

# WATAG NEWS

WEST DORSET WESTERN AREA TRANSPORT ACTION GROUP

## LOCAL TRANSPORT ROUTES

### X51/X53

Operated by First Wessex and marketed as the Jurassic Coaster.

X51 operates from Weymouth to Axminster via Dorchester, Bridport and Lyme Regis. Mon-Sat.

X53 operates from Weymouth to Axminster via Abbotsbury, West Bay, Bridport and Lyme Regis Mon-Sat. Operates Weymouth - Lyme Regis on Sundays.

### 6/6B

Operated by First Wessex and Buses of Somerset, Mondays to Fridays.

These buses operate from Bridport to Beaminster, Crewkerne and Yeovil.

### CB3

Operated by Beaminster Town Council, every Saturday, connecting Beaminster with Bridport and Crewkerne.

### 7

Operated by Dorset Community Transport on behalf of Bridport Town Council on Wednesdays and Saturdays, as the 'Bridport Town Circular'.

### 9A

Operated by Stagecoach South West, this links Lyme Regis with Exeter via Axmouth, Seaton and Sidmouth, daily.

### 14

Operated by Dorset Community Transport, every Thursday, from Birdsmoorgate and Thorncombe to Chard.

### 71

Operated by Damory, on behalf of Lyme Regis Town Council, Mondays to Fridays, as the 'Lyme Regis Town Service'

### 688

Operated by Dorset Community Transport, every Thursday, from Thorncombe to Axminster.

### PlusBus

Operated by Dorset Community Transport, the PlusBus service provides transport for people who are unable to easily access public transport: young or old and including those with mobility difficulties and offers a weekday trip from neighbouring villages to local destination towns. To book, call 01258 287980. Further details here: <https://bit.ly/37hK7hB>

## YOUR LOCAL RAIL ROUTES

### South Western Railway

Axminster & Crewkerne to/from Exeter and London Waterloo.

Weymouth, Upwey and Dorchester South to Poole, Bournemouth and London Waterloo.

### Great Western Railway

Weymouth, Upwey and Dorchester West to Bath, Bristol and Gloucester.

## LONG DISTANCE BUS ROUTES

National Express operates from Weymouth and Dorchester to London



*Read WATAG's response*

# WINTER IS COMING

WATAG feedback secures services

## RIGHTS OF WAY SURVEY

Dorset Council wants your feedback

### CONTACT WATAG

WATAG normally holds public meetings regularly, however due to the ongoing COVID pandemic this has not been possible.

With lockdown being eased over the last few months we plan to have meetings again. It will be good to see you all again, in person!

You can contact WATAG via email or see our website.

Website: <https://watag.org.uk/>

Email: [watag@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:watag@hotmail.co.uk)

YOUR LOCAL JOURNEY PLANNER TRAVELINE SOUTH WEST  
<https://www.travelinesw.com/>

# SERVICE UPDATES

The latest news on our local buses and trains



The X52 open-top bus service has ended for the summer. A new winter timetable for the X51/X53 started on Sunday, 3 October 2021. The new timetable is here: <https://bit.ly/3CLeJpv> and thanks to feedback from WATAG, Sunday services are preserved between Weymouth and Lyme Regis via West Bay and Bridport.



Service 6 now serves Yeovil College at 16.45 Mondays to Fridays during term times - this has been a long term goal of WATAG. The timetable is here: <https://bit.ly/3FwzS8R>. You can also download a copy of the 6/6B as part of the attractive Buses of Somerset timetable booklet (Page 64/65), available here: <https://bit.ly/3uYv9be>



Beaminster Town Council's CB3 continues every Saturday between Crewkerne, Beaminster and Bridport, with connections to Yeovil with South West Coaches. The timetable can be viewed here: <https://bit.ly/3oyPctz>



Service 7 operates as Bridport's "Town Service" every Wednesday and Saturday.

Services 14 and 688 continue to operate. Timetables are here:

Service 7: <https://bit.ly/35i4TN9>

Service 14: <https://bit.ly/3wp2IYW>

Service 688: <https://bit.ly/3yz43ss>



Service 71 operates as Lyme Regis' "Town Service", Mondays to Fridays. The timetable can be downloaded here: <https://bit.ly/2X5HgGG>



Stagecoach South West's service 9A (Lyme Regis to Seaton, Sidmouth and Exeter) changed on 10th May, with services continuing to serve Greendale Vaccination Centre. The timetable is here: <https://bit.ly/2X1d2V7>



Between Weymouth, Dorchester and London: Mondays to Fridays this is reduced to an hourly service, with only a few trains serving Woking. On Saturdays two trains an hour are offered, with one per hour on Sundays. The timetable is here: <https://bit.ly/3D6MLVa> and a history of the route is here: <https://bit.ly/3hvSVGz>

Between Crewkerne and Axminster and Exeter/London: this route has reverted to an hourly service. The timetable is here: <https://bit.ly/2Ym41ah>. Information on the route from Axminster to Exeter here <https://bit.ly/3FeGBUW>



The Great Western Railway summer timetable for the Weymouth - Bristol (Heart of Wessex) route continues until December. The timetable is here: <https://bit.ly/3oKqfxE>. Work on step-free access on the northbound platform at Dorchester West is completed, after nearly a decade of campaigning. It is planned to open on 22 October. You can find information about this attractive route here: <https://www.heartofwessex.org.uk/>, although the Heart of Wessex Partnership has been replaced by a new Somerset and Dorset Community Rail Partnership. Further details will be available in due course.



The National Express service 190, from Portsmouth to Plymouth via Bridport is suspended, there is no date for resumption. The afternoon Weymouth/Dorchester to London service continues. (Service 035) Timetable: <https://bit.ly/34cqzqtg>. You must book in advance, either via the website or at Bridport Tourist Information Centre, where no booking fee is charged. Notably, most fares are cheaper when starting your journey at Weymouth rather than Dorchester.



**Megabus has suspended their service from Weymouth and Dorchester to London.** Meanwhile Megabus owner Stagecoach is the target of a takeover bid by National Express.

## CHANGES TO BUS SERVICES:

### BUS STOP CHANGE IN WEST BAY:

Due to essential crane works taking place on George Street in West Bay. Customers are required to go to the temporary bus stop, which is close to Nauticles Roundabout. This is near the Parkdean Holiday Park.

**Applies Monday 8th, Tuesday 16th, Thursday 18th November.**

### BUS STOP CHANGE IN PORTESHAM:

The "Village Hall" stops are suspended from Monday, 1st November to Friday, 10th December due to Dorset Council roadworks. The stops at the Kings Arms will still be in operation.

## CHANGES TO RAIL SERVICES:

### YEOVIL PEN MILL TO WEYMOUTH

Buses replace trains between Yeovil Pen Mill and Weymouth from **Thursday, 18 November to Friday, 3 December**

### AXMINSTER to EXETER ST DAVIDS

The line will be closed with replacement buses on **Sunday, 21 November**

### WEYMOUTH to DORCHESTER and WOOL

Buses replace trains on **Monday, 22 November.**

### WEYMOUTH to DORCHESTER

Buses replace trains from **Tuesday, 23 November to Friday, 26 November 2021.**

## NATIONAL BUS STRATEGY: "BUS BACK BETTER" Bus Service Improvement Plan: WATAG's Initial Suggestions



### INTRODUCTION

*We recognise that rural public transport will always be the poor relation to 'urban' public transport, and that Covid-19 has changed people's travelling habits – certainly in the short term. However, we also recognise that unless there is a VAST improvement to the existing piecemeal/ ad hoc system, the 'spiral of decline' will continue, as those services that do operate tend to be infrequent, inconvenient, and unreliable; they also start too late/ finish too early. In most cases they are expensive and connections with other operators/ modes of travel are often hit 'n' miss, with no guaranteed connections or inter-availability of ticketing.*

Prior to listing our suggestions for a Bus Service Improvement Plan for this area, we wish to make the following caveats:-

- Predictions on potential usage of public transport in general – and buses in particular – will, at least initially, be very much guesswork in the post Covid-19 world
- Decisions made by Dorset County Council (DCC) since 2011, which have impacted on both 'financially supported' and 'commercial' bus routes in our area, have resulted in a lack of trust/ confidence by the travelling public. If trust and confidence is to be regained, there will have to be cast iron guarantees as to the long term continuity of services.

We show below our suggestions for creating a step change in travel habits, to the benefit of all, and to enable Government's aspiration to "level up" to be achieved.

#### KEY POINTS [The reasons for these "Key Points" is in bold at the end of each point]

1. There needs to be minimum frequencies and hours of operation on all core routes, 7 days a week [**Convenience + a genuine alternative to private car**]
2. There needs to be real cooperation in service planning between bus and rail operators (and individual bus operators where connections are possible) so that connections can be held, or alternative transport provided [**Confidence**]
3. Bus Stations and "Key Interchanges" need proper passenger facilities, which, depending on location and the amount of time a traveller will be there, should include shelter; toilets; access to refreshments; a manned information point [**Encouragement + confidence**]
4. Real Time Information (RTIS) should be improved in those locations that have them (Weymouth and environs; Dorchester and environs; Bridport. RTIS should be extended to all bus stops in due course) and have constant monitoring [**Accuracy of Information + getting the message across**]
5. Marketing of all services needs to be centralised (as it once was) rather than each operator producing its own literature showing only its services [**Advertising + getting the message across**]
6. Parish/ Town Councils should be more involved, particularly in installing and maintaining bus stops/shelters, and ensuring roadside publicity is kept up to date [**ensuring travellers are welcomed + giving confidence**]
7. Punctuality of buses is an on-going issue, and 'bus priority' schemes need to be developed, including enforcing the rule of the road "give way to buses" [**Reliability + confidence**]

#### SPECIFICS

**A. TRUNK ROUTES:** X51 (Axminster – Dorchester); X53 (Axminster – Weymouth); 6 (Bridport – Yeovil); 9A (Lyme Regis - Exeter)

- **Days of Operation:** All trunk routes should operate 7 days a week
- **Frequency:** At least hourly on all routes, with variations on Sundays, depending on demand:-
- **X51:** half hourly throughout the day, say 07.00-19.00; hourly before 07.00 and after 19.00. Start and finish times to coincide with train connections to London [aim to arrive London before 10.00 and be able to leave London after 19.00]. Frequency could also be increased by extending some no. 10 services to Bridport [**The current service, just two hourly Mon-Sat (no winter Suns), has resulted in a decimation of the commuter and general trade; visitors to Dorchester County Hospital – even those who have concessionary bus passes – tend to drive rather than risk having to wait for up to 2 hours for a bus back home**]
- **X53:** hourly from 06.00 – 22.00 from Axminster to Weymouth – 7 days a week
- **9A:** some services could be extended to Bridport Coach Station, to provide additional frequency between Lyme Regis and Bridport
- **6:** hourly 07.00 – 20.00. Timings early morning and late afternoon should cater for commuters to Yeovil and students travelling to Yeovil College. Certain services from/ to Bridport might terminate at/ start from Crewkerne and connect into/ out of South West Coaches' **96/ 96A:** subject to adequate interchange facilities and inter-availability of ticketing arrangements.
- **Connections:** Buses to be timed to connect with trains at Axminster, Dorchester South, Weymouth, also Crewkerne (all locations requiring proper passenger facilities ALL DAY - please see Key Point 3, above). Also cross boundary links with other bus services: Axminster (30 to Taunton; 885 to Colyton/ Seaton+Beer); Lyme Regis (9A to Seaton/ Sidmouth/ Exeter); Crewkerne (96/ 96A to Chard and Yeovil).

## NATIONAL BUS STRATEGY: "BUS BACK BETTER"

### Bus Service Improvement Plan: WATAG's Initial Suggestions - *continued*

#### B. MINOR ROUTES

We feel that reinstatement of several of the services that were summarily axed between 2014 and 2017 – regardless of usage – would be a useful starting point. These include:-

- **73:** Maiden Newton – Bridport, reconfigured to provide connections to/ from trains at Maiden Newton; there would be opportunities for certain journeys to be operated by DRT principles
- **213:** Beaminster – Dorchester
- **42:** Drimpton – Bridport
- **210:** Litton Cheney – Bridport

#### C. MISCELLANEOUS

There are several communities that used to have regular bus services that now have none at all. We acknowledge that a degree of pragmatism is needed when deciding how best to organise public transport for such locations, and "community transport" will often provide a useful 'shopping trip' solution, although even these need funding.

There are certain villages that, in our opinion, have been unnecessarily removed from the 'public transport map'; these include:-

**Martinstown:** this used to be a substantial generator of business for the X51 [formerly 31 (Weymouth/ Dorchester – Axminster)] and there are many care homes in the area whose staff used to commute by bus.

**Netherbury:** except for the Saturday only Beaminster Town Council Community Bus, and the 6A school days only, this village is only served by the book-in-advance Axe Valley Ring&Ride.



#### OFFICERS REPORT

Dorset Council are reviewing the **Dorset Rights of Way Improvement Plan**. This plan describes how Dorset Council will manage and develop an improved right of way and green-space network over the next 10 years.

The survey link is below, and feedback is required by midnight, 31 October 2021.

<https://bit.ly/3BaoLjw>

#### Bus

- The National Bus Strategy places new requirements on the Council to form Statutory Partnerships with local bus operators and develop a Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP). The timescales to develop and deliver the Council's first BSIP by the end of October 2021 and activate the Enhanced Partnership by April 2022 are challenging. The first stage of the work has focussed on creating a network baseline to understand the current state network. A large amount of data has been gathered and analysed to create a picture of the current network and overlay this on top of demographic data to help identify any gaps. The bus operators are supporting the baseline work by providing data for their commercial and non-commercial operations. This demonstrates the operators' willingness to engage in this process and work constructively in partnership with the Council. The BSIP is being developed in close collaboration with members, local bus operators, passengers, local community groups, local business groups, and more widely the public. To inform the BSIP, a bus survey was run during August to find out how local bus services can be improved and what would make people use buses more. In total 1,845 surveys were received and showed the main priorities for improving bus services are more frequent services, that serve more places, and operate for longer hours each day. Two rounds of stakeholder engagement workshops have been held, including with the TAGs, and detailed meetings have also been held with local bus operators, rail and coach service providers, community transport groups, and Dorset Council Planning. The written feedback from stakeholders and the public have been reviewed and analysed, received via a range of media from email, social media, written / postal, and online survey. This analysis shows that the top three priorities are additional bus routes, higher frequency services / enhanced weekend services, and a cheaper simplified fare structure. The focus now is on drafting the BSIP document and developing the future state network proposal. The Council is required to submit a business case with high level costings to the DfT alongside the BSIP. From October onwards emphasis will shift to the creation of the Enhanced Partnership which is the legal framework to deliver the BSIP. Although the current focus is on the deadlines set by Government, this is a long-term plan that will require ongoing work to develop the BSIP beyond its submission and the creation of the EP. The BSIP will be a 'live' document and is required by Government to be refreshed annually.
- First Wessex will be running their planned winter timetables from 3rd October.
- School transport services will remain closed to the public until further notice due to concerns over the spread of COVID. Dorset Travel is also monitoring available surplus seats on school buses.

#### Rail

- Dorset Council has submitted a response to the South Western Railway December 2022 Timetable consultation. The Council has expressed concerns about the continued reduced frequency of London Waterloo to Weymouth services before reinstating two trains per hour in December 2022, and removal of off-peak services at Sherborne and Gillingham, the loss of the summer only service from Salisbury to Weymouth and removal of shuttle services from Exeter to Honiton and Axminster. The Council is already working with Network Rail on their Dorset Strategic Study to identify the infrastructure improvements necessary to achieve long held local service improvement aspirations.

The information in this issue is provided in good faith but please do double check information before you travel as schedules are subject to change.