

Bus and Coach Study

Investigation of Bus and Coach design by

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Summary

The following report is a snapshot of coaches and buses and some of the challenges facing disabled people when attempting to use them.

During the summer of 2019 Joanne and Sheila visited various bus stations, spoke to bus operators and observed the issues.

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Vehicle Types

People use the word “bus” to describe all vehicles that carry a number of passengers.

The law covering the design and operation of bus services breaks buses down in to different types of vehicle:



Minibus 9 to 16 passengers

The law covering vehicle accessibility does not include the design of vehicles under 22 passenger seats. It is unusual to see a minibus on a local bus services. The above minibus was operating on a local bus route in Skye and it is a low floor minibus with a ramp to allow a wheelchair to access the wheelchair space.



Bus

These can be 22 seats or more

Since 1 January 2015 all buses on local bus services have had to be wheelchair accessible.



Double decker bus

Since 1 January 2017 double decker buses have had to be wheelchair accessible.

With both double decker and single decker buses there is usually an electronic or manually operated ramp that extends on to pavement so wheelchair users can board the bus.

Coach



By 1 January 2020 all coaches used on local registered bus routes will have to be accessible.

Coaches usually have a set of steps up to the seats. There is usually a lift for the wheelchair but these lifts do not carry standing passengers who cannot climb steps.

Our study

Joanne and Sheila visited a number of different locations to observe different buses.

Inverness – Elgin - Aberdeen

On the service between Inverness -Elgin – Aberdeen and Elgin to Aberdeen via Buckie there are new fleets of vehicles. Between Inverness and Elgin a service operates every hour. A coach is used on one service followed by a low floor bus half an hour later. This service operates all day. The coach service continues to Aberdeen.

The coach is a Plaxton Elite with a wheelchair ramp:



The bus used on the service is an MM 200 with the MM 400 being used on the Elgin to Aberdeen via Buckie, these are both low floor buses, the first a single decker and the second a double decker. The inside of the MM 400 (similar to the 200) is laid out as follows:



Inverness – Caithness

MACS have had a lot of letters about this type of coach. Joanne and Sheila have seen the coach in Inverness but credit has to go to a lady in Caithness for the pictures.

Interdecker

The Interdecker is used on a number of long distance routes. It only has 3 passenger seats on the lower level and a space for a wheelchair beside the driver

it is reached by steep steps to the back of the coach/



The steps up to the top floor are steep with varying tread heights and a 90 degree change in direction half way up.

The seats are behind the driver and do not have a lot of leg room.



There have also been complaints about the toilet as People state that the toilet is very cramped.



The toilet can be entered to the left hand side of the steps in the above picture.

People sitting in the 3 front seats and anyone in a wheelchair at the front of the coach cannot use the toilet.



It isn't the easiest to get into but the Shades Technics toilet compartment is well equipped when you get in there.

Glasgow to Kilmarnock

Joanne and Sheila travelled on the Plaxton Panther to Kilmarnock.



This coach is low floor with the wheelchair user boarding the coach from a rear door.



A manual ramp is used. It is stored in the luggage compartment to the back of the vehicle. The driver said it takes up to 15 minutes to take the ramp out, help the

wheelchair user board the bus, clamp them in place and then return the ramp to the locker.



The driver showed us how the clamps are fitted.

The length of time to get the wheelchair on board is an issue when the coach is operated on a bus service.

There is also a design problem with the front door as the hinge extends below the floor of the coach and results in the driver being unable to pull up level with the kerb.



New Lothian Buses bus

The new Lothian bus is called “the monster bus” as it can take 100 passengers. Joanne and Sheila travelled on this bus between York Place and Ocean Terminal.



The bus has a wheelchair space but the new set of doors has resulted in the “buggy space” being removed.

The bus also has audio visual stop announcements which will be a great help to blind and deaf passengers.

Infrastructure

Parking in Bus Bays

If other vehicles park in bus stops then people have to get on and off in the roadway. This means a higher step up in to the bus.



Failing to pull up level with kerb

the bus station is not suitable for the new larger buses and coaches.

In Inverness bus station buses seldom pull up adjacent to the kerb. This causes a big problem for people with mobility problems. Sometimes a large gap is left which causes a tripping hazard. Bus operators say that this is because

Poor timetable information



Timetable information can often be in very small font and very high up in cases or bus shelters.

Conclusions

Joanne and Sheila were pleased to find that improvements are being made to bus services to help disabled people travel but there is still a long way to go. There are still a lot of problems. Bus stations are not suitable for the new buses and coaches and sometimes when low floor buses are available they cannot pull in to the kerb.

The audio-visual information on Lothian Buses is good and it is hoped that this will be included on all bus and coach services soon.

Thanks

There are a large number of people who Joanne and Sheila would like to thank but special thanks must go to the Stagecoach staff at Kilmarnock bus station, especially Alison McCluskie.