

# WEST DORSET WESTERN AREA TRANSPORT ACTION GROUP (WATAG)

## Minutes of General Meeting No.106 held in the W.I. Hall, Bridport on 22<sup>nd</sup> November 2018

**Present (27):** Will Austin (Bridport TC); Ed Boothroyd (Bus Users UK); Nick Boothroyd (Bridport Labour Party); Lynton Burse (Bridport); Monica Burt (50+ Forum); Tim Christian (DCT); John Collingwood (Bridport); Colin Divall (Bridport); Bob Driscoll (Symondsburry PC); Carolyn Emmett (Beaminster - Parent of Colfox Academy pupil); Chris Everidge (BLAP / Char Valley PC); Sheena Fox (Beaminster); Maureen Jackson (BLAP); Elizabeth Kingston (Litton Cheney); Anthony Logan (Bridport/Crewkerne commuter); Gavin Maxwell (Bridport); Jennifer Mulcahey (Bridport Nerws); R. Nicholls (BLAP); Geoff Parr (West Bexington); Erica Pretty (Early Help Dorset); David Redgewell (Bus Users UK); Philip Sankey (WATAG Chair); Patricia Schofield (Litton Cheney); Cllr Jacqui Sewell (WDDC); Tony Taylor (PSWB PC); Guz Tidy (Loders PC); Sue Warren (Morcombelake).

1. **Apologies:** Andrew Ardley, Jackie Butcher, Alex Carter, Maureen Dormer, Sally Falkingham, Ian Gray, Margaret Hayward, David Marsh, Anna Lovell, Dan Okey, Janet Proctor, Pam Reed, Billy Shearer, Carol Sim, Jean Spain, Aaron Sparks, Dave Spooner, Robin Stapleton, Chris Turner, Dickie Webster, Aled Williams, Sally Welford.

2. **Minutes:** The minutes of the previous (105th) meeting were agreed and signed.

3. **Matters arising not covered later:** Erica Pretty announced that GM106 would be her last WATAG meeting as POPP Community Development Worker as the position is to be abolished on 3 January 2019.

4. **Dorset Travel.** No DT representatives were available to attend the meeting. A short report was read out and is attached hereto.

5. **Councillors' slot:** Jacqui Sewell, WDDC Councillor for Broadwindsor much regretted the withdrawal of the service 40 from Bridport to Crewkerne, saying that seven people from her village used the bus to get to work. Although alternatives are being sought for Beaminster and Lyme Regis, the current situation is unacceptable. Jacqui, a bus user herself, will not take no for an answer, and undertook to attend future WATAG meetings. She deplored the halt placed on the transfer of assets to local communities by the shadow authority. Maureen Jackson feared that the democratic process was under threat when those in authority refuse to engage with the public. David Redgewell pointed out that experience in other counties which have adopted a unitary authority shows that the process of transferring buildings, property, staff and structures takes from one to two years and, disappointingly, the overall aim is simply to reduce the costs of local government still further.

6. **Developments on the Dorset to Yeovil corridor:** Members of the WATAG Advisory Group met with Alex Carter (CEO of Buses of Somerset) and Acting Operations Manager, Aled Williams, on the previous Thursday to discuss the recently-awarded contract for bus services between Beaminster and Crewkerne and related matters. Alex Carter's summary is attached.

Dave Redgewell urged Bridport Town Council (BTC) and other councils along the corridor to contact DCC and First to obtain a short-term emergency registration to maintain services throughout the Christmas period. Will Austin (BTC) stressed that he would be happy to arrange for the BTC to hold discussions with anyone to arrive at a solution which benefits all. The decision lies with the Town Council, but any funding would be difficult. BTC had reluctantly turned down a request for up to £10,000 from Yeovil College, as only three students from Bridport parish itself were involved. It would have been cheaper to buy a car! The starting point for a solution is to bring DCC back to the table.

Bob Driscoll pointed out that the 40 Bridport/Yeovil route was the one service which had not been the subject of any form of consultation. Jacqui also complained about the lack of consultation on the removal of a school bus in the Marshwood Vale. Parked cars and speeding vehicles are now hazardous for children, and residents have been monitoring speeds (see: <https://www.facebook.com/jacqualyne.sewell> ). Bob revealed that John Evans, the principal of Yeovil College, had been informed by Matthew Piles (DCC) that there was no demand for the early morning service, apart from students. Bob then introduced an ex-commuter on the 40 who had moved to Bridport because of the bus to Crewkerne and now had to take the costly and inconvenient solution of a bus to Axminster at 6.29 and then a train and walk to work, and the same trek in reverse in the evening. Another commuter employed in the NHS has had to reschedule her hours, losing money in the process. WATAG is also working to ease the plight of students living in Beaminster who no longer have the 15.40 bus from Colfox Academy.

First Wessex are running a Saturday timetable on 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> December, but there are no buses on Saturdays! David Redgewell felt that the two First companies involved could easily provide a solution if pressed to do so. The meeting heard several speakers discuss lack of transparency, evasion, misleading information and unhelpful suggestions (“buy a motorbike”) associated with public transport on the corridor. David reported that he had given evidence to the Transport Select Committee for the South West area in Bristol on the Yeovil/Bridport corridor.

## 7. Other Bus Operator News.

a) The Chair summarised news from operators who were not represented at the meeting. Dialogue is ongoing with Buses of Somerset. Damory continue to operate the 71 Lyme Regis town bus with support from the Town Council, on the back of the Charmouth School contract. Stagecoach South West operate the only Sunday service in the WATAG area, with a 2-hourly bus to Exeter - illustrating the clear difference in attitude between Dorset and Devon County Councils. First Wessex have introduced “minor” fare increases on some buses in the area, amounting to 25% in some cases. Bob Driscoll announced that Symondsburry Parish Council is willing to consider contributions to DCT for the PlusBus running through the area and to Bridport Town Council if BTC is to put money towards a public transport service for commuters/students to Yeovil.

b). **Dorset Community Transport:** Tim Christian confirmed that DCT is obliged to run local bus services on days during the Christmas period which are not bank holidays, and so the 14/688 services will run as normal on those days. PlusBus will not run and as the booking function will be closed from Christmas Eve to New Year’s Day bookings for 2nd January will need to be made by 21st December.

## 8. Railway News.

a) **Great Western Railway:** Regional Development Manager Dan Okey reported that GWR are hoping that the Filton Bank works (now complete) will have a very positive impact. Handback was at 04.50 on Monday 19th November and early signs are good.

b) **South Western Railway:** The SWR’s Regional Development Manager’s report is attached to these minutes. Colin Divall maintained that publicity for services needs to be accurate, pointing to the route map on the cover of SWR’s timetable leaflet 20 (Exeter, Bristol, Yeovil & Salisbury to Waterloo) which shows stations between Yeovil Pen Mill and Weymouth as “Summer only”, although trains serve these stations during the winter.

## 9. Community Initiatives

a) **Bridport and District Community Bus:** BTC Town Clerk, Will Austin, reported that figures for the first two months since the service started in August were lower than expected (5.5 passengers per journey). Numbers for the past four weeks have increased to 7.5. The route will be reviewed to shorten journey times. BTC has agreed to extend the trial period from six to 12 months to give time to find improvements. The no. 7 may travel to other parishes, although the councils concerned would be expected to contribute. Will publicly thanked Bradpole Parish Council for their input. BTC has decided to make all journeys free during December, a move which placed the number 7 Bridport Circular on the front page of the Bridport News.

b) **Beaminster Saturday Service:** Positive reports have been received. Numbers are reasonable, but more Beaminster-based volunteers are required.

10. **WATAG in 2019.** The temporary Secretary, Treasurer and Chairman have all given notice that they wish to stand down at January's Annual General Meeting. Candidates for replacements would be welcome. Maureen Jackson was assured that WATAG's funding is not under immediate threat. She was particularly concerned that the expertise and knowledge of WATAG members should continue to be deployed in a meaningful forum on Dorset transport.

11. **Democratic Moment:** / 12 **Any Other Business:** none

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 8.20 pm.

The next meeting (AGM + GM107) is to be held in the WI Hall North St Bridport at 6.30 pm on Thursday 24th January 2019.

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## **Dorset County Council Officer Report**

### **Service 40**

Bus service 40 links between Crewkerne and Beaminster and has been run by Dorset County Council since July last year. As of Monday 29 October, Buses of Somerset have taken over running this service on an altered timetable. The new service will provide four return trips per day with the final journey being direct from Yeovil to Beaminster without the need to change buses. Cllr Daryl Turner, the county council's Cabinet member for the natural and built environment, said: "I am happy to announce this replacement supported service in West Dorset linking Beaminster with Crewkerne for other bus services and rail. While it is disappointing that a full timetable is not available, the ability to fund the peak journeys for a few passengers is not possible with the current funding levels." There are connections with other services for passengers who wish to travel further. More details and the timetable will be available on [www.firstgroup.com](http://www.firstgroup.com) website in the coming days.

### **College Transport**

Dorset County Council has found a solution to transporting students to Yeovil College following the change in the timetable for Service 40. The county council has donated a minibus to Yeovil College, through a community transport fund, so that students from Bridport, Beaminster, Mosterton and Broadwindsor can attend their courses. The bus has been donated on the understanding that this service will continue to transport Dorset students. Yeovil college will manage the timetable, which started on 12 November.

### **Rail**

Dorchester West – Access Ramp: After discussions with Network Rail (NR) over the summer DCC have agreed that NR should proceed with the design with a view to constructing the ramp by April 2019. NR have offered some funding to support the partnership but it does need to be spent this financial year. A planning application will be the next step followed by a tender process to award the work and then the construction will commence.

## **Buses of Somerset**

We had productive discussions on a number of issues relating to the recently awarded DCC 40 local bus service contract, and of course the related commercial service 6, operated by our sister company First Wessex. The following attempts to summarise the current position on the issues discussed at that meeting

### **Timetabling**

- Specific proposal tabled for a new journey at 0925 ex Yeovil, 0955 ex Crewkerne
- This would connect into 1030 service 6 Beaminster-Bridport
- Operationally, this would be better for BoS, but would lose the entire first round trip of the day Beaminster-Crewkerne and return, and in consequence that earlier connection to Yeovil via SW Coaches service 96
- A second proposal to consider is the retarding of the current 1635 service 40 journey from Yeovil to 1715, again to connect at Beaminster
- Both proposals would require endorsement from the contracting authority, Dorset CC
- Subject to this, we would be pleased to consider this and any other proposals for potentially beneficial timetable changes, provided they can be reasonably achieved within existing resource provision
- We are considering a couple of alternative timetable proposals, which we'll be pleased to share with WATAG once available
- First Wessex to consider the possible provision in school/college vacations of the soon to be introduced additional early morning journey from Bridport to Mosterton/Crewkerne, with potential funding from Bridport and Beaminster Town Councils?

### **Fares and Ticketing**

- We have taken steps to ensure interavailability of ticketing products between Buses of Somerset and First Wessex on services 40 and 6 respectively
- We now are considering through fare provision between the two services, and also potentially with SWC 96, which we would ask SCC/DCC to 'broker'

### **Christmas/New Year period**

- First Wessex not planning to operate service 6 on days when Saturday timetables prevail (24, 27, 28 and 31 Dec; 2-4 Jan)
- BoS is contractually obliged to provide service 40 on these dates, which will have no connecting service 6 to Bridport

Possibility of dialogue with DCC to operate an alternative 40 within the same resource on these dates, to cover Bridport too?

Alex Carter (CEO - Buses of Somerset)

### **South Western Railway:**

West of England line: Good news is that the train formations between Exeter/ Salisbury and Waterloo will be up to full strength again from the December 2018 timetable change and indeed a number of trains will be further strengthened with additional coaches over and above what was scheduled in the current May 2018 timetable. I will send through more detail on that but it will probably be after the meeting.

Access for All nominations to provide lifts etc. for mobility impaired users have been submitted to the Department of Transport. Stations in or affecting Dorset are Gillingham & Yeovil Junction (notification due April 2019)

We are continuing to work with developers and South Somerset District Council on plans for additional parking for Crewkerne station

Timetable changes: There are no significant timetable changes this December due to the national timetable moratorium that I explained last time I came. There will be some minor tweaks. The December timetable is now available both on line and in paper form at stations. Bigger changes can be expected in May 2019 which will take account of the major consultation we did as part of the December 18 timetable planning. It doesn't necessarily mean that everything from that will be included at once and some changes may come later in December 19 or beyond. We have only just had the response back from Network Rail so I am getting an internal briefing on the detail next week. I will forward further information on May 2019 when I have it.

Weymouth / Bournemouth – Waterloo: Access for All schemes nominated (see above)  
Dorchester South, Wareham. I'm aware that GWR has nominated Dorchester West  
Weymouth station forecourt Coastal Communities Fund bid has progressed to the second stage and are pleased to be working with Dorset County Council on the final bid details

Through bus ticketing:

We will be working up a publicity strategy for the through ticketing to Axminster and Bridport with partners. It will take a bit of time with so many other projects on the go and greater benefit will be gained by linking it with timetable changes next May

Andrew Ardley  
Regional Development Manager