



The Scottish Parliament

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Mr Ronnie Park
First Bus
197 Victoria Road
Glasgow
G42 7AD

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Dear Ronnie

Following First's fare rises at the end of April, I have been receiving increasing comments about the price of tickets, validity of travel cards and discounted travel cards.

Firstly, a couple of people have noted that weekly and monthly tickets are no longer valid on the night buses in Glasgow. It appears that card holders may not have been made aware of this in advance and it has caused some confusion, stress, and considerable extra expense to travellers.

I am concerned that this change erodes the usefulness and value that passengers gain from their Firstcard/Firstweek with this move and I would ask that you reinstate the validity of these passes on nightbuses.

Another issue of concern regarding travel cards which has been raised is the difficulty in purchasing FirstCard monthly passes. The section of your website highlighting the various tickets¹ has a dazzling array of options, but the FirstCard is not among them. Could you please make the fare and purchasing arrangements for these cards more accessible and transparent. It is vitally important that passengers have access to the full range of fares.

¹ <http://www.firstgroup.com/ukbus/glasgow/tickets/>

The Green MSPs aim at all times to operate best practice in complying with the Data Protection Act (1998). We would like to keep relevant information about your concerns on file and we may need to share this with our colleagues if the issues involved are relevant to their work in the Scottish Parliament. If you would prefer that we did not, please let me know.

While I was searching the website for the FirstCard, I noticed that you have a 10 journey carnet and, hoping to see a good value option for passengers, had a closer look. I see that it costs £18: that is £1.80 per trip, only 5p less than the most expensive fare (and the maximum you could pay per trip before the end March fare rises). It seems to me that this is not giving best value to passengers. Special ticketing measures should offer real and significant benefits, not add to the confusing array of tickets available.

Another area of concern is student travel. It appears that students of secondary schools are not eligible for a student travel cards and, instead must pay adult fare once they are 16. If you are able to sell a student travel card to students with a valid matriculation card, it seems unfair that some secondary school pupils need to pay full adult fares.

The area of most concern for people getting in touch with the Better buses campaign is price. Many have been very hard hit by the price rises, which have been especially extreme for families. A rise of 50% in the child all-day ticket has sent some of my correspondents into taxis or private cars, not something that either of us would wish to happen. But this is not surprising, given that it now costs £10.40 for a family of 4 to travel a distance exceeding 5 stops and home again. I note that a child fare, when accompanied by an adult, in Brighton is 30p. This compares extremely unfavourably with First's fares.

I have already raised my concern at the lack of involvement that passengers have in decisions that affect them, including both route and pricing issues. I would reiterate the importance of listening to passengers on these issues and would ask you to look at some of the comments I have received on the betterbuses.org website. I am, of course, keen that First's responses to these issues should be represented on the website, to allow users to develop the discussion.

Yours sincerely,

Patrick Harvie MSP

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