

York Bus Forum Meeting Tuesday 21st June 2022 17.30 by Zoom

Attending; Doreen Magill (Chair), Graham Collett (Vice Chair), Dave Merrett, Roger French (Finance and Membership), Alan Robinson, Flick Williams, John Slaughter, Kevin Fradley, Lionel Lennox, Richard Parker, Eleanor Tew, Ian Anderson, Richard Bourne, Eden Blyth, Mary Fairbrother, Councillor Andy D'Agorne, Terry French, Ben Hargreaves (Best Impressions), Tony Hudson, Richard Harrison (First Bus), Dr. Colin Fletcher, Ian Craven, George Wood, David Stuart and Ray Stenning (Speaker from Best Impressions).

1. Doreen Magill welcomed members and guests to the meeting and apologies were reported from; Michael Howard, Brandon Jones, Iris Wells, Rachel Melly, and Niall McFerran.
2. Minutes of May meeting approved, the matters arising were.
Richard Parker reported that the information boards at the Peasholme Green stop had still not been updated.
3. Presentation Mr Ray Stenning, Best Impressions Company
Ray Stenning introduced his company as a one stop shop for Branding , Livery, Marketing for public transport companies.
He wanted to assist companies to create a desire for its products and said the aim for using public transport should be to “create an uplifting experience from beginning to end” when using public transport.
He highlighted impediments to creating this desire including unreadable bus stop signs, buses with adverts for competitive industries such as advertising cars which basically gave the message that the bus was a poor alternative when the message should be that the bus should be the first choice for travel.
The aim should be to build a good reputation which would give some leeway in the event of mishaps occurring- if the branding is good it gives confidence that the company knows what it is doing.
Mr Stenning gave examples of good branding from across the country including the Exmoor Coaster, Sheffield, Doncaster, Warrington where in each case the intention was to build on local strengths and identity – for example linking the railway heritage in Doncaster to the buses which had the branding “full steam ahead with Doncaster’s red buses” and Warrington’s bus wolf logo creating a synergy with the local Rugby League side Warrington Wolves.
He also pointed out examples of poor presentation and branding including in Leeds where the bus illustrated on the Wharfedale route was full of signs and stickers making it messy and overcrowded with no clear message or branding.
Clean, comfortable interiors were also illustrated as a major positive in the customer experience and contrasted with tired, messy illustrations that pointed to a company that did not value their passengers.
Doreen Magill asked what Mr Stenning suggested we, as bus users, should do where standards were below those he extolled and Mr Stenning said that we must keep complaining, take photographs of poor standards, and most importantly find the right person to complain to and back up with strong, well-formed arguments.

Flick Williams highlighted examples of poor design for those users who were visually impaired or using wheelchairs. Mr Stenning responded that bus companies needed to work with manufacturers to get designs right and overcome a tendency of some manufacturers to design wheelchair and disabled spaces because they had to rather than wanting to find the best solutions.

Dr. Colin Fletcher pointed out that there is now much greater awareness of disability issues and we are in a much better place now than say 10 years ago.

Eden Blyth referred back to Mr Stenning highlighting Confidence, Character and Charisma as being necessary pre-requisites of branding. Eden offered the 5 C's that Moorsbus use Cost, Comfort, Convenience, Confidence and Connection.

Richard Parker informed that York has two sets of branded buses- the University and Hospital Buses- but commented that they were often used on other routes which was a potential source of confusion for the public and asked for Mr Stenning's views. Mr Stenning said that branded buses should never leave the branded route otherwise essentially the bus company was basically lying to the public. That was not to say that all buses on a branded route should be branded- a mixture of branded and generic would be fine but the branded buses should not be used on other routes in his view.

The Chair thanked Mr Stenning once again for a very thought provoking and informative talk.

4. BSIP/Enhanced Partnership/Zebra buses

Michael Howard had been unable to attend the meeting but had sent an update report to the meeting and Graham Collett picked out the main points as being:

- a) that the BSIP submission to the Department for Transport needs to be in by the end of June and due to the timescales involved it is very unlikely that the Bus Forum will see any more detail until the stakeholder consultation period
- b) that York was due to be one of the first places outside London to introduce the tap on tap off system.
- c) that the outstanding question with relation to the proposed electric bus purchase was whether First Bus company would go ahead with the 34 capacity single decker option and if so would this be enough capacity at busy times.

5. Local Plan

Dave Merrett spoke to his paper on the Local Plan saying that the inspectors tend to listen to submissions without giving immediate feedback but Dave thinks the arguments put forward by the Bus Forum and others have had some impact on the transport element of the Plan. City of York Council Have agreed to provide a new modelling prediction including the predicted effect on bus passenger numbers rather than just non- bus road transport.

Ian Anderson asked whether, with the latest census results being due out at the end of the month these will be taken into account in the Local Plan. Dave thanked Ian for the information and undertook to find out whether that could be possible since it was clearly desirable if there are material differences in numbers.

6. Finance and Membership

Roger French re-iterated the number of individual and organisational members outlined in his report and explained the background to transferring the bank account to Lloyds as Virgin Money had introduced charging for voluntary organisation accounts.

He assured members that details of the new bank account would be made available when membership renewals are due next January and also to any new members resulting from the planned publicity for the York Bus Forum.

7. Concessionary fares

Graham Collett reminded members that City of York Council and First Bus had reported that concessionary fares usage was at only 50% of pre-pandemic levels and that the York Older People's Assembly had agreed to send a survey to its 200 members.

George Wood confirmed that the survey had gone out and it was hoped that the results would be analysed by the end of the week i.e. 24th June.

8. Acomb bus survey and Bus Stop Information

Roger French spoke to his survey of bus stops in Acomb which highlighted some of the poor practice highlighted in Mr Stenning's presentation that gave negative messages to bus users including faded bus stop signs barely legible in some cases. He also referred to feedback from Brandon Jones that the terminus point for the number 4 service in Acomb was the Clock House rather than Green Lane as a result of ward council meetings in 2019 giving feedback that this was the preferred spot due to the number of buses using Green Lane.

Roger asked for feedback from any members in Acomb on his report since, whilst he was a user of Acomb shops and the no. 4 service, he did not live in the ward and it was important that his report was both factually correct and accurately reflected the views of as many bus users as possible.

Doreen Magill referred to bus stop information posters that she had witnessed where the information sheets were slipped down making the QR code readers unusable.

Doreen asked members to feedback of any issues in their local areas so specific feedback could be given to City of York Council officers and the potential for a media campaign could be considered.

9. Publicity

Alan Robinson brought Richard Harrison up to date with the fact that the posters had been designed and sent to First Bus via Brandon Jones and Cathy Croston, including the design for the AV screens and Richard would follow up within First Bus with a view to obtaining a date for the publicity to go live, with a launch event involving Bus Forum members, First Bus and Councillor D'Agorne.

It was also agreed to approach the other bus companies serving York with a view to seeing if they would be willing to carry the posters.

10. AOB

a) Doreen Magill reported the sad news of the death of York Bus Forum member Donald Southall.

- b) Terry French said that if the Bus Forum were to undertake surveys of, for example, bus stop information, it could be an idea to get students involved as part of their work programmes for colleges and Doreen Magill undertook to investigate this possibility.
- c) Eden Blyth reported that the Moorsbus services would commence on 2nd July running on Saturdays and Sundays and the August Bank Holiday and running until 25th September.

Timetables are available on the Moorsbus website with the service from York Railway station to Pickering via Malton departing at 8.22 on both Saturday and Sunday and the service to Helmsley departing York Railway station at 9.18 on Saturdays and 9.12 on Sundays

Doreen Magill undertook to link the YBF website to the timetable information. Eden reminded members that Moorsbus accept bus passes but also have donation boxes for those who wish to make a contribution to Moorsbus.

11. Date of next meeting Tuesday 21st June 2022