

WEST DORSET WESTERN AREA TRANSPORT ACTION GROUP (WATAG)

Minutes of General Meeting No.82 held in the W.I. Hall, Bridport on 22nd January 2015

Present: Ron Coatsworth (DCC), John Collingwood (WATAG/BAG-WD), Bob Driscoll (Bridport), Mike Farmer (Bridport), Debbie Fiddick (DCC), Ignacio Gomez (Bus user), Freda Hennessey (Corscombe Parish Council), Ros Kayes (DCC), David Neylan (Bridport), Mike Nicks (West Bay Community Forum), Paul Oatway (Charmouth Parish Council), Sally Samuel (Beaminster Town Council), Philip Sankey (Lyme Forward), Peter Smith (Chair WATAG), John Snow (Yarn Barton, Beaminster), Daryl Turner (DCC), Richard Webster (Bridport), Lottie Welch (View From), Alan Williams (WATAG), Mark Williams (First).

Apologies: Brian Cox, Sue Herman, Anna Lovell, Erica Pretty, Peter Ridler. Adam Keen.

1. **Minutes:** The minutes of the previous (81st) meeting were agreed.

2. **Matters Arising:** none

3. Discussion re report to DCC Environment Overview Committee (EOC)

The EOC meeting on 19th January rejected any changes to the reimbursement of concessionary fares or to the composition of the Holistic Transport Review. Mark Williams read a statement from First management accepting the DCC's use of the DfT model for the calculation of concessionary fares and acknowledging that the rates received were based on the calculation. However, First argue that "other local authorities in our area choose to put more money into the concessionary fares pot, despite the calculator, saying that they should pay less because they understand the social impact that a commercial bus network has." First pointed out that the main percentage in the reimbursement rate is currently 36% in Dorset, 55% in Somerset and around 45% in Hampshire and Devon. The following discussion included the assertion by Cllr Coatsworth that the DCC "sticks to the rules", ensuring that the operator is neither worse nor better off due to the reimbursement. Alan Williams explained the points system based on the ratio between revenue foregone (from travellers who would have paid full fare if there was no concessionary scheme) and generated journeys (travellers using the bus due to existence of concessionary scheme). Bob Driscoll pointed to the DCC's role in ensuring the social function of moving people travelling by private car onto public transport. Ros Kayes was disappointed that she had not received a reply to the question she put to the DCC on 12 December 2014 regarding the amount provided by central government to the council for the reimbursement of concessionary fares and whether this amount is "ring-fenced". She pointed out that buses tend to move in and out of viability and suggested that the Holistic Transport Review recognises that it is sometimes necessary to spend more in the short-term to bring about durable savings

4. News from Bus Operators

a) First.

Mark Williams confirmed that fares had been increased on most local services, although the cost of weekly and monthly tickets remains unchanged. He explained that although oil prices had fallen sharply, First's purchasing policy "hedged" against price variations and the bulk of supplies for the year have already been bought, adding that fuel accounts for around 10% of the company's running costs. The next timetables for the X31/X53 routes are under preparation. They are likely to include a "shoulder period" with little change until the July/August peak when more vehicles will be deployed, and there may be an opportunity to restore some evening services in the high summer (from late July).

First accepted that the current usage of the X31 Sunday service is not as they would wish and fears there will be no Sunday service next winter. .

b) Damory

No representative was present.

5. Other information from DCC

Debbie Fiddick made a plea for Damory town and parish councils to "do something locally" to sort out parking problems in locations including Gerrards Green (Beaminster), Court Orchard (Bridport) and Broadwindsor which are causing delays on the 40 Bridport/Yeovil bus service. It was suggested that bus stops could be marked on the road with paint. The three timetable books are due for issue in May, and it is hoped that just two books will be sufficient later on.

6. Further updates on Real-Time and On-Bus information

The on-board audio system on X31/53 buses is still switched off. Problems with the roadside information displays include the way timetables are entered and edited in the system how drivers log on is probably causing problems. Alan Williams told the meeting that the VIX system works well in Bristol and issued a plea for closer co-operation between operators and the DCC.

7. Changes to Hospital Transport Services for Rural Population

The DCC was urged to ensure that all options were made clear to users. Application of the eligibility criteria in the NEPTS (Non-Emergency Patient Transport) policy are to be investigated

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8. Trains

Bob Driscoll indicated that the Network Rail Wessex's consultation was of "fringe interest" only, as there are no railways crossing the WATAG area. He told the meeting that a new station was under construction at Cranbrook between Honiton and Exeter (near to the regional airport). The Heart of Wessex line will be affected by electrification work in the summer.

9. Democratic Moment

Daryl Turner noted that the reduction in public transport led to reduction evening job opportunities.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 7.50.

The next meeting is at 6.30 pm on Thursday 26th March 2015 in the WI Hall, North St., Bridport

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