

LETTERS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR, NET

Contact Officer: Andy Holdstock
Telephone Number: 0115 9156520
E-mail: andrew.holdstock@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

1. SUMMARY OF ISSUES

- 1.1. Two letters have been received from members of the public since the last meeting of the Committee. The first correspondent has complained about her inability to obtain an advance purchase tram pass and about the response she has received from the Tram Operator and from the Nottingham City Transport Travel Centre. The second correspondent has requested information from the Tram Operator regarding issues relating to the capacity of the tram system and possible infrastructure improvements but is unhappy with the response that he has received.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. It is RECOMMENDED that the Committee considers the contents of the report and advises on actions to be taken.

3. Correspondent A (see Appendix A)

- 3.1. Correspondent A wrote to the Committee on 9th December complaining that she had been unable to purchase a 30-day Paypoint tram pass from retail outlets in the city centre as they had sold out of the wallets which contain the passes. The correspondent is also unhappy about the procedure for making a complaint to the Tram Operator, Nottingham Tram Consortium (NTC), as when she telephoned the customer help line number after 4.00pm with regard to this matter she was automatically transferred to the Nottingham City Transport travel centre and she alleges that the staff stated that they were unable to assist because "they have nothing to do with the tram".
- 3.2. Paypoint has a contract with the NET Line One Concessionaire, Arrow Light Rail, to provide wallets to a large number of newsagents and supermarkets throughout the Nottingham area. The passes cannot be accepted by the tram conductors unless they are sealed within the wallets. Paypoint operates a computerised stock control system which reorders wallets automatically when stock becomes low. It is apparent however that either the computerised system has not been functioning correctly or that the agents concerned have been mislaying the wallets. The complainant has written to the NTC on three occasions between 9th December and 15th January, copies of which, together with NTC's responses, are contained at Appendix A.

- 3.3. The complainant also wrote to City Councillor Urquhart on 15th January and, in response to Councillor Urquhart, Mark Fowles, the Chairman of Arrow Light Rail, has requested that NTC's General Manager discusses the issue of provision of wallets with Paypoint. He has also requested that the tram website is modified to make it clear to the public that the contact telephone number switches through to the NCT Travel Centre after 4.00pm.
- 3.4. Further to this, the General Manager of NTC has confirmed that a meeting between their Marketing Department and Paypoint is due to be held with the issue of availability of wallets one of the issues to be discussed. NTC has also listened to a recording of the telephone conversation of 8th December between the correspondent and the NCT Travel Centre and disputes the allegation that it was stated that "they have nothing to do with the tram". NTC consider that it was explained several times in the conversation that the tram help line had closed for the day and that calls are transferred to NCT where assistance with timetables and fares can be made.

4. **Correspondent B** (see Appendix B)

- 4.1. Correspondent B wrote to NTC on 26th November 2008 regarding his perception that the trams are over crowded during the morning and evening peak periods. In his letter he has asked some specific questions about NTC's expectations for the amount of time passengers should be standing, about possible improvements that are being considered to the service and why some services are cancelled more often than others. NTC replied to the correspondent on 5th December stating that they have an insufficient number of trams to enable the peak hour capacity to be increased, that their overall performance regularly exceeds 99% and that infrastructure improvements, such as the introduction of covered walkways between Bulwell Tramstop and the bus station are not within NTC's scope as operators and maintainers of the system. They also state that there are many different reasons for disruptions to services and that no particular service is affected. The correspondent was not satisfied with this response and has therefore written to the Committee asking for its observations.

4.2. With regard to the points raised by the correspondent:

- 1) The peak hour capacity of NET Line One is restricted by the number of trams available to the operator. There is currently a total of 15 trams, 13 of which are in service at peak times, with two spares to allow for servicing and maintenance or which can be brought into service if another tram experiences a fault. Whilst it is accepted that the trams are very popular at peak times and that demand can sometimes exceed supply, this is not considered to be a safety issue. The timetable that can be operated to and from certain parts of the system is also restricted by the track layout, in particular the length of single track alignment north of Bulwell. If the proposals for NET Phase Two proceed, there will be scope to increase the number of services operating north of the city centre, which will have the effect of increasing capacity on core sections of the route, although there is currently no intention to add further track north of Bulwell.
- 2) The correspondent's initial question concerning performance indicators relates to the time that passengers should have to stand on a journey. Since the tram is a fast, high capacity means of travelling over relatively short distances in the urban environment, the vehicles have been designed to carry large numbers of standing passengers and, as a consequence, there is no such performance indicator. With regard to performance indicators that are measured, these principally relate to the proportion of timetabled trips that are operated and the proportion that depart on-time and NTC regularly achieve figures in excess of 99% for these measures.

- 3) The General Manager of NTC has sent assurances that whenever suggestions are received that fall outside the operator's specific area of responsibility, they will endeavour to pass them on to the appropriate body. The City and County Councils work closely with both the NET Operator and the Concessionaire in striving to improve the overall service offered whenever funding allows and recent examples have included the provision of cycle lockers at Phoenix Park and the improvement of pedestrian links to Cinderhill Tramstop. Some recent improvements were made to pedestrian links between Bulwell Bus Station and the tram stop, in consultation with the local community, including the relocation of road crossing facilities. The suggestion of providing covered walkways is not however considered feasible.

5. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS OTHER THAN PUBLISHED WORKS OR THOSE DISCLOSING CONFIDENTIAL OR EXEMPT INFORMATION

5.1. None

6. PUBLISHED DOCUMENTS REFERRED TO IN COMPILING THIS REPORT

6.1. None

A1

9 December 2008

NET
Armstrong Way
Nottingham
NG7 7NW

Dear Sir/Madam

30 day tram pass

I am writing with two complaints. The second initiated by the first. The first is the inability to purchase a 30 day tram pass since last Wednesday 3 December as the Pay points within the City of Nottingham do not have the pass covers.

I have bought a daily ticket but yesterday I decided enough was enough and I would attempt to sort out the problem. My second complaint, who do I complain to? Your tram staff gave me a card giving one telephone number which switches through to NCT after 4.00 p.m. NCT both on the telephone and in the office in the market square state they have nothing to do with the tram.

Talbot Street, think the right response is simply to winge on about their own inability to purchase a 30 day tram pass.

This is not the first time this has happened as the same thing happened a couple of months ago. If the only way tram passes (which need to be purchased in advance) can be bought at Pay points, these pay points need to be able to provide the service.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully



15 December 2008

Dear

Thank you for your letter regarding the city centre PayPoint outlets being without wallets.

We do not supply PayPoint outlets with wallets; they are supplied by the PayPoint central office. I was informed about the city centre outlets not having wallets on Tuesday 9 December by a passenger.

I immediately put in a complaint to the PayPoint central office, and they told me that they would investigate and get back to me. They responded to me on Wednesday and said that they would continue to investigate, but that they had sent out new stock which was due to be delivered on Thursday 11 December. They will now keep a close watch on both outlets to ensure that this does not happen again.

Our customer helpline is open from 08:00 until 16:00 Monday to Friday. The NCT Travel Centre can answer timetable and fare enquiries. If someone is unable to call during our office hours, our email address is info@thetram.net which is stated on our website, www.thetram.net. All emailed enquiries are dealt with on the following office day.

I apologise for the inconvenience that both issues have caused you.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tracey Greatbatch', written over a horizontal line.

Tracey Greatbatch
NET Customer Services

NET Depot • Armstrong Way • off Wilkinson Street • Nottingham • NG7 7NW
Tel: 0115 942 7777 • Fax: 0115 942 7795 • Website: www.thetram.net

NET is operated and maintained by Nottingham Tram Consortium, a Joint Venture between Nottingham City Transport Limited (2004967) and Transdev Tram UK Limited (3672491), both incorporated in England



17 December 2008

Tracey Greatbatch
NET Customer Services
NET
Armstrong Way
Off Wilkinson Street
Nottingham
NG7 7NW

Dear Madam

Thank you for your letter of the 15 December.

Perhaps you could inform me who decides that Pay Point outlets will be responsible for issuing tickets.

Your reply would have had more credibility if you had checked whether or not Pay Point had delivered the wallets on 11 December. As at 3.45 p.m. Monday 15 December, 30 days tram passes were still unavailable in the city due to lack of wallets.

Yours faithfully



Greater Nottingham Light Rapid Transit

29 December 2008

GMR'S 9831, 9832

Dear

Thank you for your further letter regarding PayPoint outlets. I apologise for the delay in answering your letter but I was on annual leave last week and have just returned today.

You asked me to inform you who decides that PayPoint outlets should be responsible for issuing tickets. This was a commercial decision made over two years ago.

Our contact regarding PayPoint outlets is the PayPoint central office, as I informed you in my previous letter. I had no reason not to believe the central office when they told me they had despatched an order of wallets.

Following an email from another passenger who stated that they were unable to purchase PayPoint tickets in the city centre on 16th December, I again contacted the central office who, in turn, contacted the agents again. GT News told the office that they had a small number of wallets in stock and so an order was raised to arrive that week. Arden News said that they hadn't received the order that had been despatched the previous week and so another was despatched that day for next day delivery. I can confirm that Arden News did receive this second order.

As this caused us some concern, the matter was escalated to our Commercial Manager who has been in contact with PayPoint management. The result of this was that all PayPoint agents were re-issued instructions regarding wallets and the sale of tram tickets.

I am very sorry that there has been so much confusion and disruption to the availability of wallets in the city centre. As a token of apology, I enclose two General Manager's Promise vouchers, each of which may be exchanged for a free all-day tram ticket at your convenience.

Yours sincerely

Tracey Greatbatch
NET Customer Services

NET Depot • Armstrong Way • off Wilkinson Street • Nottingham • NG7 7NW
Tel: 0115 942 7777 • Fax: 0115 942 7795 • Website: www.thetram.net

NET is operated and maintained by Nottingham Tram Consortium, a Joint Venture between Nottingham City Transport Limited (2004967) and Transdev Tram UK Limited (3672491), both incorporated in England.



15 January 2009

Tracey Greatbatch
NET Customer Service
NET Depot
Armstrong Way
Off Wilkinson Street
Nottingham
NG7 7NW

Dear Madam

Further to my phone call this morning and our previous correspondence I am very disappointed to discover that yet again I am unable to purchase a 30 day pass as Ardens in the market square in Nottingham. I tried Wednesday afternoon and was told they ran out of wallets on Monday afternoon.

I really do not think it should be up to me to police the situation of whether or not wallets are available in the shops in the city centre for the purchase of 30 day passes. I am told I can purchase elsewhere, but look at my address, I don't pass a shop, my local Pay point shop does not sell tram tickets.

Last month when this happened I had to locate another shop, which I might add is done with great difficulty. It might be easier if the tickets were sold at Post Offices, at least I could find a Post Office, somewhat easier than a local shop without a name, only known by people in the locality.

I am simply looking at a solution for the customer, please don't pass the buck onto PayPoint. The relationship between Paypoint and yourselves is down to you. I am not interested in who is to blame. I simply want a solution.
In my household two adults buy 30 days passes, we are both unable to do so at present.

I look forward to hearing your comments.

Yours faithfully



20 January 2009

Dear

Thank you for your letter regarding Arden News being out of stock of wallets again last week. I apologise for your inconvenience in being unable to purchase the ticket that you required.

PayPoint operates a computerised stock control system which reorders stock automatically depending on sales. Unfortunately this is not effective with one or two retailers as they are mislaying their stock of wallets. This naturally does not trigger a reorder through sales, and so it depends on the retailer contacting PayPoint central office to inform them of the lack of wallets.

This breakdown in the system is obviously causing us concern. I have been putting pressure on their Customer Services to rectify this error. Our Commercial Manager has arranged a meeting with PayPoint management to raise a number of issues, the most important being the wallet situation.

A copy of your letter has been passed to the Commercial Manager as further evidence of the inconvenience this issue is causing for our passengers.

Thank you for bringing this situation to our attention once more.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tracey Greatbatch'.

Tracey Greatbatch
NET Customer Services

NET Depot • Armstrong Way • off Wilkinson Street • Nottingham • NG7 7NW
Tel: 0115 942 7777 • Fax: 0115 942 7795 • Website: www.thetram.net

NET is operated and maintained by Nottingham Tram Consortium, a Joint Venture between Nottingham City Transport Limited (2004967) and Transdev Tram UK Limited (3672491), both incorporated in England.



B1

Nottingham Express Transit
NET Depot
Armstrong Way
Nottingham
NG7 7NW

26/11/2008

Dear Sir or Madam,

Chronic Overcrowding on Peak Period Trams

Here at [REDACTED]; we believe that the NET service is, on the whole, a very good, comfortable and reliable service. However, we are very concerned at the chronic overcrowding experienced during the morning and evening peak periods. It is often the case that the final part of the journey into Nottingham in the morning is very uncomfortable, with passengers squashed in together and every spare inch of tram space taken. Trams on the Hucknall line are often very crowded by the time they reach Bulwell station, and passengers often have to stand for the entire 19 minute journey into the Old Market Square. There is plenty of spare capacity on the network to be able to supplement the current service with extra trams from Bulwell and the Forest during the peak periods.

I would like to ask you the following questions:

1. What are your current key performance indicators for the average and maximum length of time that passengers should have to stand? I think that these should be 4 minutes and 10 minutes respectively.
2. What proposals are currently being considered for improving the Hucknall and Phoenix Park services? For instance, covered walkways from Bulwell tram station to Bulwell bus station.
3. Although the service is generally reliable, the 0806 ex Phoenix Park, Monday to Friday, seems to be subject to cancellation more often than most other services. Why is this particular service susceptible to problems?

I would be very interested to receive your response to my letter, and would even be prepared to meet you to discuss these issues. I do have extensive experience of the public transport sector, before I became an accountant.

Yours Sincerely

B2



NOTTINGHAM EXPRESS TRANSIT

5 December 2008

Dear

Thank you for your letter dated 26 November.

For your information, there is no spare capacity to run extra trams. This is due to a number of factors, the main one being that we do not have spare trams.

I am not at liberty to discuss our performance indicators, but can inform you that our performance regularly exceeds 99% and is audited by Nottingham City Council operatives.

There are no proposals to introduce covered walkways. Any such project would not fall under our scope as operators and maintainers.

There are many reasons for disruption to service and there is no particular service that is affected.

Thank you for your interest in Nottingham Express Transit.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tracey Greatbatch', written over a horizontal line.

Tracey Greatbatch
NET Customer Services

NET Depot • Armstrong Way • off Wilkinson Street • Nottingham • NG7 7NW
Tel: 0115 942 7777 • Fax: 0115 942 7795 • Website: www.thetram.net

NET is operated and maintained by Nottingham Tram Consortium, a Joint Venture between Nottingham City Transport Limited (2004967) and Transdev Tram UK Limited (3672491), both incorporated in England.



B3

Greater Nottingham Light Rapid Transit Advisory Committee
C/O Net Project Office
Lawrence House
Talbot Street
Nottingham
NG1 5NT

08/12/2008

Dear Sir or Madam,

Chronic Overcrowding on Peak Period Trams

I enclose a copy of a letter sent to NET, and a copy of their reply. I think that this response is very unsatisfactory for a number of reasons.

1. It is self evident that the lack of rolling stock is a key reason for the chronic overcrowding. NET has not said what plans there are to invest in further vehicles to overcome this problem.
2. As a partly publically funded organisation through the PFI initiative, I think that NET ought to be more forthcoming about their performance indicators, and I would welcome any further information you can give about the blanket 99% figure quoted by NET. The spirit of the Freedom of Information Act does apply to such circumstances even if the law does not.
3. If NET receives suggestions to improve the service that fall outside of their area of responsibility, then they ought to pass such suggestions on. There is no indication that this has been done in this case.

The only point in my original letter that is properly answered is the suspicion that particular services suffer more than others from disruption.

I would welcome your observations on the responses of the NET Customer Services Department.

Yours Sincerely