

LONDON

London Buses
Customer Services
4th Floor – Zone G7
Palestrine
197 Blackfriars Road
London
SE1 8NJ

16th March 2013

Dear Customer Services

On the evening of Friday 15th March I attended a marvellous concert at the Round House that featured Deidre Cartwright and Kathy Dyson – two superb guitarists paying a tribute to Emily Remler plus Sarah P singing some delightful songs– and a terrific vocalist Lorraine Jordan with her band. The whole evening was an uplifting and moving experience. So far so good.

At circa 11.30pm I caught the 168 bus to Holborn; the bonhomie and good will to humankind vanished as quickly as spittle on a hot shovel – I forgot to say that the Stranglers were playing up stairs and judging by the racket they may well have been living up to their sobriquet.

The bus journey commenced from Chalk Farm and at every stop I was informed by an irritating, remorseless, relentless robotic voice, redolent of a Dalek frustrated in its attempts to climb a flight of stairs, that this was a 168 to the Old Kent Road Tesco. At which point I was painfully reminded that it was no wonder I lost a tenner on Champagne Fever in the Supreme Novice Hurdle at Cheltenham on Tuesday; as it fell at the first freezer in Tesco's. Whilst this was going on the driver tested to destruction Newton's first law of motion -" Every object in a state of uniform motion tends to remain in that state of motion unless an external force is applied to it" - such as the brakes with happy abandon at bus stops to let the passengers off in case they have not gone through the windscreen.

What else does London buses have up its corporate sleeve? Announcements such as The Ball's Pond Road, Boots? , Fuchsia Street, Interflora? Nutmeg Lane, Nigella Lawson's Nigellissima – no I did not make that up it is the title of her latest book. What will you exploit next? Operate canned music on the buses ripping off old music hall songs?" On Mother Kelly's doorstep down Morrison's Row? Max Miller's signature tune "Mary from the United Dairy?" Or Gus Elen singing "If it wasn't for the Waitrose in between"

*Now it really is a very pretty garden.
And Chingford on the Eastward can be seen.
With a ladder and some glasses
You can see to Hackney Marshes,
If it wasn't for the Waitrose in between.*

I would appreciate it if you could let the long suffering traveling public know how much London buses earns from this nice little wheeze and why with all this revenue flooding into the coffers our fares keep going up.

Furthermore I trust that the profoundly irritating voice will be replaced by silence – or if you are going to advertise at least have it done with a human voice; just think of all those resting actors and actresses who could drive a bus and recite excerpts from Shakespeare's plays, "This septic aisle..... this happy breed of horsemeat". "A horse, a horse a supermarket for my horse". Some are born great, some achieve greatness and some just end up in the lasagne".

Yours faithfully

Chris Hodgkins



Our ref: 1012099016 / 3428835
Date: 25-Mar-13

Mr C Hodgkins

London

TfL Customer Services

4th Floor
14 Pier Walk
London SE10 0ES

www.tfl.gov.uk

Dear Mr Hodgkins

Thank you for your letter of 16th March 2013.

We aim to send you a full response within 10 working days. However, if we are unable to answer your comments within this time, we will keep you updated about the progress of your case until you receive a full response.

If you need to contact us about this issue in the meantime, you can call us at any time on 0843 222 1234, quoting the reference number above.

Yours sincerely

Fahmida Elahi
Customer Service Advisor
Transport for London Customer Services

Chris Hodgkins

LONDON

Andrew Cumming
Transport for London
TfL Customers
4th Floor
14 Pier Walk
London
SE10 0ES

25th March 2013

Dear Mr Cumming

Very many thanks for your letter in reply to my letter of the 16th March 2013. I am delighted that the visually impaired find the announcements a help and also with the increase in the number of blind and partially sighted people asking for mobility training on buses.

As you know my complaint was about the nature of the announcements. My complaint also assumed that money was changing hands between Tesco's and London buses and if this was the case why were fares inexorably going up?

If you can find time to explain the relationship between London Buses and Tesco's that would be marvellous. However I can well understand that commercial confidentiality could prove a stumbling block to transparency

As they used to say on the buses "Hold tight"!

Yours faithfully

Chris Hodgkins



Our Ref: 1012099016
Date: 22 April 2013

Mr C Hodgkins

London

TfL Customer Services

4th Floor
14 Pier Walk
London SE10 0ES

www.tfl.gov.uk

Dear Mr Hodgkins

Re: Bad driving and bus announcements

Thank you for your email regarding a journey on the 168 bus on 15 March 2013. I apologise for my late reply.

I was sorry to read about your experience on this occasion. Please be assured that the safety of our passengers, as well as that of other road users, is an issue we take extremely seriously. Our drivers receive comprehensive training to enable them to perform their duties to the highest standard. As you would expect, safety is a vital part of this training. To drive a bus in a way that could endanger passengers is totally unacceptable. This would include heavy braking in a manner that makes passenger journeys uncomfortable. I have referred your comments to the bus operator for their attention.

I am also sorry to hear that you found the onboard announcements intrusive. The on board 'next stop' announcements that the iBus system delivers mean passengers know exactly where their bus is and what the next stop and final destination will be, even on an unfamiliar route. For the visually impaired or for those travelling in new parts of the city it has proved to be a useful resource and we have seen an increase in the number of blind and partially sighted people asking for mobility training on buses since its implementation.

Thank you again for your letter. Once again, I am sorry to hear that you have been disappointed by our services but I hope that you have found my reply to be useful. Please contact me again if you have any other questions.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Andrew Cumming', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Andrew Cumming
Customer Services

Chris Hodgkins

From: Chris Hodgkins
Sent: 07 May 2013 13:40
To: 'ENQUIRE@tfl.gov.uk'
Subject: RE: Route 168 announcements

Many thanks
Best wishes
Chris

From: ENQUIRE@tfl.gov.uk [mailto:ENQUIRE@tfl.gov.uk]
Sent: 07 May 2013 13:28
To: Chris Hodgkins
Subject: RE: Route 168 announcements

Our Ref: 1012099016
Date: 07.05.2013

Mr C Hodgkins

Dear Mr Hodgkins

RE: Route 168 announcements

Thank you for your letter of 25 March regarding your continued enquiry over the iBus announcement system. I apologise that this point was not addressed in your previous correspondence.

Please be aware that the names of stops are not the result of any financial arrangement between Transport for London (TfL) and any other group. I would like to assure you that the stop names and therefore the iBus announcements are purely for the benefit of passengers.

These announcements will describe areas of interest or common points of reference around the bus stop location. For example the stop Royal Free Hospital is named purely in reference to its location, and not due to any financial agreement between TfL and the Hospital. Likewise the Dunton Road stop is named due to the proximity of Dunton Road and will announce the neighbouring Tescos purely as a common point of reference.

Thank you for contacting us. Please feel free to contact me again should you require further assistance.

Yours sincerely

Oliver Thomas
Customer Service Advisor