

# WEST DORSET WESTERN AREA TRANSPORT ACTION GROUP (WATAG)

## Minutes of General Meeting No.97 held in the W.I. Hall, Bridport on 25<sup>th</sup> May 2017

**Present (16):** John Collingwood (Bridport); Brian Cox (Bridport), Bob Driscoll (Symondsburry PC); Sally Falkingham (Maiden Newton PC), Ian Gray (WATAG); Anna Lovell (POPP), David Marsh (Thorncombe PC); Mary Marsh (Thorncombe Bus Users); Gavin Maxwell (Bridport); Simon Newport (First); Janet Proctor (Burton Bradstock); Peter Ridler (Lower Walditch), Philip Sankey (WATAG Chair/Lyme Forward); Peter Smith (visitor); Guz Tidy (Loders PC), Dickie Webster (Bridport).

**1. Apologies:** Peter Body, Colin Divall, Maureen Dormer, Jean Dunreith, Louise Greenham, Ros Kayes, Adam Keen, Geoff Parr, Erica Pretty, Tony Taylor, Daryl Turner, Alan Williams.

**2. Minutes:** The minutes of the previous (96th) meeting were agreed and signed.

**3. Matters arising not covered later:** Philip Sankey referred to WATAG's revised constitution adopted at the Extraordinary General Meeting held on 23<sup>rd</sup> March and proposed that the document should reflect the electoral divisions used in the county council elections earlier in the month. This means deleting reference to the Bride Valley division which has now disappeared for electoral purposes. The meeting was also asked whether to retain, amend or delete the final line of section 5 ("The Committee") which reads: "No two members from the same household shall be members of the Committee." A unanimous show of hands opted to delete the line.

**4. Dorset Travel.** No officers attended the meeting, but Community Engagement Officer, Amanda Evans, submitted a report which was read out to those present and is included at the end of these minutes. Successful bidders for new contract model have been notified, but the "cooling off" period required by European legislation means that the results will not be publicly known until 1<sup>st</sup> June. Philip Sankey attended the TAG leaders' meeting at County Hall on 25<sup>th</sup> April where he learned of "structural changes" within Dorset Travel. Andy Shaw will be leaving DCC in mid June and Chris Hook will be taking on Andy's role as Dorset Travel Team Service Manager. Gordon Sneddon will then take on Chris Hook's role as Travel Operations Manager. Amanda Evans will be taking on responsibility for Bus Stop Infrastructure in addition to her existing position as Community Engagement Officer. Previously, there were 3 team leaders but this has now reduced to 1 team leader – Debbie Fiddik. Shelley Foxwell will be Debbie's deputy, but Shelley will be focusing on data systems. Joseph Rose will take on Gordon Sneddon's role as Business Development Manager and holistic transport will be overseen by Ryan Pooles. John Cumming was on redeployment until mid-May.

**5. Councillors' Slot:** No county councillors attended the meeting, the first since the DCC elections. New councillors in the WATAG area have been added to the database, together with the new leader of the council, Cllr. Rebecca Knox. Simon Newport mentioned that the previous leader of the DCC, Robert Gould, regularly attended Sherborne TAG meetings.

### 6. Bus Operators' News

i. First Bus. Simon Newport reported that the summer service had started, "slightly short of staff." Income for the first two months of the current financial year had been better than expected following poor figures in winter. The biggest problem is the proportion of concessionary bus pass holders and fare-paying passengers (25% and 75% respectively in cities, 40% and 60% in rural areas and 50/50 on the X51/53 routes). Fare payers are effectively subsidising concessionary pass holders. First is asking Dorset MPs to allow local communities to decide how concessions are applied.

Bridport Town Council (BTC) are not running a Park and Ride service this year. First have been asked if the company wants to become involved. Simon contrasted Lyme Regis, where the Park and Ride charge is £6 per day, to Bridport where the figure is just £2. Charges need to be more commercial. It was suggested that Simon contact BTC about the possibility of placing bus stops close to the car park at West Bay to take car drivers to/from town

First are producing separate publicity for the Jurassic coaster and a leaflet should appear in early June. Some service reductions (to a Winter level) may take place in September if resources are diverted to other work.

ii. Damory. Adam Keen had sent an e-mail explaining that the company is subject to a 10 day confidentiality period where the contract cannot be discussed at all. Damory therefore decided not attend the WATAG meeting, as it crosses over with the confidentiality period.

iii. South West Coaches. No representative attended the meeting. The de-registration of 73 Powerstock/Bridport service means that there will be no buses on the route after 24<sup>th</sup> July. It was also understood that the company is to appear before the traffic commissioner at a public inquiry on 31<sup>st</sup> May. Ian Gray noted that the traffic commissioner had recently moved to the area from North-East England.

iv. Dorset Community Transport. Maureen Dormer had sent a note complaining about the booking system on Wednesdays Mosterton / Dorchester service. Mary Marsh explained that the telephone coordinator was new to the job and still settling in. She pointed out that the driver will take information and that a new assistant manager is being sought. Ian Gray says "if in doubt, ask for Hilary" and undertook to take up the matter on WATAG's behalf. Sally Falkingham maintained that buses were full when they reached Maiden Newton, although it was pointed out that proper booking would avoid this difficulty. She told the meeting that the Friday PlusBus service from Maiden Newton to Bridport now has ten regular passengers, including two from Askerswell.

v. Mendip Mule Motorbus. The "Jurassic Mule" will be running between Charmouth and Beer from 27<sup>th</sup> May. The service is classed as a tour and passengers are returned to their boarding point. There are some restrictions and concessionary passes are not accepted. There is a 'senior' fare (60+) with a further discount if booked through a listed agent.

**7. Railway News:** Sally Falkingham confirmed that the modernisation works at Bath station on the Heart of Wessex line are complete. The platforms have been widened and the track realigned to allow the new, longer IEP trains to use the station. She added that the "Weymouth Wizard" summer Saturday service between Weymouth and Bristol will continue until 9<sup>th</sup> September 2017. There are no direct trains to/from Waterloo to Weymouth via Salisbury this year.

The meeting heard long-awaited news on the access ramp at Dorchester West station. DCC's Dorset Highways Project Engineer, Andrew Bradley has issued an update confirming that the ramp is being designed by Network Rail and is to be constructed by their appointed contractor, with funding from a local Dorset partnership. The current cost estimate for the work is £220,000 and, provided that the costs come back on plan, the council hopes to enter into a further agreement with Network Rail to proceed to construction - hopefully later this year. He added that "this project has been dragging on for some years now and it has taken some persistence to keep them interested, and although I would have liked to be further ahead by now, I am pleased we have got to this point and that they now want to deliver!"

Bob Driscoll reported that South West trains are to run a reduced timetable during the "Waterloo blockade" as work starts to extend platforms at the terminus in August. The new SW trains franchise due to start in August would not affect things immediately. Most staff would transfer to the new operator. It was hinted that the new post-election government might change the start date. The meeting hoped that with First involved, bus/train integration would improve, although Simon had not found it easy to work with GWR.

**8. Future Provision for local buses in the Bridport and Lyme Regis areas.** Bridport and Lyme Regis Town Councils are both looking at ways to ensure some form of bus service remains following the removal of subsidies. WATAG is to conduct surveys on the 73, 71 and 44/210 routes to establish usage of current services. No news had been received on Bridport Town Council's efforts to provide a community bus service.

**9. Democratic Moment** Simon Newport reminded the meeting that DCC's contracts for primary schools and SEN (special educational needs) are not yet finalised and results are not expected before mid-July. Philip Sankey feared that there will inevitably be a hiatus in the provision of bus services, and once passengers stop using this mode of transport, they will find another and not return. David Marsh felt it would be useful to hold public meetings of bus-users to establish needs and propose solutions. Ian Gray said that the DCC's reasoning in splitting primary and secondary school services was a complete mystery. Nobody at the meeting was able to elucidate.

**10. Any Other Business.** Gavin Maxwell stated that transport issues don't go away, and he hopes that he will be able to reflect a WATAG perspective in his capacity as member of the Board of Governors of Dorset County Hospital. Guz Tidy is unable to drive for health reasons and is reliant on the 73. She was no longer able to visit her son on Saturdays. If the 73 is withdrawn entirely, she would be left at the King's Head pub in Bradpole on returning from her doctor in Beaminster on the 40 and be forced to spend at least £10 on a taxi from Bridport to her home in Loders. Philip Sankey reminded the meeting that bus services have never been tailored to suit the individual - numbers are what matter.

Sally Falkingham asked WATAG to include the 212 Evershot/Dorchester service in their survey. Bob Driscoll regretted the low turnout at the meeting, although the confidentiality requirement made it inevitable for this particular meeting. It may be useful to schedule additional general meetings outside WATAG's normal 2-month cycle. For example, it seems absurd to wait until the end of July before discussing school and public bus services with Damory. The matter will be discussed at the advisory group meeting on 31<sup>st</sup> May - one day before information on the contract awards are released.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 7.40 pm.

The next meeting (98) - is to be held in the WI Hall North St Bridport at 6.30 pm  
on Thursday 27th July 2017.

**Secretary:**

John Collingwood  
213 St Andrews Rd  
Bridport DT6 3BT  
tel:07867848891  
email: [watag@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:watag@hotmail.co.uk)

**Chair:**

Philip Sankey  
Woodmead, 39 Silver Street  
Lyme Regis DT7 3HS  
tel: 01297 442558  
email: [philipsankey10@btinternet.com](mailto:philipsankey10@btinternet.com)

## **Dorset County Council Officer Report** **WATAG – 25th May 2017**

### **New Contract Model**

The One School One Operator (OSOO) and Inter Urban tender received a number of bids with 100% of the proposed work attracting multiple bids. The confirmation of success was issued to operators on 19th May but this is subject to a 10 day cooling off period. Once the cooling off process has been completed, DCC will issue the official award and work with successful operators to develop the network for One School One Operator and Inter Urban routes.

Alongside this work, DCC will be procuring in excess of 400 new contracts to deliver home to school and SEN travel needs. This the largest exercise since 2011, so we will be focusing on this during this period.

### **Public Transport**

There have been no changes to the subsidised services operating in the WATAG area since the March meeting. It is important to note that there will be significant changes to the supported public transport network in July this year. Dorset Travel will have a better understanding of changes to the public transport network following the award of contracts at the end of May. We will communicate the changes to all stakeholders, including WATAG, in early June.

### **Rail**

Heart of Wessex Line – Great Western Trains are now expecting to commence works in the Summer (rather than Spring) for improvements to Maiden Newton, Yetminster and Dorchester West Stations. This is to improve cycle parking and to improve access to Platform 1 at Maiden Newton Station in the form of a short ramp to replace the steps. The works should be completed in the Autumn.

A reminder that from 5th to 28th August, platforms 1-9 at London Waterloo will be closed so work can start to extend the platforms for longer trains. During this time, SWT will not be able to run as many trains as usual and there will be significant reductions in services for many stations and a small number of others will be closed. To help everyone plan ahead, SWT has published detailed service information, including travel advice for each station and an 'at a glance' service map. This information can be found at [www.southwesttrains.co.uk/plan-your-journey/planned-improvements/wswupgrade](http://www.southwesttrains.co.uk/plan-your-journey/planned-improvements/wswupgrade)

### **Cycling**

Dorset County Council were informed by DCLG that their bid for funding to build the West Bay Route has been successful. This work is expected to take place in Autumn 2018 and consultation will take place this Summer. As soon as the consultation details are confirmed, WATAG will be informed so that they can be involved if they wish to.

### **Dorset County Council Community Transport Grant**

The Community Transport Grant is still available to support the establishment of new community transport services or to expand existing schemes to meet the need of local communities.

The Community Transport Grant will fund costs associated with starting up a community transport scheme including IT software that supports effective operation, marketing and training of staff and volunteers (up to £2,000). Up to £5,000 can be requested for capital expenditure i.e. vehicle purchase. Applications will need 50% matched funding of the total cost of the project.

Successful applicants would have to agree to terms and conditions, such as providing reports on expenditure and outcomes. Full details are included in the application form which can be requested from Amanda Evans (e-mail: [a.j.evans@dorsetcc.gov.uk](mailto:a.j.evans@dorsetcc.gov.uk)).