

WEST DORSET WESTERN AREA TRANSPORT ACTION GROUP (WATAG)

website www.watag.org.uk

MINUTES OF WATAG AGM 19 – 23rd JANUARY 2020

- 1. Apologies.** These were received and are listed in the minutes of the following General Meeting.
- 2. Minutes of the 2019 AGM.** The minutes of the 2018 AGM were agreed and signed
- 3. Financial Report.** During the year, WATAG received £250 from Dorset County Council for general running costs and we paid £150 for the use of the WI Hall. Expenses directly on timetables amounted to £93.25. The opening balance of £592.99 has reduced to £372.74 at the end of the year.
- 4. Chairman's Report.** Bob Driscoll reviewed the main events and developments during the previous year. The report is attached.
- 5. Election of Officers.** Chair: Bob Driscoll was proposed by Will Austin seconded by Chris Turner. Bob agreed to remain as Chairman for one more year.
Treasurer: Guz Tidy was proposed by Bob Driscoll and seconded by John Collingwood. Guz is willing to continue, Secretary: The role had been split, with Philip Sankey acting as minute-taker and John Collingwood dealing with correspondence and administrative matters. Colin Divall seconded by Alan Williams proposed that Philip should continue; Guz Tidy proposed and Anna Dunn seconded that John should continue. They both agreed. Webmaster: Richard Edwards has agreed to continue providing this valuable service.
The chair asked for further members to join the Advisory Committee. Existing members are John Collingwood, Colin Divall, Bob Driscoll, Sheena Fox, Ian Gray, Anna Lovell, Philip Sankey, Billy Shearer, Guz Tidy and Alan Williams, who all agreed to serve again for the current year.
- 6. Pattern of Meetings for 2020.** The WI Hall has been booked for the fourth Thursday of alternate months.
- 7. AOB.** There was some discussion of the effectiveness of WATAG. Bob shared some of the frustration that nothing seemed to happen but Will Austin pointed out that WATAG involvement had been crucial in setting up the Bridport Community Bus, and Carolyn Emmett said it had helped her to liaise with other campaigners on the Colfox to Beaminster school connection.

The AGM concluded at 7.03 pm

Chair:

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Chair's Report for the WATAG 2020 AGM (23 January 2020)

A very warm welcome to this, our 19th AGM since the formation of WATAG.

As you know, I accepted this position at last January's AGM, and would like to start by thanking Philip Sankey, my predecessor, for the work he did as Chairman, and for continuing to take the minutes of meetings. I should also remind you that I took this on in a "caretaker" capacity, until a willing volunteer steps in!

And now a quick glance at some highlights of the last 12 months. January's meeting was dominated by the ongoing issues of the Bridport - Beaminster - Yeovil corridor, and this has continued throughout the year. Dorset County Council was in the process of transforming into a Unitary Dorset Council, so really little chance of any movement until the transformation was complete.

At our March meeting, it was confirmed that the new Dorset Council would start on 01 April. Dorset Travel also confirmed a revised timetable for the no. 6 route from Bridport to Crewkerne, again without ANY consultation with users of the service. The advantage of the new timetable was that buses ran through from Crewkerne to Bridport, without the requirement to change in Beaminster. The disadvantage was the withdrawal of the direct Bridport - Yeovil "shoppers" service, which had always been popular. First Wessex launched their summer timetable from 07 April, and a revised timetable was also launched for the Bridport Town Council sponsored no. 7 Bridport Circular.

At May's meeting, FW announced it had named a Jurassic Coaster Bus "Mrs. Carter", in recognition of a regular traveller on the no. 7 Bridport Circular who had reached her 101st birthday! School transport dominated much of the meeting, in particular the issue of cutting back trees in country lanes to accommodate double deck vehicles and the lack of consultation between Dorset Council and affected Parish Councils and landowners.

In July, it was announced that the Beaminster Town Council Community Bus (CB3) had reached its first anniversary and conveyed 3,800 passenger journeys, proving the need for such a service. The timetable had been tweaked in July, and Salwayash ceased to be served. Dorset Community Transport also announced revised PlusBus arrangements after a review of its 18 routes. All its routes would continue, but some would be scaled back to better reflect changing patterns of demand. On the rail side, the through rail/ bus tickets to Bridport + Lyme Regis was raised, as this facility seemed to have lapsed with the new franchise. Also there were complaints about the lack of toilet facilities at Weymouth, not helped by vandalism.

With 46 in attendance at September's meeting, we were taken by surprise and nearly ran out of chairs! This was caused in part by the winter timetable introduced by FW which sent a shock wave throughout the community, with further cuts to early and late services on the X51 and X53 (causing hardship to some commuters and those travelling on by train) and - particularly worrying - the reduction of the X51 to Dorchester to a 2 hourly service throughout the day. At that meeting I was able to report that I had addressed Extinction Rebellion at Bridport Coach station on 21st, which was the day before the start of the winter timetable. There was much amusement that FW had announced that Sunday 22nd September was CAR FREE day, and encouraged everyone to use the bus, on the same day that all their Sunday services within the WATAG area were withdrawn! Fortunately there was 1 Sunday bus operating. This was the X53 between Weymouth and Bridport, sponsored by our very own Alan Williams.

In November, 3 out of the 4 parliamentary candidates attended and gave statements on their policies on rural public transport, for which we gave thanks. We learnt that SWR would be striking throughout December as the long running guards' dispute still hadn't been resolved. A crowd-funding campaign had been started by Billy Shearer to try and secure an extension to the Sunday X53 which was due to end on 22 December. Finally, the Dorset Travel Officers' Report mentioned a partnership led by PRAMALIFE - called LINKING DORSET - which will provide a joined up way of signposting people to transport schemes available.

I've only touched on some of the issues raised in the last 12 months – copies of minutes of all our meetings are available from John Collingwood.

I'd like to conclude by thanking all of you who attend our meetings, and in particular the representatives of the bus and rail companies. Also my thanks to the members of our Advisory Group, namely John Collingwood, Guz Tidy, Philip Sankey, Anna Lovell, Alan Williams, Ian Gray, Colin Divall, Sheena Fox, and Billy Shearer, without whom this Group would cease to function.