

FORMARTINE AREA BUS FORUM

MINUTES OF MEETING ON THURSDAY 3RD MAY 2018

STAFF ROOM, MELDRUM ACADEMY, OLDMELDRUM

In Attendance

Councillor I. Davidson (Aberdeenshire Council) (Chair)

Councillor A.L. Kloppert (Aberdeenshire Council)
Councillor A. Hassan (Aberdeenshire Council)
Councillor P. Johnston (Aberdeenshire Council)
Debra Campbell (Community Planning Officer, Formartine)
Louise Will (Rothienorman Community Association)
Bryan Davidson (Rothienorman Community Association)
Pat Haines (Auchterless Residents Association)
George Scott (Ellon Bus User)
Sheila Scott (Ellon Bus User)
Anna Macdonough (Newmachar Bus User)
Jenny McCulloch (Newmachar Bus User)
Robert McCulloch (Newmachar Bus User)
Emma Anderson (Newmachar Bus User)
Kevin Glennie (Bains Coaches)
Mary Smith (Oldmeldrum Bus User)
Kathryn Morrison (Ellon Bus User)
Krista Wright (Ellon Bus User)
Sheila Noble (Ellon Bus User)
Sheila McKay (Ellon Bus User)
Ray Kenyon (Newburgh Bus User)
Anne Kenyon (Newburgh Bus User)
Pat Buchan (Oldmeldrum Bus User)
Ethel McCurrach (Turriff Bus User)
Rosemary Lawie (Oldmeldrum Bus User)
Lorna Owen (Ellon Bus User)
Robert Martin (Oldmeldrum Bus User)
Dot Davidson (Oldmeldrum Bus User)
Eileen Arthur (Oldmeldrum Bus User)
Aileen Adam (Oldmeldrum Bus User)
Eleanor Winning (Foveran Bus User)
Gordon G H Duncan (Fyvie, Rothienorman & Monquitter Community Council)
Margaret McHardy (Methlick Bus User)
Mabel Fettes (Methlick Bus User)
Jean Shand (Methlick Bus User)
Susan Sutherland (Belhelvie Bus User)
Colin Sutherland (Belhelvie Bus User)
Jacqueline Hill (Ythanbank Bus User)
Helen McGillivray (Ellon Bus User)
Dorothy Cummins (Ellon Bus User)
Margaret Thom (Ellon Bus User)
James Bruce (Glack/Daviot Resident and Bus User)
S Pumfrett (Bus User)
Alistair Massey (Bus User)
Jenny McEwens (Bus User)

Dougie Bain (Bains Coaches)
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)
Claire Marshall (Transport Officer, Passenger Transport Unit, Aberdeenshire Council)

Apologies

Fiona Jones (Aberdeenshire Powerful Voices)
Lorraine Bruce (Glack/Daviot Resident and Bus User)
Hilda Drummond (Potterton Bus User)
M. Hardy-Randall (Newburgh Bus User)
Joan Williamson (Bus User)

1. Welcome and Introduction

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

2. Minutes of Meeting on 7th September 2017

The minutes were approved.

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes

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

- 3.1 In response to the claim regarding a missing flag at the bus stop on A975 southbound, at Bridge Gardens (Newburgh), he confirmed that this has now been rectified.
- 3.2 In regards to the extension of the Ellon Park & Ride site, he confirmed that the drainage issue reported at the last Forum has been resolved, however there is no fixed completion date yet, other than it will be during the current financial year.
- 3.3 In response to the request to look at the times and the routes within Westhill and Kemnay on Service 777, he confirmed that minor changes are planned to come into force from 8th May 2018, with the route being altered slightly within Westhill, operating via Endeavour Drive, Prospect Road and B9119, in order to serve the industrial estate in response to passenger requests.
- 3.4 In response to the request for bus services to be rerouted to serve the new Co-op in Oldmeldrum, he confirmed that Bains Coaches have operated Service 240 (Oldmeldrum – Inverurie – Kemnay) via Colpy Road to serve the Co-op since 8th January 2018, and Stagecoach Bluebird Service 49 (Ellon – Inverurie) will do so from 7th May 2018.
- 3.5 In response to the claim that a bus stop pole on Snipe Street (Ellon) is obscured by overgrown trees, he confirmed that the site was inspected but was not found to be a particular problem. However, it would be reviewed in the summer when foliage growth would be at a peak.
- 3.6 In response to the request for the opening hours of Ellon Park and Ride to be extended, he confirmed that unfortunately this is not possible due to funding constraints.

- 3.7 In response to the claim that the touch screens located at Ellon Park & Ride and Market Street Interchange (Ellon) are at times inaccurate, he confirmed that this is down to certain journeys not being tracked properly. However, Stagecoach Bluebird have installed new ticket machines on their vehicles, which should improve matters as the tracking signal is sent from the ticket machine.
- 3.8 In response to the request for the provision of bus stops on Colpy Road (Oldmeldrum), he confirmed that there are now bus stops and shelters in place on both sides of the road.
- 3.9 In response to the request for no smoking signs to be displayed in the bus shelters in Potterton, he confirmed that these have been installed.

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

- 3.10 Regarding the repositioning of the sign to remind passengers that the seats downstairs on the Buchan Xpress services are strictly for people with restricted mobility, as it is obscured if somebody is sitting in the seats, he confirmed that a decision is still to be made and he will update accordingly.
- 3.11 In response to the claim that a coach with an extremely dirty exterior operated on the 0940 hours ex Aberdeen – Tarves on 4th September 2017 (Service 290), he confirmed that the vehicle had been resourced from Ballater that morning as temporary cover and unfortunately it had not been washed at the end of the previous day.
- 3.12 In response to the claim that northbound buses operating along King Street (Aberdeen) towards Ellon don't serve the bus stop opposite Frederick Street, he confirmed that this bus stop should be served by all Buchan corridor services and specific instances of this not happening should be reported to the company.
- 3.13 In response to the claim that the 1205 hours ex Aberdeen – Elgin (Service 35) did not operate on 25th September 2017, he confirmed that having looked at the company's data, it appears that the journey did run, albeit running 5 minutes late, carrying 8 passengers.
- 3.14 In response to the complaint regarding the frequent late running of the 0652 hours ex Ellon (Esslemont Circle) – Aberdeen (Service 62), with particular reference to 6th September 2017, he confirmed that the vehicle had to divert via Potterton on the day in question resulting in the bus being 31 minutes late. However, after checking recent company data over a 2 week period, the bus has been arriving in Aberdeen on schedule.
- 3.15 In response to the claim that there was insufficient seating on the 1555 hours ex Aberdeen – Ellon (Esslemont Circle) (Service 62) on 7th September 2017, he confirmed that company's data showed a 40 seat vehicle being operated on that day and there was no indication that overloading occurred at any point.

(For information, there was no response from the floor which likely suggested that the complainant was not present and perhaps the complaint was that they could not board the bus due to there being no seats).

- 3.16 In response to the claim regarding frequent late running of the 1320 hours ex Aberdeen – Ellon (Esslemont Circle) (Service 62), with particular reference to 6th and 7th September 2017, he confirmed that the company's data showed the journey to have operated 30 minutes and 20 minutes late respectively. He confirmed that he had checked operational data over the last 2 weeks and found only one occasion on which the journey ran late.

- 3.17 In response to the complaint regarding drivers being trained on scheduled services during morning peak periods, resulting in journeys operating late, he confirmed that the driver will be fully qualified, but for a short period after qualifying there will be a second driver in the vehicle as a back-up or mentor. He requested that specific dates and times of late operation for this reason be supplied in the future.
- 3.18 In response to the request for an earlier first bus on Saturdays (Service 62), to allow Ellon passengers to arrive in Aberdeen to commence work at 0800 hours, he confirmed it would assist the company if the demand could be quantified.
- 3.19 In response to the complaint that the Nightbird service from Aberdeen to Ellon (Service N62) is too expensive, he confirmed that Stagecoach Bluebird are due to undertake a review of all night bus services in Aberdeenshire.
- 3.20 In response to the claim that Service 63 (Aberdeen – Newburgh – Peterhead) frequently waits at the Newburgh timing points for up to 10 minutes, he confirmed that the Buchan corridor will be reviewed as the AWPR works near completion and matters such as running times and timing points will be included therein.
- 3.21 In response to the claim that some drivers are still not using The Quay (Newburgh) as the southbound timing point, as previously agreed by Stagecoach, resulting in buses passing this point early and waiting at the next stop, he confirmed that this should have been rectified since the January 2018 timetable changes.

A Newburgh resident confirmed that although it has been on the timetable to stop at The Quay for over a year, some drivers still stop at the old timing point.

William Mainus confirmed that operational staff will be re-instructed accordingly.

- 3.22 In response to the claim that the 0804 hours ex Potterton – Aberdeen (Service 291), on Saturdays, frequently arrives late, with particular reference to 10th June, 17th June and 22nd July 2017, he confirmed that the company's data shows that the journey operated on time on the 17th June, but around 10 minutes late on the other two dates given. He apologised for this and confirmed that the journey would be monitored.
- 3.23 In response to the claim that a "Buchan Xpress" coach was allocated to the 1140 hours ex Aberdeen – Tarves on 12th June 2017 (Service 291), he confirmed that the vehicle was allocated to the corridor as an emergency measure, due to the scheduled vehicle being withdrawn due to a technical fault.
- 3.24 In response to the claim regarding frequent late running of the 0913 hours ex Newburgh – Ellon (Service 50), resulting in passengers failing to connect with the 0930 hours ex Ellon – Inverurie (Service 49), he confirmed that the journeys are not advertised to connect.

Neil Stewart advised that, given both services are contracted to the Council, he had advanced the 0913 hours departure on 8th January 2018 by 5 minutes to allow passengers to connect at Ellon Park and Ride.

The following additional points were raised from the floor in regards to the previous meeting minutes:

- 3.25 Query from the floor relating to Item 8.1 of the previous minutes, as to whether newer buses have indeed been allocated to the Service 35 corridor.

William Mainus confirmed that newer 61 plate vehicles were allocated to the corridor towards the end of last year.

- 3.26 Query regarding Item 9.6 of the previous minutes, as to whether the bus routes within Ellon had been reviewed and if any consideration has been given to Service 62 serving Meiklemill first.

William Mainus referred to the company's decision to withdraw Service 62 from the outlying areas of Ellon during the inter-peak period with effect from 8th January 2018, so it was not possible to fulfil this request.

Neil Stewart confirmed that the Council has tried to mitigate against the above decision by providing additional journeys on Ellon Town Service (Service 54/54A).

4. Stagecoach Bluebird Update

William Mainus provided the following update:

- 4.1 Service 35A (Aberdeen – Oldmeldrum/Banff) was withdrawn, due to very low patronage, on 8th January 2018.
- 4.2 As already confirmed, Service 62 no longer serves the housing estates within Ellon in the inter-peak period.
- 4.3 Further minor timetable changes are due on 7th May 2018, these being largely in response to the withdrawals or alterations to Council subsidised journeys.
- 4.4 Once the AWPR is completed, the network will need to be looked at in terms of running times and to investigate what opportunities are presented. Feedback from the public would be welcomed.

It was raised from the floor that previous consultation sessions held by Stagecoach at Ellon Park & Ride did not allow many passengers to attend due to its location on the periphery of the town. It was suggested that in the future, the company use a central location such as Victoria Hall or Kirk Centre, and this was acknowledged by William Mainus.

5. Aberdeenshire Council Update

Neil Stewart provided the following update:

- 5.1 As already mentioned, the majority of journeys on Service 62 were withdrawn from the outlying estates in Ellon on 8th January 2018 by Stagecoach. In response to this, Aberdeenshire Council altered a number of subsidised services, as follows:
- Service 51 (Fraserburgh/New Pitsligo – Ellon) (formerly Service 251): All journeys have been re-routed within Ellon to additionally serve Castle Park.
 - Service 54/54A (Ellon Town Service) (formerly Service 254): Additional journeys and journey re-timings.
 - Service 292 (Tarves – Methlick – Ellon): Re-routing of peak return journey to additionally serve Esslemont Circle, Ness Circle and Castle Park.

In addition, the following subsidised services were also altered:

- Service 50 (Newburgh – Ellon) (formerly 450): Withdrawal of an a.m. peak journey (Monday to Friday) but replaced by alteration to Service 747 (see below), albeit operating a bit earlier. 1 of the 4 inter-peak return journeys on Saturdays was withdrawn due to limited overall passenger demand across that day.
- Service 747 (Peterhead/Ellon – Dyce): Re-routing of a.m. peak journey from Dyce to Ellon, to additionally serve Newburgh.

5.2 For the second consecutive year, a review of Council supported Local Bus Services was required to ensure that expenditure on socially necessary bus services did not exceed the Budget allocation for the forthcoming financial year, with a predicted shortfall in the 2018/19 Budget of approximately £200,000. The review resulted in a number of contracts being altered or withdrawn across Aberdeenshire, however there are no changes affecting the Formartine area.

6. Bus Service Requests / Development

Neil Stewart referred to the papers circulated, detailing pending and fulfilled service requests in the Formartine Area, and provided the following update:

6.1 In response to the request for Service 35 to be re-routed within Aberdeen City, to provide passenger access to Union Terrace or Union Street, Stagecoach Bluebird confirmed that this would continue to be investigated but it would currently involve an additional vehicle being allocated to the corridor due to the additional time required and this was not viable at present.

7. Public Transport Infrastructure / Information

Neil Stewart welcomed any requests or comments from the floor:

7.1 Request for an update on the re-instatement of the bus shelter on Market Street (Ellon) for northbound travel.

Neil Stewart confirmed that a new shelter will be installed in the next few weeks and this will be very similar in style to the previous facility.

7.2 Complaint that the Buchan Travel Guide timetable is confusing due to all the various services which operate between Aberdeen and Ellon being spread over several pages.

William Mainus confirmed that these comments would be noted but it is difficult to cater for all passenger needs, with several requesting all services for one area to be in the same booklet.

(For information, Stagecoach produce an Ellon to Aberdeen summary leaflet).

7.3 Claim regarding Service 62A (Ellon – Balmedie – Aberdeen) not serving the correct bus stops on Union Street, as advertised on Real-Time, on a Sunday.

William Mainus confirmed that this would be investigated.

- 7.4 Claim that the bus stop on the B9005 (Fyvie), opposite the Vale Hotel, is in a dangerous location.

Neil Stewart confirmed that the location would have been assessed and put out to consultation prior to being installed, however this would be investigated.

(Following the meeting, the location was reassessed and deemed as safe for a bus stop).

- 7.5 It was claimed from the floor that during the heavy snowfall in February/March 2018, Service 292 (Ellon - Tarves) was only mentioned in the service updates on the Stagecoach website on two occasions.

William Mainus apologised for this and expressed the view that the company's controllers may have regarded the whole 290-293 corridor as simply being 290/291, and confirmed that he would feed this back to colleagues.

- 7.6 It was also claimed from the floor that during the heavy snowfall in February/March 2018, Stagecoach Bluebird's smartphone app showed buses were due in Newburgh, but the information vanished as buses were diverted through Ellon due to the conditions of the roads. This was coupled with a complaint as to why buses operated to Cruden Bay and Ellon, but did not serve Newburgh throughout most of this period.

William Mainus confirmed that it is difficult for the system to provide accurate information when buses are diverted off the registered route, as was the case in the extreme weather conditions.

Councillor Davidson confirmed that due to the sheer volume of snow and dangerous conditions on a specific bend on the road between Cruden Bay and Newburgh, it was unsafe for the buses to operate on these routes until they were cleared and this took some time.

- 7.7 Claim that the display screens at Union Square Bus Station do not always work, with particular regard to Services 60/61 (Aberdeen - Peterhead).

William Mainus confirmed that this would be investigated.

- 7.8 Councillor Hassan raised the matter of a survey he had undertaken in the Oldmeldrum area to gauge passengers' thoughts on bus services. He reported that, overall, people were not satisfied with the level of bus service provision to/from the town, with numerous requests for additional journeys between Oldmeldrum and Inverurie in the evenings and on Sundays.

Neil Stewart confirmed that evening journeys between Oldmeldrum and Inverurie were previously withdrawn due to very low passenger usage, but he admitted that this was a number of years ago and since then the town has significantly grown. He reaffirmed that currently there are no Council funds available for additional journeys/services, however requests such as this may be considered in the future.

8. Service 35 (Aberdeen – Elgin)

- 8.1 Repeated claim regarding frequent late running or non-operation of journeys and that there are "unsuitable" and "poor" vehicles operating on the corridor resulting in frequent breakdowns, citing frequent faults with the door mechanism. This was coupled with a request for new vehicles, highlighting that new vehicles were recently allocated to Service 10 (Aberdeen – Huntly – Inverness).

William Mainus acknowledged that there were performance issues on the corridor due to the high mileage of the vehicles allocated to the service and reaffirmed that 9 newer vehicles ('61' plate) had been allocated to the corridor as from December 2017. He also confirmed that the Service 35 corridor is not suitable for the buses allocated to the Service 10 route due to the length of the vehicles.

Susan Watt highlighted the importance of providing dates and times of issues, and also reporting them at the time that they occur.

It was raised from the floor that the service has been operating better throughout the 2 weeks preceding the meeting.

- 8.2 Request for low floor vehicles to be allocated to the route, in particular between Aberdeen and Oldmeldrum.

William Mainus confirmed that due to the corridor being a long distance route, the majority of passengers request coaches for reasons of comfort. He highlighted that it is difficult to find the ideal vehicle type to suit all passenger needs and provide sufficient seating capacity.

- 8.3 Claim that frequent late running and/or breakdowns are resulting in insufficient seats being available at Newmachar and passengers often have to wait for up to an hour.

William Mainus confirmed that this would be investigated.

- 8.4 Complaint regarding the display screens at the front of the vehicles showing Oldmeldrum and in smaller letters underneath "for Elgin", resulting in confusion for passengers.

William Mainus confirmed that this was due to the service being split into four separate registrations to comply with EU drivers' hours' regulations, but the ultimate destination will always be displayed. He acknowledged that this is not ideal, however it allows for greater flexibility with drivers and confirmed that the size and layout of the displays comply with all the relevant stipulations laid out by the DfT.

- 8.5 Request for the re-instatement of Service 35A (Aberdeen – Oldmeldrum).

William Mainus confirmed that the service was withdrawn due to low passenger demand and was not commercially viable.

- 8.6 Repeated request for the service to operate via alternate routes in Dyce i.e. via Victoria Road and Riverview Drive.

William Mainus confirmed that a number of years ago, Service 235 (Oldmeldrum – Newmachar – Dyce) was introduced to provide a link to Riverview Drive in order to serve the health centre and Asda superstore, but the service was withdrawn due to extremely limited passenger demand.

- 8.7 Repeated request for the 2215 hours ex Aberdeen – Banff via Union Terrace to be re-instated to allow passengers to travel home from His Majesty's Theatre and the Music Hall (once refurbishment completed).

William Mainus confirmed that he would investigate what options were possible, confirming that the earlier 2135 hours journey could be re-timed to operate at 2215 hours, but that would leave a gap of more than two hours after the previous departure at 2005 hours.

- 8.8 Request for a journey to operate direct to Aberdeen Airport for passengers catching flights between 0530 hours and 0700 hours, instead of connecting at Bucksburn with other services.

William Mainus confirmed that there are no plans to re-route Service 35 via the airport or to provide earlier journeys, the first southbound bus currently arriving in Bucksburn at 0546 hours. He explained that passengers can connect in Bucksburn if they cross the road to access Service 727 (Union Square – Aberdeen Airport), which operates every 30 minutes until around 0600 hours and then becomes every 15 minutes or better.

9. Service 62 (Aberdeen – Balmedie – Ellon)

- 9.1 Councillor Hassan raised the claim that on 17th February 2018, a new driver operated the wrong way around Balmedie on the 1006 hours ex Ellon – Aberdeen.

William Mainus confirmed that this would be investigated.

- 9.2 Query as to whether the subsidy paid to Stagecoach for Service 62 is correct at only £78.48 per annum.

Neil Stewart confirmed that the subsidy is correct, as only one Saturday journey is subsidised, and it is an allocated figure from an overall package comprising several services.

- 9.3 Request for the service to revert to serving the outlying areas of Ellon during the inter-peak period as frequently the journeys don't connect with Service 54/54A (Ellon Town Service).

William Mainus confirmed that it is not commercially viable to serve all parts of Ellon throughout the day, but he would investigate connection times once the AWPR has been completed.

Neil Stewart confirmed that Service 54/54A is only operated by one vehicle, and in order to cover the whole of Ellon, the best the service can do is to cover each area on an approximate hourly basis. Connections with mainline services are available on Market Street and the longest wait should be around 20 minutes.

- 9.4 Request for only low floor vehicles to be allocated to Service 62, as many people are unable to climb up the steps on the coaches, given that the longer distance services are operated by coaches providing an alternative for those not mobility impaired.

William Mainus confirmed that this would be investigated.

10. Service 67/68 (Aberdeen – Ellon – Fraserburgh)

- 10.1 Query as to why an X67 journey on a Saturday (1630 hours ex Fraserburgh – Ellon – Aberdeen) operates via Market Street in Ellon, when it is supposed to be limited stop.

William Mainus advised that this had been rectified in the January 2018 timetable changes.

- 10.2 Repeated request for additional peak time journeys on the corridor, as well as the Service 60/61 corridor, to be re-routed via Ellon town centre, as there are considerable gaps during this period.

William Mainus confirmed that it was difficult to strike a balance between the demands of Ellon passengers and those travelling longer distances to the north, the latter requesting faster limited stop services and complaining in the past that they were often unable to obtain seats on buses at peak times.

11. Service 290/291/292 (Aberdeen – Tarves/Methlick/Ellon)

- 11.1 Neil Stewart raised a claim passed on from Tarves Community Council that the 0839 hours ex Tarves – Aberdeen broke down in Pitmedden on 17th April 2018.

William Mainus confirmed that the vehicle on this journey did break down, and there was a delay of more than an hour, for which he apologised.

- 11.2 Claim regarding frequent breakdowns and poor reliability on the corridor.

Susan Watt requested that times and dates be provided to the Passenger Transport Unit, as this is a predominately Council subsidised service.

- 11.3 Repeat request for the southbound evening journeys to be re-timed to bridge the gap from Belhelvie, which exists between 1740 hours and 2018 hours (Service 291), to provide an appropriate arrival time in Aberdeen for those attending evening events. It was emphasised that the request is not for an additional journey, but rather the rerouting of a journey.

Neil Stewart confirmed that, unfortunately, this is not currently possible due to the need for the vehicles to carry significant numbers of passengers, including many workers, north during the p.m. peak period to destinations such as Tarves and Pitmedden, and these vehicles are not available to return south any earlier. However, he confirmed that he would discuss this matter further with Stagecoach Bluebird, as another obstacle is the fact that two of these peak northbound journeys continue to Fyvie, as the vehicles are based there.

- 11.4 Complaint regarding the approximate daytime 2 hour frequency between Belhelvie and Aberdeen not catering for passenger needs.

Neil Stewart confirmed that the frequency of service via Belhelvie is considered acceptable with regards to the size of the settlement concerned and that it is not possible to enhance this at present, particularly due to financial constraints.

- 11.5 Query as to why the 0912 hours ex Ellon – Ythanbank – Methlick, connecting with a journey from Methlick to Aberdeen, was being withdrawn on 7th May 2018.

William Mainus confirmed that the journey was being withdrawn as a knock-on effect of the Council withdrawing tendered journeys in another area, combined with very low passenger usage. (For information: 2 passengers per day).

12. Service 308 (Inverurie – Turriff/Aberchirder)

- 12.1 Request for a later bus in the afternoon from Inverurie – Turriff via Auchterless.

Neil Stewart confirmed that there used to be later journey, but it was withdrawn due to extremely limited passenger demand.

- 12.2 Complaint that Stagecoach Bluebird operated a “Sunday service” on Easter Monday, rather than a normal Monday service.

William Mainus expressed surprise and confirmed that a normal weekday service should have operated, as per the contract specification and service registration, and agreed to investigate.

- 12.3 Query as to why two road closures were allowed to overlap in the same area, given the significant effect on the operation of Service 308. This was coupled with a query as to whether the impact of road closures on passenger demand for supported local bus services is taken into account when usage figures are recorded within the Council's Performance Management Framework Model (PMFM) (used to rank subsidised contracts for bus services), highlighting that Service 308 would have seen a significant drop in passengers throughout the current period of simultaneous road closures on the B9025 and in Rothienorman.

Neil Stewart confirmed that the Passenger Transport Unit has very limited control over the location and/or timing of road works. He added that, on some occasions, buses are allowed through the works but this time it was not possible for safety reasons. As there were no suitable alternative routes which could be used by the existing resources, taxis were provided by the Council on some sections to minimise the disruption for passengers.

Regarding the PMFM, Neil Stewart confirmed that passenger figures are collected over a 12 month period, so it is unlikely that this 3 week period would be significant, and the taxi usage would be recorded. He also confirmed that he would keep in mind the effect road closures have on the figures recorded in the PMFM, whilst highlighting that the model is based on various other factors such as rate of car ownership, primary journey purpose, area deprivation levels, etc.

13. Foveran Area

- 13.1 Councillor Kloppert raised the issue of buses frequently not serving Foveran in accordance with the advertised temporary timetable during the on-going AWPR works, resulting in passengers being left stranded.

William Mainus confirmed his understanding that this matter had been resolved but arrangements have been made for one of the company's inspectors to monitor this.

- 13.2 Claim that some drivers are simply refusing to serve Foveran, with particular reference to the 2140 hours ex Aberdeen on 10th March 2018, when it was further claimed that a young adult heading for Foveran was dropped off on the main carriageway in the dark. It was suggested that many issues appear to be due to poor communication between management and drivers.

William Mainus confirmed that, throughout the works affecting Foveran, the village should be served by Service 62 up until early evening and thereafter by specific journeys on the Buchan corridor. Up until recently, the evening journeys had to be operated by vehicles to a certain length, but following a recent site investigation, it has been deemed safe for the longer coaches to also serve Foveran. He advised that, in a matter of weeks, Foveran will be open to through traffic again, meaning all services will re-instate operation via the village.

- 13.3 Request from the floor for clarity on what services would operate via Foveran once the A90 Dualling/AWPR works are complete.

William Mainus confirmed that this is still under discussion.

14. A.O.B.

- 14.1 Complaint that passengers with "Megarider" tickets were not compensated for the non-operation of certain services during the extreme weather conditions at the end of February, with particular reference to those travelling to/from Newburgh on Service 63 (Aberdeen – Newburgh – Peterhead).

William Mainus confirmed that the company tried to operate as many services as possible but, at times, this proved impossible due to road conditions. He confirmed that he would discuss the issue of compensation with the company's Operations Director.

- 14.2 It was raised from the floor that some drivers currently have to wait for around 10 minutes in Newburgh to avoid running ahead of schedule.

William Mainus confirmed that extra time was added to timetables to take into account traffic congestion in Aberdeen and also the effects of the A90 dualling/AWPR works, and it is difficult to get the balance exactly right. He confirmed that running times on the corridor will be reviewed once the works have been completed.

- 14.3 Councillor Hassan raised a complaint he had received from the Community Council, that during the severe winter weather, passengers at Udney Station were unaware as to whether buses would be serving the village or not. They have requested notices to be displayed on the timetable boards to advise whether or not buses would be able to serve the village during such periods.

Neil Stewart confirmed that it is difficult to update the public on matters such as this, due to the variable effects of the weather and the operation of services changing at a moment's notice, but he would speak to colleagues to see what is practically possible in the future.

- 14.4 Councillor Johnston asked Stagecoach Bluebird to confirm the routing of their commercial services on the A90 between Aberdeen and Ellon, once the A90 dualling/AWPR works have been completed. He made particular reference to the residents of Blackdog, Balmedie and Foveran, who have raised their concerns as to the level of service to be provided and when they will be consulted on this.

William Mainus confirmed that the company is currently formulating plans for commercial provision on the corridor and will consult on this as soon as a completion date for the works is confirmed.

- 14.5 Complaint that phone calls to Stagecoach Bluebird in Aberdeen regularly go unanswered.

William Mainus confirmed that there should be someone available to receive calls, but if they are not available, there is the opportunity to leave a message and someone will call back.

- 14.6 Suggestion that Ellon residents should attend the Buchan Area Bus Forum as the town is on the Buchan corridor.

Neil Stewart confirmed that anyone is free to attend any of the Council's Area Bus Forums, but rather than advise Ellon residents to attend a Forum in a different Council Area, he would extend the times of the Formartine Area Bus Forum in the future, to allow everyone to have their say.

15. **Date of Next Meeting**

- 15.1 Councillor Davidson confirmed that the next meeting of the Forum will take place in Ellon in autumn 2018. Full details will be advised in due course.