

3.9 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains of the Minister for Transport and Technical Services regarding the bus service to the northern part of Le Squez:

Will the Minister advise why the number 18 bus to Le Squez and Le Marais was discontinued and whether he will be reinstating a service for residents of the northern part of Le Squez who at present either have to walk to Le Marais to catch the number 15 or rely on the Inner Road bus, which is every 2 hours?

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. As service 15 uses School Road, a new bus stop has been marked opposite Samares Primary School so that residents can board/alight there rather than walk towards Le Marais or the Coast Road. The old bus stops on Marina Avenue and Le Squez have now been blanked out in advance of the building work commencing. Regrettably it would not be practical to re-route a bus service via Marina Avenue and Samares Avenue due to the tight turns and high number of parked cars making it difficult for buses to manoeuvre safely. However, I am pleased to announce that Liberty Bus plan to increase service levels on a St. Clement Inner Road from the end of March and, if passenger numbers indicate, further enhancements will follow.

3.9.1 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

A complete shambles. The Coast Road is well served by bus every half an hour and now we have the number 15 bus that comes along every 20 minutes as well whereas what I am referring to is the northern part of Le Squez and the Inner Road, Marina Avenue and the 2 other housing estates nearby. I have just learned that now Green Road is not well serviced. The number 18 bus service was very well taken up, especially by elderly people. Has the Minister been in contact with the Minister for Housing to maintain an access through so that the number 18 bus could be reinstated or am I in the position of having to bring yet another proposition to this Assembly?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I have not discussed this with the Minister for Housing but my officers have been discussing it with the housing officers and that is the situation at present, but it is a work in progress and the service is still being tweaked to get the optimum result.

3.9.2 The Connétable of St. John:

Is there any possibility, Minister, that if there are too many buses on the route to St. Clement, as they have them every half an hour and every quarter of an hour, that we in St. John and northern Parishes could have more than 2 buses in the morning, one of them being usually a school bus? So is there any possibility that the Minister could move some of these buses to the northern Parishes please?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Indeed, but if we can concentrate on this particular question, I am up for questions without notice later on so Members can sharpen their pencils or knives.

The Connétable of St. John:

Can he answer the question, Sir, please?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I will put that through to Liberty Bus and see what can be achieved.

3.9.3 Deputy T.M. Pitman:

I guess I must declare I have got a sort of vested interest, having relatives there. Surely the key drive to replace one contractor with another is to enhance the service. Now, when you have got, for example, 82 year-olds - and there are quite a lot around that age down there, I have got one suffering with cancer - is it really fair or practical to have someone trying now to struggle from the bus stops that have been blacked out, as the Deputy says, all the way down to the school or all the way up to the Inner Road? Is that the best that Liberty Bus can do because buses have gone through there for 40-odd years and it has not been too much of a problem.

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

As I said previously, if the road is blocked, then the road is blocked, but I will put this through to Liberty Bus to see what can be done to enhance the service further.

3.9.4 Deputy M.R. Higgins:

Is the Minister aware that ... I think the bus company are now on their third set of timetables or schedules? Drivers are given a sheet every day and their timetables differ to what is published to the public. Does he think that is a satisfactory situation because people are waiting for buses which are coming to a different schedule than the published one?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Indeed not but, as I say, it is a work in progress. The service is still being tweaked to iron out all the gremlins.

3.9.5 Deputy M. Tadier:

It follows on very much from the last point. We all appreciate that there will be transitional teething problems while the new timetables kick in and there will be perhaps winners and losers initially but will the Minister perhaps consider a formal process of feedback whereby residents who think that they may be able to suggest improvements to the bus service, because I have certainly been contacted with people who have raised issues with regard to this question no point in listing them all here, will there be a method whereby they can leave feedback and the Minister will sit down with CT Plus and look at a holistic way of improving the service across the Island?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Absolutely. One officer is working full-time on this and another officer is working part-time just liaising with Liberty Bus, as I say, to iron out all the gremlins and that will be coming forward very shortly. There is a website which I believe is libertybus.je where people who are on the net can send their views in. There is also an information line and also we have the office at T.T.S. (Transport and Technical Services).

3.9.6 Deputy M. Tadier:

Just to confirm, if those emails are sent in, they will be responded to and will they be seen by the Minister in due course?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Absolutely and Liberty Bus assured me that all complaints or all observations are taken very seriously.

3.9.7 Deputy G.C.L. Baudains:

If you will allow me a 2-part question. First of all, I would like to know why the new bus operator did not simply take over the existing Connex routes without making changes at the

same time, which has caused a lot of confusion. Secondly, the Minister did suggest he would discuss this issue with the new bus company. Could he advise me if that is going to be in the near future and could he give those details to me as soon as he has them?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

Yes, indeed. That will be within the next few days.

The Bailiff:

The other part of the question, which was why they did not just take over the existing routes?

Deputy K.C. Lewis:

I cannot argue with that. It was a very ambitious project. There was disruption when the previous contractor took over and we have had obviously a lot of disruption on this one. It would have been far easier in hindsight to have taken over the existing routes and then tweaked at a later dates so it was an ambitious project.