 at Fetterangus road end.

Councillor Ingram confirmed that this had been the subject of a request in the past but the northbound footpath is too narrow to install any type of shelter and the southbound location is restricted due to the position of a hedge and an objection was received from the house owner.

**8. Service 66 (Maud/Stuartfield - Peterhead)**

8.1 Councillor Smith raised that, despite assurances in the past, the service is not connecting with the mainline services to Aberdeen, with the former arriving just as the latter is leaving.

William Mainus confirmed that this would be investigated again.

8.2 Claim regarding frequent late running of the 1155 hours ex Mintlaw – Peterhead (Monday to Friday).

William Mainus confirmed that this would be investigated.

**9. Service 67/68 (Fraserburgh - Aberdeen)**

9.1 Claim that some drivers won't allow passengers to board or alight on A952 at Toll of Birness, to connect with the Peterhead - Aberdeen service.

William Mainus confirmed that, with there being no official bus stop at this location, it would be at the driver discretion if it was safe to stop there, taking into account road/weather conditions and other vehicle movements.

9.2 Query as to why, at times, a low floor vehicle operates on the corridor.

William Mainus confirmed that this only happens when there is a breakdown or a requirement for routine maintenance, meaning one of the coaches is unavailable.

**10. Boddam - Peterhead (Services 81/82/82A)**

10.1 Councillor Calder referred to his correspondence with Stagecoach Bluebird regarding his Boddam surgery being cancelled on two occasions earlier this year due to the bus, on which he was expecting to travel, breaking down.

Neil Stewart confirmed that Stagecoach Bluebird had responded to his email and hopefully reliability has improved.

10.2 Query as to when new vehicles will be allocated to the route.

William Mainus confirmed that “Sprinter” vehicles were allocated to the route but these were withdrawn as they were not well received by passengers, mainly due to restricted capacity, and they are currently investigating various different types of vehicles, including slightly newer Optare Solos (minibuses/minibuses).

**11. Service 272 (Fraserburgh – New Pitsligo – Fraserburgh)**

11.1 Claim regarding frequent late operation of the 0925 hours ex Fraserburgh (Monday to Friday), at times running up to 15 minutes late.

William Mainus confirmed that he had been made aware of this and the situation will be rectified by Monday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2019.

**12. A.O.B**

12.1 Query as to what training is provided to drivers on customer service/awareness.

William Mainus confirmed that all drivers have to undertake 5 days of customer care and disability awareness training every 5 years, along with annual “refresher” training to maintain their driving licences.

12.2 Councillor Ingram praised the Central Buchan A2B dial-a-bus, which has been extended to cover the withdrawal of Service 252 (New Deer - Fraserburgh) and to cover challenging areas such as Auchnagatt, and queried whether the passenger usage has increased in recent times.

Neil Stewart conceded that he didn’t know but he would ask colleagues and arrange for this to be communicated.

12.3 Query as to whether Stagecoach Bluebird provide leaflets/posters advertising their 50p travel for children at weekends and during school holidays and, for example, if schools are targeted.

William Mainus confirmed that he would speak to the Marketing team regarding this.

12.4 Suggestion that labels be fixed to the storage compartment doors on the Buchan Xpress vehicles, warning passengers that they spring out, as people have been struck by them.

William Mainus confirmed that this would be investigated.

**13. Date and Venue of Next Meeting**

Councillor Smith confirmed that the next meeting of the Forum would take place in Mintlaw Academy in October/November 2019. Further details will be advised in due course.