

Bus drivers vote for strike action

Lothian staff have voted 80 to 41 in favour of rejecting the offer from the Advisory Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) and continuing with strike action this afternoon at the Longstone garage.

This followed a similar vote yesterday when bus drivers voted overwhelmingly to reject the proposal from the ACAS meeting.

More than 1700 members of Unite the union may now strike in the near future after several decisive ballots in recent weeks.

On 28 June the union entered negotiations with Lothian and ACAS in an effort to resolve the dispute with Lothian's management. In the event that the talks failed – which they now appear to have – the only resolution is for Unite to hold strike action at fourteen days' notice.

Unite has previously indicated that in those circumstances, strike action is likely to take place in the month of August during the period when the Edinburgh Fringe and International Festival takes place.

They claim that there are 'poor workplace relations and a hostile culture at Lothian where 'procedural agreements have not been adhered to'.

Talks in April at ACAS collapsed and the union claim this was due to the failure by Lothian's management to 'seriously consider implementing remedial measures to improve the

workplace culture’.

Just before the end of June Richard Hall, Lothian’s Managing Director told The Edinburgh Reporter : “We’ve held amicable discussions with union officials over recent weeks and we hope that Unite will enter into next week’s meeting at ACAS with a resolve to avoid strike action that would be damaging for Edinburgh’s population and visitors, as well as all our colleagues in the business.

“Of those who were eligible to vote, over 57% have voted for strike action. Over 36% opted not to take part in the ballot at all. Should the union take the decision to go out on strike, we will continue to work positively with all our colleagues across the business whether they have voted in favour or not. We sincerely hope that strike action will be averted, however.”

It would appear that hope could now be fading of avoiding strikes by our bus drivers in the next few weeks.

