

With changes to local bus services over the next few weeks, some people have asked why we don't have Lothian Buses in Queensferry, despite the company being owned by City of Edinburgh Council which has a duty to deliver other services consistently within its boundary. Public misunderstanding on this subject sometimes appears to be promoted by both Lothian Buses and CEC for marketing purposes, so perhaps such questions are understandable. To clarify their position here is a letter we received in April 2011 from the Managing Director of Lothian Buses at the time, outlining their relationship with CEC, their operational autonomy and their interest in Queensferry.

http://queensferrycommunitycouncil.co.uk/index.php/download_file/view/253/

Following the launch of Transport for Edinburgh last year, the Almond Neighbourhood Partnership met to discover how the new company might affect us. Minutes are linked here.

http://queensferrycommunitycouncil.co.uk/index.php/download_file/view/252/

Although advertised as providing integrated public transport across Edinburgh, creating the new company doesn't alter the content of the letter from Lothian Buses, except that CEC's share of Lothian Buses dividends now goes towards the tram rather than straight to the Council. With respect to delivering bus services to people in Edinburgh, the new Transport for Edinburgh company has little public accountability compared to organisations like Transport for London or Transport for Greater Manchester.

The way buses are run here is defined by Transport Scotland, not CEC or Transport for Edinburgh. Elected representatives who can influence this regime are MSPs and not Edinburgh councillors. Their page of bus FAQs is linked here.

<http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/public-transport/Buses/FAQs>

Nevertheless, ward councillors may be willing to speak informally to bus companies or MSPs on behalf of constituents. They can also explain CEC announcements in a Queensferry context. On a practical level, where CEC and councillors can help is if no bus service exists but a social need for one can be demonstrated. Councils are allowed to offer financial support for these as a last resort. To show that best value for public money is being obtained, contracts must be awarded through a competitive tender process. There are about a dozen such routes in Edinburgh, costing £1.2m per year in total. Lothian Buses wins roughly 40% of this business with the rest split between Horsburgh, ECL, Waverley and a few others. In Queensferry, routes 7, 23 and 63 are subsidised through contracts from either West Lothian Council or CEC, taking around £0.2m per year from the CEC budget. Outside Christmas and New Year, no other Queensferry routes are subject to council contracts.