

Thornhill & District Community Transport

Minutes of Meeting held on Tuesday, 29 September 2015, at 7.15pm in Thornhill Friendship Club

Present: Robin Robertson, Rab Cook, Jock Scott, Ian Walker, Gordon Neilson, Joan Neilson.

Apologies: David Dick, Jenny Bourne, Alison McMillan, Keith Walker, Robin Paisley, John Maxwell.

1. Welcome, especially to new Members.

2. Apologies for Absence

- As noted above.

3. Minutes of Previous (Quarterly) Meeting

- Accepted as an accurate record. *Proposed:* Joan Neilson; *Seconded:* Rab Cook.

4. Matters Arising from Previous Minutes

- Incorporation: still to do. DK nowhere near it on his To Do list.
- Ticket Machine: Bid had been submitted to Harestanes Windfarm. GN had had exhaustive telephone interview with caseworker, but nothing heard since end of August. Not urgent yet, as the scheduled routes are funded till about Easter, 2016. Noted that JN had been told, by ATI, that they had a new Ticketer handheld; but no information, yet, on how well it works. DK will get in touch with ATI. GN had also applied to the various Community Councils in the district we serve; most of whom had replied that we should await the result of the Harestanes application. Keir had also suggested that they probably would contribute.
- Third Sector First: again, DK nowhere near meeting with them.

5. Financial Report, incl review of charges

- In his absence, DD had submitted a Financial Report.
- Income to date **£5,830.55**
- Expenditure **£5,191.87**
 - Of which
 - Fuel **£1,211.72** (£1,518.42 same period last year)
 - Maintenance **£2,836.23** (Not including the last visit to M&S Autos and 1 more trip to M&S to come) (£2,121.80 same period last year)

- Misc. alternative hire/ replacement bus costs while our bus was “Held Hostage” at Benfield. £564.22
- Allowing for the outstanding M&S Bill taking the bulk of our current operating profit, if not it all once a door is included, I am still comfortable with our charging regime.
- Further body work repairs and or expensive unplanned maintenance would change that view. (So might the cost of the door once we know it?)
- Any further body work damage caused by crashes, (hopefully there will be none), should be considered as Insurance claims?

6. Thornhill Community Council & Mrs Adam's Legacy

- DK advised that the new régime at Thornhill Community Council had managed to obtain an agreement from Mrs Adam’s Trustees that the legacy did *not*, in fact, have to be spent on one single capital project. The Community Council had accordingly held a meeting and advised various Thornhill groups, including ourselves, that they proposed, meantime, to make payments in varying amounts (we will receive £11,000), representing, more or less, the interest accrued on Mrs Adam’s legacy over the ten years or so it has been locked away. This will make a huge difference to the various beneficiaries (ourselves, the Friendship Club, Thornhill Golf Club and so on). There are one or two conditions: the sum must be used for a capital expense (in our case, eventually, a replacement bus), not running costs; the new bus should acknowledge, by way of a plaque or, as in the case of the present one, by signwriting, the source of the funds, and so on; all of which conditions will be easy for us to satisfy. Furthermore, the funds can be made available to us now, or later, in full or in part etc.; all of which flexibility is a very welcome contrast to the norms when applying for grants. The Community Council is also offering to provide advice, or to source appropriate advice, for any group which needs it. In our case, they acknowledge that we have sufficient knowledge etc to handle the purchase of a replacement vehicle; nonetheless, the offer seems sensible and is welcome. DK has written to the Community Council to express our warm appreciation of the payment and the way in which the matter has been handled. He also paid tribute to the present Community Council’s having been unable to unlock these funds; as a former Community Councillor himself, he appreciated the difficulty there had been in bringing this about. This brings the bus replacement fund to approx £45,000. Cost of a new bus, similar to what we have, is probably about £65,000 at present, but Members were agreed that our own bus is not in immediate need of replacement. Apart from odd niggles, it continues to be pretty reliable and the money spent on regular bodywork maintenance means that it still looks almost like new. DK reported having seen the previous Moniaive bus a few weeks ago. It was immaculate up till the end of its time with Moniaive and now, some 2 years later, it had deteriorated sharply; both bodily and mechanically. A sad sight, and showing the worth of our own fairly expensive maintenance régime. Incidentally, should we *not* obtain an award for the cost of the ticket machine, we would declare £1k of the Community Council’s £11k to the Community Councils as the sum we have raised to

purchase the machine. That is why the Community Council is awarding us £11k; their original intention had been to grant us £10k towards a new bus and the further £1k was when they heard we were seeking funding for a ticket machine.

7. Wallace Hall Academy After School Clubs

- We had had an approach from a WHA parent, asking if we would run a service from WHA to Moniaive, possibly via Tynron, and possibly extending to Dunscore, to enable pupils to be returned home at the end of after school clubs on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. These finish around 17.00 and the last commercial service leaves Thornhill for Moniaive at around 16.20. DK had costed this; ascertained, from our various drivers, that we could staff it almost all of the time and that the bus would be available at the times needed. Proposals had been submitted to the WHA parent council, and DK had offered to go and speak to them. No reply had been received, but DK had heard through the grapevine that the whole thing had been considered too difficult to organise; so is unlikely to proceed.

8. Bus Report

- Nothing of note to report. It has had a quarterly check within the last couple of weeks and had required only a couple of minor items.

9. AOCB

- JN reported that she had undergone a fairly extensive familiarisation and testing by ATI, prior to driving one of their buses for Day of the Region.
- This may be significant because IW has hitherto provided our MiDAS training and we (usually DK) have provided a familiarisation session, tailored to our own housekeeping arrangements and the peculiarities of our own vehicle. There was an occasion, recently, when a potential volunteer completed the theory section of the MiDAS test, but IW had felt they did not demonstrate sufficient competence to pass the practical section and DK had felt likewise. It was acknowledged that it could be a tricky situation, in a small community such as ours, to tell someone who has volunteered their services, that those services are not wanted. At the same time, we cannot use drivers who might be unsafe, or who would not inspire confidence in our passengers. For those reasons an independent tester is desirable. IW explained that he is no longer registered with CTA as a MiDAS tester as such, though he was still willing to carry out assessments. GN, following JN's experiences with ATI recently, felt that ATI probably would not accept this and he was concerned, although MiDAS is not a condition of our insurance, as to the consequences, should a driver of ours, without a MiDAS certificate, be involved in an accident. It looks, therefore as if, whilst acknowledging our enormous debt to IW for all the training and support he has given us over the years, we must look to ATI in the future to meet those needs. There will be costs involved, but DK will speak to ATI about this.
- IW reported, on behalf of CTA, that the whole s.19 and s.22 system is under threat from the European Commission. The EC has been lobbied by commercial transport operators, who see Community Transport as under regulated operators who steal their

business. In fact, the CT slice of the transport pie is minuscule and almost entirely provides low cost transport to those who would simply not be able to travel, if they had to pay commercial rates; even supposing commercial operators would service the routes needed. No commercial operator, either, except even more expensive bespoke ones, would provide the kind of value-added services we do; carrying shopping; seeing the vulnerable into their homes etc. It seems that the UK is the only EU country that has Community Transport schemes; at any rate, ones that operate vehicles with more than 9 seats. Whilst both Westminster and Holyrood have thus far been supportive of Community Transport, the EC seems to wish to legislate that only someone with an 'O' licence (as commercial PSV drivers have) will be able to drive anything with more than 9 seats – and there would be a whole host of CPC, drivers' hours regulations etc etc to comply with, as well as an expensive testing régime for both buses and drivers, that few CT operators could afford. IW was attending a CTA Scotland meeting that week, and would convey our message that both the UK and Scottish Governments should continue to resist this. There did not seem to be a need to lobby MSPs etc. All of this is happening at a level way above anything we can influence. DK of the view that it was incumbent on both Governments to protect the CT sector; they are well aware, both of the benefits CT provides, especially in combating rural isolation and deprivation and of the likely costs of the CT sector disappearing – costs which any government would have to pick up in some other way.

10. DONMs 2015/6:

- ~~Tuesday, 15/12/2015~~, Tuesday, 15/03/2016, Tuesday, 21/06/2015 [this last to include AGM] proposed).
- In fact, due to absence of GN & JN in December, decided to go for Tuesday, 12/01/2016, instead of Tuesday, 15/12/2015, in Friendship Club, if available, and Gladstone Hall, if not.

11. Meeting Closed.