

WEST DORSET WESTERN AREA TRANSPORT ACTION GROUP (WATAG)

Website www.watag.org.uk

Minutes of WATAG AGM 26th January 2017

1. Apologies

2. Minutes of the 2016 AGM

The minutes of the 2016 AGM were agreed and signed

3. Financial Report

The Treasurer's financial report showed an end-year balance of £990.55 in WATAG's Nat West Account, mainly as a result of contributions from Lyme Regis and Bridport Town Councils and the Dorset County Council. Printing costs were the largest item of expenditure. Three thousand timetables were issued.

4. Chairman's Report

Peter Smith gave an appraisal of the main points of 2016 meetings and outcomes (see below).

5. Election of Officers

Chair: Peter Smith - proposed by Erica Pretty, seconded by Philip Sankey.

Treasurer: Peter Smith - proposed by Alan Williams, seconded by Colin Divall.

Secretary: John Collingwood - proposed by Peter Smith, seconded by Anna Lovell.

There being no other nominations, all were appointed. Peter Smith is standing for his "final year" again and appealed for fresh candidates to come forward to fill officer positions.

Webmaster – Richard Edwards will be asked to continue to provide this valuable service.

The chair asked for further members to join the Advisory Committee. The existing members agreed to serve again for the current year (Bob Driscoll, Anna Lovell, Philip Sankey, Alan Williams, Ian Gray and Mary Marsh).

The AGM concluded at 6.45 pm

Secretary:

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WATAG ANNUAL REPORT 2016

I would like to start by thanking our Councillors, Council Officers, Bus Operators the Press and Members for their support this year. We may not be best pleased by what we hear but at least we know what is going on. A major concern however is the secretive Holistic Transport Review which has been underway for some time with members being prevented from discussing results excluding users and the wider public being able to participate on the emerging policies. Some documents seem to emerge eventually often when already out of date.

JANUARY AGM – As usual the Committee all stood down and promptly stood up again and I was yet again elected Chairman again despite my protest that I was to be a one year interim Chairman for 2012 only. Anna Lovell, Bob Driscoll, Alan Williams, Philip Sankey & Trevor Jones agreed to remain on the organising committee. John Collingwood agreed under protest to carry on as our Secretary.

In the January **General Meeting** Other matters included –The Rural Transport Review was underway. Members challenged the usage number being quoted by DCC as some services were running close to capacity and one route sometimes needed an extra run to pick up all those waiting. The first information started to emerge from our Councillors on the end of subsidised bus services in Dorset as it was considered that public money should not be used to support bus services. We were reminded that most were used mainly by Concessionary Passes which do not reimburse operators for the full cost of the service (This is common in rural areas). We were told that there would be more mixing of school and public services. A suggestion was made that the Park & Ride from the Football Ground to County Hall was being under used and a substantial saving could be made on its removal. It was confirmed that DCC would not be producing a Summer Timetable booklet this year. (27 people in attendance)

MARCH – The Rural Transport review highlighted that subsidised services were being used in the main by Concessionary Pass holders which was undermining their viability which was surprising as the Transport Budget as the cuts are being made to save services to older people indicating a lack of joined up thinking. First, announced that the Summer Schedule was not to start till the 8th May well after Easter and the Early Spring Bank Holiday. Damory told us they were working on solutions to the loss of the subsidised services which would be registered under the Short Notice Procedure (Unfortunately this project failed to progress beyond the Poole & Bournemouth hinterland as was reported in the Go Ahead Annual Report. DCC was looking at replacement services and we were assured by DCC that the list of pre 9.30 services on which Concessionary Passes could be used would be issued soon (In practice it only seems to have emerged in July but not widely distributed). Concern was expressed re DCC, in a time of austerity had contributed £60k towards a weekly excursion train from Waterloo to Weymouth via Yeovil (34 people in attendance)

MAY – The Coast Bus timetables issued & produced by WATAG have been well received in Bridport and Lyme Regis Tourist Information Centres and donations towards costs have been generous (roughly print cost being covered with WATAG funding art work from its resources from DCC & Town Councils). There had finally been a TAG Leaders meeting where all of the TAGs were represented though it was regretted that Dorchester and Weymouth had not been covered by TAGs for some years, we were surprised that DCC planned to double the grant to TAGs though we would be expected to take on additional voluntary duties such as looking after Bus Shelter Information Boards and in the case of WATAG the production of timetables (We are pleased to confirm that WATAG have received the full amount now as well as catching up on the gap in funding in our 2015 financial year). Disappointingly though we were told that DCC Officers would no longer be attending TAGs though we pointed out that we could only be effective in our unique bi-monthly meetings if all parties were present and that Councillors present would have to carry the full burden from disappointed bus users. Savings had also been identified in changes to the Weymouth Summer Park & Ride (26 people in attendance)

JULY – This was a disappointing meeting with no DCC Councillors or Officers present. The list of pre 9.30 services which Concessionary passes could be used had still not emerged. We were surprised that in the Rural Bus Consultation only 7 people had expressed an interest in paying a fare. Concern was expressed that only 30 questionnaires had come from the Thorncombe area when over 50 had been HANDED in. Bus User UK had submitted a comprehensive objection to the future loss of bus subsidy in Dorset. Residents of Mosterton were disappointed that they had lost their route 40 for August due to road works in Misterton and the effect this may have on the long term future for the service if the financial support from Somerset were lost. We also heard that the 73 was to be cut back to Bridport to Powerstock only though would still receive a subsidy it was hoped that DCT could cover the lost part of the route in some way. A NORDCAT service Dial a Ride Service Dorchester to Yeovil had been well received. The poor state of Bridport Bus Station was noted. Bridport TC have been made aware of its possible effect on the Town (25 people in attendance)

SEPTEMBER – We were interested to find that Bus Subsidy worked out at £11.36 per household in 2016-17 and in 2017-18 this would reduce to £5.50. We were disappointed that our contact with South West Coaches had gleaned no information. The Head of Powerstock School told us that almost half of their pupils came from Bridport and the later service back in the evening was a major problem and staff were having to be kept at school late to look after them (we are told that this number going there is essential due to lack of spaces in the three Bridport Primary Schools and are reminded that as Powerstock is out of their catchment they are all paying a fare). WATAG has issued a Winter Timetable covering the coastal corridor generously sponsored by Alan Williams. Unfortunately there will be no X51 between Bridport and Dorchester on Sundays though through tickets would be available on the X53 & 10. The Summer timetable from First was extended into October (25 people in attendance)

NOVEMBER – Sadly this meeting started with a tribute to Dominic Knorpel who had suddenly passed away. He had been an energetic supporter of so many organisations including WATAG. There was a discussion concerning the new model for contracting of School Transport based on a One School One Contractor basis (later confirmed to be secondary with the Primary and Middle schools on a different scheme). The successful operators would be required to do the route planning based on pupil information – It was suggested that this is often incomplete and often out of date and concern was expressed as to if sufficient resources would be available within the bus operators staff to make it workable. It was hoped an officer would come to the January meeting to explain more. On the subject of pre 9.30 use of Concessionary Passes it was noted that Oliver Letwin had agreed with WATAG that a £2 flat fare would be useful. (Though the ending of pre 9.30 free travel for blind and Disabled people was in the original plan it has been confirmed that this is withdrawn). Another TAG Leaders meeting had produced more information on the School Bus Contracting including that meeting had been held with 40 operators. DCC were also to design a new Bus Stop Flag (18 people in attendance)

This report is just an outline of the many subjects covered in the Minutes which are widely circulated by email as soon as possible after the meetings and by post to those without internet access (on request) and to this end the monthly Committee meetings for 2017 have been scheduled for the Wednesday following meetings rather than the traditional “first Monday” of each month previously held. All of our minutes and reports from DCC are on our website www.watag.org.uk

Though all Public Meetings for 2017 have been booked for evenings we would be interested in thoughts about moving some to afternoons especially in the winter or should there be need, even an extra daytime meeting,