

News Update - What About the (Bus) Workers?

Welcome to the Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Users Group “News Update” focusing on the Bus Quality Contracts debate

If you want to comment on any of the issues we raise – or are interested in becoming an active member of Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Users Group and want to campaign on behalf of passengers – please contact us at twptug@phonecoop.coop or by using the ‘Contact Us’ form on our website <http://www.twptug.org.uk>

We’ll keep on commenting about the issues until the Tyne and Wear Integrated Transport Authority makes a decision to go forward with a Quality Contract. Once the decision is made we’ll turn our attention to looking at how the voice of passengers will be heard in the future.

What about the (Bus) Workers

It is not our role, as a Transport Users Group, to argue on behalf of bus workers – even though a number of the authors of both the original TWPTUG Quality Contracts Consultation submission to NEXUS and this document have, in the distant past, worked as bus drivers and many of us are still active in the Trades Union movement. We’ve noted that the managements of some of the bus companies are claiming that the terms and conditions of their staff are threatened by the introduction of a QCS. We see this as somewhat ironic given the fact that it is the current employers who have, ever since privatisation, been responsible for both cutting real wages and removing valued terms and conditions of bus workers.

We see no reason to believe that they will not want to continue to reduce their staff costs, by fair means or foul, in the future. Privately owned bus companies will always face an overwhelming temptation to place the interests of their shareholders above the interests of their staff or the travelling public. Without some sort of restraint they will continue to pay as little as they can and to cut services, and jobs, if a healthy profit isn’t available.

Should this matter to us? As citizens we think that it is in all our interests that bus workers are well paid, and so don’t have to work excessive hours or claim in work benefits. This responsibility shouldn’t stop with retirement and we want bus workers have good pensions. We see it as the role of both NEXUS and the individual employers make sure that bus workers are paid a fair wage and have good conditions at work.

Our past experience suggests that this will only be achieved by having some sort of ‘Fair Wage and Conditions’ term in any contracts between NEXUS and the operators.