

WEST DORSET WESTERN AREA TRANSPORT ACTION GROUP (WATAG)

Minutes of General Meeting No. 77 held in the W.I. Hall, Bridport on March 27th 2014

Present: Richard Webster (Bridport); Andy Pennington (Bradpole, 'Save 47'); Alan Williams (WATAG); Sally Samuel (Beaminster TC + BAVLAP); Sally Welford (Thorncombe PC); Monica Burt (Bridport Over 50s Forum); Alan Glenn (Askerswell); Brian Cox (Bridport); Mark Williams (First Dorset); Terry Spracklen (Dorset CC); Jack Dixon (View from Bridport); Amanda Wallwork (Dorset Local Access Forum); John Collingwood (Bridport); Mike Nicks (West Bay Community Forum); Paul Oatway (Charmouth PC); Janet Proctor (Burton Bradstock); Ignacio Gomez (Bridport, 'Save 47'); Dominic Knorpel (Dorset POPP); Bob Driscoll (Bridport- co-opted Secretary); Mike Bateman (Dorset Country Cars-Beaminster); Ros Kayes (Dorset CC + Bridport TC); Anna Lovell (POPP); *D BROADLEY*; Peter Smith (WATAG Chair)

Apologies: Daryl Turner; Tessa Greenaway; Erica Pretty; Philip Sankey; Debbie Fiddik; John Snow; John Green; Jane Richardson; Peter Ridler; Sue Herman

1. Minutes of GM 76 (held January 23rd 2014):

Paul Oatway raised two points regarding these minutes:-

“(a) in sub-section (c) of Section 6 (Bus and Rail Matters) second paragraph there is a typographical error regarding the second word. It currently reads ‘Oatley’ and should read ‘Oatway’.

“(b) I also raised the issue of overcrowding on the 31 and X53 bus services during the summer. Mark [First] stated that whilst he was aware of occasional problems with the 10am service, drivers do have a facility to request a stand-by bus and driver to assist, in the event of overcrowding.”

2. Matters Arising:

There were no matters arising, other than shown in 1 above.

3. Bus and Rail Matters:

Mark Williams (First): Mark was able to give a general overview of plans for the summer period.

- A new timetable will operate **in the WEYMOUTH area only** from 06 April.

- **X53:** summer time table operates commences Sunday running on the same timetable as weekdays from 6th April then from 25 May – 28 September; for most of the day will be hourly between Weymouth and Lyme Regis and will be timed, in conjunction with the **31**, to enable a virtual half hourly service between Bridport and Lyme Regis – this gives the best frequency ever on that part of the route.

- **31:** summer t/table operates 25 May – 28 September. Will be hourly, including **Sundays**, and will be retitled **X31**. It will run between Dorchester South station and Axminster and is timed to give better connectivity with rail services at those locations. Passengers to/from Weymouth will be able to change at Dorchester onto the **10** which will run every 15 minutes. To improve timekeeping, most X31 services will by-pass Martinstown, which will retain a morning and evening service for commuters and school children.

- **47:** the future of this service is dependent on Dorset & Somerset CC's involvement.

Amanda Wallwork raised the issue of overcrowding (X53 in particular), saying that, in correspondence, First had denied there was a problem. She also queried the choice of livery (cartoon characters obscuring some the windows on the upper deck). Mark felt that the frequency of service now being offered should reduce the incidence of overcrowding and pointed out that both the X53 and 31 (X31) operate without subsidy. What is required is more **fare-paying** passengers! Amanda also asked when the last X53 would leave Weymouth.. this will be 7.20 pm (19.20).

Ros Kayes raised the recent change in the fare structure, which has caused major upset for parents of students at Woodroffe School. She asked for a meeting with First, to which Mark agreed.

Paul Oatway applauded the good news regarding the improved summer t/ table for the (X)31 and X53 and asked when next winter's t/ table will be announced. Mark advised that 8 weeks' notice has to be given; we should know by July's GM.

Mike Nicks wondered if Marsh Barton Road should have double yellow lines extended, to assist punctuality due to the narrow road; the Chair also asked if bus drivers are encouraged to report poor parking.

Monica Burt asked why the 31 was being renumbered X31; Mark explained the history.

John Collingwood asked if there would be bus stops between Winterborne Abbas and Poundbury (where buses by-pass Martinstown). Mark advised this would require Highways Agency approval.

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3. **Bus and Rail Matters** (*continued*)

Alan Glenn raised concern about the residents of Martinstown and the Chair asked if there had been any consultation. Mark responded by saying there were no plans for any **First** 'shuttle' service to operate independently of the X31; Martinstown would be served Mon – Fri only; and commented that First were writing to Martinstown Parish Council.

Damory: There was no one from Damory attending.

Rail: There was no one from the Train Operating Companies attending.

4. **Update on “Real Time Information”:**

Alan Williams gave the following information:-

(a) Alan explained the leaflet showing 'add on' fares to rail tickets for use on the 31 route between Axminster and Dorchester. These are now available on the buses and the TICs in Bridport and Lyme Regis.

(b) On Real Time Information, Alan advises there are still issues, particularly the X53 leaving Seaton heading east. Whilst many of the outstanding problems have been resolved, a number of issues still remain. Terry Spracklen (DCC) advised Alan of a new contact. Matthew Williams (i/c signals and lights); Charles Carter has now left.

(c) Alan also raised the problem on the real time information boards when the bottom line gives internet information rather than the details of a third route without interruption

5 and 6. **Update on Dorset County Council ‘Subsidised’ Transport: Terry Spracklen (Dorset Passenger Transport):** Terry was able to give the following update:-

- New Public Transport in Dorset books will be available from Mon 07 April. This year there will be 3 books: Southern, Eastern and Northern. These will be announced by press release.

- the following buses (affecting our area) are altered, after the consultation period:-

14 runs Tuesdays only

42 runs Wednesdays only

44 Tuesday withdrawn

47 see below

71 Saturday withdrawn

72 (Lyme Regis seasonal Park & Ride): withdrawn

73 Saturday withdrawn

204 runs Fridays only

210 Tuesday withdrawn

212 Saturday withdrawn

(40, 76 & 253 remain unchanged)

Janet Proctor wondered whether there could be a sign on buses about making a contribution to the fare (aimed at concessionary bus pass users)

Sally Welford expressed deep concern about the 14, as this is the only scheduled public transport service from Thorncombe. There was a suggestion of getting the local MP (Dr. Oliver Letwin, a Thorncombe resident) involved.

Ros Kayes raised the point about “community transport” involvement, to fill the vacuum caused by these withdrawals.

Dominic Knorpel, as a Lyme Regis resident, expressed concern about increased traffic congestion caused by withdrawal of the 72 (the summer park and ride).

47 There was a Cabinet (DCC) meeting today (27 March), attended by Ros Kayes; the meeting also discussed the petition (by the “Save the 47” Group) and to challenge the passenger carrying statistics. There had been a survey by the user group and figures from other sources which do not agree with DCC’s figures.

A working party of Ros Kayes Rebecca Knox and bus operators. It was suggested that Somerset CC be involved and Yeovil College as it was unclear what contribution the College makes.

7. **X53 Sunday Service (Summer and Winter):** This item covered above

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8. Future of Country Cars:

This item had been requested by **Anna Lovell** and **Dominic Knorpel**. In view of Dorset CC's decision to change the funding for this, and the various ramifications, it was agreed that Dominic Knorpel and Mike Bateman would prepare a paper to be included as an addendum to these minutes (see below)

9. Disabled Access at Dorchester West station:

There has been no further development since this item was raised nearly 3 years ago, which is very disappointing as the original plan was to have the scheme in place (for the northbound platform) before the 2012 Olympics. Terry Spracklen has been in discussion with a new Network Rail manager to try and get the scheme moving again.

Terry also took the opportunity to advise on developments planned for the station forecourt at **Dorchester South** to improve vehicular access and parking for buses.

10. AOB:

- (a) Alan Williams explained the idea of a "pass", to be issued to those entitled to the concessionary bus passes, which could be used to purchase tickets at a reduced fare. The aim is to generate extra income for the bus companies, and reduce the burden on Dorset County Council. (see also Janet Proctors' comments under item 5/6- page 2 above).
- (b) Andy Pennington made a strong argument about the demographics of rural areas, and the need to treat public transport – which is a vital lifeline for rural communities – in a different way to urban public transport.
- (c) Alan Williams made observations regarding the new fares policy of **First**.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 20.50 hours.

Next Meeting (GM 78) Thursday 29 May, at the W.I. Hall, Bridport, starting at 6.30 pm

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Changes to the Dorset Country Car Scheme & impacts on the Beaminster service.

(Info for WATAG minutes GM77). Points raised by Mike Bateman (Co-ordinator, Beaminster Country Cars), and Dominic Knorpel (Dorset POPP, Older Peoples Champion for Beaminster & villages, and the Bride Valley)

- Dorset County Council has withdrawn support from the Country Car scheme and a letter sent out saying the scheme will end on 30.06.14. This means it will no longer fund "dead mileage" between the home of volunteer drivers and client collection/set down points, and will no longer administer mileage expense claims. Payment of public liability insurance will also cease, as will provision of driver training, and supply and administration of driver record and receipt books.
- The post of Community Transport Officer, which provided this support, has been made redundant.
- The April 2nd View from Bridport, and April 3rd Bridport News, carried the following quote from Cllr Hilary Cox, DCC Cabinet Member for Transport: "...we are also investing an additional £25,000 to help community transport schemes start up. There are already 60 voluntary car schemes, dial-a-rides and other community transport initiatives across the county, helping overcome rural isolation".
- expressed concern that the withdrawal of this support from Country Car schemes, could jeopardise their survival, when they are some of the best functioning, reliable and consistent community car schemes in the county. He also said that the Beaminster scheme is providing over 1000 essential journeys to local residents who have no other means of transport, and highlighted the fact that local councillors and council officers had emphasised the importance of community car schemes in the reconfiguration of health services provided by local community hospitals, and that such schemes had been used in the Equality Impact Assessment of moving services to more distant hospitals.
- Mike Bateman reported that the cost of private travel in many instances where follow up treatments would be required, would mean that some people would not go, and this view is shared by the surgeries in Beaminster.
- Further to that many of the trips to hospital make public transport impossible both from the point of appointment times and the bus timetables.
- Additionally, many visits leave the people feeling vulnerable & uncomfortable and in no state to wait for, and travel on public transport, assuming of course that they are mobile enough to get to the

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