Who’s who at Bus Users

LIFE PRESIDENT
Dr Caroline Cahm
MBE PhD

CHAIR
Gillian Merron

VICE CHAIR
Jeffrey Anderson

BOARD MEMBER
Tracy Jessop

CHIEF EXECUTIVE
Claire Walters

DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE
Stephen Morris

DIRECTOR – WALES
Margaret Everson

DIRECTOR – SCOTLAND
Gavin Booth

OFFICER – WALES
Barclay Davies

OFFICER – SCOTLAND
Greig Mackay

PROJECTS CO-ORDINATOR
Nicola Parkins

SURGERIES OFFICER
Susan Dawson

PASSENGER SERVICE ADVISER
Karen King

PASSENGER SERVICE ADVISER
Rena Verlander

FINANCE ADMINISTRATOR
Bill Wright

COMMERCIAL MANAGER
Julian Osborne

OFFICE MANAGER – ENGLAND
Therese Heslop

OFFICE MANAGER – SCOTLAND
Patrycja Kwapiszewska

OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR – WALES
Bethan Davies
Bus Users: who we are

Bus Users is an independent non-profit group which champions the interests of bus and coach users and campaigns for better bus and coach services.

We have the ear of most bus companies, their trade organisation and of the Government and local authorities.

We operate a complaints appeals service for bus and coach users who are dissatisfied with the response they have had from the companies, and we run events for bus users to meet their local bus company management and local authority staff.

We act as a support organisation for local bus users groups.

Our Mission

Bus Users champions the interests of bus and coach users and campaigns for better bus and coach services.

We aim to

- ensure the views of bus and coach users are at the heart of decisions which affect them
- increase our effectiveness as the voice of bus and coach users

Our Values are

- Inclusivity
- Excellence
- Bus and coach user-led
- Partnership-oriented
- Building relationships
- Cooperating with: bus and coach companies government local authorities communities other agencies

Bus Users UK Ltd is a Company Limited by Guarantee (registered in England No 04635458).
A major achievement for Bus Users in 2013 was the establishment of Bus Users Scotland. Not only was the establishment of a new office in Scotland significant in itself, the confidence shown in our ability by Scottish Government was an endorsement of what we have achieved elsewhere.

Scottish Government was impressed by what we have done in Wales in particular, and the model we have used in Scotland has been similar to that for Wales. Scottish Government is funding us to run a complaints appeals service and to extend our Your Bus Matters programme in Scotland. Like Wales, they have also asked us to monitor performance of bus services. During 2013 we employed two Bus Compliance Officers for Scotland and a third is now being recruited. We were also pleased to welcome Greig Mackay as Officer for Scotland and Patrycja Kwapiszewska as our Edinburgh office manager, with Gavin Booth continuing as Director for Scotland.

Further official endorsement of our work came when the Department for Transport announced that we were the recognised body to oversee bus users’ complaints under the European Passenger Rights Directive. London TravelWatch undertakes that role for local bus services in London but otherwise we cover the rest of Great Britain.

It’s been a year when we’ve taken on board the strategy that members helped us to develop, which is now giving an even greater sense of purpose to everything we do and under the leadership of our chief executive Claire Walters and the supervision of the Board we have been streamlining, and in some cases rethinking completely, the way we work.

So it’s been a year when much of what we’ve been aiming towards over the last few years has really started to come together and the first sign of things to come in 2014 has been the launch of our new website and our new branding.

As your Chair I’ve been taking every opportunity this year to encourage good practice in the industry. I have maintained our contact with Government through the Bus Partnership Forum, chaired by the Minister and attended by leading players in the bus industry. We were sorry to lose Norman Baker as minister toward the end of the year; Norman took a lot of trouble to understand the bus user’s viewpoint and without his diligent efforts bus passengers would have lost out even more than they have in recent times. However we were pleased to welcome Baroness Susan Kramer as his successor; she is carrying on the good work and I am making the most of opportunities to put the passenger perspective to her.

In terms of best practice, I was able to launch some very upmarket new double-deckers for Newport Transport and I have also been involved in the UK Bus Awards and Greener Journeys’ initiative to study more ways to encourage people out of cars and on to buses.

It’s also been a year when cuts have been back on the agenda. The latest round of local authority spending cuts appear to be creating more hardship for bus users and we have been busy responding to consultations on such issues. On top of all that the Mayor of Liverpool decided to suspend the city’s bus lanes, and we have made bus users’ feelings known. The worry is that once one city bucks the trend towards encouraging public transport, then others will do the same. We also made it clear to Transport for London that their plans to stop accepting cash would affect bus users adversely, especially the most vulnerable.

It’s been a busy year for Bus Users and one that has seen a lot of progress, much of it in terms of getting the organisation on to a real sound footing for the future. As that work reaches completion we are raising our profile and increasing our effectiveness.

I’d like to thank my fellow directors, Jeff Anderson (vice-chair) and Tracy Jessop for all their hard work this year. Tracy, from Norfolk County Council, was elected last year and has brought valuable fresh insights to us. The Board is responsible for the strategic oversight of Bus Users and for developing policy issues, ensuring we have robust financial management in place, providing risk assessments and ensuring that the organisation continues to develop in an effective and structured way.

As ever we are indebted to Claire Walters and her hard-working team as they seek to do their best for bus users throughout Britain. And finally I was particularly delighted that the particular contribution made by our Director for Wales, Margaret Everson, was recognised by the award of the MBE for services to bus users and transport in Wales in the Queen’s Birthday Honours List. I am sure you will all wish to join me in saying ‘llongyfarchiadau’: or if you can’t quite get your tongue round that, ‘congratulations’ will do just as nicely.

And my thanks to you, for being a much-valued member. I always appreciate the interest and support given by our members and groups, and I am looking forward to expanding our numbers and reach now that we have a new website to support the next stage of our development.

Gillian Merron
Chair
Financial Report for 2013

In my Financial Report last year I remarked on the fact that 2012 had been a very successful one for Bus Users due to the sound funding proposition put to our principal funders which resulted in a significant increase in the financial support offered by the operators. Those foundations laid in 2012 enabled us to reduce the level of funding requested for 2013.

During 2013 most of the major development projects that we were committed to have been completed and benefits from them are already being felt. Some of you may have had an opportunity to sample the new website. This has been a long time in preparation but it was critically important that the final outcome reflected the professional organisation that Bus Users has been developing into in the last few years. It is vitally important to everybody that our profile is raised and our voice heard in the right places and the new website will contribute greatly to that mission.

The year has also brought about a major new development in the opening of our Scottish office, which took place in May. This office is being fully funded by the Scottish Government and we will shortly have a total staff of six working out of Edinburgh. They handle all complaints, run Your Bus Matters events and complete bus compliance work on behalf of the Scottish Government.

In Wales 2013 was the first full year in which Bus Users has been completing bus compliance work on behalf of the Welsh Government. This is an arrangement that is working very well and is likely to continue for the foreseeable future. Again, as in Scotland, this work is fully funded.

During 2013 Bus Users was appointed under the EU Passenger Rights Directive as the designated organisation in the UK to whom bus users should direct their complaints in the event that they cannot obtain satisfaction from the appropriate operator. This has resulted in a grant from the Department for Transport to fund the extra resources required to carry out this obligation.

Unfortunately for a number of reasons work under the EU Passenger Rights Directive has not really got underway yet, so once again surplus funding received has been carried forward in the Development Fund to ensure that this and any other outstanding projects can be funded properly as and when the work is required to be done. After transfers to the Development Fund we were still left with a surplus for the year. The prospects for 2014 are very good. Our budget for 2014 has already been agreed by the operators, at the same level as 2013.

In conclusion, I should like to thank our colleagues in the Scottish Government and Welsh Government for their continued valuable support in Scotland and Wales and also, of course, our supporters among the membership and the bus industry whose continued support is crucial to the continued success and future development of Bus Users.

Bill Wright
Financial Administrator
Dealing with bus passengers’ complaint appeals is one of Bus Users’ major activities. For the first time our complaints handling activity received statutory backing in 2013. Bus Users is now the Government’s recognised body under the European Passenger Rights Directive for overseeing bus passenger complaints in Great Britain, other than for London bus services which still come under London Travelwatch.

Our complaint-handling role was extended to include Scotland in 2013 for this first time. Previously this was undertaken by Bus Passengers’ Platform, a Scottish Government body, and during 2013 Bus Users Scotland was established. It was set up in April, and handled 281 complaints during the rest of 2013.

The number of complaint appeals handled in England during 2013 increased yet again, to 996, compared with 789 in 2012. In Wales we saw a slight decrease, to 227 from 243 in 2012.

Not surprisingly service reliability remains the largest area for complaints, followed by service levels and driver behaviour. 74% of complaints across Great Britain were on services run by the Big 5 operators (Arriva, First, Go-Ahead, National Express and Stagecoach).

Although the number of complaints handled by Bus Users grows year on year, it seems this is due to increased awareness of our service than any worsening in the service provided by bus companies: indeed over the years the number of trivial cases referred to us has reduced, suggesting these are being handled more effectively by the bus companies without letting them escalate, and the issues with which we deal become correspondingly more complex.

**Bus Appeals Body**

Where Bus Users is not able to reach a resolution of a case to the passenger’s satisfaction, it can be escalated to the Bus Appeals Body. The Bus Appeals Body then reaches a decision on the case which it asks the bus company to implement. It does not have statutory powers to insist on its implantation, but the vast majority of operators do abide by its decisions. The few that choose not to are referred to the Traffic Commissioners.

Bus Appeals Body in England & Wales is a joint undertaking by Bus Users and the Confederation of Passenger Transport. During 2013 a new Bus Appeals Body Scotland was set up by Bus Users Scotland and the bus and coach industry in Scotland.

During 2013 69 complaint appeals reached the Bus Appeals Body, 65 from England and four from Wales: again a sizeable increase over 2012. Nine of those cases were resolved before the Bus Appeals Body had issued a decision. Bus Appeals Body Scotland had not met to resolve any cases by the end of the year, but will be active during 2014.

A full report of the Bus Appeals Body’s activities in 2013 can be found on www.busappealsbody.co.uk.
Complaints in England

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service Reliability</td>
<td>356</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver/Staff attitude</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of service</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicle condition</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus failed to stop</td>
<td>269</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticket matters</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Injury and accident</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>127</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total* 1476 100%

* 1476 issues were raised by 996 complainants, some of whom were complaining about more than one issue.

Complaints in Wales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service Reliability</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver/Staff attitude</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of service</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicle condition</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus failed to stop</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticket matters</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Injury and accident</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total* 227 100%

* 227 issues were raised by 217 complainants, some of whom were complaining about more than one issue.

Complaints in Scotland

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>PERCENT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Service Reliability</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Driver/Staff attitude</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of service</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vehicle condition</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus failed to stop</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infrastructure</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ticket matters</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Injury and accident</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smoking</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total* 386 100%

* 386 issues were raised by 231 complainants, some of whom were complaining about more than one issue.

Complaints by operator type

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Operator Type</th>
<th>Scotland</th>
<th>percent</th>
<th>England</th>
<th>percent</th>
<th>Wales</th>
<th>percent</th>
<th>Scot/Eng &amp; Wales</th>
<th>percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>'Big 5'</td>
<td>186</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>751</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>123</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>1060</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smaller groups</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Municipal operators</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independents</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local authorities</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total 231 100% 996 100% 215 100% 1442 100%
Your Bus Matters

Your Bus Matters is one of the key ways in which we engage with bus users. Our programme gets bus users talking to their local bus company managers and local authority transport staff in an informal setting. The events are ‘informal’ in that there is no fixed agenda and bus users are free to tell the people responsible for running their bus services exactly what they think of their services, ask them questions and make suggestions. Nonetheless they are taken seriously and managers take away sheaves of information. Quite often a pattern will emerge, giving bus companies clear indication that something is wrong and needs fixing, and sometimes they go away with some fresh ideas for how to improve the bus service.

With our expanded operation in Scotland, our Your Bus Matters programme has grown in 2013, and we undertook 47 events around Great Britain, seven more than in 2012. In England we did slightly fewer events than the previous year, with 19 instead of 22. Our Cymru team once again did a sterling job, with 22 events, and Bus Users Scotland organised six events, covering the country from Elgin, Aberdeen and Inverness down to Irvine.

One innovation in England this year was a coach users’ surgery, held at the hub of the National Express network in Birmingham Coach Station.

In a sample of 2,854 surgery attendees in England, by far the largest category of comments remained that related to level of service. This was followed, as in 2012, by comments on the reliability of the service on offer. Compliments slipped this year, with bigger percentages about displeasure with driver and staff attitude and fares. Concern about other passenger behaviour issues is found in certain locations but not one comment about this was recorded in the places where surgeries were held in 2013.
Bus Users Cymru Wales

Wales has undergone a series of changes in the way transport is funded, with what used to be called BSOG now paid on live mileage instead of fuel used. The Welsh Government is funding Bus Users Cymru Wales to employ, lead and direct three Bus Compliance Officers and one of their tasks is to monitor live mileage operated on behalf of the Regional Transport Consortia. From 1 April there was a reduction in the amount of funding available to the bus industry in Wales but the concessionary fares reimbursement remained untouched. We have seen a couple of poorly performing operators cease trading.

The BCOs share a room in Brunel House Cardiff with the Traffic Commissioner, which helps us to maintain a seamless approach to performance reporting.

We took part in the Minister’s Task Force Sub Group 5 dealing with Network Measures and Branding and now also in the North East Wales Taskforce and the TrawsCymru Delivery Groups which manage the performance of TrawsCymru services T4 and T2. We have taken part in the various accessibility sessions run by First Cymru and responded to all four transport network strategy consultations as well as the Senior Traffic Commissioner’s consultation.

We have taken part in the development process for a passenger’s charter and the quality outcomes consultation. Bus Users Cymru was co-opted onto the Public Transport Users’ Committee (Wales) (PTUC) and we sit on the National Partnership Forum for Older People in Wales (ministerial advisory group);

We have met with Jane Hutt, finance Minister and various other Assembly Members over the year and, together with the Chair Gillian Merron, met with the Transport Minister.

Bus Users Scotland

Bus Users Scotland (BUS) was set up in 2013 following the award of funding from Transport Scotland, an agency of the Scottish Government. The funding allowed BUS to assume responsibility for functions that had previously been carried out by other bodies – the complaints and advocacy roles of the now-disbanded Passenger View Scotland, and bus service monitoring.

Office premises were obtained in the centre of Edinburgh and staff recruited – Greig Mackay, Officer for Scotland, and Patrycja Kwapiszewska as Office Manager. Two Bus Compliance Officers (BCOs) were subsequently appointed – Calum Aikman and Hazel Dunn – and more staff members are being recruited.

The new staff are building up a good working knowledge of bus operations in Scotland. The Traffic Commissioners office, Confederation of Passenger Transport, local transport authorities and bus operators have all been very co-operative in helping with induction and training. This has allowed BUS to build up invaluable contacts with these bodies, and BUS staff deal with senior complaints staff in all of the principal bus companies, with a direct line to the most senior staff in the case of serious or unresolved complaints.

The Scottish Bus Appeals Body has been set up, largely modelled on the equivalent body covering England and Wales. The members are Ian Longair (Convener), John Elliot (MD Traveline Scotland) representing the operators, and BUS representing passengers. BUS works hard to resolve complaints before they are referred to the new body.

It has been exciting and challenging setting up BUS from scratch, but the enthusiasm and quality of the new staff has enabled this process to go smoothly.

BUS is represented on several government bodies, including the Bus Stakeholder Group and Bus Registration Group, and has regular contact with regional transport forums and special interest groups.
What’s next for Bus Users?

2014 will see the results of a lot of the hard work from 2013 coming to fruition. The completion of the new website will allow us to start the UK-wide campaign work in earnest and support the local, regional and national work going on in our offices and by our local groups.

We have started with a general campaign called ‘Give the Bus a Chance’ which will run throughout the year aimed at getting people who haven’t been on a bus or coach in years to give it another try and tell us how they got on. We will be working with coach and bus operators to provide incentives to make the idea more attractive to those who don’t use them currently and hopefully provide benefits, like the coachcard from National Express, which will appeal to members and supporters too.

We will also be taking an active part in Catch the Bus Week in April and adding other campaigns throughout the year so watch this space!

The campaigns will be used to increase our supporter base by making it easy for anyone to click on ‘support this campaign’ on the website, thereby increasing the numbers of people we represent at no cost and little effort.

By linking our Your Bus Matters events programme to a national or local campaign, we will aim to recruit supporters and members, offer volunteering opportunities and provide more ways for local people to become activists. This will link with a new programme of support we’re developing in consultation with local groups which is intended to increase the numbers of groups and spokespeople able to respond appropriately to the many local issues, while ensuring that we have a joined-up approach throughout the UK.

An increase in numbers on the ground will enable us to speak more effectively about the issues that affect bus passengers in their locality and offer an early warning system for problems that might be brewing on the bus front in that area, as well as information on good examples of creative problem-solving or good practice on the part of some operators and local authorities which might be helpful to others elsewhere.

We expect to forge and support constructive links between more bus and coach operators and local groups and passengers as well as finding ways to enable more small operators and community transport providers to take advantage of our services and expertise, from the well-regarded complaints system to the varied commercial work, such as mystery passenger and survey work.

Bus Users is becoming an established part of the network of experts which is consulted by the Department for Transport and other authorities in regard to policy or practice in the bus industry and this will be further cemented by our expanding role, particularly in respect of our statutory role as the nominated body under the European Directive on Passenger Rights which is expected to expand over the next two years.

We will be carrying out more analysis of our data and publishing more recommendations based on our findings to ensure the widest reach for the information we have accumulated.

The recognition of the organisation’s expertise and the consequent secondary requests for information or action adds both to our credibility and to our workload, as local authorities are also increasingly asking us to respond to consultations on a wide range of bus-related issues and requests for our input to numerous events and committees is also on the up.

As an organisation, we are constantly addressing the challenges that such recognition brings and expect that change will be the watchword within the organisation for the foreseeable future as we adapt to keep pace with our successes.

Our goals for 2014 are to ensure the views of bus and coach users are at the heart of decisions that affect them and to continuously increase our effectiveness as their voice. We will be working hard, with your support, throughout 2014 to achieve them.

Claire Walters
Chief Executive
Member groups

These groups are playing a greater role in this organisation by providing Bus Users with a link to members and supporters. They are able to take up real issues with local operators that affect bus passengers.

Each group is provided with promotional materials, advice on how to start a campaign, and training events and meetings are staged to allow local groups to consider similar problems and identify best practice.

The aim is to increase the number of local group during 2014/15 by targeting specific areas, so in the long-term there will be a network of county-based groups.

Details of current local groups are shown below.

Association of Devizes Passengers
www.devizespassengers.org.uk

Bath Bus Users’ Group www.bath-bus-users.org.uk

Bedford Area Bus Users Society (BABUS)
www.babus.org.uk

Brighton Area Buswatch

BUGS Bus Users Group Stevenage
www.betterbuses.org.uk

Bus Users Northampton

Bus Users Oxford

Bus Users Shropshire

Bus Watch West Haringey

C-BUS (Colchester Bus Users Support Group)

Cambridgeshire Campaign for Better Transport

Cardiff People First www.cardiffpeoplefirst.org.uk

Castle Community Partnership, Stafford

Dengie Hundred Bus Users Group (DHBUG)
www.dhbug.org.uk

Devon Senior Voice

Isle of Wight Bus & Rail Users’ Group
iwbusers.btck.co.uk

Kendal & District Bus Users (KADBUS)

Milton Keynes Bus Users Group
www.mkbug.co.uk

Norfolk Bus Forum

North Herts Bus Users Group
www.nhbug.co.uk

North Pembrokeshire Transport Forum
www.nptf.co.uk

North West Surrey Bus Users Group

Railfuture Severnside Branch

Rame Peninsula Public Transport Users Group

RELBUS: Rural East Lothian Bus Users relbus.org.uk

Southend Area Bus User Group

St Neots Area Bus Users Society
www.snabus.org.uk

Swale Seniors Forum
www.swaleseniorsforum.org.uk

Swindon Climate Action Network
www.swindonclimate.org.uk

The Pensioners & Fifty Plus Action Group, Plymouth

TravelWatch Northwest

TravelWatch Southwest

Tring Bus Users Group

West Cumbria Bus Users’ Group

West Yorkshire Campaign for Better Transport

Wirral Transport Users Association

Yorkshire Dales Public Transport Users Group
www.dalesbus.org