

Bus Users

Annual Report 2016/17

1 January 2016 - 31 March 2017



Bus Users
Working for passengers

Bus Users: who we are

Bus Users champions the interests of bus and coach users. We give passengers a voice, campaign for improved standards, and work to make bus travel a viable choice for all.

An independent, non-profit group, we have the ear of most bus companies, trade organisations, the Government and local authorities and we aim to ensure the views of bus and coach users are at the heart of decisions which affect them.

As an approved Alternative Dispute Resolution body for bus and coach passengers, we handle complaints on behalf of anyone dissatisfied with the response they have had from a bus or coach operator, and we run Your Bus Matters events to bring passengers together with the people responsible for running their bus services.

Bus Users UK Ltd is a Company Limited by Guarantee (registered in England No 04635458).

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Claire Walters

Chief Executive Officer

Kerry Donn

Financial Administrator

Margaret Everson

Director for Cymru

Dawn Badminton-Capps

Director for England

Gavin Booth

Director for Scotland

The way ahead



Things continue to change at Bus Users.

We are working with our newly formed Branches to achieve a local presence in all corners of the UK. We are also working to ensure authorities considering applying

for devolved transport powers consult people in a robust and timely way, and understand the wider impact of their proposals. We plan more events than ever in 2017/18 and anticipate being increasingly involved in passenger consultations as well as raising our media profile.

We will build on our work with bus and coach operators and are already delivering training courses for customer care staff on handling complaints from people with mental health issues. We are also developing a programme for managers new to the industry, to focus them on passenger satisfaction.

As an Alternative Dispute Body we have formalised our complaints role and can now officially deal with coach excursion passengers. This will deepen our understanding of passenger needs and expectations to help us improve services for everyone.

Social media is giving us a real insight into what passengers think of bus and coach companies, knowledge that will help operators understand and communicate with their customers. We now have 741 registered supporters and nearly 4,500 followers on Twitter and Facebook.

We will continue to build our understanding of the impact of our work and once charitable status is achieved, aim to expand our community activities with charitable funding.

Our sincerest thanks to everyone who helped us achieve our aims in 2016/17, and to all those supporting our work in the future.

Claire Walters
Chief Executive

Chair's Report

I would like to begin by thanking Norman Baker for his hugely effective stint as Chair of Bus Users UK. While he could not resist the lure of a bus operator job, which then put him in a position of conflict of interest with the role, it's clear that his time with us was very well spent. We are now in the process of seeking a new Chair to take us forward.

Once we have found our new Chair, the practical phase of finding new Directors and Trustees who better represent the diversity of the bus-using public, which we promised at last year's AGM, will start in earnest. We will, of course, keep you all up to date via our website, social media and ezine.

As anticipated, this has been a year of transition for Bus Users UK, following the decision of the membership to change the structure and status of the organisation. This has involved a great deal of discussion and paperwork, as you can imagine, but I am pleased to report that our application for charitable registration has been submitted and is under consideration.

It's been an interesting year from a legislative point of view also. The Buses Bill finally became the Bus Services Act 2017. While the amendments that we, along with our partners in the voluntary sector and the bus industry, helped to push through the Lords didn't quite make it into the final version, apart from the requirement for audio/visual information to be available to all passengers going forward, we did succeed in getting the requirement for passenger consultation pushed well up the process for franchising applications.

We are still working on finding a way to get the provision of socially necessary services made a statutory requirement which the cuts to local bus subsidies have made an ever more urgent priority.



While we have made our voices heard very loudly in many areas where cuts are being proposed and managed to reduce the impact substantially in some of them, this work is undermined by the wording of Section 63 of the 1985 Transport Act which was intended to protect such services, but wasn't worded in such a way as to be legally solid. A test case may be needed and that requires resources we don't currently have available.

A highlight of 2016/17 was becoming a recognised

Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Body for our complaints work. All traders have to let unhappy customers know that an ADR exists if they don't believe their complaint has been dealt with fairly, and any that don't do this can be reported to the local Trading Standards body which has the ability to fine businesses. Bus Users UK is now a registered ADR for the bus and coach industry, incorporating coach excursion operators as well as express coaches, which is a big step forward for us as we represent an even wider constituency of bus and coach passengers.

2017/18 will see even greater leaps forward for the organisation in a challenging environment and we look forward to reporting back to you on these in years to come. In the meantime, I'd like to thank our volunteers, supporters and hard-working staff members for everything they do to make the voice of the bus and coach passenger heard at all levels of society.

Jeff Anderson
Interim Chair

Finance Report 2016/17

This financial year has seen some changes in our income at Bus Users UK. It was agreed in the members' ballot prior to the AGM that paid membership would cease and all members would become supporters, free of charge. Therefore, the member's income generated for this financial year shows as a 75% decrease from last year. Going forward, there will be no income from individual membership fees.

Funding from the Department for Transport for our work surrounding the European Passenger Rights Regulations did not arrive again until the end of the year which, in turn, meant that some of the work could not take place and is now factored into the current financial year. A new bid for

2017/18 EPRR funding was submitted in March and a decision on this is expected shortly.

Operators' fleets have increased again in this financial year which gave us a slightly higher operators' income than originally anticipated in the budget and, as their subscriptions are based on the number of vehicles they have in service, this led to an 8% increase for the year.

The accounts show an increase in administrative expenses, office rents and IT costs: this is because of removal costs for the England and Head offices. The increase in IT costs is due to the main server having to be relocated from our former office in Shepperton. We are, however, showing a surplus at the end of the financial year

which is due to some staff vacancies which have now been filled.

Working closely this year with Board member Harry Barker, we have changed the way we budget and forecast. We are now using the Smart Budgeting method which projects a more accurate forecast of income, expenditure and cash flow. This has made reporting to the Board and the funders easier and more accurate.

Two main changes that have taken place this year are that Bus Users UK became a registered ADR (Alternative Dispute Resolution) Body, and an application for charitable status has now been submitted. These developments underline the status of Bus Users as an independent voice of the passenger and will help get our message out to the public and to the bus and coach industry. Becoming a registered charity may also open up further funding options and allow for the expansion of some areas of our work.

To help analyse the last 12 months' finances, the charts below show income and expenditure across the UK, using figures which have been examined by external auditors. Accounts in statutory format will be published soon and available on request.

Kerry Donn
Financial Administrator

Complaints

In 2016/17 Bus Users handled 2,487 complaints, up by 766 from 1,721 in 2015/16. In England, complaints rose from 944 to 1,506, in Scotland they were up from 513 to 694, and in Wales complaints rose by 17 to 287.

In addition to being the nominated body for dealing with complaints under the European Passenger Rights Regulation (EPRR), in 2017 Bus Users became an approved Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) Body for bus and coach passengers.

Bus Users helps in cases where a passenger is unhappy with the response they have had from an operator, and handles complaints on bus and coach services across the UK outside of London and Northern Ireland.

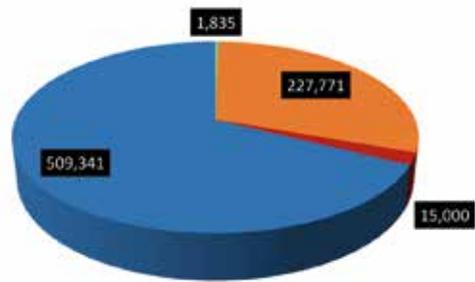
In 2016/17, the most common complaints in England were Driver/Staff Attitude at 24% and Service Reliability at 23%, closely followed by Bus Failing to Show or Stop at 18%.

Similarly in Wales, Driver/Staff Attitude and Service Reliability were 25% and 21% respectively, with Bus Failing to Show or Stop 20%. In Scotland, however, Service Reliability topped the table at 25% with Driver/Staff Attitude 19%, Frequency of Service 11% and Vehicle Condition/Type 10%.

Country	2015/16	2016/17
England	944	1,506
Scotland	513	694
Wales	270	287
UK	1,727	2,487

Complaints under the EPRR increased during the year but remain low, despite significant efforts to raise awareness of the regulation. Many operators still do not understand that some parts of the legislation apply to them and there is a wide belief that Brexit will remove this from the statute book, something our information suggests is incorrect. These rules will be in place for at least two more years and seem unlikely to be repealed as, among other things, they protect disabled passengers from discrimination, something few governments would want to be seen to withdraw.

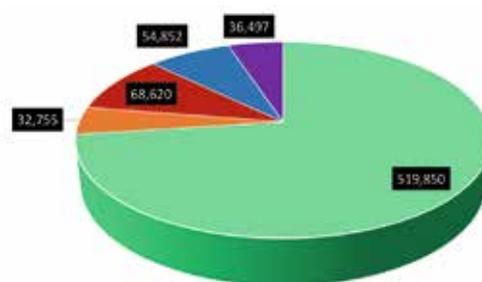
Income for the year April 2016-March 2017



Members Income and Deposit Interest
Operators
Other Income
Government Income

Income	2016-17	Percent
Members Income and Deposit Interest	1,835	1
Operators	227,771	30
Other Income	15,000	2
Government Income	509,341	67
	753,947	

Expenditure for the year April 2016-March 2017



Staff Costs
Professional Fees
Premises Costs
Travel
Other

Expenditure	2016-17	Percent
Staff Costs	519,850	73
Professional Fees	32,755	5
Premises Costs	68,620	10
Travel	54,852	8
Others	36,497	5
	712,574	

Bus Users Cymru

As part of the research we have been carrying out into the state of the bus industry, our annual ongoing Mystery Travelling Survey covered 360 random bus journeys throughout all the 22 unitary authorities in Wales. The mystery travellers completed a 97 item questionnaire covering a range of issues from facilities at the bus stop, to ratings on the driver, the bus and the journey. By analysing the results, year on year, we have identified some areas of improvement and some of concern.

Bus Users Cymru staff attended three Public Inquiries during 2016/17, to give evidence where required, and as observers: this enables us to understand more fully the problems and support the interests of passengers. In some cases the Bus Compliance Officers (BCOs) will have provided evidence to the Traffic Commissioner who may have brought an operator to Public Inquiry on grounds highlighted by them.

Our BCOs have monitored 30 bus operators this year with 14 meeting 90% or more on punctuality. In addition, 26 areas were also monitored for Bus Services Support Grant compliance.

We organised 15 Your Bus Matters events this year and attended six Community Information events throughout Wales in order to meet and hear users' concerns or problems.

We expect 2017/18 to be another busy year as bus operators and local authorities continue to juggle changes to funding and budgets, and find themselves having to make difficult choices. Buses are an integral part of our daily lives, providing access to work, education, healthcare, family and friends and supporting tourism: the bus industry serves one million people per year, or a third of Welsh citizens. Bus Users Cymru will continue to represent the interests of passengers through consultations connected with any public transport changes or amendments and monitoring the industry.

Complaints in Wales 2016/17

Service reliability	88	21%
Driver/Staff attitude	109	25%
Frequency of Service	43	10%
Vehicle Condition/Type	7	2%
Bus Failed to Stop	22	5%
Bus Failed to Show	63	15%
Infrastructure	9	2%
Compliments	1	0%
Capacity	2	0%
Disability Issues	4	1%
Accessibility Issues	3	1%
Ticket Prices	8	2%
Ticket Acceptance	13	3%
Other Ticket Matter	14	3%
Concession Pass Matter	6	1%
Personal Injury and Accident	3	1%
Incorrect Information Provided	19	4%
Smoking	0	0%
Other	9	2%
Luggage	3	1%
EPRR	3	1%
Total complaints handled	429	100%

Bus Users England

During 2016/17 we ran 16 Your Bus Matters events, giving passengers across England the opportunity to talk to bus operators and local authority representatives about their bus services. The concerns raised generally reflected the type of complaints we receive and related, predominantly, to service reliability and driver/staff attitude. As we are often in areas where a change or decline in service is being experienced or about to be implemented, this is invariably the issue of greatest concern.

Speaking to people locally enables us to challenge both local and national policy on issues such as proof-of-age cards and whether it is time to consider a standard national policy of young people's ticketing.

Following the membership vote last summer and our AGM in September 2016, we are now offering passengers and groups new ways of working with Bus Users as non-fee paying Supporters, Branches and Affiliates. We have

been working closely with everyone concerned to make sure we find the best way to implement these changes and, as a result, three of our former groups have already agreed to become branches. We look forward to many more groups – new and old - coming on board.

With the Buses Services Act looming large in a lot of our work last year, we maintained regular contact with the Department for Transport. Throughout the design and consultation process of the Bill, we worked hard to ensure that the legislation will, in fact, bring about the positive changes it promised for passengers, which we believe can only be achieved with the involvement of both bus users and non-bus users.

As well as working with partners across the industry, we have been working extensively with the voluntary sector including Anxiety UK, Mental Health Action Group and Time to Change, on ways to support bus users with mental health issues. And we have been working with the Northern Youth Parliament, learning more about young people's concern about transport and bus travel.

Complaints in England 2016/17

Service reliability	832	23.0%
Driver/Staff attitude	879	24.3%
Frequency of Service	204	5.6%
Vehicle Condition/Type	160	4.4%
Bus Failed to Stop	200	5.5%
Bus Failed to Show	461	12.8%
Infrastructure	73	2.0%
Compliments	8	0.2%
Capacity	66	1.8%
Disability Issues	34	0.9%
Accessibility Issues	14	0.4%
Ticket Prices	68	1.9%
Ticket Acceptance	78	2.2%
Other Ticket Matter	143	4.0%
Concession Pass Matter	27	0.7%
Personal Injury and Accident	83	2.3%
Incorrect Information Provided	97	2.7%
Smoking	9	0.2%
Other	112	3.1%
Luggage	42	1.2%
EPRR	21	0.6%
Total number of complaints	3,611	100%

Complaints in Scotland 2016/17

Service reliability	263	25%
Driver/Staff attitude	202	19%
Frequency of Service	112	11%
Vehicle Condition/Type	107	10%
Bus Failed to Stop	76	7%
Bus Failed to Show	54	5%
Infrastructure	46	4%
Compliments	33	3%
Capacity	28	3%
Disability Issues	25	2%
Accessibility Issues	24	2%
Ticket Prices	15	1%
Ticket Acceptance	14	1%
Other Ticket Matter	13	1%
Concession Pass Matter	11	1%
Personal Injury and Accident	7	1%
Incorrect Information Provided	6	1%
Smoking	3	0%
Other	3	0%
Luggage	2	0%
EPRR	1	0%
Total number of complaints	1,045	100%

Bus Users Scotland

2016/17 has been notable for the uncertainty caused for passengers by cuts to services. We have been working with Transport Scotland, bus operators and local authorities to minimise the effect of these proposed cuts on passengers. In two significant areas, East Lothian and The Scottish Borders, the major bus company indicated that it was closing down its entire operation, leading to concern among passengers, particularly those in more remote areas. It was fortunate that existing operators were able to step in very quickly with suitable replacement services, including a commitment to invest in new vehicles.

BUS encourages all bus operators and local authorities to consult with passengers over any service changes or withdrawals that could cause inconvenience or even social isolation, and we are happy to facilitate consultation between the different parties to achieve this end.

In 2016/17 we ran 11 Your Bus Matters events

across Scotland, with the involvement of all the major operators in the country and many local, independent ones. The main themes concerned cutbacks of subsidised and commercial services, punctuality, fares and the frequency of services provided.

We have also been engaging with various community councils and community forums to not only raise the profile of Bus Users Scotland, but to gather views of local community bus services. Much of this information is shared with the Bus Compliance Officers team and Transport Scotland.

Over the years we have developed excellent working relationships with bus companies throughout Scotland, and we have been aware of a general improvement in the way bus companies handle complaints. There are using fewer standard letters and companies seem more prepared to accept responsibility for complaints and avoid the often drawn-out (and expensive) situations where both parties might refuse to budge and which could lead to a referral to the Bus Appeals Body Scotland and its predecessors.

Total UK complaints 2016/17

Service reliability	1,183	23.3%
Driver/Staff attitude	1,190	23.4%
Frequency of Service	359	7.1%
Vehicle Condition/Type	274	5.4%
Bus Failed to Stop	298	5.9%
Bus Failed to Show	578	11.4%
Infrastructure	128	2.5%
Compliments	42	0.8%
Capacity	96	1.9%
Disability Issues	63	1.2%
Accessibility Issues	41	0.8%
Ticket Prices	91	1.8%
Ticket Acceptance	105	2.1%
Other Ticket Matter	170	3.3%
Concession Pass Matter	44	0.9%
Personal Injury and Accident	93	1.8%
Incorrect Information Provided	122	2.4%
Smoking	12	0.2%
Other	124	2.4%
Luggage	47	0.9%
EPRR	25	0.5%
Total number of complaints	5,085	100%

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