

Bus Advisory Board – 30th April 2024

Questions submitted by Rosa Kell, Wells Bus User Group

Question 1

Can the Advisory Board tell us what advice it's giving Yeovil Town Council and Somerset Council to ensure that the sale of the bus station and adjoining development at Glover Walk will by it's new owners incorporate a new bus station for the benefit of all visitors and bus and coach passengers of Yeovil.

Question 2

Can the Bus Advisory Board tell us on how can Taunton Bus & Coach Station be let out to the (a) NHS Trust and (b) sublet with all the public liability included to The Thames Valley & Great Western Omnibus Trust (TV&GWOT) to be accessed by the public on a Vintage Bus Run Event and where bus passengers are hour by hour during the whole day use buses departing from the Station and the public accessing those buses leaving this Station

Yet, the Taunton Bus & Coach Station be considered too dangerous and unusable by the bus travelling public of Taunton on a working daily.

I beg to ask how is the Station not safe to be open to the public bus passengers (and the station has not reopened since it's close down during the COVID outbreak). How can it be safe for a Vintage Event but not for the working day

Question 3

Can the Bus Advisory Board tell us where the coach and bus fees for accessing Somerset Bus and Coach parks is diverted by Somerset Council, in whose machines access fees are deposited. These funds should be ring fenced solely for use on the station and it's infrastructure.

In Street, Glastonbury, Wells, Frome, Shepton Mallet etc the payment machines are clearly signed Somerset Council.

Questions submitted by David Redgewell, South west transport Network and Railfuture Severnside,

Question 1

With The Thames Valley and Great Western omnibus Trust using Taunton bus and coach station for a special bus service, leased by the NHS who appear to have given permission for this event but as the bus and coach station reopening require planning permission and months of work. How is this event with the travelling public using the bus and coach station going ahead on the 2nd June 2024. Has Somerset council public transport Department given permission and are the travelling public covered by insurance when using the Bus and coach station, whilst we welcome this event and is Somerset public transport unit involved in the Event, we understand that First Group plc buses and National Express coaches stagecoach south west go ahead are involved in the Event.

Question 2

What is the process on reopening Taunton Transport hub as a bus and coach station, the NHS leaving and planning permission being granted and the First bus and coach services, taxis services and bike and scooter hire being provided with toilets including change place, buffet and waiting room facilities.

Question 3

Under the 1985 Transport act and the 2017 Transport act, all public buses and coach station and interchanges facilities need to be accessible to all bus and bus operators and access charges are made. South west transport Network and Somerset bus partnership and public transport group in Dorset and the west of England mayoral combined transport Authority and North Somerset council. Bus and coach operators are paying access charges at the bus and coach stations in Somerset including coach parks at Yeovil bus and coach, Wells bus and coach station, Bridgwater bus and coach station, Wincanton bus and coach station, coach parks and stations at Wellington, Minehead coach park at the Railway station street, Glastonbury, Frome, Cork Street, the last coach park have had charges by Somerset west and Taunton council and Mendip District Council. The money raised from charges is supposed to be used for up keep of the bus and coach station including walking rooms toilets, Shelters lighting and cctv facilities, cafe and Kiosk rental in the case of Bridgwater bus and coach station what is happening to income from cafe rental. As Somerset council Public transport has to provide open access at these bus and coach stations, what is happening to the money collected in charges?

Question 4 – written response to be provided

What equalities impact assessment has been carried out on closure of Public transport facilities at Yeovil bus and coach station including the public toilets and waiting room and community safety issues of withdrawing passengers and bus and coach drivers facilities at the Station and what discussions are taking place about the future of the bus and coach station facilities with the Northern Ireland property company about Redevelopment of the Transport hub and the shopping centre being one the biggest Regeneration sites in South west England, and with First group plc buses and Railway Divisions, First Group plc South buses, Wales and West buses Divisions First group plc Great Western Railway company and, First Group plc MTR South western railway company, due to Somerset Council provide railway bus services to Yeovil pen mill and Yeovil Junction railway station. With passengers using the Bus and coach station facilities, South west coaches group, Berry's coaches all which provides service from the bus and coach station.

Question 5 – written response to be provided

Can we have an update on the progress provision of a new bus and coach Depot at Yeovil for First Group plc. Outside with cleaning maintenance and supervisor offices drivers facilities, for bus services in Yeovil, South Somerset and West Dorset,

Question submitted by Barrie Childs

Question 1

How are First South/Buses of Somerset proposing to resolve the several communicated issues apparent since introduction of their revised route 25 & 28A timetables?

Specifically, with regard to Norton Fitzwarren:

- lack of effective weekday peak inbound service (to Taunton) between 08:10 and 11:10
- lack of effective weekday peak outbound service (from Taunton) between 14:55 and 17:45
- endemic early running, i.e. departing stops too early. Traffic Commissioner guidance states depart no more than one minute early
- many would-be passengers left behind at bus stops with waits of up to 3 hours for next bus, destination box displaying 'sorry - bus full'
- failure to provide timetables at bus stops; day 11 of new timetable but majority of local bus stops have no information or out-of-date timetables displayed
- single decker buses operating some busy route 25 services, causing many passengers to have no option but to stand for their whole journey
- 28A buses often displaying incorrect route number (28) leading to passenger confusion
- Ticketer software not functioning (not programmed?) for route 28A - unable to issue correct tickets or to display necessary information to driver
- First Bus app tracker not functioning for any buses operating route 28A, erroneously displaying 28A AND 28a in each case but no timings/seat information
- errors in printed timetable booklet and pdf version requiring correction

These problems extend throughout the Dulverton and Minehead corridors and beyond, and impact heavily on passengers using, or attempting to use, buses on these routes. A significant amount of time and money has recently been invested by several people and organisations to encourage folk to make greater use of their rural bus services. As long as this seriously sub-standard service remains in place, we risk undoing so much of that good work as passengers revert to their personal vehicles to make journeys that really ought to be made by bus. Once these people give up bus travel they are unlikely to return to the mode.

Question submitted by Emery Taylor, Strode College Student and Somerset Bus Partnership Management Team Member

Question 1

The 16:20 Wells to Yeovil service 77 is scheduled to stop at Strode College at 16:47 however over the last few months, it has on over 10 occasions, skipped the college and thus left students trying to get home stranded. This has had a negative effect on myself and other students who are now worried they may not be able to catch this bus home. This issue does not only affect students on the day itself, but also has a major long term effect of reducing the overall reliability of the service which could have detrimental impacts to the students future transport choices, and the overall passenger numbers on this service.

This issue has not been resolved despite multiple complaints from various students to the First Bus National Contact Centre.

What is First West of England and Somerset Council doing to ensure this issue does not happen again?