

Minutes of the Caithness Bus Users Group

Date: 06.12.13

Time: 2.00pm

Location: Caithness Horizons, Thurso

Present

Trudy Morris	Caithness Chamber of Commerce, CBUG Chairperson
David Swanson	Caithness Chamber of Commerce, Minute Secretary
Steve Walker	Stagecoach
Chris Cartmel	Stagecoach

In Attendance

John McLeod	
Gordon Calder	North of Scotland Newspapers

1. Welcome

The Chairperson, Trudy Morris, welcomed everyone and introduced all representatives present.

2. Apologies

No apologies were received.

3. Minutes of Last Meeting

The minutes of the last meeting (held on 7th June 2013) were approved by all present.

4. Actions

CBUG(2013)M001/A001 – *Stagecoach and Chamber to follow up with Highland Council on issues with timetables in Caithness and Sutherland.* **Complete** – The Chamber had held a meeting with Neil Young from Highland Council and he confirmed on 4th December that he is currently working with Stagecoach on this.

John McLeod raised that the shelter at the Towerhill Road junction in Thurso has never had a timetable Trudy asked if it had a timetable board and this was confirmed. Trudy noted that

timetable provision is Highland Council's responsibility and John stated that he had been told differently at the Highland Council service point.

Steve Walker noted that these are different issues – while the service points are under no obligation to stock timetable leaflets, Highland Council are responsible for the timetable displays at bus stops.

It was agreed that the Chamber would raise this matter with the Highland Council.

CBUG(2013)M002/A001 – Chamber to contact Highland Council regarding Towerhill Road bus stop and incorrect information at service points

John further raised an issue with provision of new timetables at the bus depot in Thurso following recent schedule changes. Steve confirmed that there had been an issue with their printers but that paper copies are being given out in the interim.

John felt that the drivers don't seem to be aware of the changes to the schedule. Steve noted that the changes were made as drivers felt unable to meet running time targets with the previous schedule and that this had been confirmed with monitoring.

John stated that two buses passed Towerhill Rd earlier that day that were not running to schedule. Steve noted that John had also raised this with the depot and that they had tracked these buses and confirmed that neither ran early.

Discussion returned to the issues with timetable provision and Steve noted that paper copies are available and all timetables are on the Stagecoach website. John felt that the text on the paper copies was too small to read and noted that not all passengers have access to a computer. Steve noted that no complaints have been raised.

It was agreed that Steve would contact David Swanson when the new timetables are available – it was expected that this would be within the next week.

CBUG(2013)M002/A002 – Steve Walker to contact David Swanson when printed timetables are available

CBUG(2013)M001/A002 – Stagecoach to look into altering Canisbay / Gills service. **Ongoing** – Steve had approached Canisbay Community Council but had no response to date. It was agreed that the Chamber would follow up on this.

Steve noted that he believes the service in question still diverts on demand.

CBUG(2013)M001/A003 – Stagecoach and Chamber to follow up with Highland Council on options regarding the 76 service. **Complete** – A meeting was held between Stagecoach and Highland Council and a solution was found

CBUG(2013)M001/A004 – Stagecoach and Chamber to liaise with NHS regarding patient transport issues. **Ongoing** – Trudy has been in contact with the NHS and the Scottish Patient Transport Service to clarify some of these issues. She has a meeting with the NHS in January to further discuss this.

Trudy read out a brief update from the NHS on this matter. Of note:

- If a patient has transport difficulties, the NHS will endeavour to give them an appointment at a suitable time
- For cataracts, they try to do everything in one day to avoid the need to travel twice – they will be introducing pre-op assessment at Golspie for Caithness General and Inverness
- They have booked patients into B&Bs prior to appointments
- They are aiming to work with the patient as a partner in healthcare, rather than a bystander

The Scottish Patient Transport Service is intended for patients who require ambulance assistance to attend their medical appointment – they work closely with NHS Highland to get patients the best appointment times. They also engage with the third sector to provide alternative transport options for patients who do not require ambulance assistance.

Trudy noted that it is important to ensure the continued provision of medical services in the county and that if transport is an issue then this must be dealt with.

CBUG(2013)M001/A005 – *Stagecoach to issue memo to drivers reminding them that Dunbeath is a request stop on the last X99 service.* **Complete** – Steve confirmed that this had been actioned. He noted that this particular journey is not running at the moment, due to the winter timetable, but that they will re-issue the memo when it returns.

5. Bus Service Issues

Steve delivered a brief update from Stagecoach. Of note:

- As mentioned in earlier discussions, there have been some minor timetable changes
- They have been asked to divert a pick-up point of the 82 service within Thurso – this change will be registered in January and will take effect 70 days from then.

Chris Cartmel noted that for timing purposes they will change the way this service operates around Tesco at the Wick end.

Trudy wished to seek clarification on the provision of Dounreay bus services, given that Johnson Controls will no longer be responsible for running them. Steve confirmed that he has a meeting with Dounreay Site Restoration Ltd, and that it is expected the responsibility for providing these services will move to them.

John raised an issue with restrictions on bus passes, noting that they cannot be used twice within a 10 minute period. Steve confirmed this and noted that it is a Transport Scotland scheme run on behalf of the Scottish Government.

There was some discussion of how the 10 minute rule is enforced and Steve noted that it is unlikely it will ever impact on passengers and that Stagecoach have never known there to be an issue with passengers having to pay fares as a result of the restriction.

6. Any Other Business

John felt that if the meeting had been better advertised, attendance may have been greater, and asked whether it would be possible to advertise in the local press. Trudy confirmed that the meeting had been advertised in the same way as before and noted that there is no budget available for press advertising.

Chris Cartmel noted that Stagecoach can put notification of future meetings on buses.

John re-raised the issue with timetables and asked if assurances could be given as to when they will be available. Steve confirmed that they would be made available as soon as possible.

There was some discussion of the issues Stagecoach had with their printers and it was agreed that they should review their printing schedule.

CBUG(2013)M002/A003 – *Steve Walker to review Stagecoach's schedule for printing timetables*

7. Date of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Caithness Bus Users Group was agreed to be held in Wick in early June 2014 – venue and exact date to be confirmed.

Trudy Morris thanked all for attending and closed the meeting.

Actions ongoing from previous meetings

CBUG(2013)M001/A002 – *Stagecoach to look into altering Canisbay / Gills service. Ongoing* – Steve had approached Canisbay Community Council but had no response to date. It was agreed that the Chamber would follow up on this.

CBUG(2013)M001/A004 – *Stagecoach and Chamber to liaise with NHS regarding patient transport issues. Ongoing* – Trudy has been in contact with the NHS and the Scottish Patient Transport Service. She has a meeting with the NHS in January to further discuss these issues.

Actions arising from this meeting

CBUG(2013)M002/A001 – *Chamber to contact Highland Council regarding Towerhill Road bus stop and incorrect information at service points*

CBUG(2013)M002/A002 – *Steve Walker to contact David Swanson when printed timetables are available*

CBUG(2013)M002/A003 – *Steve Walker to review Stagecoach's schedule for printing timetables*