

FREE OUR CITY: PRESS RELEASE

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CONFERENCE FOR FREE PUBLIC TRANSPORT IN GLASGOW TO FEATURE KEYNOTE SPEAKER FROM DUNKIRK COUNCIL

Xavier Dairaine, the Director of Engineering in Urban Communities in Dunkirk, France, will be joining campaigners in Glasgow next week to talk about why he introduced free public transport in the French city, and why Glasgow should follow suit.

The 'Free Our City' campaign is holding an online conference on Saturday 19th September under the heading, "Imagine if buses were free..." Dunkirk introduced the scheme in 2018 and it has been a huge success, expanding passenger numbers, reducing car travel and opening the city up for historically marginalised communities.

Other speakers include a citizen of Tallinn, Estonia which introduced free public transport for residents in 2013, and Jackson Cullinane from the trade union Unite, which represents Glasgow's bus drivers

Jennifer McCarey, an organiser with Free Our City, said:

"We hope everyone can join the online conference to hear our panel talk about their experiences of free public transport. These insights will be hugely valuable as we launch this campaign to imagine our city in a way that is open to everyone.

"We need to learn from the towns and cities around the world that have introduced free public transport. This conference, and this campaign, invites people to imagine what a difference it would make if buses were free. What would change, who would benefit?"

Ellie Harrison, from Free Our City, commented:

“Free public transport is an idea whose time has come. Transport is our biggest source of greenhouse gas emissions, and free public transport is the key to fighting climate change in Glasgow and the surrounding region. Our shoddy and expensive bus service doesn’t work for anyone. We need radical change.

“Half the households in Glasgow don’t have access to a car. Our extortionate bus fares, combined with this low level of car ownership, ensure that the whole city region is effectively closed to many of its residents. Free public transport will reduce our emissions, improve air quality, and free our city.

“We hope as many people as possible can come along to our conference on Saturday 19th, because this is a fight that we need to win”.

Jackson Cullinane of Unite the Union and president of the Scottish Trade Union Congress, one of the speakers for Saturday’s event, said:

“For too long, bus workers and local communities have suffered from the effects of the privatisation of bus services in the 1980s - with rocketing fares, the removal of routes, reductions in service provision, limitations on wages and conditions, increased working hours and threats to job security.

“We need a new approach. One that is based on service provision rather than profit accumulation, which supports the manufacture of Green Buses and the jobs of workers such as those at Alexander Dennis and one that properly implements the new powers of municipal bus ownership in Scotland by providing councils with the start-up support to make it a reality.”

ENDS

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Notes to editors

- The conference is on Saturday 19th September, 11am-1pm. Anyone can sign up to attend on for free on Eventbrite: freebuses.eventbrite.com
- The Free Our City campaign manifesto is available here: www.getglasgowmoving.org/reports/FreeOurCity.pdf

- Bus travel is free in over 100 towns and cities worldwide including Dunkirk and Tallinn: www.transportforqualityoflife.com/u/files/180317%20Fare-free%20buses_%20time%20to%20raise%20our%20sights.pdf
- A recent Fraser of Allander Institute report concluded that free public transport “would work towards Glasgow City Council’s 2030 carbon neutral target.” fraserofallander.org/scottish-economy/can-fare-free-public-transport-help-glasgow-reach-their-net-zero-emissions-target-by-2030/
- Powers for Councils in Scotland to operate bus services, and therefore to control or abolish fares, were devolved in the 2019 Transport Act. www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-49999555
- Free Our City is a new campaign backed by a coalition of local groups including Glasgow Trades Council, Get Glasgow Moving, Campaign Against Climate Change Glasgow, Scottish Youth Climate Strike, Scot.E3, GCOP – Glasgow Calls Out Polluters and Divest Strathclyde.

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