

STATES OF JERSEY



LIBERTY BUS: REINSTATEMENT OF ROUTE 18 TO LE SQUEZ AND LE MARAIS

Lodged au Greffe on 13th February 2013
by Deputy G.C.L. Baudains of St. Clement

STATES GREFFE

PROPOSITION

THE STATES are asked to decide whether they are of opinion –

to request the Minister for Transport and Technical Services to take the necessary steps to reinstate the No. 18 bus service to Le Squez/Le Marais as soon as possible.

DEPUTY G.C.L. BAUDAINS OF ST. CLEMENT

REPORT

The changeover from Connex to Liberty Bus has been anything but smooth. One might have expected the new company to do as Connex did when taking over from the JMT – start by following existing routes and timetables until the system had settled in before making changes to routes and timetables.

Sadly, Liberty Bus chose to change routes and timetables at the same time as starting the new service – with resulting chaos.

Customers not only found buses were using a range of new, temporary stops – at unpublished, new times, but to compound the problem, buses were arriving early at some stops, causing passengers to miss their bus.

Amongst this unsatisfactory state of affairs, probably the worst-affected passengers were residents of St. Clement –

- The No. 1 bus (Town/Gorey/Town route via the Coast Road) has always been a regular service running approximately every half an hour from 6.30 a.m. to 11.15 p.m. That was largely unaffected.
- The No. 1A bus (Town/Gorey/Town via the Inner Road) is less frequent. It runs approximately every 2 hours from 9.35 a.m. until 5.46 p.m. on weekdays. There is no service on Sundays. Not a lot of use for anyone going to work – or visiting the parish church on Sunday. This bus also does Green Road – but only between 11.06 a.m. and 6.26 p.m. (weekdays).

There are 2 main routes through St. Clement – the Grande Route de la Côte (Coast Road) and the Grande Route de St. Clement (Inner Road). As can be seen, the bus service along the latter is hardly likely to entice people out of cars onto the bus. Indeed, most people will need a car to get to work.

For that, and other reasons, the No. 18 bus (a circular route between Town/Le Marais/Town) was well appreciated. Not only did it serve Green Road, but as it used the Inner Road before turning into Marina Avenue for Le Squez and Le Marais, it also served the visitor attraction of Samarès Manor (a short walk up the road).

However, when Liberty Bus took over from Connex, they axed the No. 18 route. Residents of Green Road now have to walk as far as the White Horse Inn. Residents of Marina Avenue, Manor Court, Le Squez Estate and other areas now have to get to the Inner Road to use the limited 1A service.

Residents of Le Marais are now catered for by the No. 15 Airport to Town bus, which has been extended into that estate. Given that the No. 1 bus passes Le Marais every half an hour, it is difficult to understand the reason for doing that – especially as it might be presumed few residents of Le Marais would need to travel to the Airport on a daily basis.

The No. 18 covered Green Road, Marina Avenue, Le Squez and Le Marais. It was a well supported service and the reason for axing it is not known – unless it was because

many of its users would probably have been using bus passes and the new operator was not happy with that.

I have asked questions about this – and was promised by the Minister on 29th January that he would look into it and get back to me ‘within the next few days’. I have heard nothing.

I have also checked with the Housing Department to find out why their road closure was causing the curtailment of the No. 18 bus as explained by the Minister.

Excerpt from Hansard of 29th January 2013 –

Deputy K.C. Lewis of St. Saviour (The Minister for Transport and Technical Services):

“Construction on the latest phase of the Le Squez housing redevelopment master plan is due to start shortly and will require the northern section of Le Squez Road to be closed. Once this has been completed, it is planned that motorised traffic will no longer be able to travel south from Marina Avenue but bus access to the area will be maintained through School Road. Therefore it was felt that the extended service 15 should follow its new route via School Road from the first day of the new bus contract rather than follow the previous 18 route via Marina Avenue to then have to be permanently diverted after a short period.”

Apparently this is not so. It was Transport and Technical Services who insisted on using a double-decker instead of a single-decker, and then pointed out it could not turn into the Inner Road or Marina Avenue (I have no idea why – they are higher, not longer, than the Connex No. 18 single-decker).

As a result, Housing re-jigged their plans to suit Transport and Technical Services.

In conclusion, if we are serious about persuading people out of their cars, then the No. 18 should be reinstated immediately – and other routes (such as the 1A) be reviewed with a view to making them accessible to people trying to get to work.

Financial and manpower implications

I believe that reinstating the No. 18 bus route would increase bus usage, and as a result I consider that cost of the service would be outweighed by the payments from passengers. As the No. 15 would no longer need to be extended to Le Marais, there might actually be a saving.