

WEST DORSET WESTERN AREA TRANSPORT ACTION GROUP (WATAG)

Minutes of General Meeting No.109 held in the W.I. Hall, Bridport on 23rd May 2019

Present (24): Will Austin (Bridport TC); Mary Boughton (Shipton Gorge Parish Council); Monica Burt (Bridport Older Peoples Forum); Jackie Butcher (Mosterton), John Collingwood (Bridport); Daniel (Bridport); Maureen Dormer (Mosterton), Bob Driscoll (WATAG Chair); Anna Dunn (Chideock PC); Ian Gray (WATAG); Maureen Jackson (BLAP); Julian Jones (Green Party); Hilary Joyce (Char Valley Parish Council); Anna Lovell (WATAG); Chris Miller (Bridport); David Redgewell (Bus Users UK); Pamela Reed (Mosterton), Philip Sankey (Lyme Forward); Jacqui Sewell (Upper Marshwood Vale PC); Billy Shearer (Bridport); Aaron Sparks (First); Carol Sim (First); Tony Taylor (PSWB PC); Alan Williams (WATAG).

1. **Apologies:** Andrew Ardley, Jim Basker, Tim Christian, Colin Divall, Chris Everidge; Sally Falkingham, John Firrell, Sheena Fox, M Hayward, David Marsh, Mary Marsh, Dan Okey, Geoff Parr, Anne Sankey, Guz Tidy, Chris Turner, Dicky Webster, Aled Williams.

2. **Minutes:** The Chairman, Bob Driscoll, reported two changes to the draft minutes as circulated for the previous (108th) meeting. In Item 5, Aled Jones to read Aled Williams. In Item 6 (c), the reference to publicity for the Cattistock to Dorchester Ring & Ride had been deleted. The service and the directory were not the responsibility of DCT. With these corrections, the Minutes were agreed and signed.

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

4. **Dorset Travel Report:** A short report from Amanda Evans (attached) was read out. No councillors were present and it was early days for things to settle at the new Dorset Council.

5. **Bridport – Yeovil corridor.** The Chairman said that we had heard nothing more about matters raised at the previous meeting. This included any response to the suggestion that the 0930 Beaminster to Bridport should start in service from (say) Mosterton and the 1315 from Bridport remain in service as far as (say) Mosterton. People were still waiting for the sign at the Village Hall stop. Through and interchangeable fares were not working, with someone presenting a ‘Wessex’ through ticket from Burton Bradstock to Melplash being asked to pay again on a Buses of Somerset 6 at Bridport. Yeovil College are taking 21 students by minibus from the Bridport area and have 24 applications for 2019-2020. The minibus is a drain on finances and the College would welcome alternative provision. 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, did not help. (This issue is a national not a local one). Jacqui Sewell felt County tended to cherry-pick and West Dorset did badly. Maureen Jackson asked for joined-up planning of services. It was pointed out this was hampered by legislation although recent changes may help. Hilary Joyce stressed the importance of connections to reach hospitals (including Yeovil). The Chairman explained that Guz Tidy, our committee ‘lead’ on health, had sent her apologies. Jackie Butcher spoke well of the CB3. There was one morning journey which was often full (with passengers left behind). Usage had plateaued. Jackie and two friends had been to Yeovil and coming back on the 1245 service 96, they had a very tight connection at Mosterton (which involves crossing the road) into the 1310 from Crewkerne. They made it, but not without some anxiety. The Chairman asked First to consider running up to 10 minutes later to give a wider margin for late running. He asked what the plans were for the period between Christmas and New Year on Service 6. If part of the service (which is contracted by Dorset Council) is required to operate, Philip Sankey suggested it would be sensible to operate the whole route to the usual Monday to Friday timetable on those days.

Margaret Hayward (Netherbury) had sent apologies but asked WATAG to press for Netherbury to have one bus a day. Philip hoped that now there was more 'slack' at Bridport in the 6 timetable, this might be reconsidered. WATAG still had concerns about the whole route and will be seeking a review with Dorset Council and the operators.

6. Other Bus Operator News.

(a) **First Wessex.** Aaron Sparks reported that a bus had been named "Mrs Carter" in honour of a regular passenger on her 101st birthday. The extra X53 trip at 2010 Weymouth to Bridport and 2120 return would run Mondays to Saturdays in July and August. The C2 was being rerouted in Litton Cheney and First was hoping to switch to double-deck operation after half-term or, if not, soon after. The need for and suitability of double-deckers for the route was raised. Were double-deckers appropriate for villages as they had not been used in the past? It was pointed out that double-deckers were envisaged when the contract was awarded. John Collingwood said that there were always seats when he travelled on it. (It transpires they are currently using two single-deckers). They are also waiting tree clearance for the B4 and A2 and expected them to be dealt with in that order. Mary Boughton said that there had been developments following representation from the Parish Councils of the area. The issuing of enforcement notices had been peremptory, calling for action within 7 days over Easter. The AONB team were citing the terms of the Countryside Act as the action would decimate the rural scene. The matter was on hold, pending a meeting offered by Dorset Council, Chief Executive. Anna Dunn asked when there would be 'green' buses through Chideock as current buses dated from 2003. First replied that the majority of buses used on the route dated from 2008 (or later) although some from 2004 are used occasionally. They all meet European Emission standards. The school services used a mix of 2004 and 2008 vehicles. She lamented the fact that Chideock was cut off on Sundays for half the year. Aaron replied that it is not commercially viable to run the service in winter. David Redgewell suggested that parish councils work together to see how much financial support would be needed and to explore whether SWR would put in funds.

(b) **Stagecoach South West.** The Service 9A timetable was changing from 26 May. Philip Sankey had asked Stagecoach to look at timings in any future revision to facilitate connections at Lyme Regis but had not had a reply.

(c) **Damory.** Adam Keen is leaving Go South Coast (Damory) to become managing director of New Adventure Travel in Cardiff.

(d) **Dorset Community Transport.** They are exploring the idea of a DCT PlusBus for Health with the Tollerford Practice (with surgeries in Beaminster & Maiden Newton).

Axe Valley & West Dorset Ring & Ride. In answer to a question, it was confirmed that they continue to operate in the Bride Valley. The DCT PlusBus in that area also runs every Wednesday and alternate Saturdays.

The Report of the House of Commons Select Committee "Bus Services outside London" for which WATAG submitted evidence has just been published. The Government will have to make a response.

7. Railway News.

(a) **Great Western Railway.** Dan Okey had written to report better performance on the Westbury-Weymouth line this year to date (86% punctuality in period 1 which is April). They are seeing the benefit of all the infrastructure work last year plus trains, staff, depot works and improvements at stations. Still lots to do though so they are keeping busy to try and improve things further and make performance better. Lighting scheme at Maiden Newton will be done this summer. It was noted that Catherine Phillips having left, the future of Community Rail Partnerships was uncertain. There were no publicity leaflets and the line beyond Westbury was being included in the Severn area. Somerset CC and Dorset Council will need to work together on Westbury – Weymouth. Certain government funds are only available to CRPs so it would need to be a formal arrangement.

(b) **South Western Railway.** Andrew Ardley had sent a report that highlighted the re-introduction of a Saturday Waterloo – Salisbury – Yeovil – Weymouth service which will now operate all year. In summer, one part of the train will run to Corfe Castle and then to Poole and back to Weymouth in reverse. Through Bus-Rail tickets to Lyme Regis & Bridport via Axminster and Dorchester have been introduced, but only where SWR sets fares. David Redgewell suggested getting DfT to include such requirements into future franchises (Cross Country is up for re-tender currently).

8. Community Initiatives

Bridport and District Community Bus: BTC Town Clerk, Will Austin, reported that the revised timetable that started in March had not resulted in increased use. Now that a new Town Council was in place, the working group will look again. It was a regret that access to Chestnut Road had not been made possible. Where the route serves places in neighbouring parishes, a financial contribution was expected. In the case of Bothenhampton, inconsiderate parking (or lack of restrictions/enforcement) remained an issue. The Town Council has plans to develop the Bus Station as a transport hub to include a new skate park and other facilities. David Redgewell feared that if this displaced the First depot it would mean the loss of local jobs. Sir Oliver Letwin MP is ‘on board’ and is seeking a meeting with Matt Prosser, Dorset Council, Chief Executive. The uneven surface is being attended to as a matter of urgency. He urged people to contribute to the consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan which is open until 28 June 2019. Supporting comments matter.

9. Democratic Moment: Anna Lovell queried the gradient of the new cycleway to West Bay for both cyclists and buggies and the fact of blind corners. It is assumed it is being built to the approved highway standard. Chris Miller said that at the recent Bank Holiday weekend the path had been blocked with rubble with no signs to warn people. David Redgewell said that National Express were prepared to alter the 315 timetable to enable connections from Plymouth into Cornwall. He promised to give contact details. He said there was pressure from some investors to ‘break up’ First but scotched any suggestion that the Wessex operation might be sold to RATP. He promised to give contact details. He also said that SWR may have more catering operations locally with apprenticeship opportunities.

There being no other business, the meeting closed at 8.35 pm.

The next meeting (GM 110) is to be held in the WI Hall North St Bridport
at 6.30 pm on Thursday 25th July 2019.

Chair:

Bob Driscoll
Holmdene, Magdalen Lane
BRIDPORT DT6 5AD
tel: 01308 4255188
email: drisc.juggs@talk21.com

Treasurer:

Guz Tidy
16 Well Plot,
LODERS DT6 4NP
tel:01308 425805
email: guzcwffcw@msn.com

Admin:

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

Dorset Council Officer Report

Public Transport

At a recent meeting with Buses of Somerset, the Council received the news that service 6, Bridport – Beaminster – Crewkerne has had a 10% passenger increase since the revised timetable was introduced. The council will continue to work with companies operating the routes with a view to facilitating through ticketing to Yeovil. There have been some concerns with negotiating Gerrards Green in Beaminster due to parked vehicles. Buses of Somerset will be looking at the publicity produced for the route.

The council is continuing to make progress with the tree and vegetation clearance along the school routes in West Dorset – a dedicated Highways Officer is overseeing the programme.