

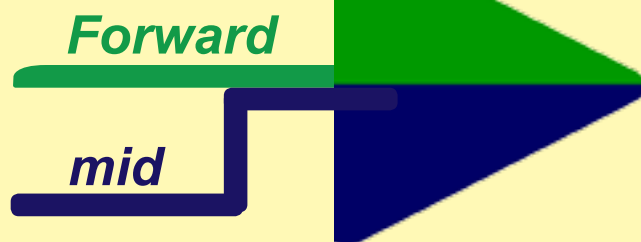
FORWARD

MidLOTHIAN

DISABLED PEOPLE

www.forwardmid.org.uk

Equality - Diversity - Inclusion



Transport for Midlothian Newsletter/Guide

Welcome to the second edition of the transport newsletter for people living in Midlothian. This has been produced by **Forward Mid, Midlothian's Disability Equality forum, promoting the equal rights of disabled people in Midlothian.**

Transport can be such an essential component in determining the day to day quality of people's lives, whether it be a trip to see a good friend, getting along to a local group or club or attending an appointment at the hospital or GP surgery, getting there efficiently and safely can be so important. Good transport can be a contributor to overall good health and well-being. Every persons needs differ, Forward Mid has tried to collate as much information from individual companies and their services. It's not easy to find all the correct information in the one place.

So that's what we've tried to do here - bring together all the various transport options and choices that are available across Midlothian.

Our hope would be that having a copy of this newsletter to hand can allow disabled people in Midlothian to have a much better understanding of the transport choices available to them, and to use them well!

Please continue inside and see what's available!

Hopefully this special edition Transport newsletter will help you when you're out and about or planning a trip across Midlothian.

If you know of some transport option that's available that we haven't included here please get in touch and let us know.

Wishing you safe and happy and rewarding, travelling!

Iain Tait



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Accessible Transport for Disabled People in Midlothian

Many public transport services in Midlothian are operated by buses that are considerably easier to use than in the past. Routes normally operated by low-floor buses giving easy access to all including standard wheelchair users are shown in the list with a Disabled symbol. Standard wheelchairs occupy an area no larger than 700mm x 1500mm. Routes normally operated by vehicles with special wheelchair access facilities (eg a lift or ramp) are marked with a symbol.



Midlothian Council helps to fund Dial-a-Ride, a special door-to-door service for people who have mobility restrictions. This includes those who cannot physically manage to board a standard bus vehicle, as well as those who live too far from a standard bus service to reach it comfortably. Dial-a-Ride services are operated by HcL (formerly Handicabs). For Dial-a-Ride bookings and enquiries Tel: ☎ 0131 447 9949

Dial-a-Bus offers once-a-week trips to selected shopping centres from most towns and villages. An easy-to-board bus calls at your door, and brings you back after your shopping trip. You can have a carer with you. There is a flat rate fare for these trips. Dial-a-Bus services are operated by HcL. For Dial-A-Bus bookings and enquiries Tel: ☎ 0131 447 1718

Midlothian Council also supports Lothian Community Transport Services (LCTS). It provides five community bus routes shown in the table of services (R1, R2, R3, R4 and R5), LCTS hires its vehicles for group travel. If you are a non-profit making voluntary or community group, and arranging transport is a problem, LCTS can hire you a minibus for 15 passengers. All vehicles can take wheelchair users. Vehicles can be with-driver or selfdrive. For LCTS bookings and enquiries Tel: ☎ 0131 663 0176 .

Wheelchair on public transport

Before you Travel!

The majority of wheelchair users will be able to travel on public transport. Wheelchairs that cannot fit on public transport:

- If your chair is more than 700mm wide by 1500mm length. A normal chair approx 660mm wide by 1065mm length when you are in it. Unless otherwise stated.
- If your chair is very heavy, chair and Passenger exceed 220 Kilograms. As public transport do not carry scales it is the wheelchair users responsibility to know the combined weight, scales can be found in most hospitals.
- If you need to travel with your legs fully extended or the backrest reclined.
- If you use a scooter difficult to manoeuvre and may be unstable in a vehicle.

You must ensure that your wheelchair is in a safe condition to travel.

This means, for example, making sure that it is correctly maintained, that the tyres are properly inflated, that you have not overloaded the back of the chair with bags (this can cause the chair to tip over backwards on a ramp).

If you have a powered chair you must ensure that the battery is secure.

If your chair has adjustable kerb climbers you should check that they are set so that they do not catch on the ramp.

The transport operator has the right to refuse to let you travel if he believes that your wheelchair is not in a safe condition.

National Entitlement Card

The Scotland national entitlement card also known as the bus pass gives 60+ and disabled people free bus travel throughout Scotland.

Application forms are available at all Midlothian libraries. There are different forms for those 60+ years of age, disabled persons and Young Scots – make sure you pick up the appropriate form for your circumstances. Completed forms with relevant proofs and a colour passport-style photo must be taken by the applicant in person to any Midlothian Library for processing. The verification process requires the librarian to confirm that the photo submitted is a true likeness of the applicant. If the application form is handed in by anyone other than the applicant, it will be rejected.

Your bus pass is printed in Hull, England, and sent by second class Royal Mail from there direct to your home address. On the front of your card will be your name and 16-digit card number, your photo and the oakleaf logo of Midlothian Council.

The expiry date is shown on cards issued to the disabled and this will continue. Expiry dates used to be printed on cards for those 60+ years old.

However, once you have proved you are 60 or over, you will never fall out of eligibility [you won't be 59 again] and so cards for the over 60s issued during the past couple of years no longer have an expiry date. The bus pass is not transferable and can only be used by the cardholders.



Various symbols can appear on the lower right side of the card. The symbols most likely to be seen on a Midlothian card are:-



“C” in orange stands for **“Concessionary Travel”**

“+1” with the “1” in black, and the “+” in orange superimposed on the “1” stands for **“plus one”** and tells the bus driver that you are entitled to have a companion travel free with you on your bus journey



An “eye” symbol in black indicates that the cardholder is blind or partially sighted and is entitled to the additional travel concessions of the Scottish Blind Scheme in addition to free bus travel.



- Free train travel within Scotland and across the border as far as Berwick-upon-Tweed in the east or Carlisle in the west.
- Free travel on Edinburgh Trams. Free travel on the Glasgow Subway.
- Free travel on most ferries within Scotland such as the Clyde and Hebridean services.

Local buses that accept this card:

First Borders	Tel: 01324 602200	www.firstgroup.com
LCTS	Tel: 0131 663 0176	www.lcts.org.uk
Lothian Buses	Tel: 0131 554 4494 [select option 2]	www.lothianbuses.com
Perryman's Buses	Tel: 01289 308719	www.perrymansbuses.co.uk
Prentice Coaches	Tel: 01620 822620	www.prentice.info
Stagecoach	Tel: 0300 111 0001	www.stagecoachbus.com

Long distance coach services within Scotland also accept this card. Some coach companies offer seat reservation but charge for this. The seat reservation cost is not

included in the concession, but may well be worth paying if you need to travel on a particular journey and cannot wait for a later departure if your chosen trip is already full when you arrive to board without a reservation.

Megabus	Tel: 0900 160 0900	www.megabus.com
National Express	Tel: 0871 781 8178	www.nationalexpress.com
Scottish Citylink	Tel: 0871 266 3333	www.citylink.co.uk

Renewal of NEC

Elderly concessionary cards issued with no expiry date printed on the card are currently valid until 2041. Elderly concessionary cards still with an expiry date will be updated to be valid until 2041 at the next issue. The Midlothian Travel Team send out a reminder letter and renewal form to holders of cards for disabled people 6 to 4 weeks before the expiry date. The renewal form plus any supporting written evidence must be presented to any Midlothian library. Photocopies of proofs will be taken and then sent by internal mail to the Travel Team in Bonnyrigg. Here the database is updated and an order sent digitally to Hull, England, for a fresh card to be printed and despatched by second class mail to your home address. Blank renewal forms are available in all Midlothian libraries if you mislay the one sent by post.

Replacement of lost or stolen NEC

You can go to any Midlothian library in person and ask the librarian to order up a replacement of a card that has already been issued to you, but is now lost or stolen. Part of the verification process is that the librarian will check that you are the person whose photo image is held in the database. This cannot be done if you do not call at the library personally.

Changes

An online application process will be introduced nationally across Scotland within the next 12 months. This will add another option – the paper application method described above will continue to be offered for those who are not online.

The Travel Team is due to move from Bonnyrigg to Dalkeith before Christmas 2015. The exact date is not yet known. Look out for an announcement in the local press and in the regular Forward Mid newsletters.

Thanks to Midlothian Travel team for this section



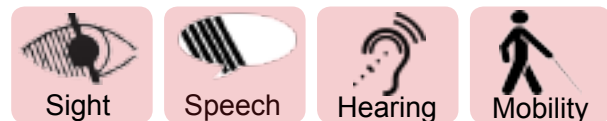
The Sustran Thistle Card Scheme

The SEStran Thistle Assistance Card is available to help anyone who has difficulty in using public transport because of age, disability or illness. www.sestran.gov.uk

The SEStran Thistle card is designed to make using public transport easier for older people or those with disabilities or illness. The card, which is supported by a wide variety of voluntary organisation in South East Scotland and by most bus operators, is credit-card sized and comes with a supply of peel-off stickers, which advise the driver of your disability and the help you need in an easy-to-read format.

The Thistle Card is free and available in Midlothian from:

- Midlothian libraries at Dalkeith, Danderhall, Gorebridge, Lasswade, Loanhead, Mayfield, Newtongrange, Penicuik, Roslin
- Midlothian Council offices – Fairfield and Midlothian Houses in Dalkeith, Dundas Buildings in Bonnyrigg
- Lothian Buses Travelshop in Dalkeith [Jarnac Court/South Street]
- Sheriffhall Park and Ride terminal
- Midlothian Community Hospital
- Health Centres at Pathhead and Penicuik
- Midlothian Voluntary Action, 4-6 White Hart St, Dalkeith



Please wait for me to sit down

Please talk slowly and clearly

Let me know when we arrive at:

The card is about the size of a standard credit card and comes with a supply of peel-off stickers. You select those that are most appropriate for your circumstances and stick them to the card. Show this to the driver to advise him of your disability and the help you need in an easy-to-read format.

Lothian Community Transport Services (LCTS)

Lothian Community Transport Services is an independent organisation that provides, promotes and supports high-quality passenger transport services including:

- Accessible minibus hire services to over 230 member organisations
- High quality training for transport operators
- Support services for transport providers



Lothian Community Transport Services minibus hire services operate from bases in Edinburgh and Dalkeith and are available to not-for-profit organisations in Edinburgh, Midlothian and West Lothian.

All our minibuses are available for hire on both a “Self-Drive” and “With-Driver” and our charges are mostly mileage-based.

Bookings are subject to vehicle availability. Minibuses can only be hired by member organisations and full details are available in our Vehicle Hire Policy.

Anyone driving a vehicle in the LCTS fleet must be on the LCTS Register of Approved Drivers.

LCTS Community bus routes

R1 Thursdays Only

Dalkeith
Dalkeith Morrisons
Eskbank Stn & Tesco
Bonnyrigg Market
Carrington
Temple
Gorebridge
Newtonloan Toll
Bonnyrigg Market
Bonnyrigg Co-op
Bonnyrigg Market
Lasswade Centre
Bonnyrigg Market
Eskbank Stn & Tesco
Lasswade Road
Dalkeith

R2 Thursdays Only

Dalkeith
Dalkeith Morrisons
Lothianbridge
Newtongrange
Gowkshill
Upper Gorebridge
Newbyres Village
Gorebridge Library
Newtonloan Toll
Bonnyrigg Market
Eskbank Stn & Tesco
Dalkeith Morrisons
Dalkeith

R3 Thursdays Only

Dalkeith
Dalkeith Morrisons
Lasswade Road
Danderhall
Newton Village
Millerhill
Old Craighall
Asda, The Jewel

R4 Mondays Only

Dalkeith
Dalkeith Morrisons
Lasswade Road
Lasswade Village
Loanhead
Mavisbank
Burghlee Crescent
Park Avenue
Gaynor Avenue
Loanhead Library
Straiton Retail Park
Straiton Sainsbury's
Straiton Asda

R5 Mondays Only

Carrington
Temple
Gorebridge
Newtonloan Toll
Bonnyrigg
Lasswade Village
Loanhead
Straiton Retail Park
Straiton Asda
Straiton Sainsbury's


For more information and enquiries contact Lothian Community Transport Services:

LCTS

6b Newmills Road

DALKEITH

EH22 1DU

Tel:  0131 663 0177

Email:  Dalkeith@LCTS.org.uk


LCTS

200 Sir Harry Lauder Road

EDINBURGH

EH15 2QA

Tel:  0131 669 9959

Email:  Edinburgh@LCTS.org.uk

Buses Across Midlothian

4 bus companies in 2015 run buses across or through Midlothian, The biggest bus company is Lothian buses, 100% of the fleet is now wheelchair accessible, Lothian buses can carry one wheelchair passenger at a time. If a person with a wheelchair is already aboard the next bus will only be a short while behind. For more information and complete timetable please visit <http://lothianbuses.com/> or Tel: 0131 555 6363

Lothian bus routes

Lothian Bus No. 3

Mayfield (Keir Hardie Drive)
Mayfield Roundabout
Dalkeith South Street
Gilmerton Crossroads
Cameron Toll Centre
North Bridge
Haymarket Dalry Road
Balgreen Road
Parkhead Terrace
Westside Plaza
Clovenstone Drive

Lothian Bus No. 15

Penicuik Deanburn
Edinburgh Road (Tesco)
Easter Bush Campus
Fairmilehead (Swanston Drive)
Morningside
Tollcross
Waterloo Place
Meadowbank House
Portobello King's Road
Eastfield (Musselburgh Road)
Musselburgh Police Station
Levenhall Roundabout
Prestonrange Road (top)
Meadowmill Sports Centre

Lothian Bus No.29

Gorebridge (Birkenside)
Gore Avenue (top)
Newtongrange Park Gates
Eskbank Stn & Tesco
Gilmerton Terminus
Cameron Toll Centre
North Bridge
Frederick Street
Stockbridge
Western General Hospital
Crewe Toll
Silverknowes Shops

Lothian Bus No.31

Polton Mill
or
Hopefield
Bonnyrigg Toll
Lasswade Road Crossroads
Cameron Toll Centre
North Bridge
Haymarket Station
Drum Brae roundabout
Maybury
East Craigs Centre

Alternate Terminus for Lothian No. 31

Beyond Bonnyrigg Toll, 31 buses serve either Hopefield or Polton Mill, but not both on the same journey

Alternate Terminus for Lothian No. 33

A small number of the No. 33 bus terminate at Dalkeith Campus Monday to Friday only, This service returns to Edinburgh only via Dalkeith South Street.

Lothian Bus No. 33

Gorebridge (Birkenside)
Gore Avenue (top)
Newtongrange Park Gates
Mayfield Roundabout
Dalkeith South Street
Sheriffhall Park & Ride
Danderhall
Old Dalkeith Road
Royal Infirmary
Cameron Toll Centre
Commonwealth Pool
North Bridge
Haymarket Dalry Road
Balgreen Road
Longstone
Baberton

Lothian Bus No. 37

Penicuik Deanburn
Penicuik Town Centre
Roslin
Bilston roundabout
Loanhead
Straiton Retail Park
Kaimes Crossroads
Cameron Toll Centre
North Bridge
Queensferry Street
Western General Hospital
Crewe Toll
Silverknowes

Alternative routes for No. 37 Some 37 buses run from Silverknowes to Bilston and terminate at Easter Bush Campus. A X37 runs at peak times Mon-Fri. Loanhead and Straiton Retail Park, calls at Straiton Park and Ride, terminates at Granton Harbour

Lothian Bus No. 39

Woodburn Jean Armour Drive
Thornycroft Roundabout
Dalkeith Jarnac Court
Eskbank Stn & Tesco
Midlothian Community Hospital
Bonnyrigg Toll
Bonnyrigg Brixwold
Newtongrange Park Gates
Lady Brae (Top)
Gorebridge Inn
Gore Avenue (top)

Lothian Bus No. 40

Penicuik Town Centre
Auchendinny
Roslin Hotel
Bilston roundabout
Loanhead (Muirfield Gardens)
Lasswade
Bonnyrigg Toll
Eskbank Stn & Tesco
Dalkeith South Street
Whitecraig
Musselburgh Police Station
Eastfield (Musselburgh Road)
Portobello King's Road

Lothian Bus No.47

Ladywood Wyvis Park
Penicuik Town Centre
Bilston roundabout
Straiton Park & Ride
Kaimes Crossroads
Cameron Toll Centre
Lothian Road (foot)
West End Queensferry Street
Western General Hospital
Crewe Toll
Granton Harbour

Lothian Bus No. 49

Rosewell
Bonnyrigg Toll
Eskbank Stn & Tesco
Dalkeith South Street
Danderhall
Old Dalkeith Road
Royal Infirmary
Cameron Toll Centre
North Bridge
Foot of Leith Walk
Lochend
Portobello King's Road
The Jewel (ASDA)

Lothian Bus No.67

Pentlands Science Park
Easter Bush Campus
Straiton Park & Ride
Kaines Crossroads
West Mains
Summerhall
Potterrow
Hanover Street

Other bus companies that transit Midlothian.

First Group travel, for time tables please visit www.firstgroup.com/ukbus/scotland_east/

First Bus No. X62

Melrose
Borders General Hospital
Tweedbank Rail Station
Galashiels interchange
Balnakiel (Wood Street)
Clovenfords
Caddonfoot
Walkerburn
Innerleithen
Cardrona
Peebles
Eddleston
Leadburn
Penicuik
Glencorse Barracks
Bilston
Asda Straiton
Edinburgh Bus Station

First Bus No X95

Carlisle (English Street)
Kingstown Rd
Longtown
Canonbie
Langholm
Mossburn
Hawick
Ashkirk
Bannerfield
Selkirk
Tweedbank
Borders General Hospital
Kingsknowes
Galashiels interchange
Stow
Heriot
North Middleton
Newtongrange
Old Dalkeith Rd
Dalkeith Rd
Edinburgh Bus Station

Perryman's Bus No 51/52

Jedburgh 51 Only
Ancrum
Kelso 52 Only
St. Boswells
Newtown
Leaderfoot
Earlston
Lauder,
Oxton
Pathhead
Edgehead
Dalkeith
Danderhall
Cameron Toll
Dalkeith Rd
Edinburgh Bus Station

Stagecoach 101/102

Dumfries
Heathhall
St Ann's
Beattock
Moffat
Holywood
Thornhill Cross
Elvanfoot
Abington
Lamington
Coulter
Biggar
West Linton
Carlops
Silverburn
Penicuik
Flotterstone
Fairmilehead
Morningside
Lothian Road
Edinburgh Bus Station

Prentice 111

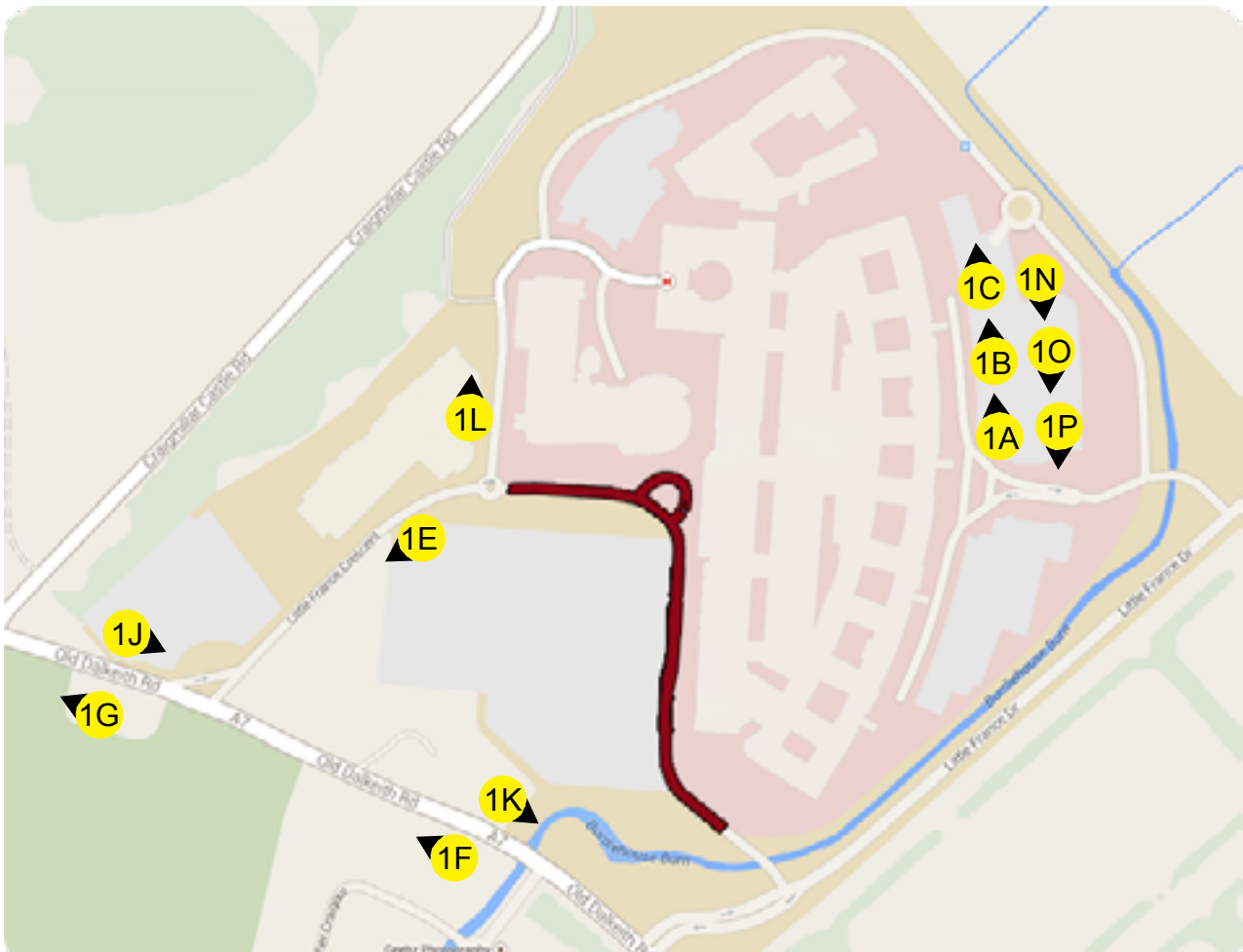
Haddington
Roodlands
Drem
Gullane
Aberlady
Longniddry
Seton Sands
Port seton
Prestonpans
Whitecraig
Musselburgh Police
Musselburgh Tesco
Old Craighall
Millerhill
Newton Village
Royal Infirmary

Buses at Edinburgh Royal Infirmary

The relocation of the current bus stops is to allow for the development of the New Royal Hospital for Sick Children also the department of Clinical Neuroscience. The bus services affected by these developments are Lothian Bus 7, 8, 18, 21, 24, 33, 38, 49 and also the NHS shuttle bus.

The bus stops have moved from Little France Crescent to Little France Drive, for the Lothian Bus

- Number 7 to Newhaven 1O ▶ 1E ▶
- Number 8 to Muirhouse 1B ▶ 1E ▶
- Number 18 to Gyle Centre 1N ▶ 1E ▶ 1K ▶
- Number 21 to Gyle Centre 1A ▶ 1E ▶ 1G ▶
- Number 24 to West Granton 1A ▶ 1E ▶ 1G ▶
- Number 33 to Baberton 1C ▶ 1E ▶ 1G ▶
- Number 33 to Gorebridge 1J ▶ 1L ▶ 1P ▶
- Number 38 to Granton 1A ▶ 1E ▶ 1G ▶
- Number 49 to The Jewel 1O ▶ 1E ▶ 1G ▶
- Number 49 to Rosewell 1J ▶ 1L ▶ 1P ▶
- Perryman 51/52 to Edinburgh 1F ▶
- Perryman 51/52 to Jedburgh/ Kelso 1K ▶
- First Bus X95 to Edinburgh 1F ▶
- First Bus X95 to Galashiels/Hawick/Carlisle 1K ▶
- Prentice Coaches 111 to Haddington 1N ▶
- NHS Shuttle Bus to WGH, Sick Kids, St Johns also stops at the bus hub.



Buses at Midlothian Community Hospital

The Lothian Bus number 39 is the only bus that goes into the Midlothian, Lothian Buses 40 and 49 stop in the Eskbank Road in Bonnyrigg, marked below the Lothian bus number 29 stops at Tesco Hardengreen, there is a short walk to a footpath that takes you over the A7 shown as the dotted blue line. The First Bus X95 stops at Justinlees on the B703 about 1 mile east, Lothian community transport service route R1 and R2 stop at Eskbank Road in Bonnyrigg.

Number 29 to Gorebridge 1T ▶

Number 29 to Silverknowes 1T ▶

Number 39 to Gorebridge 1T ▶ 1Z ▶ 1X ▶

Number 39 to Woodburn 1Z ▶ 1T ▶

Number 40 to Penicuik 1T ▶ 1X ▶

Number 40 to Portobello 1X ▶ 1T ▶

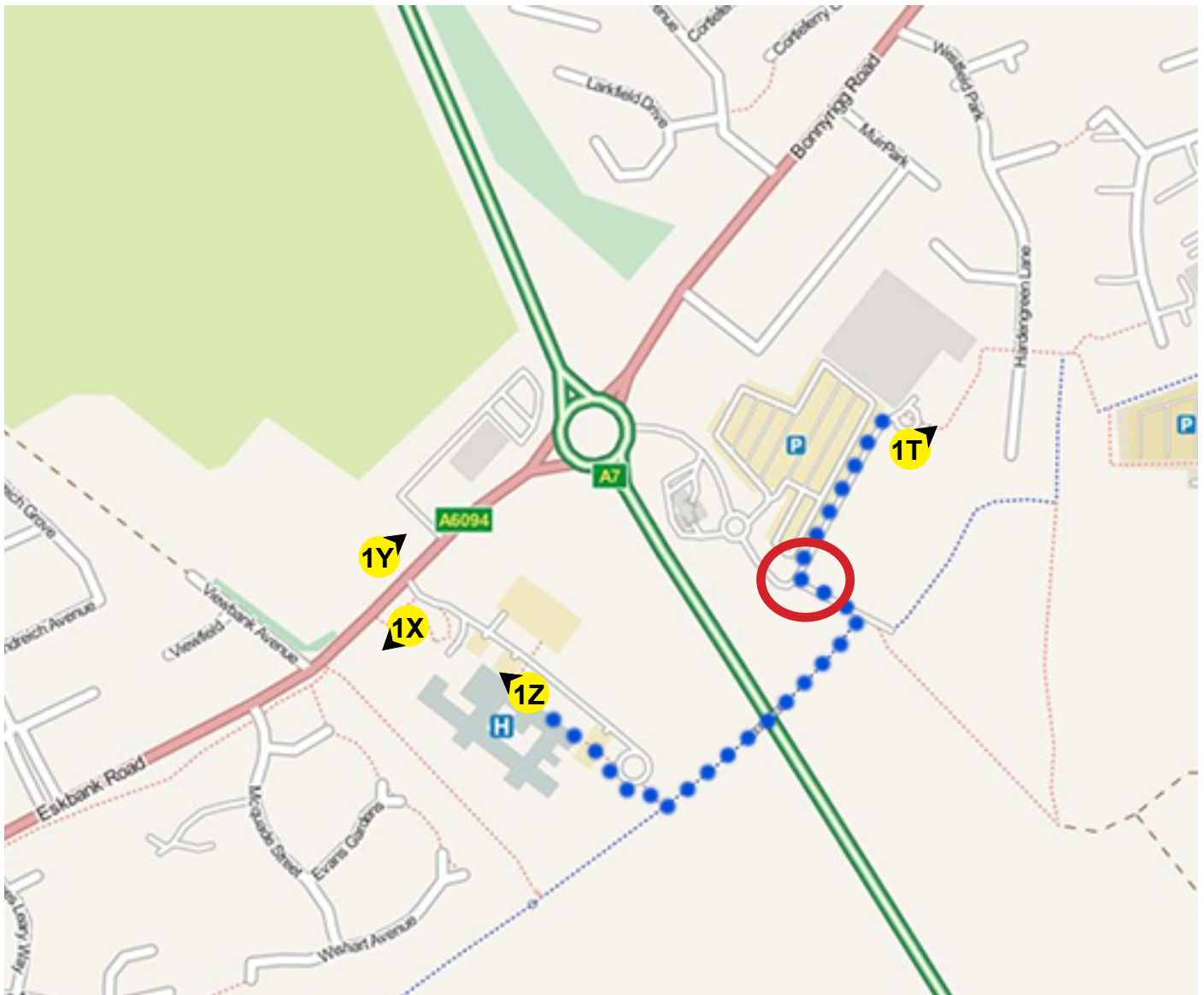
Number 49 to Rosewell 1T ▶ 1X ▶

Number 49 to the Jewel 1Y ▶ 1T ▶

LCTS R1 and R2 to Dalkeith 1Z ▶ 1T ▶ , Thursdays Only.

LCTS R1 and R2 From Dalkeith 1T ▶ 1Z ▶ , Thursdays Only.

Pedestrian footpath area Circled not suitable for wheelchairs ○



Bus Users Scotland

If you have experienced problems on a bus and have not had a satisfactory response from the bus company in the dispute then you can ask Bus Users Scotland.

Bus Users Scotland is part of Bus Users UK a non-profit organisation which works on behalf of all bus users to ensure that operators meet your needs. Think of us as the voice of passengers.

Bus Users Scotland works with partners across the country including

- Scottish Government
- Local transport authorities
- Bus companies

To drive up standards in bus travel and put the needs of bus passengers at the heart of transport policy.

The Scottish economy is hugely reliant on bus services. More than 400 million passenger journeys are made on local buses each year. Buses provide links to remote, rural communities and offer vital access to families, employment, education, health and social facilities.

Along with coach travel, bus services also provide the infrastructure for a flourishing market in tourism yet they are facing funding cuts that could threaten services and lead to fare increases. The aim of Bus Users Scotland is to offer bus passengers the same protection and safeguards already available to rail passengers.



Bus Users Scotland has a head office in Edinburgh.

The focus of Bus Users Scotland is on four key areas:

- Compliance monitoring to check bus services are running where and when they should be;
- Complaints management, to ensure that complaints are handled efficiently and effectively;
- Good practice development: working with bus companies, acting on complaints and sharing best practice;
- Advocacy: working with government, local authorities, special interest groups, Transport Scotland and bus companies to make sure the views and interests of passengers are properly represented.

Bus Users Scotland is part of the Bus Users family, which also has a successful presence in England and Wales. We champion the interests of bus users and campaign to make bus and coach services the best they can possibly be.

Contact Details:

Bus Users Scotland

Hopetoun Gate,

8b McDonald Road,

Edinburgh EH7 4LZ

Tel: 0131 523 1309

www.bususers.org/scotland/about-us

Complaints Call 0300 111 0001

Midlothian TaxiCard Participating Companies

Forward Mid asked the taxi companies for a list of Vehicles that they operate that can carry wheelchair passengers .



Bonnyrigg and Lasswade

P Jack _____ ☎ 0754 585 4449
 Not confirmed
 Town & Country _____ ☎ 0131 660 2666, 0131 663 2666
 Not confirmed
 United Private Hire _____ ☎ 0131 660 0011
 Not confirmed

Dalkeith

1212 Taxis _____ ☎ 0131 654 1212
 1212 Taxis can accommodate 1 wheelchair plus 4 passengers
 Aerial ABW Cabs _____ ☎ 0131 663 2000, 0131 663 3232, 0131 663 9666
 Aerial ABW cabs say they have the largest fleet of wheelchair accessible vehicles in Midlothian.
 Aerial ABW cabs have 28 wheelchair accessible vehicles, and 33 private hire cars in a fleet of over 60 vehicles.
 Important When booking a taxi, please state that you need a wheelchair accessible cab.
 Antonio Palys _____ ☎ 0131 660 2000
 Not confirmed
 Dial-A-Cab Direct _____ ☎ 0131 516 4141
 Cannot Carry wheelchair passengers
 Freewheeler Taxis _____ ☎ 0131 660 3880
 Cannot Carry wheelchair passengers
 Ian Diamond _____ ☎ 0771 133 6884
 Not confirmed

Danderhall

Aztec Cabs _____ ☎ 0131 663 0999
 Not confirmed

Edinburgh

Central Taxis _____ ☎ 0131 229 2468
 Every Central Taxi can carry 1 wheelchair
 Computer Cabs _____ ☎ 0131 272 8000
 Every Computer Cab can carry 1 wheelchair

Gorebridge

D&D Private Hire _____ ☎ 01875 820477
 D&D Private Hire have 1 taxi that takes wheelchairs,
 Our private hire cars are not suitable for wheelchairs users.
 When booking a taxi, please state that you need a wheelchair accessible cab.
Gore Cabs _____ ☎ 01875 822233
 Gore Cab do not have any wheelchair accessible vehicles. We operate private cars and a minibus we carry a small step to assist people getting in and out of our minibus as the step in can be quite high for elderly/disabled people.

Loanhead

Chauffeur Drive _____ ☎ 0131 440 1192
 Chauffeur Drive say they have the largest wheelchair accessible fleet in Midlothian as follows:
 For one wheelchair user and 3 passengers we operate 2 VW Caddy
 For one wheelchair user and 3 passengers we operate 2 Peugeot /eurobus
 For three wheelchairs plus passengers Ford Transit Electric Tail-lift, for heavy awkward chairs

For two/three wheelchairs plus passengers Mercedes Sprinter with ramp
 We also have Mercedes Vitos x 3 that can take one or two standard size wheelchairs
 Our fleet is involved in contract work so availability can differ from week to week, it is best to call in advance particularly for the larger vehicles.

We provide transport for days out, holidays but also journeys to hospitals, shops, banks, meals out or visiting friends.

We are introducing a loyalty scheme after using us 10 times the customer will get £4.00 off their 11th journey.

Fountain Private Hire  -----  0131 440 1688

Can accommodate 1 wheelchair plus 4 passengers

Midlothian Taxi Hire -----  0131 440 2985

Not confirmed

Newtongrange

Grange Cabs -----  0131 663 9220

Not confirmed

Swift Taxis  -----  0131 654 1004, 0131 660 1031

1 wheelchair taxi, please book in advance, Half price pensioner Wednesday 10am to 12 am.

Ring and go service for Newton village, Danderhall and Cousland.

Penicuik


JC Taxis -----  01968 676161

Not confirmed

Penicuik Private Hire Ltd -----  01968 679600

Not confirmed

Rosewell

Jed Taxi & Private Hire -----  0131 440 3733

Not confirmed

Midlothian Taxicard

From 1 April 2015, the Midlothian Taxicard Scheme has been closed to all new entrants. Those people who already had a Taxicard can continue to use them, and their Taxicards will be renewed when they reach their expiry date. Also from April, Taxicards are now issued for 4 years.

Travelling in a taxi with a Taxicard

There is a maximum £3 discount per single taxi journey - you pay the first £2, then the Council pays up to the next £3, and you pay anything over the £5.

Each year you will be allowed to make 104 single journeys using your Midlothian Taxicard (equivalent to 1 return journey a week).

Taxicard fare example		
Examples	Fare on the meter	Price you pay
Examples 1	£4.90	£2.00 Flat Fare
Examples 2	£6.00	£2.00 Flat fare plus £1.00 The amount over £5.00

When and where can the Taxicard be used?

You can use your Taxicard whenever you like and for whatever purpose, for example: a trip to the shops, visiting friends or going to classes. It's valid day and night, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. We recommend that you keep a note of the number of trips you have made.

Remember, you are only allowed 104 trips per year.

If you use up your full allocation before the year is up, you should stop using the Taxicard until the

anniversary comes round and you can start using the next year's allocation.

Not all taxi companies are part of the Midlothian Taxicard scheme. It is a voluntary arrangement whereby taxi operators apply to be part of the scheme. The Council does not compel taxi operators to join.

What happens if I lose my Midlothian Taxicard?

You will need to send in a fresh passport-style photograph along with a short letter explaining what happened to the original Taxicard - lost, stolen, mislaid, damaged in the wash, eaten by the dog, or whatever. Any damaged Taxicards should be enclosed with the letter. Send the letter to the Travel Team at Bonnyrigg.

A fresh Taxicard will be issued with the same expiry date as your original Taxicard. The replacement card will have the word "REPLACEMENT" written on it. Should the previously lost or mislaid Taxicard subsequently turn up, please do not use it. Continue to use the "Replacement" card, and return the newly rediscovered original Taxicard back to the Travel Team in Bonnyrigg.

How do I renew my Midlothian Taxicard when it expires?

You will receive a letter and form inviting you to renew your Taxicard from the Travel Team in Bonnyrigg.

This is sent out at the beginning of the month when your Taxicard expires at the end of the month. The form contains the details we have on our system for you. Please check those details and make any corrections necessary. The Travel Team require a colour passport-style photograph to be sent with the completed renewal form to the Travel Team at Bonnyrigg.

Taxicard holders often comment that they have not received their renewal letters. In the majority of cases, this is because they have moved house and forgotten to let us know that they have changed address. The renewal letter will be sent to the most recent address we have on our system.

If you have changed address, or are about to change address, then please don't leave it until your renewal is due, but let us know as soon as possible.

There is a special "Change of Circumstance" form available for the purpose in all Midlothian Travel Team information carousels located at:

- All Midlothian libraries
- Main Council offices
- Midlothian Community Hospital
- Health Centres at Pathhead and Penicuik

Is there a charge to obtain my Midlothian Taxicard?

There is no charge for the issue of a new Midlothian Taxicard, a replacement card (if you lose one before it expires) or a renewed Taxicard.


Completed forms should be taken or sent to the Travel Team at:

Midlothian Council Travel Team

Dundas Buildings, Room 9

62a Polton Street,

Bonnyrigg, EH19 3YD.

Tel:  0131 561 5455 or

Email:  ptu@midlothian.gov.uk .



The Borders Railway

It has been over half a century since there has been a working railway in Midlothian to Edinburgh or the Scottish Borders.

The new railway is due to start operating 7th September 2015. It will run a half hourly service between Tweedbank and Edinburgh Waverley. If you travel to Edinburgh you will find connections to the rest of the rail network.



The journey from Tweedbank, via Galashiels, Stow, Gorebridge, Newtongrange, Eskbank, Shawfair,

Newcraighall, Brunstane and terminating in Edinburgh. The first trains will leave Tweedbank at 05:20 hrs arriving at Edinburgh Waverley at 06:15 taking approximately 55 Minutes. From Edinburgh the first train leaves at 05:43 hrs arriving Tweedbank at 06:49 hrs over one hour. Each station will have Cycle racks, car parking (Except Brunstane and Galashiels) (Parking with charges Waverley and Newcraighall), Ticket vending machines. There are no toilets in the Midlothian stations and staff only at Edinburgh Waverley.

Tickets can be bought in advance from www.scotrail.co.uk, by calling the ScotRail Telesales team on 0344 811 0141 between 0700 and 2200, seven days a week.

Disabled Assistance If you would benefit from a little extra help when using the trains, you can arrange disabled assistance by advising ScotRail at least 24 hours in advance by:

- Calling 0800 912 2901
- Calling Textphone 18001 0800 912 2901 if you are hard of hearing
- Completing an online assistance request form on www.scotrail.co.uk/form/assisted-travel
- Making arrangements with a member of staff at a staffed railway station [only Edinburgh Waverley on this line]

As Edinburgh Waverley is the only staffed station on the Borders' Railway line, in order to provide disabled assistance at all other stations from Brunstane down to Tweedbank, there will be a set of ramps on each train managed by the train conductor.

If you hold a bus pass with an "eye" symbol on the front, then you are eligible to travel free on trains throughout Scotland, which will include the four Midlothian stations from 6 September. If you hold a valid Midlothian Taxicard, then you can present this for free travel by train but only within the Edinburgh and four Midlothian area stations, which will include Shawfair, Eskbank, Newtongrange and Gorebridge. The Midlothian Taxicard will not be valid for travel south of Gorebridge.

In both cases, you do not need to obtain a rail ticket from the station travel office. Show the card at the gate barrier. Do not attempt to enter via one of the automatic gates. Do not try to push your NEC or Midlothian Taxicard into the slot on the automatic gates – it will damage your card and may put the automatic gate out of action for other travellers. Instead, approach one of the staff at the manually controlled gate and show your card. Where there is no gate, show the card to the conductor on the train.

From Edinburgh Waverley Station			Prices correct for August 2015	
Station	Adult Single	Any time Day Return	Off peak Day Return	Weekly ticket
Shawfair	£3.30	£5.30	£3.70	£21.20
Eskbank	£4.40	£7.00	£4.90	£28.00

Newtongrange	£4.70	£7.50	£5.30	£30.00
Gorebridge	£5.30	£8.50	£6.00	£34.00
Stow	£7.90	£12.60	£8.80	£50.40
Galashiels	£9.30	£14.90	£10.40	£59.60
Tweedbank	£11.00	£16.00	£11.20	£64.00

Steam Trains

Steam Dreams will be running three journeys per week on a Wednesday, Thursday, and a Sunday in the Autumn, with a selection of first and standard class travel. Each special steam train will have a mixture of restored carriages from the 30s, 40, and 50s. The cost for the steam train return journey 1st class £75, standard class £40 under 16 £20, a family ticket 2 adults and 2 children £100. For more information please visit www.scotrail.co.uk/scotland-by-rail/steam-trains There are two ways that Midlothian residents can enjoy free concessionary travel on the trains in Midlothian when they arrive in September 2015.

As part of the Scottish Blind Scheme [SBS]. This scheme was created in the year 2000 and applies to blind persons resident anywhere in Scotland including Midlothian. Cardholders enjoy free travel on buses, trains, ferries, Glasgow Subway and Edinburgh Trams for themselves. There is free travel for a companion on buses [denoted by the two symbols of an eye and a “+1” on the card], but this companion entitlement does not extend to the other modes. SBS is financially supported by the 32 Scottish local authorities, but as far as the cardholder is concerned, the scheme is co-produced with the Scottish Government using their National Entitlement Card [NEC]. Application forms are available at all Midlothian libraries where completed forms must be handed in by the applicant in person [part of the process of verification is that the face of the applicant and the photo image supplied must be cross-checked by the librarian before the application is accepted].



Be part of the Midlothian Taxicard Scheme. This scheme dates back to Lothian Region days in the early 1990s when an agreement between Lothian Region and ScotRail allowed Taxicard holders to travel free on any train journeys wholly within the boundary of Lothian Region. This arrangement survived the local government reorganization of 1996 and the current Midlothian Taxicard is still valid for free train travel in what used to be the Lothian Region. This concession has been marginal for many years for most Midlothian Taxicard holders, but with the forthcoming opening of the new railway in September 2015, the presentation of a Midlothian Taxicard to ScotRail staff [at the gated entrance at Waverley, or to the conductor on the train] will provide free travel to/from the four stations in Midlothian [at Shawfair, Eskbank, Newtongrange and Gorebridge]. Free travel will be between any two stations in the Edinburgh and three Lothian’s area. The concession will not be available for travel to Stow, Galashiels or Tweedbank [which are in the Scottish Borders], or to other stations outwith Edinburgh and the three Lothian’s. This concession will only apply to those who have held a valid Midlothian Taxicard since 31 March 2015. From the start of April 2015, the Midlothian Taxicard Scheme has been closed to all new entrants.

Disabled Persons Railcard

If you have a disability that makes travelling by train difficult you might qualify for the Disabled Persons Railcard. The Disabled Persons Railcard allows you to get 1/3 off most rail fares throughout Great Britain. If you’re travelling with an adult companion they also can get 1/3 off their rail fare. It costs £20 for a one-year Railcard. £54 for a three-year Railcard.

You can apply online at www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk/



Transport For a Health Appointment


What to do if you need transport for a health appointment?

If you have an appointment at a hospital or other health venue, or you are visiting someone in hospital you may find that you need to arrange transport. Feedback we have received indicates that people don't always have clear information about how to do this. Information to help is below.

Using Public Transport

If you are planning to travel by public transport, information is included in this newsletter about buses that serve the Royal Infirmary (page 10) and Midlothian Community Hospital (page 11).

Traveline Scotland Journey Planner

For other destinations; Traveline Scotland journey planner can assist. This can be found at www.travelinescotland.com or by calling Traveline Scotland Tel:  0871 200 22 33. Give details of your start point and destination, along with journey times, the journey planner will give details of bus times, route numbers, bus stop locations and journey times.

Midlothian Community Hospital

A public transport guide for Midlothian Community Hospital has been produced, giving information about bus routes from across Midlothian to the hospital. Copies are available at all Midlothian libraries, main Council offices, the Midlothian Community Hospital [MCH] and the health centres at Pathhead and Penicuik. The bus stop at MCH is closer to the main hospital entrance than the free main car park. Special parking spaces marked for the use of Blue Badge holders are closer to the main door than the bus stop.

The free car park at the hospital, includes disabled parking areas close to the hospital entrance.

Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh

The Royal Infirmary site is undergoing development at present due to the building of the new Royal Hospital for Sick Children and the Department for Clinical Neuroscience. Car parking at the site will continue to be provided, the building work will mean changes to where car parks are located. As a result of the site development the bus stop has been relocated to the rear of the Royal Infirmary, closer to outpatient departments (see page 10). For more information please visit www.nhsllothian.scot.nhs.uk/riecampus

Transport between the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh and St John's Hospital

If you are travelling to or from St John's hospital and can easily get to the Royal Infirmary site, a number 40/X40 Horsburgh bus runs between the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh and St John's Hospital. The bus runs approximately once per hour and takes between 50 minutes and an hour.

General anaesthetic + driving?

Please use public transport, if possible, or arrange to be dropped off at the hospital and picked up again by car. Car parking spaces are limited at some hospitals. There are 'drop off' zones at our hospitals.

The Scottish Ambulance Service Patient Transport Service

If you are not able to use public transport and do not have your own private transportation, you may qualify for support from the Scottish Ambulance Service Patient Transport Service



Ambulance transport is available for patients who:

- Require assistance from skilled ambulance staff
- Have a medical condition that would prevent them from travelling to hospital by any other means
- Have a medical condition that might put them at risk from harm if they were to travel independently
- Have mobility difficulties that require the assistance of ambulance care staff
- Are attending hospital for treatment that might have side effects and require ambulance care on the return journey

Can I be accompanied by my carer?

There are circumstances when you may be accompanied by a carer or escort:

- If you are under 16 years old
- If you have learning difficulties
- If you require more specialist personal support from a carer due to your medical condition or a mental health condition

How can I request ambulance transport?

To request an ambulance, call the Scottish Ambulance Service Booking Line. Booking line: 📞 0300 123 1236 OR Text Relay: 📠 18001-0300 123 1236 for patients who may be deaf, hard of hearing or speech impaired

Calls will be charged at local rates for mobiles and landlines.

You may request bookings up to 28 days in advance of your appointment. You will need your appointment letter when you call with the 10 digit CHI number at the top of the letter. Due to limited space on the ambulance, you will only be able to travel with one piece of hand luggage.



A lot of time is wasted by people not cancelling a journey no longer needed. If you need to cancel a journey which has been booked, please call 📞 0800 389 1333 (freephone from landlines).

What is the NHS Travel Costs Scheme?

If you travel to hospital by other forms of transport, you may be entitled to get help with your costs. More information is available at www.scotland.gov.uk/healthcosts or call 📞 0845 850 116 (calls charged at local rates).

Other transport options

If you contact the Patient Transport Service and you do not qualify for an ambulance, they will advise you about alternative options. One option available locally is the British Red Cross Transport Service.

British Red Cross Transport Service

The transport service offers freedom and independence for people who cannot get about easily or use public transport. British Red Cross help people to get to medical/hospital appointments

How do we help people?

British Red Cross can provide a driver with a vehicle to offer door-to-door assistance for those in need. The service aims to:

- Enable clients to keep appointments safely and efficiently



➤ **Provide freedom of travel for those with mobility problems.**

The British Red Cross ask for a contribution to our costs, based on mileage used. The charge for the service is 55p per mile which we ask you to pay in cash at the time of the journey. You will be informed as to how much the journey will cost when you book it.

It is best to give as much notice as possible as this is a popular service.

What skills and training do our volunteers have?

The British Red Cross volunteers are fully trained in helping people who have difficulty travelling and those using our specially adapted vehicles must complete accredited driver training.

Could I volunteer for this service?

Without volunteers, the British Red Cross would never be able to give people the help they need in a crisis. Because we offer so many services across the UK, we depend on people who generously give up their time to help others. Please contact us if you would like to become a transport volunteer.

How do I get in touch?

For further information, please contact our West Lothian branch Tel:  01506 654 652. Our West Lothian branch manage the service for Midlothian.

Travelling Home from Hospital

When being discharged from hospital, the first option to travel home should be family or friends. You should make the staff in the ward aware as soon as possible if you have someone who can collect you from hospital when you are being discharged.

If you have a clinical or mobility need and require assistance, staff in the ward can contact the NHS Lothian Transport Hub. There is limited access to transport and this is prioritised for patients who require assistance and for transfer to other hospitals.

NHS Lothian Transport Hub

NHS Lothian Transport Hub is a single point of contact for patient transport and can only be accessed by NHS Lothian staff.

When a patient needs transport to leave hospital or be transferred to another hospital, nursing staff will call the Transport Hub on the patient's behalf.

Call handlers within the Transport Hub have access to various transport options including ambulances, patient transport buses, Royal Voluntary Service patient transport drivers and taxis. The Hub uses the same assessment as the Scottish Ambulance Service to decide what the most appropriate transport solution is for each patient.

The Hub benefits for each patient are:

- Staff are able to access the most suitable type of vehicle when the patient is ready for discharge or transfer
- The waiting time for transport outwith Lothian has reduced from 2-3 weeks to 2-3 days. This means that bed capacity is available much sooner.
- Nurses only have to make one 5 minute phone call to arrange transport. Previously this could take up to an hour. This frees up nursing time which can be used for patient care.
- All transport is used more efficiently and all patients that need the assistance on an ambulance crew will receive this assistance.

Thanks to Catherine Evans for this section.



The Blue Badge Scheme

The Blue Badge Scheme provides parking concessions nationally and across Europe for people with a permanent and substantial disability, whether that person is the driver or a passenger. The holder of a Blue Badge is permitted to park in areas normally subject to restrictions and benefits those who are unable to walk great distances.

New Applicants for a Blue Badge can apply either online via www.bluebadgescotland.org or for those not online, a paper application is available. Renewals of a Blue Badge and replacement for a lost or stolen Blue Badge are arranged using paper forms. If you change address or name etc, then please complete a "Change of Circumstance" form that can be used to notify the Travel Team about your Blue Badge, bus pass, Taxicard and Ring & Go card.

All the forms mentioned in this article are available at all Midlothian libraries and main council offices, health centres at Pathhead and Penicuik, and at the Midlothian Community Hospital.

"Blue Badge Scheme Individual Application Forms" are printed on white paper. This single form replaces the previous Form A [on blue paper] and Form B [on lilac paper]. Please recycle any copies of the old A and B forms that you may have collected before the change was made.

Send your completed form with one colour passport-style photograph [with your name written on the back], and the £20 Blue Badge fee [except for those completing Section 3 where payment is taken later]. The fee can be paid by cheque or postal order if sent by post, or by cheque, postal order, cash or debit/credit card if the form is handed in personally at the Midlothian Council office at Dundas Buildings, Polton St, Bonnyrigg, EH19 3YD. A charge of £2.50 is added to all credit card payments. Cheques should be made payable to "Midlothian Council".

All applicants complete sections 1 and 7 on the form.

There are some applicants who will be eligible for a Blue Badge if they can produce appropriate documentation dated within the previous 12 months. Complete sections 1, 2 and 7 if any of the following apply. The Travel Team will need to see appropriate documentation as proof. Bring original documents to the Travel Team office – these will be returned to you. Arrange for a certified photocopy of the documentation if you are posting the application form – do not send the originals by post as these will not be returned

- Registered blind
- High Rate of the Mobility Component of Disability Living Allowance [DLA]
- Personal Independence Payment [PIP] 8, 10 or 12 points in the "Moving Around" category
- PIP – 12 points in the "Planning and Following Journeys" category
- War Pensioner's Mobility Supplement
- Armed Forces and reserve Forces Compensation Scheme Tariffs 1-8
- Special arrangements for those in transition from DLA to PIP

For those with a disability in both arms who have difficulty using parking meters or pay machines, complete sections 1, 4 and 7.

For applicants under the age of three who have a specific condition as detailed in the form complete sections 1, 5 and 7.

Further assessment will be needed for all applicants who do not fall within one of the above categories. Complete sections 1, 3 and 7.



Circumstances covered by Section 3 “Subject to Further Assessment” include

- If you have a temporary mobility impairment which makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for you to walk and which is likely to last for a period of at least 12 months
- If you have been supplied with a wheelchair by the NHS
- If your disability is substantial and means you are unable to walk or you experience considerable difficulty in walking.
- If you cannot walk far without severe discomfort, stopping or receiving support from another person.

Applicants completing Section 3 may be invited to an “Independent Mobility Assessment” with a medical professional appointed by the Council. Assessments do not involve any physical examination. The applicant can take a spouse or companion with them for support.

All assessments in Midlothian take place at Bonnyrigg Health Centre. You will receive a letter from the Travel Team giving you a date and time to attend. If you cannot make the appointment, please let the Travel Team know as soon as possible as they may be able to offer your time slot to someone else. A couple of assessment sessions are held each month and most Section 3 applicants are seen within four to six weeks.



The doctor will decide to accept or reject the application. You will be notified of the result by the Travel Team by email, phone or letter. If your application is accepted, you will need to make arrangements to pay the £20 Blue Badge fee. If the application is rejected, you will be advised of the appeal procedure if you are unhappy with the outcome.

If your badge is coming up to its expiry date and you wish to renew it, you will need to go to any Midlothian library to obtain a Blue Badge Renewal Form printed on white paper. Complete this and submit it with the appropriate proofs and a payment of £20 to the Midlothian Council Travel Team. Consider providing a fresh photograph if you now look significantly different from the image on your previous Blue Badge. Remembering to renew a Blue Badge is the badgeholder’s responsibility – no reminder letter is sent out by the Travel Team.

If you lose your Blue Badge, or suspect that it has been stolen, this must be reported to the Police. The Blue Badge is a legal document. Misuse can result in a substantial fine and possible confiscation of the Blue Badge. You need to make a statement to the Police that you can refer to if your Blue Badge should subsequently appear being used illegally by someone else. The Police will give you a reference number.

This Reference Number must be added to a “Lost or Stolen Blue Badge” form, printed on pink paper which, when completed, should be sent to the Midlothian Council Travel Team in Bonnyrigg along with a further £20 payment.

Later in 2015, the Midlothian Travel Team will be relocated to Midlothian House on Buccleuch Street in Dalkeith. The phone and email contacts will remain the same, but the move will bring some changes to the process for obtaining a Blue Badge in Midlothian. There will be a reprint of the various paper forms to include the new Dalkeith address.

Helen's Handy Hints

I enjoy traveling on the train and will continue to in spite of some of the obstacles. Once you've decided where you want to go and when, the next thing you need to do is think about what assistance and support you may require to get there. The train company need to know that you are in a wheelchair, can you transfer to a seat or do you need to remain in your wheelchair. Try to give the train company as much notice as possible as sometimes it can be difficult to get a wheelchair space if others have already been pre-booked as there are limited wheelchair spaces available. You then need to contact either the train company you are travelling with or National Rail direct and they will book your tickets and any assistance you may require, for example, If you need ramps to get on or off the train or help whilst on the train. They also ask how much luggage you have as you may need assistance, both with getting on the train and when you arrive at your destination. Help to take your luggage to a taxi or whatever transport you have arranged to pick you up? There is a lot of planning involved and the best way to do this is to break it down into manageable stages.

- Stage 1 Where and when am I going
- Stage 2 When I arrive at the station, what support do I need
- Stage 3 What support do I need to get on the train
- Stage 4 What support do I need when on the train
- Stage 5 What support do I need to get off the train
- Stage 6 What support do I need once I am off the train but still in the station



You can book your tickets on line but I prefer to phone the company direct and get them to send my tickets to my house. It's best if you can give them at least 7 to 10 days to enable them to do this but I always find they are sent out very quickly. There is an additional cost for this but it is well worth the peace of Mind it gives you to know you don't have to panic about buying tickets at the station or trying to get them from the automatic machines they have within the station forecourt. I would usually arrive 30 to 45 minutes before departure even though they would only normally require you to be there 30 minutes before. This gives you that little extra time to make sure you are prepared for your journey. If you intend to travel a lot I would suggest you get a disabled railcard as this can save you a great deal of money. The Disabled Persons Railcard allows you to get 1/3 off most rail fares throughout Great Britain. If you're travelling with an adult companion they also can get 1/3 off their rail fare - so you can save money for your friends too! The railcard cost £20 for one year and £54 for three years so, use your Railcard for a £60 fare and you'll save £20 on the journey. That means a one year Railcard has paid for itself in just one trip! Take a friend with you and you've saved enough for lunch, a visit to the cinema or whatever you both enjoy!

Getting into Edinburgh Waverley by wheelchair is not as easy as it used to be as there are now barriers at the entrance to the station and only permitted Edinburgh taxis can gain access to the station along with Handicabs. Coming by car or via a Midlothian Taxi you are dropped at the Carlton entrance There is a telephone available for use at this entrance and you can contact the East Coast train provider direct to let them know you have arrived at the station and could they send the support that you have previously arranged, to meet you.

Once on the train there is a refreshment service provided, either in the buffet car or brought to all passengers via a trolley service. Hot drinks, cold drinks, food and alcohol. Try and have some change with you as it just makes life easier but they also accept some bank cards. The toilet facilities are usually very clean and accessible but I prefer to take my foot plates off as it makes things more manageable for me negotiating the narrow carriages. You can call for assistance if you need it to get to the toilet as there is a button at the table beside your seat. Someone will then take you to the toilet and wait outside the door or you can tell them that you will call them on the assist button which is inside the toilet to come back for you when you are ready to return to your seat.

On the Bus by Mike Harrison

Mike Harrison is Secretary of the Scottish Accessible Transport Alliance and Chair of the Midlothian Disability Access Panel. Following a spinal injury in 2006 he is a tetraplegic wheelchair user who relies on buses for about 90% of travel (trains for the other 10%). Here is a mixture of bits of information and tips from make which can help someone who does not use buses to reconsider and experiment.

Operators

There are four main operators with services running in or through Midlothian.

1. Stagecoach has services to Dumfriesshire which run through Penicuik. Its website is particularly un-helpful as all it says about users with special needs is 'contact the local operator' but gives no information as to who the local operator is or how you contact them. I suspect that, in common with other Stagecoach out-of-town services, they use coaches where a wheelchair space has to be booked in advance with seats being removed from the coach at the depot. If experience of users in Fife is anything to go by this is very unreliable.
2. Perryman operates services between Edinburgh and some Borders towns. All of their buses now have low floors, ramps and wheelchair space.
3. First Group also operates between Edinburgh and some Borders towns. Both routes now seems to be served entirely by buses with low floor, ramp and a wheelchair space. However it may be worth checking with them about any particular journey.
4. Lothian Buses provide the most frequent services in Midlothian – generally radially from Edinburgh out to Mayfield, Gorebridge, Rosewell and Penicuik. There is also the 'bus in search of a destination', the number 40 which goes between Penicuik and Portobello by a very circuitous rural route. Lothian Buses have all been fully wheelchair accessible for a few years, and the ones on the most used routes now also have a second space for a buggy.

All operators have conditions of carriage which set out their policy about numbers and types of chairs. All trying to juggle constraints to be as fair as possible to most of the users. So we may not get what we want all of the time, but should expect it most of the time. From personal experience I reckon that there will be a ramp malfunction on about one in eight journeys, but that's an initial failure – often a second attempt will be successful and usually even if it's not the driver will assist; to be left behind because of a ramp failure is very rare. Slightly more common is the situation where there is already of wheelchair on the bus and a less common one where the space is occupied by a buggy with an uncooperative owner who will not fold it. Although the signs say 'This space must be vacated for a wheelchair user' the driver cannot enforce this. You may just have to wait for the next bus – not a problem if it's the No. 3 with a 10-minute service, but a 40 or in the evenings when it's 30' it's a pain. In my cycling days I always used to allow 'puncture time' to a journey to allow for changing an inner tube. Now I allow 'buggy time' by taking one bus earlier than the one I need to arrive at my destination in time. This means that most of the time I arrive at places 20 to 30 minutes before I need to be there. Reduces stress no end.

I have no personal experience of using the first



Mike Harrison Alighting a bus

two operators and only very limited with First Group, but I do between 20 and 30 journeys a week on Lothian Buses so most of what I say from here on is based on my personal experience and observation.

At home

How hard are your tyres? How are your brakes? On a bus you are protected against a sudden stop by the backrest, but if your brakes are not well adjusted you may be liable to some skidding when a bus starts off from a stop and this is much more a significant problem in wet weather. There is no need for restraints in trams or trains, but the modern bus does accelerate quite quickly. It is not a problem if the brakes are well set and the tyres are dry.

At the bus stop

At every stop there is a board which details the kinds of ticket available and the price. If you don't have an entitlement card, READ THIS(!). And remember that, for driver safety reasons, Lothian Buses drivers do not have any access to cash to give change.

The drivers will usually stop if there is anyone waiting even if they don't look as if they are waiting for that particular bus, but it's always best to signal. If you are obviously physically disabled and have a wheelchair or a stick the driver will do his best to get in close to the kerb. Unfortunately bus stopping places are frequently cluttered up with illegally parked cars and pavement heights are very variable. The Kassel kerb which is designed to be almost exactly at the height of the bus floor is fine if the bus is able to get in close and square to the kerb, but very often they have to come in at an angle which means there is an uncomfortable gap. Also if a ramp is needed, that has to have a space to drop slightly and the Kassel kerb can be too high. I feel sorry for the drivers, some of the routes are quite long and in the course of a return journey there may be something like 80 stops and every one will be slightly different in the approach line and kerb height, and as drivers do not stick to one route it's obviously impossible for them to remember the details of every stop.

The convention is that a wheelchair user goes to the front of the queue and gets on first so that they have time to position themselves and get the brakes on before the bus sets off, and generally other passengers are on the side of the disabled and those with buggies. Most buggy owners will fold the buggy if it is in the wheelchair space, or even get off the bus without being asked.

Ramps

The ramps are generally reliable, although slightly oversensitive and will retract automatically if they hit an obstacle, but there are various tricks the drivers will use and generally will make three or four attempts to get a ramp out before they will come out of their cab and assist manually with a wheelchair.

My old chair had its centre of gravity too far forward, and the chair tended to tip backwards going up a bus ramp. I always tried to make sure there was somebody behind me in the queue (see next paragraph) and would ask them for help, but I learnt that if I said "please stop me tipping backwards" it panicked them, but if I said "can you help me up the ramp?" They were happy to help. My new chair is balanced better.

On the bus

If you have an entitlement card and are in a wheelchair you will not be able to reach the card reader. For driver safety reasons they will usually have their window closed, in which case the card has to be passed through the small slot at the front so the driver can scan it. At busy times very often the driver will just offer to enter the 'fare' manually, as long as he/she has seen the card.

If you are not a wheelchair user but have difficulty in walking, it's probably a good idea to have a Thistle card which can indicate to the driver that you need time to sit down before the bus moves. If you say where you are getting off, it will also enable the driver to give you time to get to the front

of the bus. One of the disadvantages of the additional space for the buggy is that it has reduced the number of handholds for getting to the front.

The wheelchairist has an additional problem on some of the older single deck buses which have four inward facing seats on the left-hand side. These are very popular with those who have reduced mobility, but unfortunately the space is quite narrow and it is very difficult to get a chair past without running into people's shins, and of course these are the people who have the most difficulty in getting out of the way. On these buses there is also a slope from front to back so as well as trying to avoid people's legs you are going uphill.

Getting off the bus

Sometimes this is harder than getting on. Firstly you have to do a 180° turn usually around the pillar that has the blue bell on it. Diagonally opposite are usually the seats for disabled people but these are also very popular with people who have shopping trolleys or walkers. Generally they are not aware of how much space is needed for a wheelchair's footrests, and a polite "Watch your legs I don't want to hit them" is in order.

Go squarely down the ramp, keeping control of your speed. Again people don't realise that you need to go to the end of the ramp before turning and will stand there blocking your exit. Speak nicely to them! A 'Thank you' at this point can be both to the driver and the people who are giving you space to get off. Be careful in wet weather where you may not have the normal grip.

Finally

If you have not used a bus because you think you may not be able to, get a friend or a carer to go with you who can help if you need it and just give you confidence anyway. Don't be frightened, don't be dissuaded. It can be an adventure and a sense of humour and a relaxed attitude is an advantage. Always allow more time than you think you will need. You have all the time in the world.

Postscript

Lothian Buses are considering trialling the carriage of mobility scooters. Up to now they have said 'no' to all scooters for, I think, three reasons:

- Many are not manoeuvrable enough to get into the space in a reasonable time
- A significant number have a narrow width wheelbase and stability going round corners could be an issue
- It's unfair to expect drivers to have to make a snap decision about whether or not to let any particular scooter try to board

The Confederation of Passenger Transport (CPT) scheme which some operators use gets round these issues. Anyone who wants to take a scooter on a bus has to do four things

1. Go to a designated place (usually a bus depot) with the scooter and have it assessed for size, weight, turning circle and stability
2. Be trained in getting on and off a bus – without the pressure of a live journey and other passengers waiting to board
3. Be assessed on handling skills and the time taken.
4. Receive a permit to show to the driver of a bus on routes operated by the company that issued it.

The last point is significant, because there are many different bus configurations, and what might fit on to one type will not go on another.

Hopefully, Lothian Buses will go for something like this. To just say, 'we are going to have a trial' and allow anyone just to turn up at any bus stop with any kind of scooter would cause a lot of confusion, delays and aggro towards both drivers and the disabled. This could destroy the goodwill and encouragement that currently prevails.

Forward mid

This is the second issue of transport across Midlothian, Forward mid hopes you find this information enlightening. We would love to hear your thoughts in person at Café Connect over a free cup of tea or coffee, failing that a phone call, email or letter, without you telling us what you would like to see happen in Midlothian we cannot try to change it for the enrichment of the local community.

Forward mid aims to raise the awareness of challenges and opportunities which exist for disabled people both locally and nationally:

- By sharing information on issues that affect disabled people
- Forward mid publishes and distributes a bi-monthly newsletter
- Forward mid has a website which has a wealth of useful information
- By actively promoting the rights of disabled people
- Forward mid is a member of the Midlothian Community Planning Equalities Forum
- By working in partnership with organisations in representing the interests of disabled people
- Forward mid works with Midlothian Council by advising on access to public buildings
- Forward mid works with colleges in Midlothian by checking wheelchair access throughout the college.

Café Connect

Café Connect, Dalkeith's vibrant community café run by Forward Mid (with generous support of Midlothian's LAC Group) gives people with disabilities a chance to meet up to talk and listen. We all have different things to bring and our own stories too.

Café connect is a great place to find out useful information about a whole range of relevant supports and services, for example:


Welfare Reform, Access Issues and Self Directed Support. Or just turn up for a coffee, tea and cake on the house!


It's a friendly gathering where everyone is welcome. A place where you can listen or share your story!

Where: Dalkeith Welfare hall, St Andrew Street,
(East side of Dalkeith Medical Practice), Dalkeith

When: Last Tuesday of every month from 2 pm to 4 pm:

For more information contact:
Eric Johnstone at MVA,
4-6 White Hart Street, Dalkeith,
Midlothian, EH22 1AE

Tel:  0131-663-9471

Email:  eric.johnstone@mvacvs.org.uk



A Word From Edinburgh Trams

We want as many people as possible to be able to use our trams in safety and comfort. All our trams have dedicated wheelchair spaces. If there is no wheelchair user occupying or requiring to occupy a wheelchair space, other passengers including those travelling with a buggy or with bulky



luggage may occupy a wheelchair space. Any passenger using a wheelchair space must vacate that seat if requested to do so by a Company official.

Our trams have certain seats which are designated as 'priority seats' and are intended for use by those passengers who are less able to stand throughout their journey. Any passenger using a 'priority seat' must vacate that seat if requested to do so by a Company official.

Please note that mobility scooters are **NOT** permitted on our trams. Wheelchairs which are in a condition which could endanger other passengers or damage their belongings or the tram will not be carried.

Travelling as a wheelchair user or with a wheelchair user

All of our trams have dedicated wheelchair spaces. These spaces are designed for wheelchairs which are no bigger than 700mm wide, 1200mm long and 1350mm high. A wheelchair user will not be able to board a tram if the tram is full, or if there are already wheelchair users occupying the wheelchair spaces.

When using a tram, wheelchair users and/or carers must ensure that the wheelchair is positioned in a wheelchair space and comply with the instructions given by notices and or a Company official. Wheelchairs must have the brakes ON whilst the tram is in motion. Whenever the wheelchair space is needed by a wheelchair user, other passengers must move to make it available unless the tram is full.

Scottish National Entitlement Cards that do not have City of Edinburgh Council as the issuing Local Authority are **NOT valid on tram services**. Scottish Blind Scheme card holders can travel on the Edinburgh Trams free of charge.

As part of the Scottish Blind Scheme [SBS]. This scheme was created in the year 2000 and applies to blind persons resident anywhere in Scotland including Midlothian. Cardholders enjoy free travel on Edinburgh Trams for themselves. There is free travel for a companion on buses [denoted by the two symbols of an eye and a "+1" on the card], but this companion entitlement does not extend to the other modes.

Alternative Publications

Editions of Forward Mid newsletters are available in large print or at www.forwardmid.org.uk For alternative publications please email eric.johnstone@mvacvs.org.uk or call Eric Johnstone on 0131-663-9471. Write to him at MVA, 4-6 White Hart Street, Dalkeith, EH22 1AE with your request.