

# WEST DORSET WESTERN AREA TRANSPORT ACTION GROUP (WATAG)

## Minutes of General Meeting No.110 held in the W.I. Hall, Bridport on 25<sup>th</sup> July 2019

**Present (26):** Andrew Ardley (SWR); Nadeem Ahmad (Bridport); Jackie Butcher (Mosterton), Sarah Carney (Bridport TC); Tim Christian (DCT); John Collingwood (Bridport); Daniel (Bridport); Colin Divall (WATAG); Maureen Dormer (Mosterton), Bob Driscoll (WATAG Chair); Anna Dunn (Chideock PC); Sally Falkingham (Maiden Newton PC); Sheena Fox, (Beaminster); Ian Gray (WATAG); Freda Hennessey (Corscombe, Halstock & District PC); Anna Lovell (WATAG); Gavin Maxwell (Bridport); Karen Millem (Beaminster); Chris Miller (Bridport); Chris Noon (Char Valley PC); Philip Sankey (Lyme Forward); Jacqui Sewell (Broadwindsor Group PC); Aaron Sparks (First); Tony Taylor (PSWB PC); Chris Turner (Beaminster TC); Alan Williams (WATAG).

1. **Apologies:** Cllr Chris Addis, Will Austin, Monica Burt, Carolyn Emett, Margaret Hayward, Maureen Jackson, Cllr Jon Orrell, Geoff Parr, David Redgewell, Pamela Reed, Carol Sim, Robin Stapleton, Guz Tidy, Dicky Webster, Aled Williams..

2. **Minutes:** The minutes of the previous (109th) meeting were agreed and signed.

3. **Matters arising not covered later:** None.

4. **Report from Dorset Travel:** A report from Amanda Evans (attached) was read out. It was noted that Guz Tidy (of the WATAG Committee) had tested the cycleway using a mobility scooter and reported her experience to Dorset Council. There was still an issue at the Crown Roundabout and the traffic lights had “short” phases.

5. **The Bridport to Yeovil corridor - The continuing saga .** After two years of correspondence we are nowhere near achieving a satisfactory service. WATAG still had concerns about the whole route and has sought a review with Dorset Council and the operators. Currently, there is no commuter service (apart from limited term-time provision on B5), nothing for students and no through service to Yeovil. The lack of a Bridport – Beaminster bus at 1545 affected Colfox students returning to places on the Beaminster corridor. Carolyn Emett had spoken at Dorset Council on this issue and Bob had spoken at the recent Place Scrutiny Committee (chaired by Daryl Turner) who agreed to set up a working party on the issue. Sue McGowan had suggested that we await their conclusions rather than work on the 6 in isolation, but Daryl had responded that as it was uncertain whether the working group would look in detail at individual routes, the 6 should be proceeded with as a matter of urgency. Most of WATAG’s suggestions for changes had been dismissed by the operators as impracticable (due to the tight time between service 6 duties and the school duties before and after). One train connection improvement is still being looked at. Through and interchangeable fares should now be working. The fact that students had to remain in education (full or part-time) up to 18, but the duty to provide free transport ceased at 16, was mentioned again (with students from rural areas having to travel further and pay more for transport). Usage had declined. People had lost confidence in the connection between the 1245 service 96 from Yeovil and the 1310 Service 6 from Crewkerne at Misterton with the risk of being stranded there for four hours. Bob asked those who relied on the service 6 to read the correspondence and come back with suggestions. Tim Christian suggested that we produce three sets of proposals: a ‘basic’; a medium level and an ‘ideal’ service. It was agreed to proceed on this basis and the Committee would welcome people’s ideas. Sheena Fox would work with Beaminster folk. Chris Turner said that whilst looking at the needs of college students, we should remember that commuters needed a service all year round. Chris also asked whether a decision had been made about the service in the Christmas period as they had supplemented it last year with CB3. Aaron Sparks said it was still to be decided whether they would make service 6 an exception to their ‘Saturday service’ policy. He also explained that drivers should contact control if they were delayed making the ‘guaranteed connection’ in the evening.

Sally Falkingham said that Maiden Newton had also lost useful links to Yeovil and young people were generally going to Weymouth College.

## **6. Other Bus Operator News.**

(a) **First Wessex.** Aaron Sparks said that there are regular drivers for school runs who knew that they could accept fare-paying passengers. With a very recent upgrade to their computer system it should now feed into the real time system and the First app. Nadeem Ahmad was a user of first and last journeys and said it was difficult to check when Customer Services were closed. He also noted that the Weymouth and Weymouth+ tickets were publicised but information about travel in this area was less easy to find. Sally Falkingham asked about travel on the B1/B2 for shorter journeys between villages (eg to Kingcombe). Aaron confirmed that passengers could board or alight at any stop but agreed that the B1 was likely to be standing room only. Freda Hennessey said Corscombe had concerns about double-deckers on the B4.

(b) **Stagecoach South West:** Philip Sankey (for WATAG) had asked Stagecoach and First to look at connections in Lyme Regis now that First does not operate west of Lyme. David Attrill at First is considering this as the winter timetable is drawn up.

(c) **Dorset Community Transport.** Tim Christian had timetables for their two bus services (14/688). These and their PlusBus services continue to operate during school holidays. He had been informed that the Bride Valley Dial-a-bus operated by Dorset Council was being withdrawn at the end of the month (but had not been included in the report from Dorset Council) and DCT would now cover West Bexington with their PlusBus. They had carried out a review of their 18 Plusbus services. None was to be withdrawn, but some would be scaled back. From the Bride Valley, they would run into Dorchester every Wednesday and into Bridport every Saturday from September (currently every Wednesday and alternate Saturdays). The Yeovil Service B would now only run on the first Thursday of the month from August. They would give the information to all those who are registered with them and if there is spare capacity give wider publicity. The idea of a DCT PlusBus for Health with the Tollerford Practice (with surgeries in Beaminster & Maiden Newton) is being progressed and the pilot scheme should start next month. The Practice is identifying people who attend particular clinics who could need the service. It is supported by the PPG (Patient Participation Group). Gavin Maxwell said that transport was key to the CCG (Clinical Commissioning Group)'s Sustainable Transition Plan. Lack of transport to access hospitals was a big issue. Tim said DCT would like to run the pilot first before re-approaching Dorset CCG with a demonstrable model.

## **7. Railway News**

a) **South Western Railway:** Andrew Ardley said that wi-fi on trains had been upgraded and refurbishment of rolling-stock continues. Since the strikes in June, the Union has held a further ballot which means that they can call further strikes within the next six months subject to two weeks' notice, which leaves little time for contingency planning by management. The Coastal Community Fund bid for improvements at Weymouth did not succeed. Plans for a full overbridge at Dorchester South with lifts were not included in the latest grant awards programme. An interim solution could be to use taxis to take people to/from the far platform. There were opportunities to work with others (including Dorset Council) for bids to fund projects through the Customer & Communities Improvement Fund. This had a wide scope and could include trialling bus connections and covered both revenue and capital expenditure. Through Bus-Rail tickets to Lyme Regis & Bridport via Axminster and Dorchester should work on SWR website. In sending his apologies, Robin Stapleton had given details of two train failures. Andrew replied that rolling stock was being used more intensively but there had been no reduction in maintenance. With older stock, some failures will happen.

Concern was expressed about lack of toilets at Weymouth. They seemed to be prone to vandalism and he suggested that people could use the toilet on a train at the platform. Most SWR trains had more than one toilet but this was not the case on some GWR trains.

b) **Great Western Railway:** Andrew Ardley in the absence of anyone from GWR reported that there would be a Direct Award 3 from December. SWR were operating a limited service between Yeovil and Weymouth which might be developed further. Catherine Phillips had left the Heart of Wessex Community Rail Partnership and Andrew Wiles of Somerset County Council was holding the fort. Kelly Flynn is the Dorset Council officer representative.

## 8. Community Initiatives

a) **Bridport and District Community Bus:** The service was being monitored. Aaron did not have passenger numbers to hand. The working group was due to meet on 6 August.

b) **Beaminster CB 3 service:** This celebrated its first anniversary in June and had provided 3800 passenger journeys. Thanks to donations (alongside concessionary passes) they were able to continue. They had introduced a revised timetable at the beginning of July.

9. **Meetings attended on behalf of WATAG:** Ian Gray had attended an SWR Community Rail event in Southampton and felt Dorset lagged behind other places.

10. **Democratic Moment:** Alan Williams was able to report that WATAG had arranged support for a limited service between Weymouth and Bridport on Sundays from 22 September to 22 December 2019 (three round trips). Sally Falkingham reminded people that Heart of Wessex was the first CRP in the South West with a meeting planned for 27 September. Chris Miller said that the path /cycleway to West Bay was now open. Colin mentioned a further recent report following on from the one that WATAG had contributed to<sup>1</sup>. Alan Williams had produced a guide to First fares. First has agreed that WATAG may issue it, but it should be clear that it is not an official First publication

## 11. AOB: none

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 8.40 pm.

The next meeting (GM 111) is to be held in the WI Hall North St Bridport at 6.30 pm on Thursday 26th September 2019.

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<sup>1</sup> House of Commons Transport Committee, *Active travel: increasing levels of walking and cycling in England*, Eleventh Report of Session 2017–19 (16 July 2019)

## **Dorset Council Officer Report**

### **Appointments to Dorset Council**

As part of the restructure for the new Dorset Council unitary authority, two appointments have recently been confirmed for Dorset Travel:

- Sue McGowan as the Head of Dorset Travel
- Gordon Sneddon as Service Manager for Travel Operations.

In line with the new Council's restructuring process, appointments for other job roles in the new team will be made over the coming months.

### **Public Transport and Bus Stop Infrastructure**

At the Place Scrutiny Committee meeting on 9 July 2019, the committee agreed to set up a working group to look at the effect of previous reductions in subsidy for public transport (and the viability of routes) across the county in the context of the climate change emergency. This will include the corridor between Bridport, Beaminster, Crewkerne and Yeovil, part of which is covered by service 6 (Bridport to Crewkerne) with onward journeys available from Crewkerne to Yeovil. Concerns about the reliability of connections between buses at Beaminster on this route have been addressed by the operators (Buses of Somerset and First Wessex) who have put a process in place to ensure that buses wait for each other.

Emily McCurdy (Public Transport and Infrastructure Support Officer) has started her maternity leave and is due to return in February 2020. In Emily's absence, please contact Tess Evans who is Emily's maternity cover. Tess' e-mail address is [teresa.evans@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:teresa.evans@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk).

### **Cycling**

The Burton Road cycleway and light controlled crossing are complete.

East Road Roundabout cycleway safety improvements are substantially complete. There is an embargo on carrying out construction work on the roundabout during July/August so street lighting, signage, cycleway surfacing and roundabout landscaping will be finished off in September.

Bridleway W1/14 between Burton Road and Station Road/West Bay Road Car Parks has been widened and resurfaced with tarmac to make it more accessible for all ages and abilities and easier to maintain going forward. We will be adding a stone and chip surface dressing over the tarmac in September which will seal the path making it last longer and it will resemble a gravel path when it's finished. It also provides additional friction/grip which slows cyclists down and makes them easier to hear when they're approaching. Additional cycle parking will be installed next to the play area/toilets in West Bay.