

LEITH LINKS COMMUNITY COUNCIL

Lothian Buses

Nigel Serafini, Ben Ritchie

23.8.22

Dear Sirs

I am writing on behalf of Leith Links Community Council, with regard to the imminent proposed changes to bus services in our area.

As you are aware, we have been campaigning for a new bus service to run through Leith Links to serve the large population in the growing number of new housing developments on the north side of the Links. We were looking for a new service, to replace the No. 12 service that was summarily removed a couple of years ago. We were NOT looking for a revamp of several well-established and well-used bus services in the wider area beyond the Links – that, while it could benefit some residents (nearest to the Links), could significantly disadvantage many others in our community (residents along the Restalrig Road and Lochend Road corridors).

In the discussions we have had most recently, with Ian Bieniowski and later John White, and Ben Ritchie, we were led to believe that prior to a new service being, hopefully, introduced in due course, Lothian Buses would continue holding discussions with the community, as regards the needs of local people. Also we were expecting to see proposals that would be presented with a view of how local bus routes are expected to link to / work with the tram service, and with some data on actual and projected usage, and catchment area, including the catchment numbers still to be built along Seafield Road.

So while we appreciate that Lothian Buses has, in one sense, ‘listened’ and been willing to act promptly, we are however very disappointed that you have autocratically introduced sweeping changes without any consultation with the local community, and with no transparency, or presentation/communication of evidence. Also with very little notice and a lack of information about the existing and proposed new frequency of the relevant services.

Can we meet as soon as possible, please, to discuss this? And please will you send a representative to our next meeting of the Leith Links Community Council, which will be online on Monday 29 August at 6:30 pm, to explain the proposed changes and to answer questions? That meeting will be open to the public.

The immediate response to the proposed changes from our local community has been mostly negative, as far as we can establish so far. (Our efforts at consultation will continue.)

On the positive side, a bus running through the Links, and access to Aldi and Ocean Terminal, will be welcome, so thank you for that. But overall the 34 is probably the least popular bus that could possibly have been chosen, as it is relatively infrequent and a very slow route into town because it follows a circuitous route. Therefore it is perhaps not likely to attract much of a ridership going south into town (which may be used as an excuse to later axe it again...?). However the wholesale

swapping over of Lochend Road buses with Restalrig Road buses has met with some horrified hostility. Why is this necessary? The 25 and 21 are both much needed routes, well-used by residents around the Links as well as further up Restalrig Road, and losing those is a very high cost for the local population.

This is not just a minor adjustment, though it may look like that to fit young people sat in front of a big map onscreen. On the ground, in real life, the distance between Restalrig Road and Lochend Road is too far to 'just walk through' for older and less able people. People adapt and develop their lives – and often make momentous decisions about their jobs, and house purchases - around the bus services that are available to them. Sudden changes to bus services can be traumatic and life changing. Also, having to take two buses instead of one can be unaffordable for many, especially in the current cost of living crisis.

The changes you are proposing (swapping 25 & 21, for 34 & 49 which, aside from their routes, are both less frequent services), seem to be maximally disruptive to both local communities (Restalrig Road and Lochend Road) without actually addressing any of the other main issues with bus services in Leith (no bus to Western General, concern over the loss of the No. 22, traffic congestion in Great Junction Street etc.).

We look forward to hearing from you, urgently, on this matter.

Sally Millar, Secretary

On behalf of Jim Scanlon MBE, Chair

Leith Links Community Council

Cc

Scott Arthur, Transport for Edinburgh, Convener, Transport & Environment Committee

Elected Councillors

(Ward 13) Booth, Faccienda, McVey

(Ward 14) Aston, Griffiths, Staniforth, Whyte