

WEST DORSET WESTERN AREA TRANSPORT ACTION GROUP (WATAG)

Minutes of General Meeting No.102 held in the W.I. Hall, Bridport on 22nd March 2018

Present (23): Andrew Ardley (SWR); Dan Bolsover (First Wessex); Monica Burt (BAOPF); John Collingwood (Bridport); Colin Divall (Bridport); Bob Driscoll (Symondsburry PC); Jean Gosney (Bridport); Andy Hedditch (Bridport); Sarah Herring (West Bay); Elizabeth Kingston (Litton Cheney); Maggie Luck (Bridport); David Marsh (Thorncombe PC); Gavin Maxwell (Bridport); Geoff Parr (West Bexington); Sue Pugh (Bridport); Philip Sankey (WATAG Chair/Lyme Forward); Phyllis Stocker (Bridport); Tom Thornett (Beaminster); Val Thornett (Beaminster); Guz Tidy (Loders PC); Chris Turner (Beaminster TC); Dickie Webster (Bridport); Alan Williams (WATAG),.

1. Apologies: Sally Falkingham, John Firrell, Sheena Fox, Ian Gray, Maureen Jackson, Ros Kayes, Anna Lovell, Mary Marsh, Janet Proctor, David Redgewell, Helen Reed, Peter Ridler, Catherine Searle, Aaron Sparks, Carol Sim, Lewis Ward,

2. Minutes: The minutes of the previous (101st) meeting were agreed and signed.

3. Matters arising not covered later: Philip Sankey explained that the evening's meeting would be recorded as an experiment to allow the temporary secretary to prepare the minutes more easily. There were no objections.

4. Dorset Travel: Dorset County Council Officer Report. Dorset Travel sent a written report which was read to the meeting and is quoted below:

Integrated Transport Review Day: *An Integrated Transport Review Day was held by Dorset County Council on 26th February. Key stakeholders for transport attended including representatives from parish, town, borough and district councils, Transport Actions Groups, community transport schemes and public transport operators, to name but a few. The event encompassed all aspects of travel and the changing network and the people at the forefront of these services shared their experiences and welcomed feedback.*

The programme was split into 4 themed sessions:

- **Starting Well** – Mainstream School & Special Educational Needs
- **Living Well** - Public Transport & Community Transport
- **Live Better** - Transformation Programme
- **Next Steps** - Integrated Transport Planning & Learning from others.

Each session was followed by group discussions at which there was some very constructive feedback. Key points raised at the event will be fed back to Dorset County Council's People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

Sustainable Transport

Sea Road North Cycleway has now been completed.

East Street Roundabout Cycleway Safety Improvements – Construction work is now expected to start week beginning 16th April 2018.

West Bay Link – Construction is still anticipated to start in Autumn 2018.

Cycle parking improvements at Heart of Wessex Line Dorset stations – Great Western Railway have now installed extra cycle parking at Maiden Newton, Dorchester West and Yetminster.

Older Persons Concessionary Bus Pass

A reminder that many concessionary bus passes in the West Dorset area are due to expire at the end of March 2018. Older Persons Concessionary Bus Passes are automatically renewed and will be posted direct to the pass holder before the expiry date. If anyone still hasn't received their new pass 1 week before its expiry, the Dorset Bus Pass Information Line (Tel: 0300 330 1201) can help resolve any issues.

Colin Divall had represented WATAG at the “Integrated Transport Review Day” along with several other WATAG members representing their respective parish councils. He felt that the event had been useful as it allowed him to gain a better understanding of the financial and other pressures on the council, although he was disappointed that there were limited opportunities for feedback and discussion and that the proceedings were “a bit rushed”. David Marsh would have liked to talk to others present at the event - or at least know who they were, but he was told by Dorset Travel that the Data Protection Act prevented disclosure of the attendance list.

5. Councillors’ slot: latest information from our elected representatives. No DCC or WDDC councillors attended the meeting. The DCC Democratic Services Department is still to advise the name of the representative who is to replace Daryl Turner and has advised WATAG that the “appointment request” has been “progressed.”

6. Bus Operators.

a). First Wessex, Dorset and South Somerset: The new summer timetable has been issued, together with a 2018 Jurassic Coaster leaflet with times and town maps on one side and tourist information on the other. Dan Bolsover announced minor changes to roadside timetables together with new stylised flag designs. Philip Sankey reported First’s decision to run an additional service from Bridport to Axminster on Saturdays and asked for this change and other corrections to be displayed in timetables and roadside displays. Alan Williams expressed concern about capacity on tourist routes on Sundays - where are the “extra high-season buses?” Philip Sankey had been informed that the newly-installed ticket machines provide more detailed information which could assist in highlighting possible capacity problems and minimize cases of stranded passengers.

Geoff Parr spoke of a partially disabled friend who regularly uses Dorchester County Hospital and who is confused about which bus stop should be used to come back to Bridport. Dan advised that two stops are live and the one at the layby is out of use at the moment. Gavin Maxwell asked Dan to make sure that this information is provided to staff at the hospital’s reception desk. Sarah Herring was assured that both stops (with and without shelter) are for both First buses (10 and X51) not just those to Poundbury. Bob Driscoll hailed this as good news as WATAG had been told by Chris Hook and his predecessor that the first stop was for the use of no. 10 passengers only.

David Marsh asked for news on progress of tree-cutting to allow the A2 school routes to use double-decker vehicles. Dan assured the meeting that both the A2 and B4 routes had been mapped and full information has been passed to the DCC for action. He confirmed that the buses in question could be used by the public although they will not run during school holidays. Alan Williams asked whether the 06.53 X53 from Weymouth will be a single or double-decker from 26th March. This is another case where the trees need to be cut as there can be up to 100 schoolchildren on one double-decker. This is unsafe going into Lyme Regis. Alan did not accept Dan’s assertion that two buses (a single and a double-decker) could cope with numbers. Inspectors could help. Guz Tidy said that a double-decker bus comes into Loders every day to pick up 3 to 5 children “wriggling about” as it does so. She asked whether a single-decker would be re-introduced when the Uploders roadworks are complete to complete the whole run as previously (a double-decker cannot go under the railway bridge). Dan maintained that the main problem was due to deliberately obstructive car-parking but all should be resolved if a single-decker returned to the full route.

Bob Driscoll passed on a request that the 14.28 X53 bus running from Weymouth to Axminster via Colfox Academy (15.40) on schooldays stops at the Co-op and Knightstone Rise stops in St Andrews Rd, Bridport to allow passengers to connect with the 15.45 no. 40 bus to Beaminster. Dan undertook to make sure that drivers stop at these registered stops when requested.

Chris Turner raised the case of a Netherbury resident who asked to be dropped off the 6 Bridport/Yeovil service at the old bus stop at the South side Netherbury turning (on the large bend) so she could walk home down into Netherbury. The driver refused her request and made her stay on board all the way to Beaminster. Dan will check to determine whether the no. 6 is a “hail&ride” or “flagged stop only” service and advise drivers accordingly. Philip Sankey told the meeting that although demand for passenger journeys to and from Netherbury is increasing on the Axe Valley Ring and Ride service, the offer may have to be curtailed to avoid cross-subsidy issues between the Devon and Dorset parts of the service.

7. Railway News.

a) **Great Western Railway:** The Heart of Wessex Rail Partnership has submitted a very full 8-page response to the Great Western Rail Franchise Public Consultation. The main points are improved frequency (in particular to get rid of the three-hour gap) and better timing on commuter services to/from Yeovil. There has been some difficulty on the line following the introduction of “turbo” trains cascaded from the Paddington/ Reading route which need to be adapted with ‘selective door’ controls to open on short platform intermediate halts. The problem has been addressed and posters have been put up at the halts concerned.

It is now eight years since funding became available for a disabled crossing point at Dorchester West. Bob Driscoll spoke of commissions, licences, agreements, land-swaps, fees and three months of paperwork, but no signs of actual progress. Alan Williams had noticed that the Heart of Wessex line’s visual and audio information systems assume that intermediate stops will not be used, and, if a train does stop at one of these halts, passengers are told that they are arriving at Castle Cary as they pull into Yeovil! Sally Falkingham sent a note speaking of a dramatic improvement in reliability and punctuality since the beginning of January. Monica Burt had asked GWR why only one carriage is put on at busy times. The company responded with a complimentary first-class ticket! There was no GWR representative at the meeting, but Bob Driscoll explained that some of the difficulties were caused by the use of rolling stock for training purposes, and there should be a great improvement in the summer.

b) **South Western Railway:** Andrew Ardley, recently appointed Regional Development Manager for the South-Western area, explained that his role is to work with stakeholders in the area. He regretted that he could not release any feedback on the December 2018 timetable consultation as Network Rail have yet to give full confirmation of the timetable submitted by SWR. Andrew announced that improvements are being rolled out across the company’s network, and that trains on the West of England service through Exeter are to be refurbished over the next few years with better wi-fi, new seat coverings and other improvements.

Questions were invited and Colin Divall asked if SWR had any plans to improve rail/bus connections. Andrew said that meetings are to be set up with First regarding connections at Weymouth and Axminster and work is to be done on promoting PlusBus and through rail/ bus ticketing. Sarah Herring had collected photographic evidence on the “disgraceful, filthy lavatories” at Poole station. She had tried to complain on-line but had not received a reply on where to send the photos or who to contact. Andrew undertook to contact the company’s station team and advised that the station is due for refurbishment in the longer term. Bob Driscoll asked whether SWR would reinstate a Saturday service between Waterloo and Weymoth via Yeovil this year. This service operated in 2016 with County Council subsidy. Andrew will check to see if it is timetabled for 2018. David Marsh reported that his wife was on the 10.19 from Crewkerne to Waterloo that morning and had to disembark from the diesel train to catch an electric one at Basingstoke. Whilst admitting that the diesels are getting older, Andrew claimed that they are still very reliable and SWR had to find a way to minimise inconvenience to passengers when failures of this sort occur. Liveries are being changed gradually. Sarah Herring spoke of uncleaned washrooms on trains and demanded more “mops and buckets” on board as well. She also asked if there would be any “special offer” fares this summer. Andrew said that this was unlikely - certainly west of Salisbury, as there are not many spare seats and extra carriages are not available. There may be more flexibility at weekends.

8. Bridport and District Community Bus. Bob Driscoll read out a resolution taken by Bridport Town Council earlier in the month.

“(1) that the proposal to commission a bus operator to provide a round Bridport bus service, running up to 6 times a day on a scheduled service, for a pilot period of 6 months on a Wednesday and Saturday be approved as proposed in Appendix C.

(2) that the councils in the parish areas through which the service runs, be approached to see if they would financially support the service.

(3) that the service starts by June 2018.

(4) that the full costs of the service, recommended provider and confirmed route, be agreed at the next Council meeting.

(5) that support be given in principle to establishing a new Charitable Trust, or similar community managed body, to provide local bus services and take ownership of the vehicle offered by the County Council. That there be a report back to Council with proposed membership, objectives and business plan for services, including financial projections etc. including a progress report to the next Council meeting.

(6) that as part of the actions to establish a new community run body as in 5 above, the Town Council works with Beaminster Town Council to look at how services between Bridport and Beaminster can be supported.” Bob explained that the “round Bridport bus service” was unlikely to extend beyond Bradpole, Walditch and Bothenhampton. The discussion turned to interruptions to service during recent bad weather. Whilst understanding First’s operational difficulties, several speakers asked for better communication on social media and radio. Chris Turner reminded the meeting that Dorset still does not have its own local radio service, despite the efforts of DorBAG. He then referred to the bus jointly gifted to Beaminster and Bridport for community use. A joint working committee is to be set up to organise and run the vehicle. Beaminster council particularly wants to run a bus on Saturdays. The two councils are presently working independently and will come together under the committee for planning, fund-raising, etc. A “section 22” not-for-profit community bus permit would satisfy Beaminster’s needs: concessionary passes would have to be accepted but the bus could run as a stopping service - hopefully running from Crewkerne, Broadwindsor, Netherbury, Beaminster to Bridport once or twice a Saturday. Insurance costs have been established and volunteer drivers are urgently sought. Chris felt that volunteer drivers would ensure viability and reduce costs.

9. Democratic Moment: No one present had anything extra to raise at this point.

10. Any Other Business: Philip Sankey announced that Lyme Regis Town Council has been working on a Park&Ride scheme for the summer. The service has been registered and is to be run by First Wessex from Easter Saturday (31st March). There has been little publicity.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 8.05 pm.

The next meeting (GM 103) is to be held in the WI Hall North St Bridport at 6.30 pm on Thursday 24th May 2018.

Chair:

Philip Sankey
Woodmead
39 Silver Street
LYME REGIS. DT7 3HS
tel: 01297 442558
email: philipsankey10@btinternet.com

Treasurer:

Janet Proctor
14 Grove Orchard
BURTON BRADSTOCK
DT6 4QJ
tel:01308 898594

Temporary Secretary:

John Collingwood
213 St Andrews Road
BRIDPORT
DT6 3BT
tel: 07867 848 891
email: john@cjctrad.co.uk