Buses: vital to the urban economy
General enquiries and membership
Join Bus Users UK to help us represent the views of bus users and make a difference to bus services.
Terminal House
Station Approach
Shepperton TW17 8AS
01932 232574
membership@bususers.org

Bus Users UK Cymru
Senior Officer for Wales:
Margaret Everson
Officer for Wales:
Barclay Davies
PO Box 1045
Cardiff CF11 1JE
029 2022 1370
wales@bususers.org

Bus Users UK in Scotland
Senior Officer for Scotland:
Gavin Booth
gavin@bususers.org

Press enquiries
Stephen Morris
01932 232574
smorris@bususers.org

Complaints
If you have a complaint about a bus or coach service, you need first to contact the bus or coach company concerned to try and resolve the issue. If you’re unsuccessful in doing this, we will investigate your complaint and follow it up with the bus or coach company.
Please contact our Passenger Service Advisers:
Karen King karen@bususers.org
Rena Verlander rena@bususers.org
0300 111 0001 (national call rates)
01932 232574

Passenger power is working
Bus passengers can influence local authorities and bus companies and if you want proof, read Paul Kirby’s description of how he led a campaign to protest about proposed cuts to supported services in Wetherby on page 10. Or the success achieved by Bus Users Shropshire in restoring Sunday services in the county, on page 20.
And you can read elsewhere in this issue how effective consultation, co-operation and partnership can be when bus passengers are given the chance to have their say.

Margaret Everson reports from Bus Users UK in Wales:
‘The Welsh Government has confirmed the grant for next financial year commencing 1 April 2013 so we can start planning activities. A further series of seminars for bus operators is planned at which the Traffic Commissioner and Traveline Cymru will be speaking, as well as the Bus Compliance Officers’.
Margaret has also been to Scotland at Welsh government’s request to outline how we work there. We’re hopeful this will lead to an expansion of Scottish government support.

Our general manager Stephen Morris, has now been appointed Deputy Chief Executive. As the role suggests he will deputise for Claire Walters when necessary and advises both Claire and our chair Gillian Merron on bus industry issues. He is also responsible for Bus Users UK policy and practice issues, media and social media and oversees our printed publications.

Change of AGM venue
Our AGM on Saturday 27 April will be held in the Oxford Spires Four Pillars Hotel, Abingdon Road, Oxford OX1 4PS, and not as advised in Bus User 49. The hotel is a short distance from the historic city centre of Oxford and is served by frequent Oxford Bus and Thames Travel routes along Abingdon Road; it is a 20-25-minute walk from Oxford’s High Street.
We look forward to seeing members there – full details of the event and the programme are given in papers despatched with this magazine.


**From the Chair**

**Our Annual General Meeting** is coming up soon, and I look forward to seeing as many of you as possible at Oxford on Saturday 27 April. We move our AGM around the country so that as many people can get to it as possible, even if not everyone can get there every year.

Two years ago at our AGM in Hove, you gave us very valuable input into our strategy, and we presented a completed strategy last year at Liverpool. That included the establishment of the new role of Chief Executive. Claire Walters was appointed to the post six months ago and has been working hard at refining the strategy as well as implementing it. This is a long and important process, and you’ll be able to hear at Oxford what we have achieved so far and our plans to keep strengthening and developing the work of Bus Users UK.

There’s been a great deal going on from our team and local groups and the fruit of that activity will become increasingly apparent over the next few months. Suffice to say, the governments in Westminster, Cardiff and Edinburgh are all impressed with our work and are supportive of it.

The bus companies also remain supportive. Claire Walters and I presented our budget to senior management of the major bus companies at the Confederation of Passenger Transport’s headquarters in London in November and they were happy to continue to support our work. Indeed, this year we were able to ask them for a reduced figure, which was a welcome position to be in. That does reflect the fact that the proportion of our funding that comes from the bus industry is beginning to reduce, which is in all our interests.

In the last Bus User I had just been to the EuroBus Expo show, to see the best of the best. It’s been good since then to go to Newport to launch some very upmarket new double-decker buses, which have features to assist those who are visually impaired. It’s one thing to see smart new buses at a show, but it’s altogether more meaningful to see them actually going into service to give bus passengers a much improved travel experience.

More recently I went to the launch of a new initiative by Greener Journeys that is studying ways to get people out of cars and on to buses. Whilst some people will possibly never make the switch, there are plenty who could be persuaded if the service is reliable and frequent and run with high-quality vehicles like those at Newport.

Gillian Merron Chair
Partnership works in Greater Manchester

We hear a lot about Quality Bus Partnerships, (QPB), but how do they work – and do they work? Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) has reported that the QPB on the A6 corridor between Manchester and Stockport has delivered benefits for millions of passengers and is to be used as a blueprint for better bus services across Greater Manchester.

The A6 corridor is one of the busiest in the country, and the QPB has led to high levels of service regularity, punctuality, reliability, vehicle quality and customer service.

Along with improved bus services, the scheme has met high targets for passenger information, highway and shelter repairs, and bus lane enforcement. Stagecoach has invested £11.3m in 40 new hybrid-electric vehicles on the 192 Manchester-Stockport route, equipped with free Wi-Fi for passenger use. Stagecoach also plans to build a new passenger park-&-ride at Hazel Grove, Stockport, with space for just over 400 vehicles.

Councillor Andrew Fender, Chair of the TfGM Committee said: ‘As well as improving the passenger experience, better bus services reduce the impact of traffic congestion on economic growth and people’s health and the environment.

‘Over the next few years TfGM will be delivering some major schemes to improve bus services across Greater Manchester, with a multi-million pound investment in bus priority and facilities.

‘Quality Partnership schemes will be crucial to capitalise on and protect the level of investment in those routes, so I look forward to seeing more being introduced across Greater Manchester over the coming years.’

What’s Claire been up to?

Since the last edition, I’ve been getting to meet a lot of people in the Bus Users network and learning more about the plans and concerns of passengers, government at various levels and people within the industry so that I can form a better picture of where we should target our activities.

I’ve spent a few days in the Welsh office and a fair bit of time in Scotland talking to those who might help us to set up something similar to our Welsh operation north of the border, which would be very useful – so watch this space! I’ve also been to a few Bus User group meetings, including one of our most recent associates in Norfolk.

I also did some Mystery Passenger trips in various locations, to get a better understanding of what that work can achieve. Interestingly, this highlighted a possible difference in what men and women expect by way of a greeting from the bus driver, as my male colleague felt there had been good eye contact with the driver a lot more often than I did! This led on to useful discussions with some bus and coach operators and their customer service staff about the ambassadorial role that drivers have for their company. One idea that came out of this was that we could work together with passengers and companies to develop a commendation scheme so that drivers get a Bus Users certificate if passengers regularly give them compliments.

Likewise, we’re in the process of developing a Good Passenger Award, for which drivers can nominate their favourite passengers. These ideas are aimed at helping passengers and drivers recognise that good transport is a two-way process and that if we’re courteous to the drivers, it increases the chances that they will be courteous to us!

Claire Walters, Chief Executive
The benefits of the bus in Metropolitan areas

STEPHEN MORRIS reports on the benefits buses bring to England’s major conurbations – but set against falling passenger numbers

Following in the footsteps of the excellent work Greener Journeys has done to show the massive effect bus services have on our economy, pteg (the Passenger Transport Executive Group) has produced a report that outlines the economic and social benefits of bus services for the major urban areas in England.

The areas covered are those in the ‘Metropolitan’ areas of England, which doesn’t include London, but does include Tyne & Wear, Merseyside, Greater Manchester, West Yorkshire, South Yorkshire and the West Midlands, on which a billion bus journeys are taken every year. That’s out of 4.7billion journeys in England, almost exactly half of which are in London.

For most people in the Metropolitan areas the bus is the only means of public transport. 98% of households live within a 13min walk of at least an hourly bus service in those areas, and there are 67,000 bus stops, compared with just 524 railway stations and light-rail stops. And indeed 10% of those who travel by train need to use the bus for part of the journey.

The bus networks in the Metropolitan areas are estimated to generate more than £2.5billion in economic benefits, nearly half of which accrues to society at large, in terms of reducing congestion (estimated at more than £600million alone) and pollution, lower accident rates, improved productivity and the benefit to car users of having an alternative when the car isn’t available. The biggest benefits are in the peak periods. The report also points out that buses make a direct contribution to the economy in terms of the number of people employed (and unlike a lot of service industries very few of those jobs can be outsourced to other countries or other areas) and in terms of the size of the bus-building business in the UK. The industry employs 124,000 people in Great Britain, two-and-a-half times as many as the railways.

The report concludes that of every £1 of public funding the industry produces more than £2 of economic output and 30p of income tax and National Insurance.

Other findings are that if a quarter of commuters travelling into city centres by car transferred to the bus then road traffic speeds would increase by more than 50%.

Possibly the most worrying trend the report shows up is the decline in use of bus services in the Metropolitan areas over the last 25 years, particularly in comparison with the rise in bus use in London over the same period. Clearly the benefits of bus services are recognised in London and this report brings valuable evidence to the case to reverse the trend in other conurbations and to harness the benefit that bus services bring to urban areas in particular.
It’s Snow Good!

Bus operators in Wales made good use of social media to keep passengers informed during the winter’s heavy snowfalls in Wales. Paul Harley welcomes this and looks at how other bus companies use Facebook and Twitter.

Wales, along with the rest of the UK, was badly hit by heavy snowfall towards the end of January. Many bus routes were suspended for several days; others saw an intermittent service, with buses often finishing early in the evening when freezing conditions created ice on previously passable roads.

What was noticeable (compared to last winter) was how well several bus operators performed in terms of keeping their customers informed via the Internet, principally using Social Media, ie Facebook and Twitter.

Cardiff Bus won an award last year for its use of Social Media and could be heading for another one, as the flow of information from the company was excellent. Arriva Buses Wales and First Cymru notably improved on last year, with helpful bulletins telling people what was/ wasn’t running.

Other operators who performed well were GHA Coaches, Lloyds Coaches and Newport Bus.

One very noticeable absentee was Stagecoach, which is piloting the use of Twitter in Oxfordshire, with an intention of rolling it out across the UK. I very much hope this happens before next winter, as most of their customers didn’t know what was going on. Stagecoach was able to operate some routes, but many passengers stayed at home unaware of this, so the operator lost potential revenue.
Go North East has a massive following on Facebook! They’ve done extremely well marketing this as a communication channel with their customers. Nottingham City Transport also has a large number of ‘friends’. Lothian Buses leads the Twitter table, which tends to be used for regular updates on how the buses are running. It’s pleasing to see Cardiff Bus in second place; a well deserved position!

Facebook and Twitter are not a total solution (as they aren’t used by everyone), but they are recognised as an essential means of communication between public transport operators and passengers. Provided you have a mobile phone signal at your stop, there’s no reason why you shouldn’t be advised if there’s a problem with the bus or train you are waiting for. I dream of the day when I can stay indoors in the morning, monitoring the progress of ‘my’ bus, then leave home and walk to the stop to reach it a minute before the bus. No more long waits in freezing weather at bus stops!

A dream at present, but surely to be reality within the next decade?

### A count of ‘followers’ of various organisations in February produced these results

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Free bus travel for job hunters

A deal forged with leading UK bus companies offered 800,000 jobseekers free bus travel in January and has led to Stagecoach offering discounted travel throughout Britain.

Greener Journeys, the campaign to promote sustainable travel, recently brokered a deal to enable jobseekers, especially the young, to use their bus routes free of charge for a month. Arriva, First, Go-Ahead, National Express, Stagecoach and others including Blackpool Transport, Cardiff Bus, Network Warrington and Trent Barton, agreed to support the joint initiative that provided tangible help for people actively seeking work or taking part in training. Greener Journeys estimated the scheme covered over 70 per cent of all bus routes in England, Scotland and Wales. Jobseekers who had been unemployed for between three months and one year were eligible, and the scheme is particularly targeted at young people for whom unemployment rates remain high. Government figures suggested that the offer could benefit as many as 817,000 people who were out of work and claiming benefits.

Passengers had to possess a valid JobCentre Plus Travel Discount Card in order to benefit from the scheme, and this was presented to the driver.

In fact, around 45,000 journeys were made by users of the Bus for Jobs scheme, which was particularly popular in the north-east of England.

Claire Haigh, chief executive of the scheme’s promoter, Greener Journeys (pictured), says: ‘Whilst it was only ever designed as a one month offer, the significance of the scheme goes far beyond. Firstly, it has raised awareness of local bus services with job-seekers and employment agencies, and of job seekers with bus companies, many of whom have either decided to extend the offer or are now looking to what longer-term discounts they can give. Secondly, it has succeeded in raising awareness across government and the media of the importance of buses to the wider economy.

‘As the government, main political parties and media grapple with the issue of free bus travel for wealthy pensioners, I hope that one important outcome of this scheme has been the spotlight it has put on job seekers – and young unemployed people in particular – against whom the cards are so heavily stacked.’

Following this success, Stagecoach launched the country’s first long-term nationwide discounted bus travel scheme for job-seekers, giving thousands of job-seekers across the UK a 50% discount on their bus travel to help them find employment. Holders of a JobCentre Plus Travel Discount Card will qualify for half-price single and return tickets on Stagecoach’s 6,500 buses in the UK outside London. Stagecoach is already part of a Transport for London scheme which offers reduced bus, tram and train travel rates for jobseekers in the capital.

Young people in areas as far apart as Orkney in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland to Porth in Wales and Dover in south-east England will benefit from the new Stagecoach initiative.

The scheme is being funded entirely on a commercial basis by Stagecoach without any public sector support. It will initially run for six months with a view to testing the potential for a permanent discount.

Sir Brian Souter, Stagecoach Group Chief Executive, said: ‘Youth unemployment is one of the biggest issues facing our country today and we know
lothian’s social media bus

Lothian Buses recently launched its distinctive blue social media bus. The bus livery shows travellers the many ways they can connect with Lothian Buses while on the move and includes quotes from bus passengers as well as famous people outlining their thoughts on social media. As an added attraction for travellers, the bus has been fitted with free onboard Wi-Fi.

Ian Craig, managing director of Lothian Buses, said: ‘Social media is an ideal way for us to communicate information to our passengers. We hope our new social media bus will raise awareness of our Twitter and Facebook accounts which will allow more customers to get our real-time bus and travel information and updates, to help them get around our operating area.’

Over half of UK residents are registered on Facebook and there are over 34 million UK Twitter accounts. Lothian Buses Facebook and Twitter accounts are followed by almost 20,000 people every day who are looking for travel information, service updates, company events and news. The company also has a free phone app, Edinburgh by Bus, which provides real-time bus departure times and a journey planner.
Finding out that your service is at risk
I am afraid you cannot rely on anyone telling you that services are due to be axed, if my experience is anything to go by. Metro, the West Yorkshire PTE, started a ‘service review’ of all subsidised services in Leeds in January. I saw a poster in a bus station and noted with relief that the ‘main services affected’ did not include Wetherby. But I noticed that most services under threat were not city centre routes, like the ‘ring road bus’. These are important services for a comprehensive network so I emailed the Metro consultation team with my concerns.

Then a friend mentioned to me that the Wetherby routes were included in the review and checking online found he was correct. I was shocked and angry to find that every Sunday bus after 8.45pm on both routes from Leeds was threatened with the axe. Why was this information not on the poster? If I, as a keen bus user, did not realise these buses were at risk, then very few other people would.

Anatomy of a campaign
If you believe strongly that your subsidised bus services are being unfairly targeted by cuts, PAUL KIRBY offers a few pointers to help you set up a simple but effective campaign.
Passenger consultation, or lack of it

Metro’s consultation consisted of a poster in bus stations, which, as it was to become apparent, did not state all the services affected; a very small item on its website and 10 consultation meetings around the city. They employed a ‘bus consultation team leader’ so I emailed this person and the director general of Metro asking why:

- the home page of the Metro website contained only one small sentence on the review
- people without internet access were not catered for
- the poster did not list the threatened Wetherby routes
- no leaflet was produced for passengers to look at and take away
- no poster/leaflet of the review was in the local library, town hall or similar public places in any of the affected villages on the routes
- no publicity was in the local paper
- no posters were on the affected buses themselves.
- no consultation meeting was arranged in Wetherby

and there was no reference to

- how these proposed cuts were discussed
- the criteria for putting them forward
- how much these cuts would save, and cost (new timetables etc)
- what other factors were taken into account, like rail services

How can the public/passenger form a rational opinion about these cuts if they were not provided with all the relevant information?

I was also upset that in its standard email response, the Metro consultation team informed us that ‘changes to your bus services will be made on 20 July 2013’. This gives the impression that the decision had already been made before this ‘consultation’. No reference was made to this mistake, let alone an apology, in the emails that followed. Public organisations should be prepared to admit to their mistakes, which would mean that people would have more respect for the people who make these decisions.

Action and allies

I copied in all and sundry to the above email. Thankfully, my MP took an interest and asked the Metro DG, Kieran Preston, to address the issues I raised. Things started happening immediately – Metro sent me passenger numbers for the threatened services, organised a consultation session at Wetherby Town Hall, extended the consultation period by a week and were willing to put up a poster on all bus shelters on the routes affected. They even used a poster that I designed, headed ‘Wetherby Bus Cuts’. It was large A3 size too, so that was very pleasing.

Unfortunately, there are not that many shelters on which to stick the posters. Apart from the bus station in my town (pictured), there are only two bus shelters, one of which was not on the route so had no poster. There are three stops in Leeds City Centre for one route but only one had the poster. The timetable display for the other route in Leeds bus station had plenty of room for one but was not used. Posters were put on the bottom deck of some buses, which meant those who always go upstairs missed them: a lot of passengers would still not know about these possible cuts.

My efforts to inform people

I suggested to the two bus companies running the services that they print a leaflet based on the poster and put it on their buses. Unfortunately the idea was not taken up.

I informed the local paper about the possible cuts and the way Metro had consulted on them. You must try to write the article for them I am afraid, as there are many reporters who have never been on a bus in their lives and do not understand even the basics of the local transport set-up. Our local paper has sadly become more expensive and less popular in recent years, but involving local media is vital to get the message across, especially to local councillors and businesses.

Of course, there is the internet too. You could set up a Facebook page or Twitter account, if you have the knowledge and time.

To see whether people cared about these...
particular cuts, I set up a petition in the local wellknown and popular Wetherby Whaler chippy, a charity shop and the post office. With more time available I would have asked many more businesses – the more the merrier. With support from the town mayor, I tried to put a petition in the library but after two weeks of indecisiveness by the head of libraries it was too late anyway.

You should try to contact parish councils on the routes affected. I easily found their details on the internet, or you could go to your local library or council office. The villages around Wetherby were very concerned and gave a lot of support to the campaign.

**Petition contents**

On the front page of the petition you should state all the facts surrounding the bus cuts, and most importantly the context. If possible, make a comparison of services with another better-off town, showing why the cuts would be unfair. I used an example of a nearby town that would still have a rail service and a very good Sunday service, even if their proposed cuts went ahead.

In proposing these cuts Metro had not indicated which other factors were taken into account. They seemed to be based purely on passenger numbers (which incidentally for one of the routes seemed pretty good to me).

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**Here is an outline of the petition containing all the arguments.**

- State all the towns, villages and suburbs that will be affected.
- Describe the current service as already being a skeleton one, eg no buses to town x, y and z.
- Compare with a similar-sized place, eg town x has a total of 13 buses arriving in Leeds before midday (a half-hourly service), compared to our four. Plus town x has a train service.
- Include other relevant information, eg Wetherby is the only town in the Leeds City Council area to have no bus services on Boxing Day.
- Detail the exact services at risk, eg 10 Sunday evening journeys on the Wetherby-Leeds routes X99 and 770 are threatened by these proposals. If these withdrawals go ahead, the last 770 Sunday bus to Leeds would be 18.50, and 20.40 for the X99 route.
- Compare again with town x, eg town x also has two bus routes to Leeds (and a train service). After this ‘review’ town x will have six bus journeys to Leeds (and two trains) after ours have finished. After 20.00 on a Sunday it will have 10 bus journeys from Leeds (and three trains), compared to our zero journeys.
Detail the cost consequences, eg passengers living in Wetherby will have to buy a multi-operator day ticket instead of a single-operator day ticket, more expensive by £1.60. Taxi fares from Leeds will cost up to £25.

State lifestyle consequences, eg these cuts will make weekends away by rail to places like London/Edinburgh impractical.

Appeal to everyone, not just bus users, by detailing the possible adverse affects on the town, eg say that bus cuts affect EVERYONE, not just passengers and it will adversely affect local businesses – fewer customers in our cinema, pubs, restaurants and fast food outlets. The many race-goers who use the bus will not be able to stay in town.

Describe the self-interest aspect, eg if you don’t use buses now, you may need to use them one day, and services rarely come back once cut. Furthermore, it is often the thin end of the wedge and more cuts will take place in the following years as fewer people will want to travel on a shrinking service.

Mention that people who use buses are generally on a low income and ask if it’s really fair to hit the poorest in society again in these hard times.

The response to the campaign
I was astounded by the response, despite the fact many people would still not know about the proposed cuts.

It was clear that the people of Wetherby and surrounding villages do care about keeping public services, even if they do not use them themselves. It was most heartening that such a comparatively well-off community rallied round like that.

And it confirmed that it is not just leisure journeys that would be affected. I heard from two workers at a restaurant who would not be able to get home without one of the bus routes. They pay £72 for a monthly bus pass and should be able to use it when they need to. These cuts would seriously affect people’s lives.

The petition attracted an incredible response. A total of 356 signatures on 20 sheets of paper in such a short time and without much publicity, was quite an achievement. The sheet attached to the petition clearly stated that the person signing is against ANY cuts in Wetherby bus services.

Quite a number of those who signed the petition were visitors from Leeds and around West Yorkshire. I emailed those signatories who provided their email address with the results of the petition and a brief summary of the campaign containing all the comments I received. I received one email in support of these cuts.

I gave the petition to my local MP, Alec Shelbrooke, who kindly presented it to Metro. We can only hope that Metro has taken the clear strength of feeling into account when making these, admittedly difficult, decisions. And let’s hope they consider all relevant factors, not just passenger numbers.

The decisions on these cuts have not yet been made. Only time will tell if the campaign succeeds in cancelling these particular cuts. At the end of the day, it is up to YOU to make sure your voice is heard.

Are you up for it?
A campaign does take a fair amount of time and effort, but not necessarily expense. The only costs to me were buying clipboards and printing out the three petitions. But I was pleasantly surprised at what you can achieve with few resources, a bit of luck, some publicity and a key person or two to support you.
Go on, give it a go!

Paul has indicated that he will be happy to share his campaign experience with other bus users – he can be contacted on paulyorks@yahoo.com.
‘Wholly unacceptable’ so free travel in Derby

In what is thought to be an unprecedented move, North West Traffic Commissioner Beverley Bell has ruled that the bosses of Arriva’s bus operations in Derby must give passengers free travel for 12 months, following a public inquiry into the company’s failure to run two local services properly. She made the ruling after hearing that the firm did not give the correct legal notice for changes to routes running between Alvaston and Derby.

The decision means that Arriva Derby will be prevented from charging passengers who board the 44 and 45 services at any point, providing they are due to arrive in Derby after 7.00pm.

Directors from the firm were called to a regulatory hearing before the Traffic Commissioner after acknowledging that the company had failed to tell Mrs Bell – and its passengers – that the stopping point of the services had changed.

They were registered and advertised as terminating at Derby bus station (pictured) when in reality the buses were stopping on Albert Street, in order to connect with another service provided by the firm.

In evidence to the Traffic Commissioner, Arriva’s regional engineering director said that an administrative error had led to the company’s failure to apply to change the registration with the Traffic Commissioner. It was also noted that an earlier stopping point – outside the bus station – had also not been authorised by Mrs Bell.

Under regulations governing local bus services, operators are required to give legal notice to the Traffic Commissioner of their intention to begin operating, change or cancel routes.

After questioning the director further, Mrs Bell concluded that it was clear various individuals in the business had not dealt with the matter properly. She also found that by the time of the hearing, despite being notified of the Traffic Commissioner’s concerns, the appropriate application to amend services had still not been made to her office.

In response to the evidence heard during the inquiry, the company’s regional managing director admitted to the regulator that there had been a catalogue of errors and that it gave him no pleasure to sit and listen to Arriva’s failings.

The Traffic Commissioner was told by the operator’s solicitor that the 44 and 45 routes were important to Derby and for the company. He advised the Traffic Commissioner that the company’s failures had affected services after 7.00pm, which made up 11 out of 20 journeys on the routes.

In her written decision, Mrs Bell said the errors made by Arriva had been ‘wholly unacceptable’ and was also critical of the company’s response when it realised services were still not running properly by November 2012. ‘The company instructed all drivers to set down inside the bus station. Passengers were once again inconvenienced,’ she added. ‘Having become accustomed to being deposited at Albert Street, they were just then deposited at the bus station with no notice and no explanation.’

Mrs Bell also used the written decision to remind the company that there were good reasons why
Getting non-users on board

A campaign to encourage non-bus users to consider taking the bus for some of their journeys was launched by the Mayor of Milton Keynes recently.

The mayoral launch of the Get on Board campaign was part of a three-day event in Midsummer Place with an information stand, promotional items, Arriva’s pink Get on Board bus plus the Get on Board promotions team (pictured) who help to advise members of the public of the best bus routes to use for their regular journeys.

As well as this public event, a total of 63,000 households that are located within a 400m radius of Milton Keynes bus routes 2, 4, 5 and 8 received a personal travel pack. These pink packs with the slogan ‘Get On Board – Think Pink’ include information on their local area’s regular bus services and bus stop locations as well as complimentary bus tickets to use on most local buses.

Milton Keynes Council is committed to promoting greener more sustainable methods of travel around the city and buses offer one way for residents to do just that. There will also shortly be eight new electric buses running on route 7 through Central Milton Keynes.

Bus service improvements will also be undertaken by Arriva in addition to the positive changes that Milton Keynes Council is undertaking through the Better Bus Fund award.

www.getonboardmk.co.uk

regulations required them to give notice of any changes to services.

‘Passengers reliant on public transport have to fit their schedules into and plan their diaries around the bus services that they use and this can be made even more difficult when passengers are then reliant on other public services such as hospital visiting times.

‘They must therefore be given the proper notice to allow them to plan in the event of any alterations.’

The Traffic Commissioner also noted that while the movement of a stopping point by a short distance might not inconvenience some passengers, there were those whose age or infirmity would make the task ‘difficult, lengthy and painful’.

She concluded there was ‘no good reason’ why Arriva dropped passengers 150 metres away from the advertised stopping point in Derby and highlighted that the company’s decision to do so was based on financial considerations.

‘The revenues had been falling and Arriva took a commercial decision to feed the service into another route thereby reducing the number of buses that they had to put on the road,’ Mrs Bell added.

The routes were lucrative – despite reduced passenger numbers – but the Traffic Commissioner ruled that Arriva had not given proper regard to those who continued to use the service.

As a consequence, she said that it was ‘entirely appropriate’ for passengers using the 44 and 45 services – who would arrive in Derby after 7.00pm – to receive free travel by way of the inconvenience they had previously suffered by Arriva’s actions. The firm is prevented from charging passengers a fare for those journeys as a result of the order.

‘It sends a very clear message to the passengers that they will now benefit from action taken against the company; it sends a very clear message to the operator of the consequences of its failings and will have the necessary deterrent effect,’ the Traffic Commissioner concluded.

‘It will also send a very clear message to the wider bus industry of the consequences of failings such as these.’

Mrs Bell’s order against registered services 44 and 45 took effect on 1 March and expires on 28 February 2014.
Passengers may sometimes complain about bus driving standards, but what’s it like behind the wheel?
PHIL TONKS found out when he had his first taste of bus driving.

When National Express West Midlands asked if I’d like to try my hand at driving a bus, what was I to say? I write about them, monitor them, ride them endlessly, take pictures of them, read about them... but drive one?

There were four brave souls from Bus Users UK who were up for the challenge. After a quick briefing at NXWM’s training centre at Walsall Garage, we were taken out into the large training area, marked out with various cones and kerb-style mock-ups. Just as well it was large – there were other trainees going through their paces, and whilst they were doing it for real we all felt slightly apprehensive about getting behind the wheel!

Our instructor team split us into two pairs. We had a double-deck Metrobus and an ex-National Express Volvo coach as our vehicles. My partner and I had the Metrobus first. I recognised this as a bus I’m sure I’ve ridden on in much younger days.

‘Who’s going first?’ shouted the instructor. It appeared that I had no choice in the matter! I had the course explained to me – a bit like a bus version of an obstacle course, littered with cones in all sorts of pretty shapes and sizes. Foot on brake, select ‘drive’, handbrake off, then when I released the footbrake the classic 1980s double-decker rolled into action. I gently touched the accelerator and there was that familiar Metrobus roar as I gingerly made my way towards the first ‘challenge’ – the mock-up kerb.

‘Don’t forget the wheels are behind you’, the instructor reminded me as I edged towards my fictitious kerb, with possibly fictitious passengers. I didn’t do too badly ‘for a first attempt’, apparently (although I think the instructor was possibly being kind) as I headed towards challenge number two – the chicane.

Weaving in and out of cones without mangling them in the back wheels was completed – without any mangling – and then a diagonal run (avoiding other trainees in their large white steeds) leading to a full left-hand lock, bringing me to challenge number three
– lining up the back wheels in between two cones. ‘About six inches out’ said the instructor. Hey, what’s six inches amongst friends!

The final challenge was the scariest! Two lines of cones tapering in to two final large cones either side of the vehicle, which were positioned just about wide enough to get the bus through. The secret was to watch the right-hand mirror, get the bus dead straight – and then don’t move the steering wheel! Having been hugely tempted to pull the wheel all over the place, I listened intently to the instructor’s advice – and I managed to get through – without any injured cones!

We swapped teams, instructors and vehicles – now I was behind the wheel of the Volvo coach. The brakes certainly worked as I applied them for the first time! We repeated the assault course in our new vehicles and then the big test – our instructor was going to mark us! aaarrrggghh!! no advice, no comments, nothing.

Round the course one more time, trundling with the coach at no more than 10mph – the poor vehicle had once had the prestige of gliding down the motorway but now she had me, proving that the brakes very much worked every few moments!

I managed to squeeze the coach through the tiny tapered cone arrangement one more time and spun her round, parking her next to the Metrobus with the other pairing on board.

The moment of truth was very much like an X-Factor moment and in classic 3–2–1 countdown – I’d won with the scores on the doors, to raucous laughter and cheesy grins! We’d all had a lot of fun!

Apart from a hugely enjoyable afternoon testing our skills behind the wheels of our mighty vehicles, what had we learnt?

Well, in much the same way that I learnt to drive the Stourbridge Shuttle Class 139 Railcar, I can tell you that it is a lot more challenging than it looks! The real trainees face lots of theory tests and numerous practical ones before they can be let out on to the streets. It may look relatively easy but it requires huge amounts of concentration at all times – and it’s very different to driving a car!

Catching a bus is something most people don’t really think about – and shouldn’t have to. But driving such a large vehicle, in traffic, thinking not only about what you’re doing, but the actions of others, whilst having up to 70+ people behind you is a huge, continuous responsibility.

Apart from having a hugely enjoyable and fun afternoon, my ‘driver experience’ has helped me to appreciate what skills bus drivers have and what an excellent job they do every day across the highways and byways of our country.

Thanks to National Express West Midlands and the Training School at Walsall Garage for a fascinating afternoon.
In July 2011, Caerphilly County Borough Council’s tendered bus services came up for renewal. Officers in the council wanted to use the tendering process as an opportunity to regenerate the supported network by providing a group of services that, whilst continuing to need support, would be sustainable long-term and provide a base on which to grow passengers.

The Sunday network across the county borough was one area in need of attention. As well as a few town services in Caerphilly itself, the coverage was based largely on key routes connecting the major settlements and had changed little since deregulation. Bus services mainly started after lunchtime and operated until late evening.

So what did Caerphilly do?
Alex Clarke and his colleagues analysed ticket machine data for every Sunday journey on each route. It became very clear that late evening journeys were very poorly used but there was high patronage on the first journey of the day (often after lunch). This was evidence that a large number of people were waiting all morning for the first bus of the day in order to go out.

Not wanting to rely purely on ticket machine data, Alex travelled on a number of routes to better understand where and when people were using the bus and it also allowed him to conduct some ad-hoc questioning of passengers. He said bus drivers were very forthcoming with information particularly where timings were too tight and where the network could be improved. The conclusion was that most people wanted earlier buses.

The final network proposal was one that focused on the key settlements and attractors eg Cardiff, Newport, Merthyr Tydfil and Caerphilly. Timetables were moved earlier with most buses starting at 09.00 or 10.00 with a little reduction in the late evening.

CAERPHILLY’S GUIDING PRINCIPLES

There were four guiding principles to the tendering process

1. **Keep it simple**
   The new network had to mirror the main weekday network as best possible to achieve consistency, familiarity to reduce confusion and help with promotion of a holistic route network.

2. **Make convenient connections**
   Frequencies on Sundays are generally lower than those on weekdays and so co-ordinated connections (with rail as well as bus) are more important. Focus was made on connections to/from Cardiff, Merthyr Tydfil and Newport and across the county borough.

3. **Timetables suitable for modern-day Sunday lifestyles**
   Many existing timetables did not start until after lunchtime and ran late into the evening. Whilst these may have been suitable at the time of deregulation, Sunday lifestyles have changed dramatically, particularly in the last decade. Sunday trading is now the norm with many people preferring it as a day to shop. The new timetables had to operate when shops were open and provide access to the county borough’s tourist attractions.

4. **Package work suitably to achieve efficiencies**
   The new tenders were designed so routes were grouped together allowing better economies of scale with some space allowed for tweaking at a later stage.

The Caerphilly approach

In BU49 we reported that Caerphilly County Borough Council’s enhanced Sunday network had won the Excellence in Passenger Transport award – sponsored by Bus Users UK Wales – at the Chartered Institute of Transport and Logistics Welsh National Transport Awards.

Our BARCLAY DAVIES caught up with Alex Clarke, Transport Officer at Caerphilly Council to find out what it was all about.
Managing Change
The challenge was to ensure that the management of change did not result in inconvenience. Alex argues that experience shows that even the slightest change to a route or timetable can result in adverse public reaction. A customer may complain that a bus timetable is often randomly altered to run 10 minutes early, but with an explanation as to why it has changed (perhaps because there was now an ability to connect with other services for example), the change becomes acceptable – even advantageous. Every bus stop in the county was updated in time for the change, which offered an opportunity to promote some of the network benefits.

Conscious that there would still be those who did not know the network was changing or understand the benefits of the changes the council produced a concise booklet detailing changes and benefits for each route.

Results
Quite simply – passenger numbers increased. To understand the benefit of the revised network, figures taken from July 2010 to January 2011 were compared with that from July 2011 to January 2012 and the result is an increase in passenger numbers of 22% and continues to grow.

Conclusion
In the current economic climate, budgets and investments for high-profile projects are not as readily available and local authorities will need to examine carefully how to achieve the maximum benefits out of the money they already have. The revised Sunday network in Caerphilly is such an example and illustrates what can be achieved working in partnership with stakeholders and developing an understanding of passenger needs and aspirations.

Big changes in Glasgow
First Glasgow, which operates the biggest urban bus network in Scotland, moving 114 million people every year, is introducing measures in May that it says ‘will significantly improve and simplify its bus network.’ This will be the biggest improvement to services since the late 1990s, will benefit those living within the city and across Greater Glasgow.

The company will run Simplicity-branded services every ten minutes or better during the day with many routes enjoying buses every five minutes, and it will provide complimentary Wi-Fi on more of its buses, with almost 300 in service by the end of the year.

The network will be simplified, with many routes altered and re-numbered, making it easier for all customers to understand and use the services.

Ronnie Park, managing director of First Glasgow, says: ‘Simplicity will give our customers confidence that they can expect a bus every ten minutes or better during the day on the Simplicity network. We want to make life easier for passengers so they know a bus will arrive at a bus stop within a matter of minutes.

‘Services every ten minutes or better will encourage more people to use our buses and to use them more often. Our aim is to make Simplicity one of the best bus networks in the UK’.

First Glasgow recently introduced ‘the One’, a high-frequency route using high-quality buses (pictured) equipped with Wi-Fi.
In March 2011 a public meeting attended by over 100 people was held in response to proposed cuts in bus services as a result of Shropshire Council’s cut in funding for public transport. The cuts included the axing of all Sunday services within the county, the discontinuation of all evening services (except for two early evening routes in Shrewsbury) and reduction in frequencies of daytime routes, as well as the withdrawal of concessionary travel before 09.30 and the banning of its use on park-&-ride.

Out of this meeting Bus Users Shropshire (BUS) was formed in May 2011 and had some initial success in getting frequencies on some interurban services reinstated, but the rest of the cuts went ahead.

We are affiliated to Bus Users UK and registered with the Campaign for Better Transport, but we do not support any political party. We are governed by a constitution and managed by an elected Executive Committee which meets bi-monthly to implement our agreed plan and report to general meetings of all members twice a year where we share ideas.

Our vision is for a well-publicised comprehensive network of well-used bus services that are reliable, affordable, convenient, safe and friendly. We believe that buses should be quiet, clean, comfortable, and non-polluting, and that information about bus services should be easy to understand with ‘live’ departure boards that display actual departure times. We want BUS to be representative of bus users across the whole of Shropshire, to be a strong and influential voice for bus users in Shropshire, and to achieve a constructive relationship with bus companies, local government and other interested groups.

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We have established working relationships with our major operator, Arriva, and with Shropshire Council, which recognises us as a stakeholder. Our meetings with both organisations include discussions on issues of concern raised by our members and suggestions for addressing them, which have resulted in some positive outcomes. With Arriva we have reached agreement in principle with the local manager for BUS to have an input in customer service training for their drivers. Issues raised vary from drivers smoking at one of our bus stations to the routing of a bus service to improve reliability and meet local needs; and from access by bus to a new medical centre to the suitability of the network of demand-responsive services. To keep our members informed of what we are doing and abreast of what is happening to bus services, we are producing a quarterly e-newsletter, the first of which was published in October 2012.

For 2013 we have two top priorities. The first is to win the argument for Sunday bus services, through political pressure and airing the case in the press and on local radio. The second is to recruit more members and supporters (we have 20 at present); becoming a member costs from £6 a year and allows participation in the running of BUS, while a supporter who just has email contact costs nothing. We need more members and supporters to fully represent bus users and give clout to our arguments, but to get more members we need to publicise our activities throughout the county and we need members’ income to fund the production and distribution of publicity about BUS. To address this we are seeking some external grant funding and hope that we are successful in our application.

Keith Gallop, Vice Chair of Bus Users Shropshire

Local Groups are essential to the success of Bus Users UK as the passengers’ champion, and we are keen to hear of local initiatives and successes that we can feature in the pages of Bus User. Send your news and photos to the editor (gavin@bususers.org).
Have your say

**Hide-bound?**
It’d be nice if Bus Users UK tipped a nod to vegetarian bus users too. Lots of us have deeply-held ethical reasons not to want to sit on cow skins – whether we’re Hindu, vegan or a greenie, there are lots of ethical issues with leather. What’s wrong with having non-leather seating areas on all buses, so we all feel welcome?

_Amanda Baker, Birmingham_

Why do bus manufactures and bus companies think that leather seats are essential? Having travelled on buses with leather seats I find that they are too hot in summer and too cold in winter. I also think that there is a safety issue with them, as when the bus is going round corners you have to hang on tight to avoid sliding off the seat into the aisle, as the seats are slippery.

_Peggy Grubb, Chesterfield_

**Timetable responsibility**
At a recent neighbourhood forum run by Derby City Council, an interesting matter was raised relating to a local bus service. Arriva Midlands operates its weekdays-only route 109 between Derby and Ashbourne, serving a number of intermediate villages, for some of which it is the only bus service. During most of the day the headway is around two hours. The service is operated under contract to Derbyshire County Council; however one evening journey in one direction is operated by TM Travel – the 18.00 departure from Ashbourne to Derby.

The point raised at the forum was the refusal of Arriva to display this departure on its roadside timetables, claiming that it was not policy to advertise the services of its competitors. TM Travel can hardly be expected to publicise this one journey at bus stops, so potential passengers who have no access to the county council’s excellent timetable book are largely unaware that it runs; this no doubt contributes to the very small number of passengers. Derby City Council, a unitary authority, seems either unwilling or powerless to influence the situation; only a small part of the 109 is in its area.

It seems to me that a solution could be for the County Council to assume the responsibility for bus stop timetables, advertising all services that use a particular stop. It would be interesting to know whether this particular problem has arisen in other areas and if so, how local authorities and possibly other public bodies seek to address it.

_Michael J Smith, Derby_

**Nature notes**
Official published sources classify us as a solitary species, but in truth we are really quite gregarious. We often pair up and occasionally even come together as a trio – with enormous gaps before and after – to follow each other nose-to-tail along our well-trodden routes, some of which were established many decades ago by our now extinct red ancestors.

Found mostly in urban and suburban districts, and only occasionally in the countryside, we enjoy being chased. But we are almost impossible to catch like this – we make a sport of taking off at speed to leave you out-of-breath and fuming!

_To catch us you need to wait patiently, sometimes for a very long time, especially in cold and wet conditions in which we always seem more reluctant to emerge. We don’t like staying out late. We’re rarely to be seen during the evenings and still more rarely on Sundays. We used to have cousins who used to stay out all night, but they too are now extinct in Leicester.

Our typical behaviour includes stopping suddenly to sweep you off your feet, shooting red lights, and having no change first thing in the morning.

Watch out for us!

_Martin Shuttleworth, Leicester_
Blowing hot and cold
I read with interest Gillian Merron’s article in the BU49.

The issue about bus heating was fascinating, not least because it seems to miss two pertinent factors – one of which I have voiced before. In the beginning there was an army of people to attend to every faulty/failed component on a bus, London Transport taking care of EVERYTHING on overhaul.

Over time, with cost pressures, many issues have been downgraded; except when it comes to getting a bus through a Ministry test, I have known it in the past where a perfectly functioning bus – one that has been through a test previously – has had parts exchanged with a bus due to have a test in order that another test pass can be achieved.

The ideal time to rectify heating faults, notwithstanding what I have just described, is during the school summer hols when fewer buses are needed in service; unfortunately, there isn’t much evidence of that, except from operators with a long pedigree such as The Delaine or safeguard.

How many times do you see a passenger get on a bus and open a window immediately they sit down, without checking with others first?

Asthma sufferers prefer cool/cold air, so a bus with heating on is not conducive to their condition. The list is endless, but the fact is it doesn’t matter how many thousands of pounds a bus costs, it’s the human element that makes the difference when it comes to heating – every time.

Krystina Baker, Guildford

Would it were as simple as that, Krystina. In many of the larger bus companies the driver cannot regulate the temperature inside the bus, as the heater controls are set by engineers – hence the nonsense of heaters on in the summer and off in the winter. Bus Users UK has campaigned about this in the past. Ed

Sharp exit
I was interested to see that a reason for buses not having separate exit doors is increased insurance costs and false claims. All London buses have CCTV cameras trained on the exit doors. Maybe this is one way of mitigating the problem but I still wonder about the insurance implications of the new London buses that have not only a separate exit but an open rear platform (pictured). Nostalgia is a wonderful thing but I would have thought that safety and lower insurance costs trumps it.

Chris Barker, London

We do agree that this behaviour is dangerous and always follow up with operators if a specific complaint is made. In our experience, bus operators don’t generally dismiss complaints as eccentricity although there are certainly some that need to improve their customer service. Ed

Single-handed
I am astonished at your tepid response in BU49 to Paul Kirby’s letter on bus drivers using just one hand to drive. It is scandalous that a PSV driver should drive with only one hand on the wheel. You seem to think that it is only a matter of concern ‘if it endangers the lives of passengers’. Of course it endangers their lives. And what about other road users and the public at large? Professional drivers, especially PSV drivers, should set an example to other drivers. Any driver who drives with only one hand on the wheel would fail the basic test let alone an advanced test.

You should have remonstrated with the bus companies concerned. You have the muscle to make an impact while the average passenger who complains will be dismissed as an irritating eccentric. I would have expected better things of Bus User.

M O S Hawkins, Stockport

We do agree that this behaviour is dangerous and always follow up with operators if a specific complaint is made. In our experience, bus operators don’t generally dismiss complaints as eccentricity although there are certainly some that need to improve their customer service. Ed
Welcome

To new members
Andrew Braddock, Yateley; Colin Bricher, Northampton; Ian Coe, Morpeth; Peter Dodd, Abingdon; Bernard Draper, Ryh; Roger Goodhew, Shrewsbury; Brenda Head, Addlestone; John Hennessy, Macclesfield; Paul Roberts, Bromsgrove; Robert Spalding, Corwen; Alan Whittington, Stanford-le-Hope; Dave Williams, Portsmouth.

To new groups
Norfolk Bus Forum
Mrs S E Paramour, Norfolk Federation of Women’s Institutes, 45 All Saints Green, Norwich NR1 3LY
Email: fedsec@norfolkwi.org.uk Tel 01603 624580

The Pensioners & Fifty Plus Action Group
Mrs Margaret Williams, 14 Walters Rd, Plymouth PL5 1NR
Email: tomag42@hotmail.co.uk

Bus Users UK LOCAL GROUPS

Age UK Colchester peter@ageconcern.org.uk
Association of Devizes Passengers
www.facebook.com/DevizesPassengers
BABUS (Bedford Area Bus User’s Society) www.babus.org.uk
BBUG (Bath Bus Users Group) chair@bath-bus-users.org.uk
Bradford & District Older People's Alliance (BOPA) www.bopabradford.org.uk
Brighton Area Buswatch brightonbuswatch@gmail.com
BUGS Bus Users Group Stevenage www.betterbuses.org.uk
Bus Users Shropshire bususersshropshire@hotmail.co.uk
Bus Users UK Northampton
13 Dryden Avenue, Daventry NN11 9DJ
Bus Users UK Oxford Hugh_jaeger@hotmail.com
Bus Watch West Haringey c.barker@lineone.net
Campaign for Better Transport – Cambs
6 Hertford Street, Cambridge CB4 3AG
Campaign for Better Transport – West Yorkshire rwilkes@blueyonder.co.uk
Cardiff People First cardiffpeople1st@btconnect.com
Christian Peoples Alliance Party (Northampton Branch) colin.bricher@ntlworld.com
City of Hull & Humber Environment Forum info@hullenvironmentforum.org.uk
Colchester Bus Users Support Group peterkay.essex@btinternet.com
Dengie Hundred Bus Users’ Group (DHBUG) sarah@burnhamtowncouncil.com
Ealing Passenger Transport Users Group www.eptug.org
Footprint Trust www.footprint-trust.co.uk
Friends of DalesBus www.friendsofdalesbus.org.uk
I.W. Bus & Rail Users Group iwbusers@fsmail.net
Kendal & District Bus Users (KADBUS) 01539 740761
Milton Keynes Bus Users Group peter.ballantyne@btinternet.com
Norfolk Bus Forum fedsec@norfolkwi.org.uk
North Herts Bus Users Group (NHBUG) marilyn.kirkland@north-herts.gov.uk
North Pembroke Bus Users Group
North West Surrey Bus Users Group mjworley@btopenworld.com
Oxfordshire Unlimited daveholmes.home@btinternet.com

LOCAL GROUPS continued

Pattishall Parish Council ann.atkin51@btinternet.com
Penllwyn Community Partnership Sian Woosnam, c/o 12 Highmead, Penllwyn, Blackwood, Gwent NP12 2PE
The Pensioners & Fifty Plus Action Group tomag42@hotmail.co.uk
Radstock Public Transport Group george@whiteclsl.demon.co.uk
Railfuture www.railfuture.org.uk
Rame Peninsula Public Transport Users Group j.cadwallader@btinternet.com
Rural East Lothian Bus Users www.relbus.org.uk
The Senior Council for Devon Transport andrea@scfd.org.uk
Southend Area Bus User Group donaldfraser17@btinternet.com
St Neots Area Bus Users Society info@snabus.org.uk
Swindon Climate Action Network www.swindonclimate.org.uk
TravelWatch NorthWest admin@travelwatch-northwest.org.uk
TravelWatch SouthWest www.travelwatchsouthwest.org
Tyne and Wear Public Transport Users Group ne11ee@fsmail.net
West Leigh Residents Association donaldfraser17@btinternet.com
Wirral Transport Users Association
17 Poulton Road, Bebington, Wirral CH63 9LA

Joining Bus Users UK

We always welcome new members; membership is available to anyone who uses buses for whatever purpose. It doesn’t matter if you only use them occasionally. It’s also open to groups of bus users and organisations that share our concern for better public transport.

If you wish to join please write to us at Bus Users UK, Terminal House, Station Approach, Shepperton TW17 8AS, or visit our website, www.bususers.org to download a printable membership form or to join online using PayPal.

You can also subscribe using on-line banking; please email our financial administrator, Bill Wright, on finance@bususers.org, who will provide the bank details to be used and a reference to quote. Members can now pay by Direct Debit – forms accompany subscription renewal notices and can also be downloaded from www.bususers.org.

Annual subscriptions

£15 for individuals
£10 for senior citizens, under-18s and unwaged.
The subscription for local groups is £18.50.

Bus companies and local authorities that share our desire to improve communication with passengers and who support the Confederation of Passenger Transport’s Code of Good Practice can take out associate membership; please contact us for details at the Shepperton address or email enquiries@bususers.org.