

**WEST DORSET WESTERN AREA TRANSPORT ACTION GROUP  
(WATAG)**  
website [www.watag.org.uk](http://www.watag.org.uk)

**MINUTES OF WATAG AGM 17 - 25TH JANUARY 2018**

**1. Apologies**

**2. Minutes of the 2017 AGM**

The minutes of the 2017 AGM were agreed and signed

**3. Financial Report**

During the year, WATAG received £250 from Dorset County Council for general running costs. £150 was spent on the use of the WI Hall, £29.72 on costs related to the website and £165.96 on other general expenses. The Group also received a donation from Puncknowle & Swyre Parish Council. Lyme Regis Town Council gave a grant of £200 for WATAG's timetable project and donations collected (mainly at the Lyme Regis and Bridport TICs) came to £443.58. Expenses directly on timetables amounted to £832.85. The opening balance of £990.55 has reduced to £715.60 at the end of the year..

**4. Chairman's Report**

Philip Sankey reviewed the main events and developments during the previous year (see below).

**5. Election of Officers**

Chair: Philip Sankey - proposed by Mary Marsh, seconded by David Marsh. Bob Driscoll agreed to continue to act as Vice-Chair

Treasurer: Janet Proctor - proposed by Bob Driscoll seconded by Anna Lovell.

Secretary: John Collingwood stood down but agreed to continue for the immediate future. Candidates for this position are welcomed.

There being no other nominations, all were appointed. Philip Sankey will not be standing for re-election next year.

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 group welcomed Guz Tidy, Lodders Parish Councillor to serve with existing members John Collingwood, Colin Divall, Bob Driscoll, Sheena Fox, Ian Gray, Anna Lovell, Mary Marsh, David Marsh, Janet Proctor, Philip Sankey and Alan Williams, who all agreed to serve again for the current year.

The AGM concluded at 6.55 pm

**Chair:**

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**Treasurer:**

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**Secretary:**

John Collingwood  
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## WATAG CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT for 2017

This year has seen a lot of change for WATAG as an organisation and in the public transport services in the area.

Peter Smith, who had served as Treasurer for several years and latterly had served as Chairman as well, relocated to Norfolk in April. I agreed to take his place as Chairman and Janet Proctor took on the job of Treasurer. We are ably supported by a wider advisory group/committee. I am grateful for their support. Bob Driscoll agreed to be an acting Vice-Chairman and with his many contacts has often been our spokesman on Bridport issues. John Collingwood has kept our database of addresses and taken minutes of the public meetings. He wishes to relinquish the latter task and we are seeking a volunteer to take notes of our meetings. Alan Williams has masterminded the production of a successful WATAG timetable for the summer period. Our attempt to produce a winter timetable was abandoned when the bus company kept announcing changes to the timetable.

They are ably supported by Anna Lovell (whose wide-ranging contacts with the County Council have proved useful), Ian Gray (whose inside knowledge of the bus industry has been invaluable), Colin Divall (with his academic analysis); David & Mary Marsh (with their experience of setting up community schemes) and Sheena Fox who has joined us more recently to represent Beaminster residents.

We are also grateful to Richard Edwards who maintains our website.

We have had good press coverage for a number of issues. I would particularly thank Lottie Welch of the View from Bridport for her support. We were sorry to see the paper close down at the beginning of January 2018.

The bus services in the area fall into two groups – commercial services, which pay their way from fare revenue and supported services which require financial support from the County Council.

In order to reduce spending, the County Council revised their policy on the services they would support. This was for a core inter-urban network operating Mondays to Fridays.

As a result of this change in policy several local routes lapsed in July 2017 as the contracts were not renewed. Routes affected were the 44, 71, 73 and 210. After a break during the Summer, the 71 restarted in September with support from Lyme Regis Town Council.

Dorset Community Transport have introduced some PlusBus services as a partial replacement.

The other services in the area were operated commercially and were expected to continue. Dorset County Council were retendering their school services at the same time. When the results were announced, Damory was left with their service 40 Yeovil – Beaminster – Bridport –Bridport Hospital as an isolated operation and decided to discontinue it from 24 July. Dorset County Council had this route on their core network but had worked on the basis that it would remain commercially viable and operate without subsidy. Since then, there has been a series of short-term arrangements. WATAG will continue to encourage discussions towards a more coherent long-term solution.

First has faced challenges as it took over the school contracts for Beaminster, Colfox and Woodroffe Schools. There was overcrowding in September as services were reduced to a ‘winter’ level of service at the beginning of the month before the tourist season had finished. There were further reductions throughout the Autumn with no Sunday services after mid-November in the Bridport area. In January 2018, the last remnant of a service to Exeter was withdrawn. Stagecoach continues to provide a Lyme Regis to Exeter service seven days a week (although it serves different places en route).

WATAG hopes that with more time to plan, First will be able to provide a better seasonal service in summer/autumn 2018.

WATAG also looks at train services and has contributed to South Western Railway’s consultation on a revised pattern of services from December 2018. We also have an interest in the Weymouth – Bath and Bristol line.

WATAG works to improve public transport and to encourage people to use it. There are times when we question what is planned but we also encourage people to use what is there. This is a balancing act (for example in September, the 1555 from Lyme Regis did not have the capacity to carry school pupils and returning tourists) and WATAG seeks to be realistic in the suggestions it makes.

Thank you to everyone who supports us and we shall continue to do what we can in the coming year.

**PHILIP SANKEY**