Written response to the recommendations from Lothian Buses

Thank you for your letter of 13 September 2007 to Neil Renilson regarding the Scottish Parliament's Equal Opportunities Committee report entitled "Removing Barriers and Creating Opportunities".

A response (copy enclosed) was submitted by myself on behalf of Lothian Buses to the previous Committee Convener, Cathy Peattie, MSP, with specific regard to the recommendations which refer to transport providers.

I am delighted to be able to update as to progress which can be summarised as follows:

**Recommendation 112**
New vehicles due during 2007 are as previously with an additional ten new single deckers received during September taking this year's total new fleet to 75. This represents an investment during 2007 of £13.6m.

All new fleet due for delivery this year will be fully operational by November resulting in a further four services (service 10, 14, 27 and 41) being converted to be fully accessible to customers.

Further investment valued at £9.4m has been committed for 2008 and will deliver a further 50 accessible double deck and six single deck buses to our fleet.

Our objective of having full accessibility on all services by 2010 remains and on the basis of our investment record will achieved.

**Recommendation 113**
Current position as previously stated.

**Recommendation 114**
Current position as previously stated.

**Recommendation 115**
Current position as previously stated.

**Recommendation 116**
During the course of 2007, all new driving staff have continued to receive, as part of their basic training, a disability equality course run by Capability Scotland.

Whilst training for new employees is of paramount importance, we have not forgotten existing driving staff and the need to inform and upskill them to face modern day challenges. An in-house one day equalities seminar has, so far during the course of this year, been delivered to over 1000 staff.

Training will continue until all drivers have been included which we anticipate will complete by the end of December 2007.
Recommendation 117
In recent weeks, Lothian Buses has become the first bus operator in Scotland to be accredited by the Driving Standards Agency (DSA) to undertake Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC) training for PCV drivers.

This achievement underlines our determination to deliver market leading standards of service to all customers by investing in the professionalism and core competencies of our staff.

Recommendation 118
Current position as previously stated.

I trust this additional information is of interest and assistance.

Ian Craig
Managing Director
Lothian Buses
11 October 2007
Thank you for your correspondence of 28 November 2006 to Neil Renilson which included a copy of a report entitled "Removing Barriers and Creating Opportunities" published by The Scottish Parliament on behalf of the Equal Opportunities Committee.

The recommendations which refer specifically to transport providers (number 112 to 118) have been reviewed and I have the following response to offer from a Lothian Buses perspective.

**Recommendation 112**
When deliveries of new vehicles are completed in July 2007, a total of 394 low floor double deck and 140 low floor single deck vehicles will have been added to the Lothian Buses fleet over the last eight years. This represents an investment of over £90m and brings the average age of Lothian Buses fleet down to around 5 years.

All of these new vehicles are fully wheelchair accessible having been constructed to the latest Disability Discrimination Act standards.

Subject to the continued availability of funds to invest in new fleet, it is our intention to offer full accessibility on all services by the end of 2010. As I am sure you will appreciate, this is considerably in advance of the Government's own target.

**Recommendation 113**
Please find enclosed a copy of our most recent timetable leaflets which identify clearly those services currently operated by low floor accessible vehicles.

This information is now being cascaded onto our website and we are working with Traveline Scotland to ensure their database is suitably updated in order that journey planning for customers with specific mobility requirements can be easily and accurately undertaken.

**Recommendation 114**
Recent local and national consultation strategy documents on bus information provision all refer to the ATCO printed public transport information: "A Code of Practice Guidelines". This document states the need to have available printed leaflets in large print size as a basic necessity. This facility is available through all Lothian Buses' Travelshops and/or by request to our Customer Services department.

In addition, ATCO also offer advice on information provision via the web, CD/cassette tape, braille, minicom/text phone and other languages.

We continue to work closely with the City of Edinburgh Council who have taken on board responsibility for providing other formats except large print through the interpretation and translation service set up by the Council for this purpose.
Recommendation 115
Considerable investment continues to be poured into the development of the Edinburgh and the Lothians real time information system. This project is being driven forward by the City of Edinburgh Council and SESTRAN in partnership with operators and other stakeholders.

Trials continue with regards to ensuring that real time information is available to those with disabilities who otherwise would find using the conventional on-street displays difficult. Specifically, the facility to include next bus audio announcements is currently being progressed with input and consultation from the RNIB and MACS organisations.

Recommendation 116
To date, 363 new drivers and all supervisory and Travelshop staff have been enrolled on, and undertaken, a disability equality training course run by Capability Scotland. During 2007, our in-house training school staff, will deliver the same course to all other drivers which is a significant commitment as this will require around 1,500 staff to be taken from their regular driving duties in order that they can attend as we require.

We believe this is a crucial investment and are taking vigorous steps to ensure our staff are fully aware of their responsibilities towards disabled customers and are suitably trained and skilled to provide a truly inclusive service to the travelling public.

Recommendation 117
In addition to our disability equality training, we are currently preparing to embrace new vocational requirements for PCV drivers brought about as a result of an EU Directive which, from 10 September 2008, will require all new drivers to attain a designated standard that will culminate in the award of a Certificate of Professional Competence (CPC).

We have formed a strategic alliance with an industry training partner (Go-Skills) in order to develop a suitable SVQ which will be rolled out from this date. Contained within this SVQ will be a specific module entitled "Helping Passengers with Special Needs".

Recommendation 118
All on-street route managers are currently completing disability equality training in order to ensure that the standard of service offered to customers with special needs is delivered as required by our driving staff.

We already have a strong working relationship with Capability Scotland and many other leading disability groups and charities which complements our ongoing relationship with the MACS organisation.

I trust these comments are of some encouragement with regards to the progress already being made. We fully recognise the role and responsibility upon us to ensure that the bus services we operate are accessible to all.
Thank you again for the opportunity to comment and assuring of our continued attention to the matters raised by this Report.

Ian Craig
Managing Director
Lothian Buses
17 January 2007