

8th Floor, The Point
37 North Wharf Road
London, W2 1AF
Tel: +44 (0) 20 7291 0505
www.firstgroup.com

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Edward Mountain MSP
Convener
Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
EH99 1SP

Via email to Peter McGrath, Clerk for the Committee:

netzero.committee@parliament.scot

Dear Convener,

Follow up to evidence session on 29 April 2025

Thank you for the opportunity to provide evidence to the Committee on 29 April 2025 as part of the Transport in Scotland inquiry. During the session, we discussed the importance of just transition in Scotland, particularly the importance of creating economic and social benefits as part of Scotland's net zero commitment, and I wanted to follow up with further detail about how First Bus's approach to procurement and vehicle supplier choice supports this aim.

As I mentioned during the session, First Bus is committed to operating a fully zero-emission fleet by 2035. We currently have over 290 zero-emission buses (over 50% of our fleet) across Scotland, with the vast majority supplied by Scottish and UK manufacturers. Our suppliers include Alexander Dennis, with the Scottish manufacturer making up over 66% of First Bus's zero-emission fleet

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395 King Street, Aberdeen AB24 5RP

across Scotland. In addition, First Bus has previously placed orders with NewPower, by Wrightbus, to convert diesel buses into zero-emission electric vehicle. Repowering is a cost-effective approach to decarbonisation, with the process of converting diesel buses into electric for less than half of the price of a new electric bus. An additional benefit is that repowers can be completed by skilled engineers in as little as three weeks.

As I mentioned during the evidence session, a new electric bus costs over £300k for a single decker which carries a significantly higher premium than a diesel bus, which in our experience, costs closer to £200k. In addition, performance and reliability can vary significantly between manufacturers, from possible technical to structural failures, and it is important for First Bus to seek best value in our procurement processes. First Bus is open to positive competition from manufacturers, which is why we have also procured buses from Yutong. Yutong are the largest global manufacturer of medium and large buses, giving significant technical knowledge and experience in producing electric vehicles, helping with reliability, and keeping our zero-emission fleet on the road. While the supplier's operations are based in China, final assembly and customisation is handled by Pelican Bus & Coach in Yorkshire.

Our efforts have been supported by the Scottish Government, namely via the Scottish Zero Emission Bus Challenge Fund (ScotZEB). In ScotZEB Phase 1, First Bus received £18.6 million in funding, with First Bus providing a further £16.4 million of investment. This brought the total investment to £35 which was used to purchase 74 new fully electric and zero emission vehicles – a strong example of the partnership approach that First Bus see as imperative to the future of bus. First Bus welcomes this initiative, which we see as a positive development for competition and for the adoption of EVs in the bus industry, as well as for encouraging inward investment and growth in the supply chain of zero-emission vehicles.

We believe that this is the right approach to keep us on track to deliver against our 2035 target in support of the Scottish Government's own net zero ambitions. Together, we hope to encourage innovation in the adoption of zero-emission

buses, while supporting jobs in the domestic manufacturing sector as well as in terms of vehicle maintenance and keeping fares affordable and fair for customers.

With regards antisocial behaviour (ASB), I would like to underline the points made in the session by several contributors in that ASB is on the rise in general. Although this remains an issue caused by a minority of young people, it is one being taken seriously using a multi-agency approach. In addition to those points raised by Paul White (Confederation of Passenger Transport) on developing school education modules and a working group to tackle ASB involving youth groups, First Bus has implemented a number of actions ourselves, including working closely with the Police to tackle hot-spot locations. If I can provide any further information on this subject area, please do let me know.

I trust that this letter, in addition to the evidence provided to the Committee, explains First Bus's commitment to working with policy makers and our partners in delivering high quality reliable bus services, supporting local economic and our communities, improving air quality and encouraging modal shift. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you wish to discuss these issues in more detail.

Kind regards,

Duncan Cameron
MD· First Bus · Scotland