

No.635 Bus Service
A Discussion with the Operations Management of Diamond Bus
27 June 2019

Mr M Butler (Operations Manager) and Mr P Lamb (Assistant Operations Manager) of Diamond Bus were present and, when asked by the Chair about the approach they intended to take, they replied that they had come to listen.

Reliability of Stock

A member summed up the main issues that were causing concern to the Parish Council and local residents. The member in question was a regular user of the buses on the route and travelled daily from the centre of Shevington to Wigan Bus Station and back. The bus he had caught at 11:40 that morning had had a problem with its gears and the journey had been made with only one gear in use all the way. They had arrived at the Bus Station to find that two No.635 buses had broken down and had been parked in one bay. The 18:20 bus that the member had caught for his return trip in the evening had been 10 minutes late in arriving at the stand. The scenario described was an all too regular event. In addition the buses providing the very early morning and weekend services often simply did not turn up.

There was great concern locally about the quality of the Diamond Bus fleet in use on this route. The member appreciated that the company had taken over the old stock belonging to East Lancs Travel when it had taken over the route. However, the stock was breaking down too frequently and information about what was happening was rarely made available to prospective passengers if buses were expected not to be arriving. All in all the service was generally unreliable – albeit there had been a slight improvement in recent weeks.

The Operations Manager replied that there had been a number of issues with the buses used on the No.635 route at the beginning of the year and that he was aware of what they were. The bus providing the 11:20 service that morning had had an electrical fault.

The company were undertaking a fleet replacement programme as part of their strategy to improve reliability. New low emission vehicles were gradually being introduced.

Diamond Bus provided buses for other routes. Earlier in the year four brand new buses had been pressed into use on the service to the Trafford Centre and the buses they replaced should have been cascaded down to the No.635 route, but this had not happened. Buses were very technical these days and personnel had to be trained in IT in order to be able to expedite repairs. The right buses had to be used on the No.635 route, because they were working all day.

The frequency of the No.635 service had been changed to once every 15 minutes instead of once every 12 minutes. This had improved matters with regard to reliability of arrival at a bus stop to a certain extent. Delays of any length were reported on Twitter.

The member observed that Diamond Bus could get the public on its side by sharing planned improvements with them.

Another member reported that he had heard that the lighting was sometimes not in use on the buses in question. The buses were DDA compliant, but, if two buggies were on the bus, there was insufficient space for someone in a wheelchair.

Anyone with an issue was invited to email Mr Butler directly.