

7.9.22

Thank you Axxxxx

In addition to our earlier and very detailed message, please can you pass on to relevant senior staff that Leith Links Community Council has serious concerns about the forthcoming bus route changes in our area and the manner in which these were (not) discussed with / communicated to the local community.

In particular, we would like to know why changes were introduced and publicised apparently before LB sought and discovered key information about the state of Constitution Street. And how the Salamander Street diversion will be monitored and its impact assessed (as we consider it potentially dangerous, without adequate road improvements and traffic controls in place first)?

We are seeking a meeting with Lothian Buses as soon as possible.

Thank you

Sally Millar

Secy, LLCC

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**On 7 Sep 2022, at 16:55, Axxxxx of Lothian Buses wrote:**

*Hi Sally,*

*I can confirm that this has been passed on to our Commercial team and have now been advised that information on our service change on 11 September, including the alterations to buses in Leith and Lochend can be found here*[*Service change from 11 September 2022 - Lothian Buses*](https://www.lothianbuses.com/news/2022/08/service-change-11-september-2022/)

*The short term diversion information for service 34 can be found here*[*Service Update - Lothian Buses*](https://www.lothianbuses.com/live-travel-info/service-update/?alert_id=22a9ec20a664161cd55de74b43ab75f9)

*Regards*

*Axxxxx*

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**From:** Sally Millar (Leith Links CC) <secretary@leithlinkscc.org.uk>
**Sent:** 07 September 2022 14:31
**Subject:** **Fwd: Bus - Leith Links**

Axxxxx

Thank you for the acknowledgment.

This is actually really urgent, as the changes in question are 4 days away!

Is the 34 bus going to run through Leith Links on the 11th September or not? If not, there is no justification for changing all the other buses around for no reason, without delivering the bus through the Links.

Please advance this to another senior manager, who makes operational decisions, as we need to keep the local community informed about what bus they will need to get on in 4 days time.

We cannot wait for Ms Marshall to come back from holiday. And this is really an operational not a ‘communications’ issue anyway.

Thank you for your help

Sally Millar, Jim Scanlon

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On 7 Sep 2022, at 13:28, Axxxxx wrote:

*Hi Sally/Jim,*

*Thank you for your email, to which I acknowledge receipt.*

*Gaynor is currently on Annual Leave however this will be passed on and Gaynor will respond accordingly on her return next week.*

*Kind regards*

*Axxxxxxxx*

*PA to Chairman, Finance Director and Communications Director*

[www.lothianbuses.co.uk](https://www.lothianbuses.com/)

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Communications Director

Lothian Buses

6 September 2022

Dear Ms Marshall

Thank you for your message of 29 August.

We were disappointed that nobody was able to attend our Community Council (CC) meeting last Monday particularly as the package of service changes due to start on 11 September is said by Lothian Buses’ public news release ([Service change from 11 September 2022 - Lothian Buses](https://www.lothianbuses.com/news/2022/08/service-change-11-september-2022/)) to be “in response to requests from the LLCC”, which falsely implies communication between us.  We can appreciate that our invitation was at short notice, nevertheless we still wish to meet to discuss these changes, and any future plans you may have for further changes in response to tram operations commencing in the area next year and further residential development along Seafield Road.

Therefore I am writing again to request a meeting at a time as soon as possible that is convenient to you. I suggest that the best format would be an informal discussion meeting, involving your chosen LB representative(s), two or three members of the Community Council, and our three Councillors Adam McVey, Chas Booth and Katrina Faccenda (you originally met with the latter two back in June). The sooner the better, please, especially in the light of some of the urgent questions we have (see below).

We would also like to invite a representative of Lothian Buses to attend the next CC meeting, which will be on Monday 26th September at 6:30 pm (online). We can structure that meeting in whatever way you feel comfortable with; I think our local community would just like to hear an explanation of the reasoning behind the decision to swap all the other buses around in our area (as well as putting the 34 through the Links) and have a chance to put their points of view.

**Specific questions** that we would like to raise before a future meeting include the following:

**Feasibility of the proposed route –** We are very keen to see a bus running through the Links but we are concerned as to whether the proposed 34 route up Constitution Street and into Queen Charlotte Street is actually viable, given the tram situation**.** Can you confirm (1) that this is the proposed route and (2) that the 34 service using this route will indeed start on 11th September? We need this information in order to keep the local community informed. (Ideally, we would also like to be on the inaugural bus journey, to take photos and share with the press etc.)

If not using the Constitution Street route, what other route would you be proposing for the 34? Baltic Street, Salamander Street and Salamander Place? Or Salamander Street and Claremont Park?

Can the local knowledge of the Community Council be helpful here? Can we invite a representative from Lothian to meet us and make a site visit in order to acquaint themselves with our area ‘on the ground’? Your colleague Ian Bieniewski came to meet us in October 2021 and ‘walked the walk’ with us around the whole area, which I think he found helpful as he had not previously been aware of how much the area is changing (new housing developments). He concluded then that there would need to be traffic signals at the junction of Salamander Place with Links Place / Gardens as this is a very busy junction, used by docks traffic as well as all other through traffic (due to tramworks currently but in future due to proposed low traffic neighbourhood). It is also a very sharp left turn from Salamander Place into Links Gardens, and there is a traffic calming road narrowing ‘chicane’ in place at the turn. Two buses going in opposite directions could not pass at this junction. There is also a lollipop person and a ‘School Streets Zone’ here.

(And incidentally, the road surface on Salamander Place is absolutely appalling).

If not starting on the 11th September, please can you tell us when the service will start?

And if the 34 is not going to run through the Links immediately, please can you confirm that you would also suspend the changes to the other bus routes (25, 21, 49)?

**Frequency of bus services –** in order to make meaningful evaluations of the overall service to our area, we would like to receive further information about the timetables and frequency of the bus routes in question. That is:

Current frequency of the bus Nos. 21, 25, 34, 49

Proposed frequency of the new services 21, 25, 34, 49

Plus start and end time of services.

**Bus Stops** – in order to get a better overall picture of how residents in the area will be served, we would welcome some more detailed information about where exactly the bus stops will be for the service 34 particularly for the ‘new’ stretch through the Links to/from Ocean Terminal and at the Restalrig Road South end. Also if there are any changes to other stops along the route, rather than a straight ‘swap’ with those already existing for the other bus services.

**General feedback from the recent CC meeting**

At our meeting last Monday there was universal unhappiness about the way the changes have been imposed upon our area without consultation, and therefore many questions were raised about the ‘process’ by which bus route changes are decided and communicated. Additionally -

* Many people questioned whether a wholesale upheaval of all the buses in the area was necessary, in order to facilitate a bus through the links.
* Many people felt the ‘bus journey time’ that you included in your letter was disingenuous. From the point of view of a bus user, the actual bus journey time is only one factor. The key factors that make up a meaningful total journey time include the time it takes to walk to the relevant bus stop, plus the time one has to wait at the bus stop (i.e. bus frequency), plus any time taken mid-journey to transfer from one bus (and bus stop) to another in reaching the final destination, plus the walk time at the other end. In that real-life scenario, the location of stops and the bus route itself is more important than just the actual bus journey time.
* Residents in the densely populated area between Lochend Road, the Links and Pirniefield (i.e. the Restalrig Road area) were concerned that the changes would make life harder for them. A couple of examples - it was noted that by removing the 21 from Restalrig Road, residents will not only find it harder to access the Leith Treatment Centre and the Western General Hospital but will also have bus access to the Royal Infirmary removed from them. Removing the 25 from Restalrig Road means that there is no bus that allows residents from there direct transfer to either Waverly station (stop PM) or Haymarket station (stop HA).
* Accessibility to key services for older and less able residents was felt to be compromised.

Other questions that people have raised include:

* Are you making any arrangements to monitor passenger reaction and views?
* When will you evaluate the impact of the changes (for your passengers, and for your own ridership numbers)? And will you share the findings with the Community Councils in the areas where the bus routes are being altered?
* If the impact and opinion is negative would you consider reverting to the former routing and/or making further new changes?
* Are you planning any further bus service changes in the Leith/Leith Links and Craigentinny areas once the tram operations start in 2023.  If so, when will you be consulting local Community Councils about those proposals?
* What forward planning are you doing of potential growth in ridership as a result of ongoing residential development along the Seafield Rd corridor, and towards Portobello – a corridor that could be described as somewhat of a public transport desert at the moment.

A number of other comments have been made via our web site, and I will be happy to collect these and forward them to you in due course.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Thank You

Jim Scanlon MBE

Chair, Leith Links Community Council

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**From Gaynor Marshall, Communications Director, Lothian buses (27/08/22)**

*Thank you for taking the time to write to Lothian.*

*As we recover from the impact of the pandemic, we acknowledge that there have been fundamental shifts in societal working trends and corresponding shifts in travel patterns. It is critical that Lothian continue to review and adapt your bus network to reflect current travel habits, match supply and demand and maintain commercially viable services to allow us to deliver a service for all of our customers.*

*As we move toward the cessation of Scottish Government financial support in the autumn it is vital that we stabilise our network and form a solid foundation on which to base our next steps in economic recovery.  With these challenges in mind,  it might be helpful for us to provide some background around the process for the changes in Lochend, Restalrig and Leith Links.*

*With regard to Leith Links, the situation back in November 2019 was that the 12 had been diverted away from Leith Links due to the closure of Constitution Street as part of the tram project construction.  This left service 1 which had been operating a one way loop via the Links since the removal of the roundabout at the foot of Easter Road.  As part of the next round of closures in the Leith area that were planned to be put in place from Spring 2020 most bus services were planned to be diverted or altered.  For Leith Links this would have seen service 1 extend to Seafield via Vanburgh Place/East Hermitage Place to replace then service 12, which was curtailed in the city centre.  Immediately prior to this change the Coronavirus pandemic broke out and the city’s bus network was hastily adapted to run as a skeleton service during the initial lockdown period.  Subsequently the Spaces for People project closed a number of roads in the Leith Links area which prevented any bus route from operating across the Links.*

*Service 12 was not ‘summarily removed’ from Leith, the original and indeed Final Business Cases for the Tram project have always assumed that service 12 (along with service 22) would no longer operate via Leith Walk and would be curtailed to the city centre.  The northbound closure of Leith Walk from Spring 2020 led us to anticipate a significant reduction in demand for bus travel based on our experience with previous longer term closures for tram related works on Leith Walk.  As a result a number of changes were implemented to reduce excess capacity and reduced costs which included curtailing service 12 at the start of the project rather than on the introduction of trams in service.*

*When looking at reinstating a bus service across Leith Links we were faced with the lack of additional resources and a need to not increase operating costs, whilst at the same time remaining cognisant of the need to retain as many existing bus links as possible.  The only option to serve Leith Links under these circumstances was to re-route service 34 between Sleigh Drive roundabout and Ocean Terminal.  In order to provide a reasonable journey time (please see below) the new route would be via Restalrig Road the Links Gardens, Bernard Street and Commercial Street.  This led us to consider the provision of buses on both Restalrig Road, Lochend Road, East Hermitage Place which have links to Leith Walk and the city centre.  By swapping both pairs of services (34 49 to Restalrig and 21 25 to Lochend) both corridors retain their links to the city centre (25 and 34) and to Leith Walk (25 and 49) and to, whilst services 1 and 49 provide the same links on East Hermitage Place.*

*Journey times to and from the city centre will change slightly with most journeys being timetable to be quicker.  Current journey times and new journey times are shown below along with a comparison with service 12 for Leith Links from 2019.*

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | *12 (2019)* | *25 (current)* | *25 (new)* | *34 (current)* | *34 (new)* |
| *Leith Links to Leith Street/York Place* | *18 minutes* |  |  |  | *17 minutes* |
| *Restalrig Road to Leith Street* |  | *18 minutes* |  |  | *15 minutes* |
| *Lochend Road to Leith Street* |  |  | *13 minutes* | *16 minutes* |  |

*Lastly, regarding a link from the Leith area to the Western General Hospital, we understand the continuing desire for such a link, and indeed would be supportive of such an initiative in the medium to longer term, however given current pressures we are unable to commit to such a service at this time.*

*I hope that this gives a bit more background information and context.*

*Lothian is absolutely committed to delivering for our customers and I know the significant role we play in a sense of community   I appreciate and acknowledge all that you state and I’m sorry that these changes have caused concern amongst some of your constituents.   However the (harsh) reality as previously mentioned is that as we move toward the cessation of Scottish Government financial support in the Autumn it is vital that Lothian take the necessary steps to stabilise our network and form a solid foundation on which to base our wider economic recovery.*

***Gaynor Marshall***

*Communications Director*



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To

Lothian Buses

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