

WEST DORSET WESTERN AREA TRANSPORT ACTION GROUP (WATAG)

Minutes of General Meeting No.94 held in the W.I. Hall, Bridport on 24th November 2016

Present (18): Peter Body (Beaminster TC); Lynton Burse (Bridport); Ron Coatsworth (DCC); John Collingwood (Bridport); Colin Divall (Bridport); Bob Driscoll (Symondsburry Parish Council); Richard Edwards (WATAG webmaster); Alan Glenn (Askerswell); Jill Glenn (Askerswell); Ian Gray (Poole); Ros Kayes (DCC/BTC); Simon Newport (First); Geoff Parr (West Bexington); Peter Ridler (Walditch); Philip Sankey (Lyme Forward); Peter Smith (Chair WATAG); Tony Taylor (Puncknowle&Swyre Group PC); June Williams (Drimpton/Broadwindsor/Salwayash PlusBus users)

Apologies: Tim Christian, Sally Falkingham, Mike Farmer, Richard Freer, Louise Greenham, Freda Hennessey, Adam Keen, Anna Lovell, Mary & David Marsh, Erica Pretty, Daryl Turner, Richard Webster, Alan Williams.

Dominic Knorpel: Dominic was remembered as a tireless campaigner for a fairer and more inclusive society and as a champion for the elderly, the isolated and the young. His was a frequent, informed and irreplaceable voice at WATAG meetings. His sudden and untimely passing is a huge loss to his family, his friends and the community.

1. Minutes: The minutes of the previous (93rd) meeting were agreed and signed.

2. Matters arising not covered later: none.

3. September 2017 School (and July 2017 Public) Transport. A chance to discuss the paper presented to DCC Cabinet on 26 October on future provision. The “New Passenger Contract Model” is now being put into effect. It is understood that the “One School One Operator” (OSOO) model will be applied to secondary schools and that meetings have already been held with current contractors. Carriers will be given the addresses of in-catchment pupils and decide on who goes on which bus. Existing arrangements for primary schools are expected to continue. Peter Smith feared that the new model would be very difficult to apply due to uncertainty on pupil numbers. Ian Gray said that he “can’t see it happening” and that “the danger in inaccurate tenders is that you get inaccurate quotes.” The model will be “very challenging” for contractors. Bob Driscoll told the meeting that Chris Hook of Dorset Travel expects that a DCC officer (perhaps A Shaw) will attend the WATAG meeting in January to give a presentation on the scheme.

4. Information from Dorset Travel. No officers attended the meeting, but Community Engagement Officer, Amanda Evans, submitted a report which was read to those present and is included at the end of these minutes. In a separate e-mail, she pointed out that “there have been no changes to the subsidised services operating in the WATAG area since the September meeting, so there is no reference to public transport in the DCC officer report for November.” Although Peter considered that these reports are “always received on time and are useful and relevant”, several speakers expressed dismay and surprise at the plans to remove pre-09.30 travel concessions from both sighted and blind passengers. Bob wondered what the move would achieve and what savings were anticipated. The Concessionary Passes Consultation is to run over the holiday period (1st December to 13th January 2017). Ros Kayes indicated that the questionnaire may allow respondents to call for a flat rate fare for concessionary bus pass holders. Alan Williams (in a note) confirmed that our MP (Sir Oliver Letwin) had supported WATAG’s suggestion for a flat-rate (perhaps £2) per journey fare three years ago. Alan also expressed concern about the pedestrian crossings proposed for the North-South walking/cycling route. The cycling route was generally welcomed and the meeting learned the etymology of the expression “toucan” (two-can).

5. Councillors' Slot. Ron Coatsworth said that school work currently performed by DCT is out to tender. Preliminary work is underway on the Bridport Community Bus scheme, although he feared that other parishes don't have the necessary resources to meet the challenge. Grants are "match-funded" so potential operators will have to contribute up to £5,000. Ros Kayes confirmed that the Bus Bill now going to the House of Commons will not prevent local councils from running bus services as social enterprises. There was general exasperation at the lack of "joined-up thinking", with buses returning to base empty over long distances, taxis for pupils paid by the DCC and lack of consideration of the impact of penny-pinching on schools and communities. Peter Smith feared that the countryside will close down as a place to live and be left to "farmers and tourists." Bob asked Ron Coatsworth to tackle Dorset Travel on behalf of Powerstock School. Ron said that the answers he was getting were "rather feeble" and promised to "keep at it".

6. Bus Operators' News

- i. First Bus. Simon Newport said that the demands of strikers were "unaffordable" and that he was surprised that industrial action had gone on for so long. The summer had been very frustrating for First although it had been good one as far as passenger numbers are concerned. The winter timetables are in operations and "no big changes" are planned for next summer. The company welcomes suggestions. He explained that timetables are anchored on Axminster rather than Dorchester and some connections are not ideal. He confirmed that "one-to-one" discussions had been held with DCC on school transport only, and understands that the main criterion for selection will be price. This is disappointing as First would like to do some tender work, with possibilities of infill. An X53 user expressed concern about collisions with branches and Simon confirmed that responsibility for trimming overhanging trees lies with the highways authorities (Highways England/DCC).
- ii. Damory – No representative was present.
- iii. South West Coaches – No representative was present. The actual and potential impact of the changes to the 73 bus route was evoked throughout the meeting. Suggestions for more rational use of the vehicles and drivers have been rejected or ignored. "SW Coaches won't budge" said Bob, who also asked how much extra funding does a fuller service actually need. Ron Coatsworth hoped the community will rally. Sally Falkingham, public transport representative for Maiden Newton and Frome Valley Parish Councils sent a note on the Care Commissioning Group's proposal to set up a Community Hub at Bridport Hospital. Maiden Newton surgery is part of a combined practice with Tunnel Road, Beaminster. With the removal of the Maiden Newton to Powerstock section of the 73 route, patients from Maiden Newton hospital have no public transport to Bridport hospital. As organiser of the Maiden Newton branch of the Dorset County Car service (one of three remaining), Sally has registered increased demand for transport to Bridport. People needing to visit dentists or opticians in Bridport are being told to make future appointments on Friday mornings.
- iv. Dorset Community Transport. Hilary Daniels, DCT's Operations controller, sent a report on services in the area. The report is attached to these minutes, together with comments and news from Sally Falkingham and Mary and David Marsh of Thorncombe.
- v. Stagecoach South West. No problems reported on the 9A/X9 service between Lyme Regis and Exeter.

7. Railway News. Sally's report included news that "from December 11th GWR will be operating their two Sunday morning services to Weymouth all year round with the first train now starting from Bristol Temple Meads at 08:23 instead of Westbury". Bob announced that the last train from Waterloo to Axminster on Saturday evening now leaves one hour later at 20.20, He also revealed SW Trains' "well-kept secret" that passengers can travel from Weymouth to Salisbury for £10 return on certain Saturdays and Sundays during the run-up to Christmas on the "Santa special"

8. Neighbourhood Plan (NP). Although the NP for Bridport covers only Allington, Bothenhampton and Walditch, Bradpole, Bridport and Symondsburry, Peter Smith offered assistance on all transport matters to any parish in the WATAG area preparing their own plan. Bob started his brief resume with concerns about the radical change in the DCC's Transport Plan. This "bombshell", which NPs must accept, removes any concept of a modal shift from the private car to public transport and now focuses solely on economic growth. The transport group working on the Bridport and surrounding parishes NP focuses on traffic flows through Bridport, town centre controls and pedestrianisation in South St. (a solution finding favour with Simon Newport), provision for cyclists and walkers and public transport (feeder services, shuttle buses, town service and, possibly the reborn Brit Valley Railway to be called the Jurassic Coast Railway. Further information is available on the Vision 2030 website (www.vision-2030.co.uk). Bob stressed that the NP is a community effort and that anyone who has anything to suggest or add is welcome to participate.

9. Other Transport Campaigning groups. WATAG intends to maintain and expand links with groups, including TravelWatch SouthWest (a forum shunned by DCC), the Campaign for Better Transport, Bus Users UK and others.

10. Democratic Moment & AOB. Peter Body gave a harrowing tale of difficulties in getting to and from Dorchester hospital using the Ezecc ambulance service – "a terrible mistake"

11. Items for Chairman's Committee or next Public Meeting.

Nothing specific was suggested, as items will be dictated by fast-moving events.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 8.25 pm.

The next meeting is to be held in the WI Hall North St Bridport at 6.30pm
on Thursday 26th January 2017.

Secretary:

John Collingwood
213 St Andrews Rd
Bridport DT6 3BT
tel:07867848891
email: john@cjctrad.co.uk

Chair and Treasurer:

Peter Smith
Watton House Farm,
Watton, Bridport. DT6 5JZ
tel: 01308 424646
email: peter@smithwat204.fsnet.co.uk

Dorset County Council Officer Report **WATAG – 24th November 2016**

Concessionary Passes Consultation

The Concessionary Passes Consultation will be available online at dorsetforyou from 1st December and running until 13th January 2017. Paper copies will also be available from Libraries, County Hall Reception or by e-mailing HTR@dorsetcc.gov.uk. An e-mail will be sent to WATAG informing of the consultation and will include a poster and pdf of the paper questionnaire.

The Dorset concessionary travel scheme currently provides the statutory minimum provision of free travel between 0930 and 2300 on Monday to Friday and at all times on weekends and public holidays. The scheme also allows free concessionary travel before 0930 on services where the next bus is not until after 1030. Free all day travel is also available for blind and partially sighted pass holders. There is also an additional companion scheme which allows individuals with certain disabilities the option of having a companion travel for free within Dorset.

Finally, concessionary pass holders from East Dorset are also granted free all day travel when starting their journey in East Dorset. This is an enhancement funded by East Dorset District Council for its own residents with a valid concessionary pass.

What is proposed?

Dorset Travel proposes the following changes to Dorset's Concessionary Pass Scheme:

- Removal of free travel before 0930 on routes that have no other services until after 1030.
- Removal of free travel before 0930 for blind and partially sighted pass holders.

The companion scheme and additional concessions provided to East Dorset pass holders will remain the same and continue as they are currently.

New Contract Model

Dorset Travel have completed the market engagement phase and is seeking to go to tender for Public and Mainstream transport in January 2017. There will be a clear idea of what the public transport network will look like in April 2017.

Dorset County Council Community Transport Grant

The Community Transport Grant has been expanded to incorporate applications for capital expenditure up to £5,000 ie. vehicle purchase. £2,000 is available for revenue costs such as IT systems, training, marketing, etc. An updated CT Grant application form and guidance notes has been e-mailed as a separate document with this report.

Bridport Town Council has recently been awarded a Community Transport Grant of £2,000 to carry out a feasibility and scoping study for a community bus scheme in Bridport. In addition, Dorset County Council is providing their services to host an online customer survey that will also be made available in paper format on local bus routes.

Real Time Information systems

There are no immediate plans to remove the RTI displays in Bridport and DCC are liaising with transport operators to ensure displays are fit for purpose in the future.

Amanda Evans is liaising with Ken Aveyard (Traveline Data Co-ordinator) and Phil Jelf at Vix, following reports from Alan Williams that X51 destination data on West Street RTIs is not displaying correctly in all instances. Ken Aveyard informs that this is an ongoing issue due to implications with the data import process at Vix. This is being investigated further by Ken and Phil to resolve the problem.

Bus Stops

Job orders are being progressed to repair the 2 leaning bus poles in East Street and to replace the damaged timetable cases at Nationwide and Frosts bus stops.

Marsh Barn bus stops: Further to a request for bus stop poles and flags to be installed at Marsh Barn, investigations reveal that historically there is no record of bus stop poles or flags ever being supplied at these stops. It is acknowledged that there are stopping points allocated to Marsh Barn but there is not a requirement to have a bus stop pole installed at every stop, which appears to have been the case at this location. Prior to committing expenditure to install bus stop poles and flags, the next step is to establish whether there is a need at these stops. Passenger information for the Marsh Barn bus stops has therefore been requested from First to determine the level of usage at this location.

Sustainable Transport

Kevin Humphreys (DCC Transport Planner) is currently working on a north-south walking and cycling scheme in the Bridport/West Bay area which I hope will be constructed next Autumn/Winter. This route comprises three sections:

Sea Road North – The existing uncontrolled crossing opposite the Co-op car park will be upgraded to a toucan crossing and the existing footway on the western verge will be widened to 3 metres to accommodate walkers and cyclists and will continue to East Street Roundabout. An additional cycleway link will be constructed in Riverside Gardens. This new section will connect the Bradpole cycleway to the Askers Meadow cycleway to form a continuous route. This will be funded by DCC Local Transport Plan funding.

East Street Roundabout - A new Toucan crossing will be installed in East Street and the existing pelican crossing in Sea Road North will be converted to a toucan crossing. The footways on the western/southern side of East Street Roundabout will be widened for both walkers and cyclists to use. These improvements are designed to improve the safety of cyclists and will be funded by Highways England.

West Bay Link – DCC have been working with Sustrans to design a new link between the Crown Roundabout and the old railway line (ORL) that leads to West Bay. This will involve widening the existing footway between the Crown Roundabout and Chestnut Road in Burton Road. A new section of shared-use-path will continue in the verge eastwards to an uncontrolled crossing opposite the entrance to the old railway line. The first section of this ORL will be widened and resurfaced. The funding for this will hopefully come from the Coastal Community Fund.

Maps detailing the above have been e-mailed as separate documents with this report¹.

¹ Please contact WATAG secretary if you would like copies of the maps or the DCC's Application Form for Community Transport Grant

STATUS OF DCT SERVICES

DORSET COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

The Wednesday PlusBus into Bridport was one of the four initial trial services and the only one of the four which has continued more or less as it began. The first stage of the service carries passengers from Thorncombe, Kittwhistle, Broadwindsor, Bowood and Salwayash into town, then a second leg takes in Wootton Fitzpaine, Whitchurch Canonorum, Morecombelake and Symonds bury. Both sections have people who travel every single week, and between the two this bus regularly carries 14 passengers.

Known as ‘Dorchester B’, another Wednesday PlusBus connects Abbotsbury, Portesham, Winterborne Steepleton and Martinstown with Dorchester. This is one of our least well performing PlusBuses, usually carrying only one or two people. We are considering extending the reach of this service – perhaps starting at Litton Cheney or Punknowle – and would welcome comment on whether there might be any take up.

Also on a Wednesday, ‘Dorchester C’ serves Broadwindsor, Mosterton, Beaminster, Toller Porcorum and Maiden Newton. This route began mid-May, and usually carries between 6 and 9 people.

Our Friday service into Bridport from Maiden Newton and Toller Porcorum began in September in direct response to requests from local people that a replacement was needed for route 73 which had been suddenly withdrawn by South West Coaches. Despite WATAG’s publicity efforts on the inaugural run of our PlusBus replacement, this service rarely attracts more than 4 or 5 passengers.

All DCT’s PlusBus services are based on school routes, and while these school routes continue DCT has no current plans to discontinue any service. However all school bus contracts are due for re-tendering this year and, while DCT is hoping to retain these contracts, PlusBus services may have to be adjusted if contracts are changed or lost.

We will shortly be embarking on planned promotion of all our PlusBus services around the County, including West Dorset.

OTHER COMMUNITY TRANSPORT NEWS

THORNCOMBE USERS

- DCT's Service 14 and 688 continue to be between 70% and 90% full, most weeks. (There has been the odd week, when numbers have dropped to 50%, but the next week have bounced right back again).
- Our fund raising, to fill the revenue shortfall, has been going very well.
- With the generous support of Thorncombe and Tatworth Parishioners, plus support from businesses in Chard, we have raised a total of £988.30, (soon to be £1000.00), since June/16.
- These ear marked funds are being held by Thorncombe Parish Council.
- We have applied to Dorset CC for a Community Transport Grant, which we are hoping, will be matched funded i.e. 2 x £500.00 from ourselves, then 2 x £500.00 from DCC.
- This, should we be successful, will secure our buses well into 2017.

2/. MAIDEN NEWTON AND FROME VALLEY

Dorset Community Transport are running a Friday morning service to replace the 73 service from Maiden Newton to Bridport via Toller Porcorum. Users have to register with Dorset Community Transport and book their journey by 14:30 the previous day. Information about this service is published on the Parish Council websites for Maiden Newton, Frome Valley and Toller Porcorum and on the Parish notice boards at Maiden Newton and Cattistock.

The 212 service to Dorchester has been combined with school transport from Frampton and Stratton to St Osmonds and Thomas Hardy and is operated with a double decker bus. The initial problems over time keeping seem to have been resolved and I am no longer getting complaints from members of the public.