

**LEEDS BRADFORD AIRPORT – HARROGATE BUS SERVICES**

**Issue 1**

**SUMMARY**

This discussion paper outlines the history of bus services between Harrogate and Leeds Bradford Airport and then considers alternative ways in which the current 747 bus service between Harrogate and Bradford via Airport could be enhanced and made less dependent on subsidies.

The current 60 minute frequency Harrogate-Airport-Bradford service operated by Centrebus between May 2011 and September 2013 and by Yorkshire Tiger since then is a significant improvement on the previous 90 minute frequency 767 Harrogate-Airport only service previously operated by Transdev from 2005 until 2011.

However it is still not adequate in terms of frequency, reliability and operating hours. As the numbers of Airport passengers currently using the service appears insufficient to justify increasing the frequency and operating hours, it is vital that efforts are made to attract other fare-paying passengers to and from other places along the route. This paper suggests ten ways in which this might be achieved mostly at relatively little expense.

With all Council funding under scrutiny following Government cuts, we cannot rely on the subsidy for these services and hence it is vital that they attract more income to be commercially viable.

**1. HISTORY**

Harrogate Chamber was one of the original promoters of the need for this Bus Service as an important element of our Traffic & Transport Action Plan (HC361) - as illustrated by the fact that the official launch photograph in 2005 shows County Councillor John Fort, David Alexander, then MD of Transdev and Brian Dunsby in front of the first branded "Bus2Jet" outside the Airport.

From 2005 until 2010 the Harrogate Airport Bus Service was operated by Transdev's Harrogate & District Travel as No 767 with a 90 minute frequency service, subsidised by NYCC. Transdev did an excellent job in maintaining a high level of reliability and punctuality with their 767 service as they had stand-by vehicles and drivers readily available at short notice from their depot in Starbeck.

NYCC put the service out to tender again in February 2010. A new 767 contract was awarded to Proctor's Coaches on the same 90 minute frequency, but it failed to attract sufficient passengers. There was also concern at how Proctors could cope with a sudden bus breakdown or driver illness. In February 2011 NYCC announced that they intended to withdraw funding for this 767 service.

In April 2011 a new contract arrangement was negotiated by METRO with a reduced contribution from NYCC plus contribution from the Airport Company. The existing METRO-funded 737 Bradford - Airport Service was extended to Harrogate on an hourly frequency. Operated by Centrebus and branded Airport Direct, this new service attracted extra passengers by stopping at all the normal bus stops between Harrogate and Bradford.

Having lobbied hard for improvements to the original 767 service, Harrogate Chamber of Trade & Commerce Chief Executive Brian Dunsby welcomed the new service from three points of view.

*"Firstly Harrogate depends on visitors to its many national and international conferences, trade exhibitions and agricultural shows which together attract over 650,000 delegates for around 750 events each year. They come from all over the UK, from Europe and some from around the world - North America, Middle East, Africa, India and Australasia. Those who fly in expect a reliable direct service from the Airport to Harrogate as they now find in almost all major airports.*

*Secondly Harrogate's own business managers and residents are travelling more and more around Europe and also long-haul from major hubs like Amsterdam, Brussels and Paris. As private taxis and long-term parking are quite expensive, a reliable and frequent bus service is very attractive.*

*Thirdly the new additional benefit of this 737 service is the hourly direct connection between Bradford and Harrogate, calling at all stops along the route. This will be beneficial for commuters, shoppers and students, with some many opportunities now available in Harrogate colleges, hotels, restaurants and shops.*

*So we welcome the new service, we congratulate Centrebus in finding a way to link it to their existing services and for accepting the commercial risk, and we thank the Airport Management, North Yorkshire County Council and WYPTE for subsidising the core costs of the service".*

Centrebus was acquired by Arriva plc in September 2013 and the service was re-branded as Yorkshire Tiger from April 2014, but the timetable for the 737 Bradford-Guiseley-Harrogate remained unchanged.

In March 2014, METRO said "the 737 contract, along with those for other Airport services had recently been extended and will now expire on 29 October 2016. I am aware that Yorkshire Tiger are keen to make improvements to both Bradford services and it is likely that this will take place from April 2015 when North Yorkshire's £15,000 per annum funding for the 737 ends."

In actual fact, the Airport - Harrogate service was linked to the more direct 747 Bradford-Greengates - Airport service in October 2014 in an effort to improve punctuality - but the frequency remained at 60 minutes.

## **2. FREQUENCY**

The Chamber said at the outset in 2005 that a 90 minute frequency service would simply not be used sufficiently to become viable, as people will not wait up to 90 minutes for the next bus if they have just missed one. Likewise for outbound services to the Airport - it means in most cases that passengers would be either too early or too late for the official check-in time. It really needs to be at least every 45 minutes and preferably every 30 minutes to attract sufficient air passengers.

Of those visitors and returning residents arriving on a flight who have just missed one bus to Harrogate, how many are going to wait up to one and a half hours for the next bus? This is totally unsuitable for business visitors and leisure visitors alike and very disappointing indeed.

Our concern then was that with a trial period having just one bus every 90 minutes, the likely level of passenger usage would be so low that it would be deemed to attract insufficient support, and therefore be lapsed, which proved to be the case. We said that we needed to start with a 30 or 45 minute frequency as a minimum and then hopefully the demand will increase for more services in future.

The Chamber has repeatedly pressed for at least an hourly frequency because passengers would not wait for up to 90 minutes for the next bus, and NYCC responds that an increase in frequency would require more buses and drivers, and therefore significantly increase the cost of the service. Given that the subsidy level per passenger was already quite high, the County Council said that they could not justify increasing the frequency without further external investment or a substantial increase in patronage; this point has also been made to LBIA.

When NYCC indicated that they wished to substantially reduce their funding in 2011, METRO took the initiative and negotiated with Centrebus to operate a 60 minute frequency service between Harrogate and the Airport, as an extension of the 737 Bradford-Airport services. This was better than the previous 90 minute 767 service and enabled workers and shoppers as well as air passengers to commute directly between Bradford and Harrogate, but still not as many as we really need.

The only recent frequency change to Leeds Bradford Airport services was from 27 April 2014 when Service 757 (Leeds - LBIA) had an increase in the Mon-Sat daytime frequency from every half hour to every twenty minutes plus an improvement in early morning and late evening departures. Most regional Airports in other parts of the UK operate at frequencies in the range of every 10-20 minutes at Belfast, Birmingham, Bristol, Edinburgh, Glasgow and Newcastle for example.

## **3. EARLY MORNING & EVENING SERVICES**

In addition to our concern over frequency, members and residents repeatedly complained that the Harrogate-Airport service did not match the current Airport Schedules for early morning flight departures and evening returns. This again made it impracticable for air passengers or for airline or airport staff to rely upon the Airport Bus service, so they continued to drive and park - or use rather expensive taxis.

### **3.1. Early morning ex Harrogate.**

The 05.15 from Bradford reaches the Airport by 05.51 - but the first bus from Harrogate does not leave until 05.46 and does not reach the Airport until 06.16. This is far too late for passengers to check-in for several early morning flights – for example:

06.15 Amsterdam  
06.30 Dublin  
06.40 Southampton  
07.00 Aberdeen  
07.00 Amsterdam

### **3.2. Evening departures from the Airport to Harrogate.**

The last bus to Harrogate now leaves the Airport at 21.28, whereas the Bradford buses run on until 23.30. This means for example that Harrogate passengers on the following scheduled flights would be likely to miss the bus:

21.05 Aberdeen - Eastern Airways  
21.20 Amsterdam - KLM  
21.30 Düsseldorf - Jet.2  
21.50 Dublin - Ryanair  
22.30 Alicante - Jet.2  
23.50 Malta - Ryanair

(The above pattern of departures and arrivals will vary day to day but are broadly similar each week. Winter schedules of course may change things.)

### **3.3. Vehicle & Driver location and back-up**

To ensure prompt operation of the early morning services to the Airport and the late evening return services to Harrogate, it would presumably be helpful if some of the vehicles and drivers are based in Harrogate. Running buses empty from remote depots to begin a service is wasteful of fuel and driving hours. Likewise the service needs a reliable back-up of spare vehicles and drivers in case of accident, breakdown or illness.

## **4. RELIABILITY**

We have received several reports of missing and late-running buses on the Harrogate route. Yorkshire Tiger has explained that reliability is not just affected by vehicle breakdowns. They have had a number of instances where journeys have not operated as the driver was at the limit of their legal driving hours due to the excessive delays en-route caused by roadworks and traffic congestion.

The building of the Marks & Spencer development on the A61 Leeds Road at Oatlands was particularly disruptive for several months to the point that they had to use additional buses to maintain some semblance of service. The revised timetable that they have implemented addresses this factor and therefore they anticipate that reliability will significantly improve. In conjunction with a refurbishment of our fleet they are confident that both the reliability and punctuality of the service between Harrogate and the Airport will improve considerably.

The Chamber has repeatedly called on NYCC Highways Dept to optimise the numerous traffic light systems in Harrogate to maximise flow of traffic on the major roads. A computer-controlled system known as SCOOT is due to be installed and commissioned in 2015 to achieve this

## **5. FUNDING STREAMS**

Historically NYCC contributed around £53,000 a year for the 767 service between 2005 and 2010, but this was reduced to only £15,000 in 2011 when the Harrogate-Airport service was combined with the Bradford-Airport service. Leeds Bradford Airport Company made up the shortfall, as part of their commitment to improve surface access to the Airport. We understand that the current contributions towards the cost of the Harrogate extension are £45,000 from LBIA and £15,000 from NYCC.

We recognise that it is difficult for most Regional Airport bus services to earn sufficient revenue from fare-paying passengers – especially when a significant number travel “free” using a National

Concessionary Bus Pass. Hence subsidy is vital and we are grateful to NYCC and the Airport Company for underwriting the Harrogate-Airport Service at present. However this cannot be relied upon indefinitely.

In response to recent enquiries from this Chamber, Clive Hopkinson said "*WYCA (Metro) is under financial pressure to continue to make savings in funding for bus services across West Yorkshire and they are not in a position to subsidise additional journeys into North Yorkshire.*"

*The current NYCC contribution of £15,000 per annum may be lost from 1 April 2015 and it will be up to Yorkshire Tiger should they wish to absorb this reduction in subsidy."*

Local M.P Nigel Adams recently raised the funding issue with NYCC and he had a reply from Mary Welch, Passenger Transport Officer, NYCC to say that contractual arrangements are now in place until the end of the current Metro contracts for the other Airport services which now run until October 2016. However she went on to say that due to the financial cutbacks, the County cannot fund any additional journeys at this time.

Hence the Harrogate-Airport service seems safe for 2015-16, but clearly we need to see if new funds can be found from other 'pots'- e.g. NYCC or HBC economic development budgets; Airport surface access budget; major Airline Operators promotion; Local Economic Partnerships; local major businesses, etc. If extra funds could be found to secure a higher frequency, together with earlier and later services, then it should be possible to promote the whole service more effectively and hence attract more fare-paying passengers on the route – as outlined below.

Leeds Bradford Airport Company stated recently "*We provide voluntary financial support to the airport bus services, including the Harrogate connection. We want to make sure that the operators provide effective and attractive services to our passengers. One of the areas we regularly discuss with the bus operators is providing us with clear and detailed information on bus patronage, so that we can see how the buses are used throughout the day, week and year, attribute patronage to airport and non-airport users and, as far as possible, match bus services to our flight schedules*". Clearly this continued support is vital for the Harrogate-Airport services.

## **6. CONSULTATION**

There has been a serious lack of consultation throughout the NYCC & METRO re-tendering processes, despite our repeated explanations of what was required for an effective Harrogate–Airport bus service. In 2010 we were surprised to learn that NYCC had issued an invitation to re-tender for this service without any apparent prior consultation with the Airport Management, the Harrogate Borough Council or Harrogate Chamber of Trade & Commerce - the main voice of business in Harrogate. We feel sure that all three bodies would have explained our joint concerns over the inadequacy of the present service and our suggestions on how it needs to be improved in order to become a viable public service by meeting the needs of many more passengers.

Likewise we only learned about the new agreement with Centrebus in 2011 after the details had been negotiated by NYCC, METRO and the Airport. The views of passengers and of the many businesses dependent on the service appear not to have been considered in this process.

This paper is therefore a digest of our past efforts to achieve an improved Harrogate-Airport bus service, so it covers various issues and suggestions for consideration by NYCC, METRO and LBIA.

## **7. PROMOTION OF HARROGATE-AIRPORT-BRADFORD SERVICES.**

Harrogate Chamber has previously suggested various ways in which the Airport services could be enhanced and promoted to make them more attractive to both air passengers and local residents. This section summarises the main suggestions for consideration by the organisations concerned, although we accept that some actions may already be in hand that we may not be aware of.

**7.1 Airlines.** The Airport's Aviation Development Director Tony Hallwood has done a great job in attracting many new scheduled flights to LBIA, including Aer Lingus, British Airways, Eastern Airways; Easyjet, FlyBE, Jet2, KLM, Monarch Airlines, Ryanair and Thomson. This success needs to be reflected in comparable Airport Express Bus Services that match the operating hours for all these routes - and for the airline staff as well as for passengers in both directions.

Could each of these airlines be persuaded to promote the various LBIA bus services on their web sites linked to their LBIA flights? Even better could they be persuaded to make a financial contribution towards the cost of the Airport bus services?

**7.2 Welcome to Yorkshire.** The official visitor site for Yorkshire, Welcome to Yorkshire, has a comprehensive web site [www.yorkshire.com](http://www.yorkshire.com) but their airport travel information is well out of date. Welcome to Yorkshire made special efforts in 2014 to attract not only leisure tourists to the Yorkshire Region as a whole but especially to the Harrogate District for the Tour de France Grand Depart. They also aim to attract business visitors to Harrogate for conference, exhibitions and shows of all types.

However under the heading "Onward travel from regional airports" their information is out of date: "*Leeds Bradford International Airport - MetroConnect provides direct bus services to Bradford and Leeds while Service 767 offers a bus service to/from Harrogate bus station*". But in both cases the web links are obsolete and they fail to connect to the current bus service operators at LBIA.

**7.3 Visit Harrogate.** This destination management organisation is now promoting Harrogate for both business and leisure tourism all the year round. Their web site does promote the Airport and states "*There is an hourly bus service (the 737 Airport Direct service) to/from Harrogate Bus Station during the day from where buses can be caught from there to the rest of Harrogate district.*" Unfortunately the web link is to the old 737 timetable which does not include the new 747 service to Harrogate. [www.visitharrogate.co.uk/travel/leeds-bradford-international-airport](http://www.visitharrogate.co.uk/travel/leeds-bradford-international-airport)

**7.4 Hotels & Guest Houses.** Harrogate has over 2,000 beds in a variety of large and small hotels and guest houses, which are in use all the year round by both business and leisure visitors. The larger hotels are represented by Destination Harrogate ([www.destinationharrogate.co.uk](http://www.destinationharrogate.co.uk)) whose web site promotes LBIA but is nearly five years out of date:

*Leeds/Bradford International Airport. Tel: + 44 (0) 113 250 9696, www.lbia.co.uk. 20 minutes drive from Harrogate. Daily scheduled flights. Worldwide connections and direct flights from the UK and Europe. Bus2Jet - This is the new bus service between Harrogate & Leeds Bradford Airport. www.bus2jet.com.*

In 2010, the Chamber suggested operating the 767 service as a "Harrogate Hotel Hoppa", going around the major hotels on the route into and out of Harrogate. This would obviously attract more publicity from the hotels it served and this in turn would generate extra passengers. However the NYCC decision to terminate the 767 Contract with Procter's Coaches ended that dialogue.

Over 40 smaller hotels, guest houses and B&B's are represented by Accommodation Harrogate [www.accommodationharrogate.co.uk](http://www.accommodationharrogate.co.uk) – but their web site does not include any information on travel to Harrogate apart from a road map. Clearly this is a good opportunity for some reciprocal promotion with the Airport and the bus operators. Maybe a discounted ticket price could be given in return for a voucher issued by those accommodation providers who are supporting the scheme.

**7.5 Harrogate Employers needing staff.** Harrogate has a very low level of unemployment and many businesses have difficulty in recruiting staff especially at the lower end of the pay scale in retail and hospitality businesses, including bars, cafes, guest houses, hotels, and restaurants.

We have therefore suggested that a frequent regular bus service between Harrogate District and traditionally higher unemployment areas like Bradford District should be beneficial to employers and employees alike.

Bus links between Harrogate and Bradford have declined in recent years and, in July 2009, First Group withdrew the link altogether. Alternative operators then came forward to maintain the local links i.e. Bradford - Otley and Harrogate to Otley and Ilkley, but at that time no bus operators were interested in operating a direct Bradford - Harrogate service on a commercial basis.

In February 2011, Kathryn Daly, then Economic Development Manager at HBC, wrote as follows about the potential demand for a bus link between Harrogate and Bradford (via LBIA).

*"From an economic development perspective, I can confirm that anecdotal evidence from local businesses is that they have to source labour from outside the district in order to fulfil their workforce requirements. This is particularly true in some of the lower skilled, lower paid jobs that are prevalent in the district economy around hospitality and tourism for which there is not a readily available pool of resident labour in the district. Employers cite having to recruit from the urban areas of West Yorkshire and also from the North East due to the lack of local workers seeking this type of work in the district.*

*The lack of public sector transport at present will undoubtedly be influencing the levels of in-commuting from Bradford and keeping these levels relatively low. My view is that if public transport links were improved between Harrogate and Bradford, then the labour market in*

*Bradford could become an increasingly important provider of workers to employers in the Harrogate district."*

Hence the Chamber supported the Centrebus proposal in 2011 to operate a Bradford to Harrogate service via the Airport. However we feel that this route has not been very well promoted either to employers or to unemployed people in Bradford who might be suitable for jobs in Harrogate. This opportunity needs to be promoted through local Job Centres and Recruitment Agencies in Bradford District and also to larger employers in Harrogate. To be attractive a low cost weekly or monthly season ticket might be needed, which could in some cases be subsidised by employers

**7.6 Residential Community Bus Service Promotion.** The 747 Harrogate-Airport-Bradford bus service is now operated as a local bus service so that passengers can and do get on or off at all the designated bus stops along the route. It is therefore quite popular with communities in North Yorkshire such as Kirby Overblow, Huby, Weeton, etc., (Note – the hourly Harrogate – Huby – Pool – Otley – Ilkley/Guiseley service operated by Connexions Buses runs on a commercial basis on Mon-Sat during the day) It could perhaps be made more popular by additional local promotion plus an offer of reduced price "shoppers' tickets" on off-peak services. These could easily be promoted via the local Parish Councils and Community Centres - and via the local newspapers and radio stations. (*NEW SUGGESTION: Put a bus stop at the new Apperley Bridge Station on Ilkley Line.*) This principle could be extended by re-routing the 747 service from Pool via Otley or possibly via Menston to the Airport, replacing some of the existing 967 services to the Airport. Local residents suggest that the extra journey time via Otley would be no more than 5 or 10 minutes. There would then be a saving on the operating cost and the subsidy for the existing 967 Airport service, whilst the extra passengers would boost revenue for the 747 service.

**7.7 Airport Staff Transport.** The Airport Management have tried hard to encourage more staff to use public transport but the bus timings rarely match shift change times. Again it is really a question of frequency rather than actual schedules that need adjusting to make this a practicable solution for more staff employed by the Airport, the Airlines and many supporting services.

**7.8 College Students.** Harrogate College attracts students from across North and West Yorkshire. It is located near to the Oatlands bus stop on the Leeds Road route of the Airport Bus service, so it could be used by students from Bradford District and from other residential areas along the route. To be attractive a low cost weekly or monthly season ticket might be needed,

**7.9 Airport Bus-Rail Interchange.** One more suggestion is to develop the Airport as a bus / rail interchange as it is envisaged that a wider network of local services will develop as the airport expands following planning consent granted for enlarging the terminal building, coupled with long term plans for a rail link to the Airport, together with a Parkway Station and a very large car park.

**7.10 Limited Stop – Express Service.** The 747 service is long route taking between 75 and 90 minutes end to end depending on traffic This begs the question could the route be simplified in the Yeadon/East Guiseley area and made Limited Stop to/from say Greengates to Bradford Centre, where there are alternative local services. Also bearing in mind the Bradford City Centre Regeneration is now well under way, is there not scope for promoting better "connectivity" between Harrogate and Bradford? We think the above could help to improve Airport passenger numbers, although it might reduce the number of local link journeys.

**7.11 Wider publicity required.** All of the above suggestions require more publicity through a variety of channels, but there appears to be no coordinated effort by the different organisations to publicise these important Bus Services to existing and potential users. May we suggest compilation of an e-mail list of all the relevant organisations that could help to promote all the Airport Bus Services? Then the Operators could ensure that they are all informed of any future changes in the services and about any special offers to encourage greater use of these services.

**7.12 Marketing responsibility.** We appreciate that Metro provide comprehensive passenger information in the form of timetable leaflets, on-line timetables, road side timetable displays and real time updates for passengers. However with regard to marketing and promotion, we understand that Metro contracts are awarded on a minimum cost basis, all revenue taken from passengers rests with the operator and it is therefore in the operators' interest to maximise revenue from the service by carrying out additional marketing and ticketing initiatives. We therefore urge Yorkshire Tiger to undertake many of the above marketing suggestions as they will gain from the additional fare revenue.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

The current 60 minute frequency Harrogate-Airport-Bradford service operated by Centrebus since May 2011 and by Yorkshire Tiger since September 2013 is a significant improvement on the previous 90 minute frequency 767 Harrogate-Airport only service previously operated by Transdev from 2005 until 2011.

However it is still not adequate in terms of frequency, reliability and operating hours. As the numbers of Airport passengers currently using the service appears insufficient to justify increasing the frequency and operating hours, it is vital that efforts are made to attract other fare-paying passengers to and from other places along the route.

Current publicity for the service in North Yorkshire is limited and several important web sites show out of date information on the Airport bus services, so updating these should be the first priority.

Then there should be a fresh campaign by Yorkshire tiger in conjunction with Metro, NYCC and HBC to promote the 747 service to all relevant Organisations, Hotels, Guest Houses, Visitor Attractions, Employers, Job Centres, Colleges, Shopping Centres, Parish Councils and Community Centres and similar places along the route. This Chamber is willing and able to help promote the service by bulk e-mails to all known businesses situated in the relevant postcode areas served by the 747 service plus inserts in our monthly REVIEW newsletter.

Pending implementation of such a publicity campaign we urge METRO, NYCC and the Airport to at least maintain their current funding for the service – and if possible increase it to cover the “missing” early morning and evening services so that it can serve all current scheduled flights.



**PAPER COMPILED BY BRIAN L DUNSBY, CHIEF EXECUTIVE  
HARROGATE CHAMBER OF TRADE & COMMERCE. January 2015**

## APPENDICES

### A. RELEVANT CONTACTS

The following individuals and organisations have provided key information used in this paper

**Kathryn Daly, Strategic Development Manager, Harrogate Borough Council**

E: Kathryn.daly@harrogate.gov.uk www.harrogate.gov.uk

**Clive Hopkinson – Bus Network Co-ordinator, West Yorkshire Combined Authority**

E: clive.hopkinson@westyorks-ca.gov.uk www.westyorks-ca.gov.uk | www.wymetro.com

**Abigail Houlden, Business Administration Manager, Leeds Bradford International Airport**

E: Abigail.Houlden@lbia.co.uk www.lbia.co.uk

**Michael Moore, Commercial Officer, Yorkshire Tiger,**

E. michael.moore@yorkshiretiger.co.uk www.yorkshiretiger.co.uk

**Jeff Thomas, former Parish Councillor, Huby**

E: brenda.thomas44@btinternet.com

### B. CHAMBER QUESTIONS + RESPONSE FROM YORKSHIRE TIGER - October 2014

Harrogate Chamber submitted a series of questions via Clive Hopkinson at WYCA and Michael Moore responded on behalf of Yorkshire Tiger to address a number of our comments as follows. The questions are in black Times Roman 10 point and the replies are in blue Calibri 11 point, copied directly from the e-mail:

**Q1. Early morning ex Airport.** What is the point of running buses out of the Airport at 04.35, 05.37 and 06.11 when no passengers are around - is this just for the few night shift workers - or are these bus now stabled at LBIA overnight instead of in a bus garage Leeds or Bradford?

At the least we need the 21.48 journey from Bradford to LBA extending to Harrogate - departing LBA at 22.28 it could reach Harrogate by 23.02.

**A1. Early morning ex Airport.** The buses that operate 737 and 747 operate from our Leeds depot, they currently operate out of service between Leeds Depot and Bradford, we are now running these buses as earlier trips on 757 first and then we are running these from the Airport to Bradford in service rather than run empty.

**Q2. Early morning ex Harrogate.** The 05.15 from Bradford reaches the Airport by 05.51 - but the first bus from Harrogate does not leave until 05.46 and does not reach the Airport until 06.16. This is far too late for passengers to check-in for several early morning flights such as Amsterdam (06.15 & 07.00), Dublin (06.30), Aberdeen (07.00) and Southampton (06.40). Where does this bus start from now? Could it not start any earlier?

**A2. Early morning ex Harrogate.** The 0515 from Bradford replaced the pre-existing 0510 from Bradford. The 0546 from Harrogate is the previously timed 0600. At this current time it is not possible to run this journey any earlier due to length of the drivers duty – 0546 was as early as we could go. We would be happy to look again at this for the start of the summer timetable, but given the low revenue on the Harrogate section we would need some financial support for the additional costs.

**Q3. Evening departures from the Airport to Harrogate.** The last bus to Harrogate now leaves the Airport at 21.28, whereas Bradford bus runs on until 23.30. This means for example that Harrogate passengers on the following scheduled flights would be likely to miss the bus:

21.05 Aberdeen eastern airways  
21.20 Amsterdam KLM  
21.30 Düsseldorf Jet.2  
21.50 Dublin Ryanair  
22.30 Alicante Jet.2  
23.50 Malta Ryanair

(The above pattern of arrivals may vary day to day but broadly very much the same each day. Winter schedules of course may change things.)

**A3. Evening departures from the Airport to Harrogate.** Likewise, the last buses are direct replacements of pre-existing journeys that we have been contracted to provide. No additional journeys have been provided to Bradford. Again the drivers' hours limit any change now, but again we would be happy to provide something for the start of the summer timetable, if financial support was available.

Whilst I appreciate that there may be a view that we could absorb these extra hours at no cost, this is not feasible – the Harrogate leg carries only one third of the number of passengers that we carry on the Bradford leg where we are currently fully funded to operate until late. If some additional funding can be made available then we would be happy to provide these additional journeys.

**Q4. Publicity claims.** Metro state in their latest Public Transport Changes leaflet that the new timetable "*will improve service punctuality and reliability, offering better links to the airport to suit flight times and airport shift patterns.*" Frankly we cannot see how this benefits Harrogate at all! Metro will no doubt say it's NYCC that is the problem, but we wonder if it is Yorkshire Tiger who are "calling the tune"

**A4. Publicity claims.** It is our responsibility to operate our services punctually and reliably and ultimately if we fail to do so it is solely Yorkshire Tiger that has to answer to the Traffic Commissioners – however we work closely with Metro for the benefit of all passengers; it would have been ideal for us operationally to introduce a timetable from July, however we agreed with Metro to delay the service change to the end of the summer season for the passenger clarity.

Service 737 has suffered greatly by an increased level of traffic on the road since the service was first linked through and a disproportionately higher level of roadworks on the route. Journeys on service 737 have been running in some cases up to 50 minutes late, primarily because the 737 could not operate the return journey in 3 hours. By connecting to the 747 we are much more confident that the return journey can be undertaken



in 3 hours. I would expect that increased customer satisfaction insofar as operating journeys punctually rather than having to wait for up to 50 minutes is a major benefit to Harrogate. I would also add that it was our suggestion to broadly maintain the existing departure times from Harrogate to reinforce the existing times despite the upheaval that that has caused in West Yorkshire and the reaction that Metro has had to manage within the county.

**Q5. Reliability.** One of my group who lives at Huby has monitored the service and reported several failures for the 737 service as follows:

13 October 2014 No. 10.29 LBA bus to Harrogate

13 October 2014. No. 11.10 Harrogate. LBA

18 October 2014. No. 20.10 Harrogate to LBA

18 October 2014. No. 21.10 This bus parked at Pool, turned round went back to LBA, not sure what is happening here!

20 October 2014 approx 14.15 bus travelling towards Harrogate flagged up "not in service" presumably a further non passenger journey

Clearly reliability is seriously in question. It is no good re-branding if the vehicles engines are "clapped out".

**A5. Reliability.** I note the observations of your group member and will ask our Leeds depot team to identify what has happened. I take on board your comment that reliability has been 'in question', but reliability is not just affected by vehicle breakdowns; we have had a number of instances where journeys have not operated as the driver was at the limit of their legal driving hours due to the excessive delays en-route. The building of the Marks and Spencer development at Oatlands was particularly disruptive to the point that we had to use additional buses to maintain some semblance of service. The revised timetable that we have implemented addresses this factor and therefore we anticipate that reliability will significantly improve. In conjunction with a refurbishment of our fleet we are confident that both the reliability and punctuality of the service between Harrogate and the Airport will improve considerably.

#### GENERAL COMMENTS

Yorkshire Tiger are committed to the service to/from Harrogate, to that end we:

- cross-subsidise the Harrogate section with revenue from other elements of the Airport group;
- have increased the number of drivers hours in the Airport network to improve reliability and absorbed the costs;
- held fares on the Harrogate section despite increasing other fares on the Airport group by up to 9% - this being despite a reduction in NYCC concessionary travel reimbursement;
- retimed the Harrogate service to provide connections with trains to/from Knaresborough and York to grow the revenue on this leg.
- have introduced a weekly saver ticket for passengers travelling on the Harrogate section (£24 per week) which allows travel across the wider Tiger network to Bradford and Leeds.

Whilst the current funding arrangements and revenue streams are in place, we can maintain the service broadly as now; however we are mindful that further budgetary pressures on local authorities could have a direct impact on the funding for the Airport group of services and whilst we hope that we can maintain (if not improve) the level of service that we provide to all users across the network it is inevitable that any reduction in funding/revenue will have an effect on the ongoing level of service we can provide.

If you or any of your members have any suggestions for any initiatives, which come at marginal or no cost, where we can generate income to offset any potential funding reduction or to provide cross funding for further service enhancement then we would of course be delighted to consider them.

I hope that this addresses your concerns in respect of the service to Harrogate and underlines the efforts that we have and are taking to ensure Flying Tiger as being an attractive travel option between the Airport, Harrogate and the wider North Yorkshire area.

**Michael Moore**, Commercial Officer, Yorkshire Tiger. 27/10/14.