

WEST DORSET WESTERN AREA TRANSPORT ACTION GROUP (WATAG)

Minutes of General Meeting No.80 held in the W.I. hall, Bridport, on September 25th 2014

Present: J. Buarita (Bridport); Monica Burt (Bridport 50+); Ron Coatsworth (DCC); John Collingwood (Bridport); Brian Cox (Bridport); Bob Crutchfield (Damory); John Cummings (DCC); Bob Driscoll (Bridport); Richard Edwards; P.Evans (Bridport); T. Jones (Burton Bradstock); Alan Glenn (Askerswell); L. Goodison (Bridport); Freda Hennessy (Corscombe PC); Sue Herman (Secretary WATAG & POPP); Rebecca Hilton (Bridport); Neil Hurlock (TRIP); Iris Jones (Chideock); Mike Jones (Chideock); Ros Kayes (DCC WDDC & Bridport TC); Dominic Knorpel (POPP); Anna Lovell (WATAG & POPP); Paul Oatway (Charmouth PC); William Richard (Bridport); Erica Pretty (POPP); Janet Proctor (Burton Bradstock); Sally Samuel (Beaminster TC); Philip Sankey (Lyme Forward); Peter Smith (Chair WATAG); John Snow (Yarn Barton); Richard Thomas (Bridport News); Herbie Treehead; Daryl Turner (DCC/WDDC); Dickie Webster (Bridport); Lottie Welch (View From); Alan Williams (WATAG); Mark Williams (First);
Also, a number of attendees whose names could not be deciphered.

Apologies: Debbie Fiddik; John Green; Mary and David Marsh; Mike Nicks; Geoff Parr; Peter Ridler; Jane Richardson;

1.Minutes: The minutes of the 79th meeting were agreed, with one correction: in section 8 the name should be Andrew Bradley; but signing was deferred until next meeting as the secretary had forgotten to bring them.

2. Matters Arising: There were none

3.Bus Operators' Report:

a) **Damory:** Bob Crutchfield reported that the No.40 (to Yeovil) was doing better than expected and that Dorset County Council (DCC) and Somerset County Council (SCC) were installing roadside structures for publicity material. He also mentioned an outstation being established in Bridport with a local team of drivers.

The 71 Lyme Regis Saturday service would restart in November. There had been a few complaints about the curtailing of the weekday late afternoon service to fund this, but the overwhelming majority wanted it.

b) **First:** Mark Williams reported that following the withdrawal of subsidies (several years ago) the evening cuts to the No.X31 and the Sunday X53 had had to be made. In the summer 2014 First had injected extra resources to run an improved service.

There will be a connection for college students from Weymouth to Bridport as the X53 will call at the college to collect them, and there is a guaranteed connection from and to Beaminster via Bridport bus station.

First have raised concerns about delays incurred in Bridport due to traffic congestion. First has written to Bridport Town Council and DCC and this issue will be looked at as part of an overall traffic review before Christmas. A meeting between all interested parties will be arranged.

There is now m-ticketing available on First buses.

After Mark's report there was a long discussion about the cuts to evening services. The main points were:

- 1) People who work evening shifts in Dorchester or Axminster will no longer be able to get home and so are likely to have to give up their jobs.
- 2) Those who travel by train for work or pleasure will not be able to catch a train from London (Waterloo) later than 16.20 to Axminster or 16.35 to Dorchester.
- 3) It will no longer be possible for those who haven't a car or older people who cannot drive at night to go to the programme of talks at Dorchester Museum or to the cinema or other outings and get home, thus increasing isolation and loneliness during the dark winter.
- 4) Students at Hardy's will no longer be able to stay for the public lectures, after school rehearsal/clubs etc. unless there is someone who can drive to Dorchester and collect them.
- 5) It is not even possible to get home West of Bridport on later buses, which, again means taxis or collections.
- 6) The question of evening visiting hours at Dorchester Hospital was also raised.

It was pointed out that in rural areas the buses are a social necessity and that they should not be subject to cuts because an operator was not making a profit on the routes.

It was commented on that it was ridiculous that bus companies were not allowed to talk to each other, or work together.

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It was also felt that DCC should look again at making sure that rural areas kept their vital lifelines and were not neglected.

Ros Kayes said she would be talking to DCC and to First, and she felt it unacceptable that services were being cut. There is a petition on her website.

The question of bus passes was also raised again and it was pointed out that if holders were allowed to pay, say, half-fare then the finances of the bus companies would be transformed. It was noted that the rail pass is bought and then entitles the holder to a third off the fare and it was questioned why bus passes couldn't be similar. Ron Coatsworth said that he had suggested to the Council that they introduce their own pass which would enable passengers to pay a half fare and that would suit both bus companies and passengers but it had not been interested.

5. Information from DCC: John Cummings said there was nothing to add to what had already been said, and that there was no news on the 2014-15 budget yet.

6. Real Time and On Bus info and Bus Stop and Timetable Display: Alan reported that there were still problems with the Real Time info: it was not working properly in Bridport. And it seemed to have "lost" all the Damory buses.

The On Bus info. had had serious problems and therefore the audio is being switched off. DCC is tied into a contract with the providers but as they do not seem able to sort out the problems it was wondered whether DCC could apply a penalty.

7. Country Cars and Hospital transport: Erica Pretty reported that 7 'country car' schemes had applied to POPP for funding to become Neighbourhood Car Schemes. **Beaminster** and **Bride Valley** are still providing a service.

The Hospital car scheme is still not working properly with people arriving late for appointments and having to wait far too long to be collected after their appointments. There had been cases where the people had not been collected from home, thus missing appointments and treatment; this was quite unacceptable.

8. Trains: Bob said that the autumn timetable on the Heart of Wessex line was now in operation. Through bus/ rail tickets are available (with the X31 via Dorchester or Axminster) but the tickets could only be bought at a station, or by telephone in advance. It was asked what would happen if someone had a through ticket, bought looking at the present timetable, and then discovered that the bus had been cut!

9. Disabled access at Dorchester West: there was no progress.

There being no further business the meeting closed at 20.10. The next meeting will be on November 27th

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