

**BABUS RESPONSE TO BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL RESUME OF TENDERED BUS SERVICE  
CHANGES  
OUTLINED AT LIAISON MEETING ON 7<sup>th</sup> JULY 2011**

BABUS extends a welcome to Grant Palmer Passenger Services in the rural area north of Bedford.

Grant Palmer, based on the operation of other services into Bedford from the south and west is seen as a “good” operator in that it listens to public requests and acts where feasible, provides a helpful environment to passengers and delivers a high quality and reliable bus service. The provision of information both at the roadside and on board buses is seen by BABUS as essential and the arrival in North Beds must mirror the information level applicable to Route 68 rather than earlier routes such as 200.

The timetable leaflet issued for Route 68 should serve as a basis for the new routes and BABUS hopes that a small booklet can be produced covering the range of new service timetables and a map.

As there are some fundamental alterations to the services currently operated in the area, and noting many peoples resistance to change, Grant Palmer must make an immediate positive impact in the neighbourhood and it is essential that the replacement services are widely marketed.

Prior to the first day of operation, timetable details should be available at local outlets (shops, doctor’s surgeries pubs etc.). BABUS understands that the Borough Council TT Book is being reissued from the same date but believes that a small “Local” document relating to routes 25-29 covering TT, fares deals, the importance placed on connections etc. will be a good “selling point” for the changed services. This publication should also be available on the vehicles from Day One.

It may be trite to say so but there is only one thing in this world you cannot do twice – create a first impression! Getting it right from Day 1 is essential.

BABUS notes the story contained in the Times and Citizen of 14 July and its variance from the press release on the matter. Already there is ground to catch up with the local populace.

Again, perhaps blindingly obvious, actions which will win over the locals are:

- A regular (and thus recognisable) team of drivers
- Drivers helping passengers on board
- Punctual and reliable delivery
- Drivers aware of the route to take (some are complex)
- Route Maps for drivers and office staff who may deal with queries.
- A contact telephone number on roadside flags.

BABUS comments on a route specific basis:

**Route 25**

A robust timetable is essential to ensure reliable connections at Harrold Institute with Route 26  
The phone contact details mentioned above are a firm requirement at Harrold Institute.  
The current daily 136 journey appears to have slipped the net – it does not feature on Route 25 as it runs via Bromham but it leaves the last southbound Stagecoach 50 passengers isolated at Sharnbrook if it does not run. BABUS hopes that B.B.C will address this issue.

### **Route 26**

The same comments re connections apply as above, whilst through traffic may not be great, those making the journey need confidence that the connectional arrangements work. BABUS assumes that the small vehicle planned for this service will have sufficient accommodation for the Wymington to Rushden section. The increased frequency on this latter section is noted and welcomed along with the extension via the ASDA supermarket in Rushden.

### **Route 27**

As mentioned in the press release this is a NEW service – some sections of this route have not seen a regular bus service for a long time. It clearly comes with a “use it or lose it” tag and BABUS believes that to assist in this end a letter box leaflet/booklet drop in Willington and Great Barford is necessary. BABUS may well be able to assist in this task but would request that a BABUS leaflet be also included.

Reference should be made to the connectional facilities at Great Barford with X5 to and from Cambridge and at Willington with services to and from Sandy and Biggleswade.

### **Route 28**

This route also covers some sections of road that have not seen regular public transport for a long time. The importance of retaining connections at Kimbolton to and from St Neots cannot be overstressed. The continued operation of a commercial route between Bedford and Riseley via Thurleigh has an effect on the routing of 28 to avoid direct competition which BABUS understands is not the best use of subsidy money.

### **Route 29**

Appears to be a “sweep up” route and whilst it covers some local needs (Sharnbrook surgery for example) it is difficult to envisage regular traffic between Pavenham and St Neots or six day a week trade from Honeydon! This route must be seen as a trial and marketing here is seen as important.

### **DRT**

The serving of the small communities of Knotting, Melchbourne and Yelden by DRT linking with Rushden is understood. A similar linking with Sharnbrook (again Doctors’ Surgery) should be investigated.

### **Bedford Terminal**

The move away from remote Harpur Street is welcomed by BABUS but we wish to know the current status of the plan to amend the use of the area of the Bus Station not under Stagecoach control. In other words, the use of the QD stop must be seen as only temporary until access to the main site is provided.

To access the Bus Station (or QD) from Kimbolton Road/Goldington Road BABUS requests buses run via High Street, St Pauls Square, Horne Lane and River St thus providing much improved access to the Market area and the Harpur and Howard shopping centres.

### **Commercial service changes**

BABUS wishes to record a small number of comments concerning the commercial route changes planned for the same date.

It is pleasing to note the all day service provision between the Rail and Bus Stations in Bedford with the two journeys per hour increasing to up to six during the “peaks” by the diversion of extra routes.

It is understood that Bedford Commuters Association has some concerns but at the time of responding we have been unable to ascertain what these are.

BABUS firmly believes that to enable the bus services to operate smoothly along the western portion of Midland Road, strict policing of parking will be essential.

There appears to be a widening gulf in ticket issuing methods with Stagecoach moving towards the use of SmartCard technology and other operators retaining paper tickets. Coupled with varying fare policies and prices this suggests any form of ticket interavailability is becoming more remote. Indeed the only passengers able to take advantage of using any bus will be the concessionary pass holders. This is particularly seen as an important issue between Flitwick and Bedford where operators timetables have now been constructed to provide a regular interval service, the routes have been given identical numbers but in essence the two services are not "joined up".

Funding for the extension of most Town Services into the late evening is welcomed and brings Bedford more in line with service levels provided in adjacent towns and cities. The one thing sadly lacking in Bedford is the provision of cross town services and the consequent increase in use of the Bus Station. BABUS hopes that with the expected traffic easing within town after the final stage of the Bypass is completed a rethink on this issue will be undertaken and advantage taken of the better reliability and performance of bus journeys.

**And Finally .....**

BABUS requests that reference to its aims and objectives will be included at a suitable location in the new Bedford Borough Travel Booklet and that the former "advert" continues to be displayed. It should be noted that the telephone line for BABUS is now 0871.218.2287

BABUS  
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