

## Meeting Minutes

<b>Meeting Title</b>	<b>Customer Panel Meeting</b>	<b>Reference</b>	<b>Swansea / Cymru</b>
<b>Date of Meeting</b>	<b>25 January 2012</b>	<b>Start Time</b>	<b>1800</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>Civic Centre, Swansea</b>	<b>Prepared By</b>	<b>Natacha Tagholm</b>

<b>Attendees</b>	<b>Apologies</b>	<b>Distribution</b>
Terrance Davies (TD) Sheila Betts (SB), West Wales Group of Civil Servants Mike Llewellyn (ML) Brain Owen (BO) Roderick Lay (RL) Paul James (PJ) Amanda Shepherd (AS) Neil Harris (NH) Rebecca Gooch (RG), City and County of Swansea Pablo Rees (PR) Jenny Davies (JD), Mencap Swansea Barclay Davies (BD), Bus Users Cymru Kevin Hart (KH), First Colin Fox (CF), First Natacha Tagholm (NT), First	Lynn Coleman (LC), Swansea People First Peter Maksymuik (PM), Swansea People First Alli Maskell (AM), Mencap	Simon Newport, First (SN) Marc Reddy, First (MR) Allen Parker, First (AP) Penny Scotcher, First (PS) Phil Trotter, First (PT) Karen Baxter, First (KB) Sue Arrowsmith, First (SA) Matthew Parker, First (MP) Hayley Thomas, First (HT) Lyn Harvey, First (LH) Julian Osborne (JA), Bus Users UK

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	<b>Description</b>	<b>Who</b>	<b>Due date</b>
<b>1</b>	<b>Introductions</b>		
<b>1</b>	<b>Introductions</b> General introductions were made around the table:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kevin Hart – General Manager First Cymru</li> <li>• Natacha Tagholm – Regional Customer Services Manager, South West and Wales</li> <li>• Colin Fox – Business Manager, Swansea</li> <li>• Amanda Shepherd – works at Singleton Hospital and travels to work by bus</li> <li>• Sheila Betts – regular bus group and represents a West Wales group</li> <li>• Rebecca Gooch – City and County of Swansea</li> <li>• Pablo Rees – regular bus user and secretary of SAFE Swansea (disability forum)</li> <li>• Mike Llewellyn – retired, living in the Killay area, totally reliant on buses</li> <li>• Roderick Lay – retired General Manager, regular bus user</li> <li>• Neil Harris – Swansea University, reliant on buses or bicycles</li> <li>• Paul James – lifelong bus users, also a member of Bus Users UK</li> <li>• Brian Owen – reliant on buses</li> <li>• Terrance Davies – reliant on buses</li> <li>• Barclay Davies, Bus Users Cymru, an independent body who</li> </ul>		

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	will arbitrate in the case of complaints. Bus Users Cymru (part of Bus Users UK) also undertakes regular surgeries throughout Wales for the public to attend. Various operators would be represented at these events.		
<b>2</b>	<b>Purpose of the Swansea Customer Panel</b>		
2	<p>NT explained that the customer panel is to take a more strategic overview of the First bus services and not to address individual complaints which should still be addressed through the Customer Service Department.</p> <p>The aim of the panel is to be representative of different groups who use the services and to respect that these groups may have varying issues affecting them.</p> <p>It was explained that tonight's meeting was about setting the scene for future meetings and that there was no fixed agenda as such.</p> <p>A proposal was made that all the members of the panel should send in their issues prior to the next meeting so that they can be effectively collated into categories and an agenda. Panel members could also propose solutions which can be discussed at the meeting in terms of why those solutions might work or might not.</p> <p>The minutes of this meeting will also formulate the basis of an agenda.</p>	ALL	16/04/12
<b>3</b>	<b>Subsidies</b>		
	<p>KH explained that last week, Transport Ministers in Cymru reduced the level of rebate on fuel (known as BSOG – Bus Service Operator's Grant) by 25%. This will have an impact on services from April.</p> <p>In addition to this the Welsh Government has just announced a 27% reduction for Local Transport Services Grant (LTSG) (which is the subsidy paid to Local Authorities from Welsh Government for Tendered services).</p> <p>The LAs will look at social need when reviewing their services. It is possible that the LAs will wait to make their decisions until after the elections in May. This could also result in an increase in fares.</p> <p>Swansea lost subsidies on Sunday services 18 months ago.</p> <p>KH mentioned that it will be a tough year ahead with early morning and evening service most likely to be affected. We will however do a route by route analysis of all the factors affecting us. We have 200 routes in South Wales so this is a laborious exercise. It is therefore anticipated that any major changes will take place from June.</p> <p>As an industry we continuously lobby ministers, local authorities, the C.P.T. (Confederation of Passenger Transport UK) and other bodies.</p>		
<b>4</b>	<b>Concessions</b>		
	In response to a question from the panel, KH confirmed that Cymru bus operators do receive more than those in England and Welsh customers can use their concession passes all the time whereas in England there		

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	<p>are time limitations (usually after 09:30).</p> <p>However, the Welsh Government does cap the concession reimbursement. As more concession holders use the buses the percentage reimbursement will decrease if the cap is exceeded. The cap has already been fixed for the 2012/2013 financial year.</p>		
<b>5</b>	<b>Update on FTR</b>		
	<p>One of the panel members asked if Swansea is keeping the FTR as other cities are axing it because of problems. KH explained that Swansea has no plans to get rid of it and Cardiff is planning on expanding its fleet of bendy buses.</p> <p>The panel expressed concern that when one breaks down, it is the equivalent of two buses not running.</p> <p>KH explained that, in Swansea there is a fleet of 10. The FTR in Swansea was introduced for the purpose of linking the two hospitals (Morrison and Singleton), the university and the city centre and creating capacity. In general the public prefer FTR type buses to double deckers as there is no struggling up and down stairs etc.</p> <p>One of the panel asked about the 43 service which seems to be a service that achieves the same goal. KH advised that the 43 service is tendered by the City and County of Swansea and operates a different way between the 2 hospitals.</p> <p>KH mentioned that only the FTRs have real time equipment on board and that it costs £49,000 p.a. to maintain for 10 vehicles. Unfortunately it is expensive because one company has the monopoly on the marketplace. This figure does not include the cost of purchasing the equipment initially.</p> <p>PR mentioned that there is a constant problem of the FTR audio system not working. This is a very important facility for the visually impaired, wheelchairs users (who have to face away from the direction in which the bus is travelling), people with learning difficulties, tourists etc.</p> <p>KH explained that the system is host enabled and that we need to remind the hosts that the system needs to be used. Whilst the system is being fixed, KH mentioned that the hosts could ask customers if they need anything in terms of stops etc. PR mentioned that might seem patronising to some disabled users.</p> <p>CF explained that we have had battery life issues, fob problems (they can only be sourced through the RNIB). First did approach the manufacturer about the system working permanently put it would require a re-write of the software which was financially unviable. We are currently waiting for new fobs and batteries as the batteries only last about 2 or 3 days. PR mentioned that he has used the FTR about 30 times this year and the audio has only worked once.</p> <p>Another panel member suggested the voice could be changed as the current one is annoying but it was deemed better to have the system</p>	KH/CF	



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disability forums and information sessions.</li> </ul> <p>AS and SB explained that, although the on-bus communication is usually very good, it is not easy for the visually impaired. NT explained that she has a meeting scheduled with the RNIB to discuss this and other issues concerning visually impaired customers.</p> <p>The following suggestions for improved communications were made by the panel:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use Inspectors</li> <li>• Use hosts</li> <li>• Use bus station tannoy</li> <li>• More presence in the bus station</li> <li>• Improve real time information on buses</li> <li>• Audio equipment on buses</li> <li>• Via timetables – the dead space which is currently filled with a Traveline logo or similar could be used to put information about what we have achieved or what is happening in the industry.</li> <li>• A system in the bus station for hearing impaired passengers.</li> <li>• Information days in shopping centres</li> <li>• Make more use of bus stops</li> <li>• Council websites</li> <li>• Travel websites</li> <li>• Local interest websites</li> <li>• Printed local maps with paying advertisers (perhaps those venues along the route etc.)</li> <li>• Tourist Information Centres</li> </ul> <p>The panel should consider other ways of improving this.</p> <p>CF explained that the tannoy system was only installed by City and County of Swansea in December 2011 and that the information is starting to come through although we need to give the people using the system the confidence and ability to convey messages in a customer appropriate manner.</p> <p>KH explained that the staff in the bus stations are employed by City and County of Swansea and partly funded by us. They are primarily there for timetabling information.</p> <p>We do accept that we do need to encourage our controllers to spend more time in the bus station.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">PT</p> <p style="text-align: center;">ALL</p>	
8.2	<p><b>Mystery Shopping Forms</b></p> <p>NT distributed copies of the Mystery Shopping Forms which were designed with disabled users in mind (in particular those with learning difficulties). It was explained that these can be used by anyone and requests for more should be directed back to NT.</p> <p>Need a Welsh copy.</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">ALL</p> <p style="text-align: center;">PT</p>	
8.3	<p><b>Safe Journey Cards</b></p>		

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	<p>NT handed out the Safe Journey cards and explained their use, i.e. to help people with special needs communicate them to the driver.</p> <p>NT also explained that we had been running various interactive sessions with disability groups across the region to help passengers understand how to get on the bus safely, where to sit in order to be visible to the driver, what to do if they felt uncomfortable etc. NT offered this to all groups present.</p>		
8.4	<p><b>RESPECT Campaign</b> The panel asked what the policy is about passengers dropping litter etc.</p> <p>NT explained that there are often issues with complaints about other passengers, e.g. litter, bags on seats, body odour, bad language etc. She mentioned a previous campaign called RESPECT which had been run nationally via cove advertising on bus. There is a plan to re-introduce this across the region soon. We can ask passengers to be respectful but sadly we cannot force them to.</p> <p>KH explained that drivers can be requested to intervene but are not obliged to. We would not ask drivers to jeopardise their own safety in order to confront a passenger. However, the driver can call the police to evict a disruptive passenger. In the case of spillages from bottles left on the bus etc. this might result in the bus having to be pulled in for cleaning should it be major and this would have an impact on services.</p> <p>PJ asked if litter bins could be put on buses. KH explained that, when the UK was under a high security threat, all containers were removed from public places. As part of the respect campaign we would expect people to take their litter home with them. The type of people who would use a bin are the same who would take it home.</p>		
8.5	<p><b>Drive Green</b> The panel asked about greener travel and if we use a method of monitoring driving to improve fuel efficiency which can in itself reduce costs given the forthcoming funding issues.</p> <p>KH explained the Drive Green system which is fitted on the buses. It is a system which monitors adverse braking, acceleration and other such driving "faults". Whilst it is not used as a disciplinary tool, it is used as a safety and training tool. The Drive Green system also allows us to track a particular bus and pinpoint the time it was at any particular location. It has also been instrumental in driving down our collisions and passenger incidents. We can also track buses through our Almex ticketing system and can identify how many passengers boarded at each stop.</p>		
<b>9</b>	<b>Panel Complaints/issues</b>		
9.1	<p><b>Route 17/400/404</b> RL mentioned that complaints on these routes are not always responded to as they cross two depots. This needs to be discussed with the depot managers. If a customer complains about 2 services they should only have one response.. BO also mentioned that the complaints are dealt with better from our Llanelli depot rather than Swansea.</p>	KH/CF/LH	

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	RL also mentioned the incomprehensible timetabling of service 17 running 4 minutes in front of 400 from Gowerton. This is equal to 2 buses per hour instead of 3 with 2 running virtually together. He has spoken to the inspector responsible for these routes in Swansea and he tells me he has reported the deplorable timekeeping on this route but it would appear that his comments have as yet not received attention.	CF	
9.2	<b>116/118 and Singleton timetables</b> The timetables have not been updated.	PT	
9.3	<b>116/118 Punctuality</b> KH explained that First had taken these routes over from another operator and it had been a very difficult time. The previous operator used to have a system whereby the drivers would call the oncoming buses to ascertain if customers were waiting at stops and therefore make a decision as to whether to go via that location. This is how they managed to run to the timetable they had implemented. First has a policy of no mobile phones whilst driving even with an ear piece and therefore could not follow the same system. It is a LA service. SB mentioned that it has improved in reliability. KH explained this is because we changed the timetable in November to address the reliability and punctuality issues. In addition we moved some of the LA owned vehicles to the P&R to allow our own newer vehicles to do the longer Gower run.		
9.4	<b>Killay Services</b> The panel asked what impact the new bus station has had on services to Killay and asked about timetabling issues, mentioning that services 20, 21 and 21b tend to leave within 5 minutes of each other.  CF explained that they all go to Killay via different routes and therefore the arrival times are different. If we were to change the scheduling, then there would be a pinch point (a time at which buses arrive together) somewhere else along the route.  CF also explained that the 21b service is council tendered and therefore run to their timetable.		
9.5	<b>Timetables in the Civic Centre</b> The bus stop outside is only showing no. 4 timetable.  The timetables in the foyer need updating.	PT	
9.6	<b>Comfort</b> PJ mentioned that First needs to improve the comfort and experience of travelling on the buses in order to attract new customers as currently it is not a pleasurable experience. KH explained that the new buses which will be coming in by 2015 will be more comfortable and some will even have leather seats.		
9.7	<b>Destination blinds</b> PJ asked why some of the destination blinds were not working. CF said that all the vehicles (except two) had been refitted at a cost of £1,200 each. All vehicles in First have illuminated working destination blinds and are replaced if they fail.  RL mentioned that destination blinds are not illuminated when the engine is turned off at the bus stands at Swansea bus station there by causing passengers to miss buses when they are at the wrong stand.	CF	

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9.8	<p><b>Swansea Bus Station Working Group</b></p> <p>PJ asked if there is a working group to make suggestions for improvements to the bus station. KH suggested he contact Chris Vinestock of Swansea City Council.</p> <p>RL mentioned that the service displays are not real time and when buses are late they disappear from the display although they have not even arrived at the stand!</p>	KH	
9.9	<p><b>RL</b> commented about the temperature on some 100 services where it has been so unbearably hot that passengers are stripping to there underwear. He asked if the advertised air conditioning is working and if not why not? Have the drivers been instructed how to use it</p>	CF	
<b>10</b>	<b>A.O.B.</b>		
10.1	<p><b>Format of minutes and discussion at the panel</b></p> <p>It was requested that the minutes also be available in 14pt font and that the discussion at the customer panel use less technical jargon.</p>		
10.2	<p><b>Venue for customer panel</b></p> <p>Discussions were had about the suitability and time of the venue/panel. The main problem is the lack of services from outside the Civic Centre for the return journey. KH explained there is a cost factor involved and we had considered a local hotel which was nearly four times the cost. RG suggested the Grand Theatre. NT/KH to follow up. No decision was made on the time but it was accepted that this seemed the most convenient for those who worked.</p>	NT/KH	
10.3	<p><b>Contact List</b></p> <p>PJ requested that the panel members have a list of contact for each depot for when issues arise.</p>	KH/NT	
10.4	<p><b>Bristol minutes</b></p> <p>The panel asked if they could be sent a link/copy of the minutes from the customer panel with these.</p>	NT	
10.5	<p><b>Agenda for next meeting</b></p> <p>Panel members should submit their agenda issues a week prior to the meeting. PR has requested:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training for drivers</li> <li>• Passenger Safety</li> <li>• Complaints by Depot</li> <li>• Summer services, e.g. Open Top Buses, Special Timetables &amp; publicity</li> </ul>	ALL	
<b>11</b>	<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>		
	Wednesday 25 <sup>th</sup> April 2012 – 18:00 – 20:00 – venue to be advised.		