

WEST DORSET WESTERN AREA TRANSPORT ACTION GROUP (WATAG)

Minutes of General Meeting No.95 held in the W.I. Hall, Bridport on 26th January 2016

Present (32): Lynton Burse (Bridport); John Collingwood (Bridport); Donald Broadley (Bridport); Hilary Cunningham (Shipton Gorge PC); Richard Cunningham (Shipton Gorge PC); Colin Divall (Bridport); Maureen Dormer (Mosterton); Bob Driscoll (Symondsburys Parish Council); Mike Farmer (Bridport); Geoff Fry (Puncknowle & Swyre GPC); Alan Glenn (Askerswell); Jill Glenn (Askerswell); Ian Gray (WATAG); Adam Keen (Damory); Anna Lovell (POPP); David Marsh (Thorncombe PC); Mary Marsh (Thorncombe Bus Users); Simon Newport (First); Bill Orchard (Litton Cheney PC); Geoff Parr (West Bexington); John Porter (Shipton Gorge PC); Erica Pretty (POPP); Peter Ridler (Walditch); Joseph Rose (DCC); Philip Sankey (Lyme Forward); Stephen Seaman (South West Coaches); Carol Sim (First); Peter Smith (Chair WATAG); Tony Taylor (Puncknowle & Swyre GPC); Daryl Turner (DCC); Dicky Webster (Bridport); Alan Williams (WATAG)

Apologies: Peter Body, Tim Christian, Sally Falkingham, Ian Gardner, Neil Hurlock, Ros, Kayes, Anne Sankey.

June Williams: Ian Gray gave a tribute to June who passed away on 11th January. She has been a prime mover in keeping public transport in Salwayash and has been a much-valued member of the WATAG committee in recent months. Our thoughts are with her husband Peter and her family.

1. Minutes: Amanda Evans (DCC) asked for it to be noted that the proposal in the Concessionary Pass Consultation to remove free travel before 09.30 for blind and partially-sighted pass holders was withdrawn after submission of the DCC Officer's report and it is no longer planned to remove this particular concession. The minutes of the previous (94th) meeting were then agreed and signed.

2. Matters arising not covered later: none.

3. September 2017 School (and July Public) Transport Contract. WATAG was very pleased to welcome Holistic Transport Review Manager, Joseph Rose. He told the meeting that the £850,000 reduction in the home/school budget meant that changes would have to be introduced on 1st August and at the beginning of the school year in September. The "One School One Operator" (OSOO) model has been adopted for secondary and upper schools, as operators have a better understanding of their vehicles and the constraints they face. The tender process has been delayed and will now run from 10 February to 13 March and the outcome will be clear in April. With the focus on "inter-urban services", the DCC proposes to open up school bus services carrying pupils aged above 11 to the travelling public to mitigate the inevitable impact on rural communities, encourage "rural infill" to take advantage of positioning movements and to facilitate community transport. Two applications for match funded community schemes have been received from West Dorset. Match funding is available to "pump prime" schemes, with up to £2,000 on revenue and up to £5,000 on capital costs. Joseph spoke of the Concessionary Travel Pass consultation and expected savings of £16/20,000 from withdrawing current "enhancements". 43% of the 1,400 responses to the consultation were in favour of the proposals, 47% were against and 10% didn't know. The matter will come before the DCC cabinet on 1st February. Funding is not the only issue for the council, and the DCC is keen to create conditions to open up school routes to the public and thereby open an additional revenue stream for operators. A multitude of questions followed. Alan Glenn said that using school buses is all very well, but what would happen in the holidays? Attendees from Puncknowle, Shipton Gorge and Mosterton all felt that villages would be cut off, a vital social function would be lost and that the elderly, infirm or carless living in rural areas would be isolated with no chance of moving to towns as affordable housing is not available.

Joseph expressed the hope that community transport could bridge the gap. Daryl Turner said since the Council has limited money and faces the intractable problem of concessionary fares, the only realistic solution would be for communities to make their own arrangements. Philip Sankey pointed out that Lyme Regis TC is keen to maintain public transport, as it reduces congestion, eases parking and moves visitors in and out of the town. This presented an opportunity to tap synergies between the new contracts and the Town Council, which has accepted a role in funding. Bob Driscoll referred to the Dorset Police and Crime Commissioner's consultation which asked whether the public is prepared to pay more council tax to improve policing. It was claimed that an increase of £3.80 per year per household would raise £1.7 million extra income and Bob wondered whether the DCC would countenance such an idea to generate income for public transport. He was also doubtful whether the DCC has made the savings expected, referring to a letter to Symondsburry Parish Council from Mike Harries (DCC's director for Environment and the Economy), but Joseph Rose assured the meeting that the target savings of £500k had been achieved. Peter Smith was disappointed that the "DIY aspect" of the council's plans had not been made clear in earlier meetings. Alan Williams maintained that several bus companies in the South-West accept a flat fee from concessionary pass holders for journeys outside the range of the Concessionary Travel Scheme, including Buses of Somerset and First. Joseph maintained that such arrangements are not legally possible for the DCC.

4. Information from Dorset Travel (including RTI). The DCC Officer Report was read to those present and is included at the end of these minutes. Joseph announced that, having been "fixed twice" by the contractor, the large RTI display unit at Bridport bus station will be replaced by a smaller (and more accurate) screen. He assured the meeting that the council is aware of the problems and that work is in hand. Bob Driscoll asked why there were two bus stops (with shelters) within 60 yards of each other at Dorset County Hospital in Dorchester for westbound traffic: one for the 10 and one for all others, including the 6 and X51. Joseph explained that the stop nearest to the hospital entrance is close to a busy junction and that significant congestion could be caused if more than one bus were at the stop. He admitted that the siting of the stops was "not ideal" but that the reasoning behind it was understandable. Simon Newport confirmed that the 10 will call at both bus stops.

5. Councillors' Slot. Daryl Turner spoke of difficulties associated with attempting to change or bypass the concessionary bus pass mechanism. Transport historian, Colin Divall, maintained that, throughout the half century since the Beeching cuts, successive governments had sought to push responsibility for transport on to county councils. We should encourage local initiatives and point a finger at central government. The delegation from Shipton Gorge felt that county councils were now shifting the buck back to parish councils.

6. Bus Operators' News

i. First Bus. Simon Newport said that First are busy planning for the summer. The new timetables should come into effect on 9th April and would be very similar to last year's. He announced some fare "changes" on local routes, with single, weekly and monthly tickets costing the same and increases on return journeys. Colin Divall pointed to the anomaly where combined rail/bus tickets could be bought at railway stations, there was no facility to do so on-line or at local outlets. Bob Driscoll said that SW trains could be rung in advance by phone to send out through tickets (£2 p&p), although he admitted that this was not ideal and hoped that the TIC or any future transport agency could handle this and other ticketing-related tasks in the future.

ii. Damory – Adam Keen confessed that he had no idea what services Damory would be running in the area in six months; time. The company will bid for "the bits we want" and sub-contract where necessary. In answer to a question from the floor he said that the 40 service was just about commercially viable with assistance from Yeovil college and could probably continue without the hospital "dogleg" subsidy. There was discussion of the 40's scheduled visits to

Bridport Hospital. Adam undertook to look into Anna Lovell's assertion that the bus fails to stop at the first stop on Hospital Lane.

- iii. South West Coaches – Stephen Seaman was also very uncertain about the future. Most of the company's services are subsidised and South West Coaches intend to tender for some routes.
- iv. Dorset Community Transport. No representative was present, but Ian Gray feared that the charity may face a disadvantage compared with larger organisations and a great deal of horse-trading lay ahead. Joseph Rose stressed that the council's primary focus is on getting children to and from school, adding that contracts for primary schools will be individual, not clustered. Sally Falkinham had e-mailed WATAG advising that she had used the DCT bus from Maiden Newton to Bridport on the previous Friday. There were six people on the bus: 4 from Maiden Newton, and two from Toller Pocorum, although more passengers usually take the bus at the village. She wondered whether the service had been advertised in Askerswell which lies on the route. Alan Glenn confirmed that DCT had sent 60 copies of their leaflet to the village and that he expected a positive response. When asked about seat-belt provision on school routes, Joseph Rose confirmed that the DCC prefers their use although there is no legal requirement for operators to provide them or to enforce their use.
- v. Stagecoach South West. No problems reported on the 9A/X9 service between Lyme Regis and Exeter and the company has confirmed that there are no plans to change the existing timetable.

7. Railway News. Bob Driscoll understands that SW trains will be running the summer Saturday London to Weymouth via Salisbury and Yeovil link again this summer. Will the DCC be splashing out a further £60k this year?

8. Bridport & District Community Bus. The public consultation is open and no closing date has yet been announced. The initiative is to be relaunched on Saturday 4th February at the Bridport Community Fair and all potential users or interested parties are urged to complete the questionnaire.

9. Democratic Moment & AOB. Colin Divall suggested that WATAG interrogate claims in the Dorset CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group)'s consultation and publicity material that proposals for changes to NHS services in Dorset will take account of public transport services. Joseph was aware of the mismatch and assured the meeting that the DCC is working closely with the CCG on this.

Alan Williams called for assistance in compiling and proof-reading WATAG timetables. David and Mary Marsh volunteered immediately. Other helpers welcome.

Mike Farmer made a plea for the town centre traffic lights to be removed to improve traffic flows for all vehicles. The First and Damory representatives welcomed the idea.

Adam Keen announced that Damory have donated a tree-logging vehicle to the DCC.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 8.35 pm.

The next meeting (96) - is to be held in the WI Hall North St Bridport at 6.30pm on Thursday 23th March 2017.

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Dorset County Council Officer Report
WATAG – 26th January 2017

New Contract Model

Dorset Travel has completed the market engagement phase and is seeking to go to tender for Public and Mainstream transport on 27 January 2017. There will be a clear idea of what the public transport network will look like in April 2017 which we will communicate to all. The changes associated with the new contracts will be implemented in August 2017.

Joseph Rose (Total Transport Project Manager) will be attending the WATAG meeting on 26th January to give an update on the Public & School Transport Review, Dorset's proposed transport network and the Concessionary Pass Consultation.

Public Transport

There have been no changes to the subsidised services operating in the WATAG area since the November meeting.

Community Transport

Free support is being made available to Dorset's community transport schemes to attract new volunteers. If a scheme is in need of more drivers, Amanda Evans (Community Engagement Officer) can set up a Facebook ad to help recruit more volunteers. DCC will provide this service free of charge.

Advertising on Facebook can be effective as we can target people living in a specific location and make it appear more personal to that target audience. It is also hoped that Facebook ads will attract some younger volunteers. If interested, please e-mail Amanda Evans at a.j.evans@dorsetcc.gov.uk.

The Dorset Volunteer Centre is also available to provide support with recruiting volunteers so please contact them to discuss your requirements. Their contact number is (01305) 269214.

Additional funding is available from POPP if existing NeighbourCar schemes would like to expand the criteria of their existing scheme. Ideas for expansion could include:

- covering a wider geographical area
- catering for all journey purposes rather than only medical appointments
- providing transport to all age groups if they do not have access to public transport, rather than restricting to elderly and disabled
- taking people to their nearest bus service so that they can continue their journey by public transport.

The application for additional funding to expand your scheme needs to be sustainable i.e. pays for itself in the long run.

Please contact Erica Pretty (e.pretty@dorsetcc.gov.uk) for further details.

Rail, Cycling and Sustainable Transport

Highways England will provide £483,000 for pedestrian/cycle safety improvements to be made to the A35 East Road Roundabout. Construction is anticipated to be autumn this year.

Highways England have also agreed to fund a feasibility study to improve pedestrian/cyclists safety on Sea Road South and Crown Roundabout. This work will be completed in 2017/18.

Maps for the above have been e-mailed separately with this Report.

DCC are still planning to deliver the Sea Road North cycle route in late summer/early autumn.

In terms of the funding for the West Bay Route, DCC is expecting a decision from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) in late February.