

Consultation on changes to bus registration in Scotland



RESPONDENT INFORMATION FORM

Please Note this form **must** be returned with your response to ensure that we handle your response appropriately

1. Name/Organisation

Organisation Name

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Title Mr Ms Mrs Miss Dr *Please tick as appropriate*

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3. Permissions - I am responding as...

Individual / Group/Organisation

Please tick as appropriate

(a) Do you agree to your response being made available to the public (in Scottish Government library and/or on the Transport Scotland web site)?

Please tick as appropriate Yes No

(b) Where confidentiality is not requested, we will make your responses available to the public on the following basis

Please tick **ONE** of the following boxes

Yes, make my response, name and address all available

or

Yes, make my response available, but not my name and address

or

Yes, make my response and name available, but not my address

(c) The name and address of your organisation **will be** made available to the public (in the Scottish Government library and/or on the Transport Scotland web site).

Are you content for your **response** to be made available?

Please tick as appropriate Yes No

(d) We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Transport Scotland to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

Please tick as appropriate Yes No

CONSULTATION QUESTIONS

Question 1: do you agree with the proposal to extend the pre-registration notice period from 14 days to 28 days ?

Yes No

In many instances, this proposal should bring forward more meaningful dialogue and understanding between the Operator and the Authority during the registration process. This should ultimately benefit the overall provision of bus services. For this reason, First already consults with authorities to this timescale (28 days) and beyond. This additional time should encourage discussion on the impacts of proposed changes to the network generally and for alternative options to be discussed/ considered, including the potential use of deminimis funding where service gaps are identified.

This consultation period should not however unnecessarily extend the total process timescale i.e. it should not prevent a final timetable proposal to be lodged at the end of the 28 days.

Consideration also needs to be given to the level of detail required in the proposed revision documents at the beginning and during the consultation period. This could have some influence on the flexibility of the consultation process.

Question 2: Do you agree with the proposal to replace the duty to inform the relevant authorities before making an application for registration with a duty to consult with the relevant authorities?

Yes No

We already welcome dialogue within the period required for informing the Authority and would continue to do so, in the spirit of an open understanding of the factors leading to the revisions being brought forward.

Our concern lies with the obligation to consult being 'supported' by guidance as to how this consultation would be undertaken. This is potentially dangerous as some authorities may seek to demonstrate that the letter of the Guidance has not been complied with, including instances where it has been the authority that has not fully engaged in the process, or where an authority might seek to use it for control purposes.

First would strongly resist any proposal to allow a 'veto' of a registration on anything other than the current road safety grounds.

Question 3: Do you agree that relevant authorities should be encouraged through guidance to draw potential concerns about new registrations to the attention of the traffic Commissioner for Scotland and/or Transport Scotland?

Yes No

It is our understanding that authorities already draw relevant concerns to the attention of the Traffic Commissioner. This proposal suggests an extension to the kind of concerns that might be deemed relevant e.g. network coverage. In paragraph 24 within the consultation document, it is the need to properly consult, rather than necessarily agree that is important, and that principle must be carried through to the final registration process. Any guidance on the handling of these concerns should seek the full agreement of all parties.

Question 4a: Do you agree with the proposal to reduce the period of registration from 56 days to 42 days? What difficulties (if any) do you consider such a change might present and how might these be addressed?

Yes No

We would seek the retention of the overall 56 day timescale post-consultation as this allows operators to deliver advance information to the market in a timely and efficient manner. Should the operator wish to extend the period of consultation currently for any particular reason, they already have that flexibility. Whilst the 42 day period has been used in the past as the minimum period between registration and change on the road, we feel that the wide range of internal and external information requirements can best be delivered utilising the current 56 days. See response to Q1.

Question 4b: An alternative option would be to reduce the registration period from 56 days to 42 days only where Electronic Bus Service Registration (EBSR) is used. Do you agree with this?

Yes No

We are concerned that this would discriminate against operators who use a paper based system. We also feel that the 56 day period ensures the highest quality of delivery of the change can be achieved.

Question 5: Do you agree that we should require operators to detail within registered hourly frequency bands any services that are registered as frequent services?

Yes No X

We see no benefit in this proposal, but do see risk. The 'frequent service' descriptor guarantees the passenger a maximum average 5 minute wait time, whilst allowing the service provider to uplift service levels to meet flexible customer demands at different times. Our fear is that such rigidity might lead to a default of lower service levels being offered, to 'err on the safe side'. This would be detrimental to customer service. A requirement to set out a detailed high frequency timetable would also increase administration costs, again for no benefit to bus users.

Question 6: Do you agree that if the proposed changes set out above are adopted, they will improve the bus registration process in Scotland ?

Yes No X

Where Operators and Authorities engage fully in the 14 day notice period we believe that we already have a successful registration process. However, First agrees that in cases where service revisions are substantial and complex, additional time should be given to the process, to ensure that all factors have been fully considered and we accept the benefit that the additional consultation period would bring. However, we do not feel that this should be compensated for by a tightening of the service delivery period. i.e. that should remain at 56 days.

Question 7: It is possible that much of what is proposed above could be achieved through Guidance and/or a Code of Conduct to facilitate engagement between operators and relevant authorities rather than changes to the legislation. Do you have any views on this?

Yes X No

Yes, we have views.
We are concerned that using Guidance or a Code of Conduct might provide scope for interpretation by authorities which would cloud the clarity of the existing processes. We feel that should there ultimately be revisions to the registration process, these must be backed by legislation.