

## **Opening Statement – Mr Billy Hann, Chief Executive of Dublin Bus**

### **Introduction**

Mr Chairman, thank you for this invitation to appear before the Committee. I look forward to today's discussion.

I am joined here today by Mr Ciarán Rogan, Chief Customer Officer and Mr Phil Donohue, Head of HR and Development at Dublin Bus.

At the end of last year, 13 days after becoming Chief Executive of Dublin Bus, I appeared before the committee and acknowledged the operational challenge posed by a highly competitive labour market and an industry-wide shortage of drivers.

I am pleased to return seven months later to update the committee on our substantial progress in boosting driver numbers. Today, my short opening statement will focus on the success of our recruitment campaign and the measures we are taking to meet the demands of an expanding network.

### **Driver Recruitment & Campaign**

As Dublin continues to grow, more and more people are converging to our city to live, work and socialise. Fortunately, many are choosing to leave their cars at home and are embracing public transport.

As a result, Dublin Bus has experienced a surge in customer demand, surpassing pre-pandemic levels. In fact, this year we anticipate surpassing the remarkable milestone of 140 million passengers achieved in 2019. This equates to approximately 2.7 million journeys each week, with a weekday average of 434,000 passengers.

This increase in passenger numbers, compounded by a highly competitive labour market, posed a challenge for us.

In response, Dublin Bus implemented the biggest recruitment drive in the history of our organisation.

In 2022, we recruited and trained 319 drivers.

In the first half of 2023, we recruited and trained 200 drivers and received over 1,500 prospective driver applications after ramping up our campaign.

By the year's end, we estimate that Dublin Bus will have successfully recruited and trained more than 400 bus drivers. To achieve this ambitious target, we took significant steps to enhance the capacity of our Training Centre in May 2023, enabling us to accommodate 12 new trainees entering the programme and 12 new drivers graduating weekly.

The success of our recruitment campaign, and the impact it will have on our service, cannot be understated.

Our team developed a creative and memorable campaign which has prominently featured on the sides of our buses. 'We Are Hiring' scrolls are now synonymous with the sight of the yellow double-deckers on the streets and roads of Dublin, as are the on-board announcements played for customers. Our on-board marketing is bolstered by a multi-faceted campaign, across traditional and social media.

Now that we have the privilege to meet each other in person again, we have focused on taking the recruitment drive on the road, showcasing careers at recruitment days, events and roadshows across the Greater Dublin Area.

We are immensely proud of the work done so far but recognise and acknowledge there is more hard work ahead of us.

While we are close to reaching our current targets, the full implementation of future phases of the BusConnects Network Redesign project will require continued recruitment and training.

We are already putting measures in place to relieve future pressures, including our Longer Work Policy, which was introduced in March of this year. This policy allows for employees to work until their seventieth birthday.

## **Conclusion**

Yes, we are facing challenges today. But our commitment to providing safe, high-quality, sustainable public transport services to the people of the Greater Dublin Area is paramount to everything we do.

Driven by an ethos of 'Every Journey Matters', Dublin Bus recognises the need to not only meet, but exceed the expectations of our customers.

This includes offering fulfilling, life-long, secure job opportunities to our team of drivers.

Just last month, I had the opportunity to celebrate 50-years of service with one of our drivers and his family at our Donnybrook Depot. Terry arrived at Dublin Bus shortly after his fifteenth birthday as a messenger in 1973, and over the last five decades, he has proudly served countless customers and communities across the Greater Dublin Area.

This is the story of Dublin Bus and the drivers who serve us.

While the challenges of today will not disappear overnight, I can assure the Committee that Dublin Bus will continue to move forward, overcoming these challenges as we always do.

I look forward to discussing this with you in further detail and answering any questions you have. Thank you for your time.