

Bus Appeals Body

2014 Annual Report

The Bus Appeals Body (BAB) provides an independent arena to resolve complaints of bus and coach passengers in England and Wales where no satisfactory agreement has been reached by the passenger and the bus company. The Bus Appeals Body Scotland (BABScot) does the same for passengers in Scotland.

Set up in 1999, BAB is a joint undertaking by the bus passenger representative organisation Bus Users UK and the bus industry trade body, the Confederation of Passenger Transport. Three individuals, all with appropriate understanding of issues facing both bus and coach passengers and the bus companies that provide them, sit on the body. Bus Users UK appoints a representative with an understanding of the bus passenger issues while the Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) appoints a person to represent the company perspective, and there is an independent chair.

Until 2013 Scotland had statutory provision for handling bus passenger complaint appeals, but during that year, a similar appeals body for Scotland was set up with Scottish Government support in 2013. Bus Appeals Body Scotland is independent of that in England & Wales. BAB and BABScot both have independent chairs with a casting vote and the bodies assess complaints referred to them via Bus Users UK.

London and Northern Ireland retain statutory bus passenger representation.

When passengers are not satisfied with the way the bus or coach company has (or, of course, has not) responded to their complaint, Bus Users UK aims to broker a solution on their behalf. Where this cannot be achieved for whatever reason, the issue can be escalated to the Bus Appeals Body.

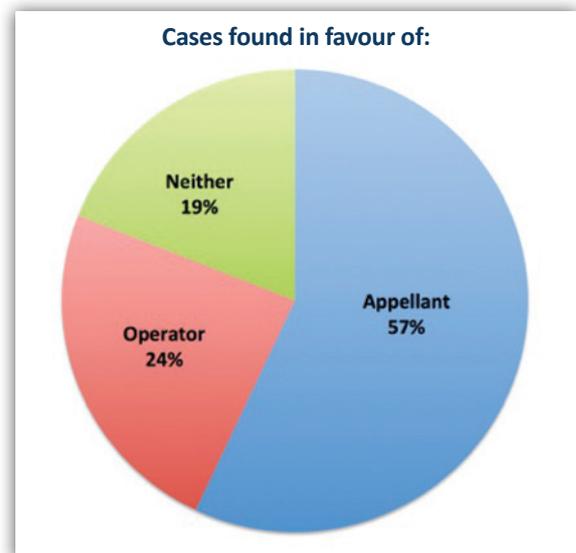
Most operators of scheduled bus and coach services in Britain are members of CPT, and agree to abide by BAB or BABScot decisions as part of their CPT membership. However neither appeals body has a statutory remit.

Following the retirement of Lord Snape of Wednesbury, Chris Heaps, a former Traffic Commissioner and solicitor, was appointed as the chair of BAB in England and Wales at the beginning of 2014. At the same time, new representatives of the operator and passenger viewpoints were appointed: Roger French OBE and Roma Patten respectively.

In Scotland, the passenger representative during last year was Harry Barker (who subsequently stepped down after becoming a Director of Bus Users UK), the industry representative is John Elliot and the chair is Ian Longair.

2014 Cases for BAB

During 2014 Bus Users experienced a further increase in the volume of complaints handled in England and Wales. The increase was relatively small in England but significant in Wales. Neither led to a rise in the number of complaints reaching BAB; in fact, the number fell from 69 in 2013 to 50 in 2014, of which six were from Wales. Four complaints were resolved by the parties after being submitted to BAB but before any decision had been made.



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Three cases involving persistent service reliability were referred directly to the relevant Traffic Commissioner. Two other similar cases were the subject of ongoing discussions between the operator and the complainant, and so were not taken on officially as BAB cases.

BAB sets itself a target of eight weeks to resolve all cases. In 2014, the target was met in 100% of referred cases.

Of the 46 cases on which decisions were issued in 2014, 26 (57%) were found in favour of the passenger, and 11 (24%) were found in favour of the operator. Nine found some fault on both sides. These proportions are broadly similar to those for 2013.

In 2014 service reliability and driver/staff attitude issues remain the key categories for referrals to BAB. Driver/staff attitude complaints are not just about drivers; they sometimes involve customer service staff employed to resolve complaints and other customer-facing employees.

ISSUE	2014		2013	
	CASES	%	CASES	%
Service Reliability	13	15%	18	32%
Level of service	7	8%	0	0%
Driver/Staff attitude	32	38%	20	33%
Bus no show or stop	17	20%	13	23%
Ticket issues	3	3.5%	0	0%
Injury/accident	0	0%	1	2%
Incorrect information	3	3.5%	3	5%
Lost Luggage or property	2	2%	4	7%
Vehicle condition	6	7%	4	7%
Access	1	1%	0	0%
Total	84		57	

NB: many cases involved more than one issue, often including some aspect of staff conduct over the way in which the complaint was handled. These figures show total number of issues dealt with.

BAB recognises that the number of cases reaching BAB is a small proportion of those reaching Bus Users, and that those in turn are a very small proportion of the number of bus and coach journeys made. BAB believes, nonetheless, that some bus companies still need to improve their complaint handling procedures significantly and we suggest they work more closely with Bus Users to gain greater insight into how their company is perceived by those making complaints. An improvement in dealing with complaints by operators would result not only in more satisfied customers, but in substantial savings in management time, especially when, in many cases, the passenger is seeking only an explanation for a failure and an apology.

In 2013, Lord Snape required that the names of the companies failing to implement decisions should be published. Of the three named in the 2013 Report, SM Coaches, and the other companies under its umbrella, did not feature in BAB referrals during 2014 and that the relationship with Thandi was much improved.

Regrettably easyBus, which failed to implement two BAB decisions in 2013, has again failed to implement no fewer than five determinations issued in 2014. One complainant issued proceedings in the County Court Business Centre (Small Claims Court) and recovered a greater sum from easyBus (including the cost of a rebooked flight) than had been recommended by the Bus Appeals Body.

Discussions about appropriate action where operators fail to implement Bus Appeals Body Decisions continued with the Senior Traffic Commissioner throughout 2014.

Number of cases dealt with by Bus Appeals Body and Bus Appeals Body Scotland, 2005-2014

2005	86	2010	41
2006	77	2011	25
2007	88	2012	49
2008	26	2013	70
2009	80	2014	47

