
Newsletter of BABUS-Bedford Area Bus Users' Society Christmas 2008

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EDITORIAL

This is the third newsletter of the calendar year 2008 which we hope will establish a pattern for the future. The Committee wishes you compliments of the season and all the best for your bus journeys in the year 2009.

.STOP PRESS

It would appear that one of BABUS's longest running campaigns for low floor vehicles on the X5 has borne fruit with new coaches with easier access due to arrive in the New Year. Just before Christmas, one of our committee saw one at the bus station and was able to inspect it.

BUS SURGERY

The Bus Surgery that was set to be held by Bus Users UK in Bedford on 24 October 2008 had to be postponed. It is hoped to hold it on Friday 30 January 2009.

COMMITTEE

Due to family and business matters, a number of our members have had to leave the Committee. In consequence there are a number of vacancies on the BABUS Committee. We specifically need a Treasurer and we need help with publicity and the website. Please call the enquiry line on 0870 486 1369 if you would like to help.

MEMBERSHIP

Our membership year runs from 1 April until the following 31 March. **To continue to receive all the benefits of membership**, renew your membership by sending a cheque for £3 (£12 for group membership) payable to **BABUS**, to the Membership Secretary, Simon Norton, 6 Hertford Street, Cambridge, CB4 3AG. Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope if you would like a receipt.

Contact BABUS through **the website at** <http://babus.org.uk> **or on** the BABUS Enquiry Line on 0870 486 1369 (24 hour answering and fax service). If you leave a message and would like us to call you back, please leave a landline telephone number. We regret we may not be able to respond to mobile numbers. You may also send a fax to 0870 486 1369.

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A MANIFESTO FOR BUS USERS IN BEDS

As we said in the last newsletter, we believe that the forthcoming local government reorganisation in Bedfordshire affords a unique opportunity to ensure that councillors elected to the new local authorities in June 2009 are aware of the importance of public transport to the lives of people in the area.

We therefore propose to draw up a manifesto for bus users which will be circulated to candidates prior to the elections. It is intended as a political document for those who will be making policy in the new local authorities. We will be consulting with bus users and representatives about what should be in the manifesto, but here's a first draft to go on with.

This draft will be posted on the BABUS website, and there will be a thread on the public section of the Bulletin Board inviting you to make suggestions for improving the manifesto. We hope that members with access to the Internet will join the Bulletin Board so they can take part in these discussions. See <http://babus.org.uk> to join. Those without access to the Internet can make their comments known by post.

Here is the draft:

The Bedford Area Bus Users Society (BABUS) has drawn up this manifesto with the intention of ensuring that councillors elected to the new unitary authorities are aware of the importance of a high quality public transport network to the life of the region, and are motivated from day one to break away from the traditional attitude of treating buses as a fallback service for a minority who have no access to other means of transport.

Evidence is growing almost daily about the problems caused to the world environment from climate change, and road transport is a major contributor to this problem. We urgently need to devise means of reducing the number of vehicles on our roads, and developing a comprehensive public transport network to enable many people to share the same vehicle is one way of doing this. Traffic reduction would also bring also many other benefits in terms of safety, air pollution, noise, community severance etc.

The Local Transport Act 2008 offers new opportunities to improve local transport, by means such as Quality Contracts (whereby local authorities specify the service network, as happens in London), the setting up of new Passenger Transport Executives (which can

coordinate across a wider area) and road user charging (which can raise money for improvements), even if some of these are inappropriate to Bedfordshire.

We wish to put particular emphasis on the need to secure sufficient revenue funding to maintain an adequate network. We believe that such funding should be given priority over capital funding, where much larger sums are usually needed even for very modest improvements to the transport network (especially new roads). This isn't to say that we don't support schemes, especially the east-west rail link, which will bring major region-wide benefits; but at present it's not this type of scheme which is grabbing the lion's share of available funding.

The scope of this manifesto is intended to cover all buses in Bedfordshire except for services entirely within the Luton/Dunstable urban area; cross-boundary services from Luton and Leighton Buzzard to adjoining counties not serving rural communities in Bedfordshire; and infrequent services provided (e.g. by community buses) to meet particular needs, such as access to market day shopping. This draft also omits consideration of town services in Bedford (including Clapham, Oakley, Bromham, Kempston and The Wixams), Biggleswade and Leighton Buzzard; we hope that people who know these areas well will let us have their proposals to add to this draft. There is general agreement as to what is needed on the qualitative aspects of a bus service (even if provision falls short in practice): things like easy access, adequate information at bus stops and in published timetables, reliable timekeeping assisted by bus priority measures where necessary. We will therefore not deal with these issues in this manifesto. Our main concern here is with the details of the bus network.

Here are some suggested guidelines for the level of service which we believe should be provided.

1. All communities should have regular services (at least 2 hourly) running 6 days a week between the morning and evening peaks. We accept that in principle some communities may be too isolated to deserve such a service, but we believe that with the land use structure in Bedfordshire there are few cases where there would be difficulty in providing such a service. For these more remote communities there should at least be a peak service, including school buses open to the general public. Many remote communities could be served by

demand-responsive services which only divert to serve it when booked in advance.

As far as demand responsive provision is concerned, we should add that such services should normally be based on a "core" route, leaving the starting point at a fixed time, from which diversions would be made as required. Bookings should only be required when necessary -- we suggest as a guideline that a scheduled call should be provided at every village which has passengers at least two thirds of the time on that particular journey. Furthermore, when booking is necessary, people should be able to book on the day of travel.

2. Towns and larger villages should have at least an hourly service, together with some evening and Sunday buses. On Mondays to Fridays there should be at least one evening journey connecting with a train leaving London after the evening peak (i.e. on which Off Peak Day Return tickets are valid). On Fridays and Saturdays there should be later journeys which enable people to enjoy evening entertainment in larger towns. There should be Sunday buses serving major leisure attractions such as Woburn Abbey and the Shuttleworth complex.

Every opportunity should be taken to extend these standards of provision to smaller communities which lie on the line of route.

3. All parts of an urban area should be within walking distance of a bus stop with at least an hourly daytime service -- usually more for large towns such as Bedford.

4. Services between the areas covered by Bedfordshire's three unitary authorities (including Luton), and to neighbouring counties, should be provided on an equal footing to internal services. In other words the relevant local authorities should make every effort to ensure that mobility is not constrained by artificial local government boundaries.

In describing our detailed proposals we have divided Bedfordshire up into a number of areas. To a large extent, our proposals could be implemented in each area independently of what happens in the others, and we have tried to draw up a number of "packages" to facilitate this. However, two of the routes straddle several "package" areas and we have therefore hived them off to a separate "cross country" section, which also includes a third route that is in fact completely outside the area served by the new authorities but which we are including because of its major strategic importance. It is necessary to give our proposed services route numbers so

that we can refer to them; where possible we have tried to use the same numbers as comparable routes in the existing network.

An overview of the existing network can be seen on the newly updated system map produced by Bedfordshire County Council [which should be out early in 2009]; timetables for any particular route can be found from Traveline South-East <http://www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk>, or, in the case of routes serving Cambridgeshire or Northamptonshire, Traveline East Anglia/East Midlands (for which replace "southeast" by "eastanglia" or "eastmidlands"). This will enable readers to compare our proposals with what already exists in the area.

In describing the new network please note that evening and Sunday services would be provided only when specifically mentioned.

Proposals that would require infrastructure changes (except where these are already under way) are excluded. There are many infrastructure changes that would make it easier to provide a bus service, notably changes to junctions on the A1; also some that may be taking place for other reasons, e.g. to serve the not yet built development at The Wixams.

Cross Country Link

89: 2 hourly Stevenage-Milton Keynes via Lister Hospital, Hitchin, Holwell, Pirton, Shillington, Upper Gravenhurst, Silsoe, Flitton, Pulloxhill, Greenfield, Flitwick, Ampthill, Millbrook Turn, Ridgmont, Husborne Crawley, Aspley Guise and Woburn Sands. On Sundays this route is followed to Upper Gravenhurst then route 200 below from Clophill (and not serving Tingrith).

200: 2 hourly Biggleswade-Milton Keynes via Broom, Southill (most journeys), Stanford, Clifton, Shefford, Chicksands, Clophill, Maulden, Ampthill, Flitwick, Steppingley, Tingrith (some journeys), Eversholt, Woburn Abbey, Woburn and Woburn Sands.

700: Hourly Luton-Stansted Airport via Luton Airport, then alternately Breachwood Green and Gt Offley, Hitchin, Hitchin station, Gt Wymondley, Lister Hospital, Stevenage, then alternately via Walkern, Cottered and Buntingford and via Aston, Benington, Dane End and Standon to Bishops Stortford. Evening and Sunday service runs 2 hourly via Great Offley, Buntingford, Puckeridge and Standon.

North Bedfordshire

1 (Milton Keynes-Olney-Bedford): Service runs hourly west of Lavendon, evenings and Sundays less frequent. Bedford is served only in the

peaks and on Sundays, at other times passengers connect with P1 at Lavendon. Between the peaks buses continue to/from Harrold, Odell and Sharnbrook, connecting with M50 to/from Rushden and continuing as 152 to/from Kimbolton.

1C (Milton Keynes-Newport Pagnell-Stagsden-Bedford): Service remains 2 hourly and omits Great Denham (see 168 in West Bedfordshire package), but continues to serve Bromham estates and Biddenham.

P1 (Bedford-Northampton): Service remains hourly and less frequent on Sundays, but evening buses added 7 days a week and timed to connect with trains from Birmingham to Northampton.

X5 (Cambridge-Oxford): No change to daytime service (currently half hourly, including Sundays). Evening service remains hourly, but serves all stops within Bedford.

42 (Milton Keynes-Olney-Newton Blossomville): Extended to Bedford at existing frequency (2 journeys per day). Lavendon journeys withdrawn, see 1.

M50 (Bedford-Sharnbrook-Rushden-Kettering): Remains hourly on Mon-Sat daytimes, but Sunday service, which remains 2 hourly, extends from Rushden to Kettering.

125/6 (Bedford-Harrold-Rushden): Overall hourly service maintained but with the following route changes:
(a) South of Harrold, buses serving Stevington get there via Bromham instead of Oakley.
(b) North of Harrold, buses use three routes to Rushden: via Podington and Wymington; via Odell, Sharnbrook, Souldrop, Rushden Avenue Road and Bromswold Road; and as above to Souldrop then Melchbourne, Yelden and Chelveston. As at present passengers for Bedford can travel "across" Rushden to get extra journeys; but passengers for Rushden would also be able to get extra journeys by changing at Odell Turn or Souldrop.

150/1: 151 runs hourly between Bedford and Wilden, alternately via Renhold and Ravensden, as now except for a diversion to Ravensden Turn (B660). Buses continue to/from St Neots as 150, alternately via Chawston Crossroads and Duloe, with demand responsive diversions to Wyboston village, Honeydon, Upper Staploe and Staploe, and via Colmworth, Little Staughton and Kimbolton, with demand responsive diversions to Staughton Moor, Dillington, Perry and Littlehey Prison. Passengers may change at Wilden to complete the loop back to Bedford or

St Neots. On Saturdays 2 journeys are timed to serve the needs of prison visitors; these journeys also run on Sundays and can be used for shopping in Bedford or visiting Grafham Water or Wilden Butterfly Farm.

152: New partly demand responsive circular service from Sharnbrook (continuing to/from Milton Keynes as 1) and Kimbolton, hourly between the peaks, alternately via Thurleigh, Bolnhurst, Brook End and Pertenhall or via Riseley, Upper Dean and Tilbrook. Bus diverts when required to Hatch End, Bletsoe, Swineshead, Shelton, Hargrave, Lower Dean and Covington. Also peak service to/from Bedford as existing routes 152 and 153. Connects with 150 at Kimbolton for St Neots.

Homehoppa: This evening service would be reinstated to run as a scheduled service from Aspects Leisure Centre to Bedford town centre and rail station, connecting there with trains from London, then as required to Sharnbrook (last journey to Riseley if required). Return journeys should be bookable.

East Bedfordshire

E1: New route running 2 hourly from Biggleswade to Dunton, Eyeworth, Wrestlingworth, Cockayne Hatley Turn, Potton, Gamlingay, Everton and Sandy. A similar service would run in the evenings on a demand responsive basis also serving Sutton if required.

E3: New route with 2 journeys per day from Biggleswade to Bedford via Shuttleworth, Ickwell, Northill, Hatch, Moggerhanger and Willington loops.

M3: Completely revised to run from Bedford to Sandy direct then looping via Potton, Biggleswade and back to Sandy and Bedford. Connects at Sandy with Sandy Shuttle and at Potton with 18A/28. Hourly each way round. Evening buses run 1-2 hourly between Bedford and Sandy with some journeys extended to/from Biggleswade.

E4: New route running 2 hourly from Sandy via Moggerhanger, Blunham, double run to Great Barford, Tempsford, Little Barford, Eynesbury (Tesco) and St Neots.

M4 (Bedford-Biggleswade via Northill): Continues to run hourly, extended to Biggleswade leisure centre, otherwise no change. Provides half hourly service to Bedford with M3 journeys not serving Potton.

M5: Sunday variant of M3/4 running from Bedford via Sandy, Everton, Gamlingay, Potton, Biggleswade, Upper Caldecote, Shuttleworth,

Ickwell, Northill, Cople, Cardington and back to Bedford. 4 hourly each way round.

E6: New one way loop from Biggleswade to Broom, Southill, Old Warden, Shuttleworth and Upper Caldecote Pastures, with 3 journeys.

18A/28 (Cambridge-Cambourne-Gamlingay-St Neots): Remains 2 hourly and double runs from Gamlingay to Potton connecting with M3.

127 (Royston-Guilden Morden): Remains 2 hourly and extends to Wrestlingworth, Potton, Sutton village, Dunton roundabout and Biggleswade. Joint hourly service between Wrestlingworth and Biggleswade with E1.

202 (Ashwell station link): Adds 2 inter-peak round trips from Ashwell & Morden station to Ashwell, Hinxworth, Edworth, Langford and Biggleswade. May also serve Royston or Hitchin on market days.

Sandy Shuttle: Frequent one way loop from Sandy via Sunderland Road and Engayne Avenue. Connects at town centre with M3 to/from Bedford.

South-East Bedfordshire (Shefford, Stotfold etc.)

M1/2 (Bedford-Shefford-Hitchin): No change to half hourly service (2 hourly evenings and Sundays) except that Sunday service omits Henlow Camp (see 82).

79: Replaced by new 2 hourly service from Luton to Shefford via Streatley, Sharpenhoe, Barton le Clay, Hexton or Higham Gobion, Shillington, Lower Stondon, Meppershall, Campton and Chicksands.

82 (Biggleswade-Hitchin via Henlow Camp): Hitchin town section replaced by extension to Stevenage via Lister Hospital. New 2 hourly Sunday service.

90 (Arlesey Taxibus): New route from Arlesey Station (west) via Henlow, Clifton, Shefford, Chicksands, Meppershall, Stondon, Henlow Camp and return. Hourly each way round, 2 hourly evenings (service includes Langford). Stotfold is served by 97 (see below).

97 (Hitchin-Stotfold): When road through Fairfield Park is available, service is replaced by circular from Hitchin via Letchworth, Fairfield Park, Arlesey village, Arlesey Station (east), Stotfold, Norton and return via Letchworth. Some journeys may extend to/from Luton. Half hourly each way Mon-Sat, hourly evenings and Sundays.

Central Bedfordshire (Amphill, Flitwick etc.)

S1 (Bedford-Luton via A6 corridor): Continues to run hourly weekdays, 2 hourly Sundays.

J2 (Bedford-Amphill-Flitwick): At least 3 buses per hour, more when developments at The Wixams and Center Parcs mature. At least hourly services (different ones) diverting via Stewartby and Houghton Conquest.

J4 (Bedford-Luton via Amphill, Flitwick, Toddington and Upper Sundon): Continues to run 2 hourly on Sundays.

20 (Luton-Flitwick): Ceases to serve Toddington (see 20A). 1 journey each way by loop via Luton, Barton le Clay, Pulloxhill, Flitton, Greenfield, Flitwick, Westoning, Harlington and Upper Sundon.

20A (Luton-Milton Keynes): New 2 hourly service via Upper Sundon, Chalton, Toddington, Milton Bryan, Woburn, Lt and Gt Brickhill and Bletchley.

X31 (Luton-Dunstable-Toddington): Extends to Flitwick at existing hourly frequency, but does not serve Wingfield and Tebworth (see South Bedfordshire package, where also other X31 variants are to be found).

X44 (Bedford-Flitwick): Continues to run hourly and diverted via Cotton End, Wilstead, Haynes Church End, Clophill (church), Maulden and Amphill.

Flitwick Flyer: Hourly one way evening service from Flitwick station connecting with trains to Amphill, Maulden, Clophill, Silsoe, Flitton, Pulloxhill (if required), Greenfield and back to Flitwick. May also serve Flitwick and Amphill estates if required.

West Bedfordshire (Cranfield, Wootton etc.)

V1 (Bedford-Cranfield): Remains hourly, runs direct from Upper Shelton to Cranfield village and University, then continues to North Crawley, Newport Pagnell and Milton Keynes.

V2 (Bedford-Cranfield): Sunday service remains 2 hourly via Stewartby and Marston Moretaine but extends from Cranfield to Moulsoe and Milton Keynes Coachway where it interworks with the Milton Keynes local network. Also new 2 hourly evening service, which serves stops between Cranfield and Kempston as required and continues to serve estates on the north side of Bedford.

17: 2 hourly from Milton Keynes to Bletchley via Coachway, Moulsoe, Cranfield University and village, Salford, Wavendon and Open University.

160: New hourly service between Aylesbury and Bedford via Leighton Buzzard, Woburn, Woburn Sands, Aspley Guise, Brogborough, Lidlington, Marston Moretaine, Upper Shelton then as V1.

168: New hourly service using new road from Bedford via Queens Park, Great Denham, Kempston Cemetery, Box End, Wood End and Wootton.

South Bedfordshire (Leighton Buzzard and the area around Dunstable, but not the corner of Bedfordshire east of the M1)

Luton-Leighton Buzzard: service increased to 4 buses per hour to serve new developments. As now there would be an hourly extension to/from Milton Keynes, also some buses could extend to/from Luton Airport. The routes, each hourly, would be:

(a) Luton, Houghton Regis, Wingfield, Tebworth, Hockliffe, Leighton Buzzard, also serving either Dunstable or Eggington.

(b) Luton, Dunstable, Tilsworth, Stanbridge, Eggington, Leighton Buzzard.

(c) Luton, Dunstable, Church End, Totternhoe, then via A505 and A4146 to Leighton Buzzard.

(d) Luton, Dunstable, Church End, Eaton Bray, Northall then via A4146 to Leighton Buzzard, and continues to Milton Keynes via Soulbury and Stoke Hammond.

On Sundays (b) and (d) would each run 2 hourly, extending to either Milton Keynes or Aylesbury and timed to enable connections between these two towns.

X31 (Luton-Milton Keynes): Continues to run hourly via Dunstable and A5.

46 (Luton-Hemel Hempstead): Hourly from Luton to Slip End and Markyate, then alternately via Redbourn and via Kensworth, Whipsnade Zoo, Studham, Jockey End and Water End. The Studham variant would continue to run 2 hourly evenings and Sundays, omitting Whipsnade Zoo when closed.

61 (Luton Airport-Aylesbury): Continues to run hourly via Luton, Dunstable, Totternhoe, Eaton Bray, Edlesborough, Ivinghoe and Tring, with evening and Sunday service added, both 2 hourly.

202 (Dunstable-Harpenden): Increased to run 2 hourly by existing route via Chaul End, Caddington and Slip End.

231 (Luton-Caddington-Dunstable): Continues to run half hourly, 2 hourly Sundays, evening service increased to 2 hourly.

343 (Dunstable-St Albans): Continues to run hourly on weekdays but diverts via Kensworth and Dunstable Downs. Sunday service runs 2 hourly on a loop route using the A5 between Markyate and Dunstable in one direction and also serving Whipsnade Zoo.

LIAISON MEETING WITH BEDFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL, 13 November 2008

Summary Report by Peter Glyn Williams

Bedfordshire County Council was represented by Simon Ayres, Public Transport Team Leader.

It was confirmed that there would be changes and improvements affecting East Beds services from 24 November. The contract had been re-negotiated and Meridian Line Travel of Royston would be taking over the Chiltern Coaches staff and the County Council-owned vehicles. The planned improvements should cover services connecting Pottton, Eyeworth, and Wrestlingworth, and on the Biggleswade-Sutton route in the mornings. A new locality timetable was due to be published.

The electronic displays at the St Paul's Square stops remained a matter of concern. It was proving difficult to persuade any of the agencies involved to accept responsibility for the necessary works required to provide power supplies to all four panels.

There would be no roll-out of on-street Real Time Information displays in the foreseeable future. Effort was being concentrated on establishing and proving RTI vehicle positioning and voice links to benefit the operators. Priority would be given to Luton-Dunstable routes.

An agreement had been reached involving Hertfordshire County Council and Centrebus to extend Service 89 (Hitchin-Henlow Camp) to Shefford to provide a better service to some of the intermediate villages. This would take effect from 2 January 2009.

In the context of local government restructuring, Mr Ayres could not, as yet, give any firm assurances on the allocations of staff and responsibilities. Due to the continued uncertainties it was clear that a period of paralysis currently existed.

There was discussion on a note re-submitted by BABUS Member Mr Alan Sprod concerning problems with timetable displays in Amptill/Flitwick and by John Smith raising queries over bus stop information over a broader area, and highlighting a perceived

reluctance to accept responsibility for making improvements across Bedfordshire.

A new County transport map would be published in 2009. Locality timetables were being produced for East Beds, Dunstable College, followed later by Dunstable area, Leighton Buzzard, and Bedford Borough (covering all operators). Simon said that the onus was on the operator to ensure that timetable displays were current.

There was discussion on the standard of service provided on routes operated under contract by Cedar Coaches. The issues concerned poor destination displays, obsolete timetables and a liberal interpretation of the requirements to issue tickets.

It was noted that some Silsoe residents wishing to travel to Flitwick and Ampthill to visit the doctor and dentist, banks and shops had complained there were only a few, irregular, direct services. Mr Ayres said he could not make a case for changing the linking services in the area in the light of the perceived demand.

Mr Ayres reported that Bedfordshire County Council had been approached by Cambridgeshire County Council asking if Cedar Coaches could cover an additional, morning, service into St. Neots from the villages served by the route in Cambridgeshire. Cedar had declined, as they had no spare vehicle at the time requested. As a result, Cambridgeshire are to re-tender their end of the route, either for the one additional journey requested or for a complete rewrite of the service within that county with the possible loss of through journeys to Bedford.

Some concerns were expressed over the future of services used by North Bedfordshire residents. In particular the withdrawal of Cambridgeshire funding for 152 and issues around the possibility that this would result in no through journeys to Bedford; with connections being provided into the X5 at St Neots as a partial replacement.

LIAISON MEETING WITH STAGECOACH EAST, 4 DECEMBER 2008

Summary Report by Peter Glyn Williams

Stagecoach hosted the meeting and were represented by Tony Cox, MD, Stagecoach East and Zoë Paget, Operations Manager, Stagecoach in Bedford.

Relationships between Stagecoach East and BABUS

Colin Franklin said he felt that Stagecoach could be more supportive of BABUS by making our promotional material available at the Bedford Travel Shop.

Tony Cox insisted that, a commercial entity, the decisions made by Stagecoach management had to be based on commercial reality. This included marketing and promotional material that had to be shown to be relevant, targeted and cost-effective.

Peter Williams acknowledged BABUS could not exist as an effective group without the support of the major bus operator and the local authority. It was understood that there were mutual benefits to be gained from continued co-operation.

X5 route developments

The Stagecoach representatives confirmed that a fleet of new X5 vehicles was on order. These would provide enhanced levels of comfort for drivers and passengers with improved reliability and performance. The timetable for introduction had yet to be determined with a number of factors that required consideration, including driver and maintenance support training, operating experience with the new vehicles, etc. Stagecoach would probably issue a press release at an appropriate time.

Stagecoach staff at Gloucester Green, Oxford, were now able to brief intending passengers about X5 delays.

The new M K Coachways interchange should open Summer 2009, and would provide greatly enhanced facilities.

Planned Bedford Bus Surgery

This was scheduled for Fri 30 Jan 2009. Bus Users UK was liaising with Bedford Borough Council over a suitable location.

Improvements in timetable leaflets

John Yunnie suggested there was scope for improved clarity for the 124/5/6 printed timetables. The timetable available on the Northants County Council website offered a clearer representation of the service timings at Sharnbrook Church

Advice to drivers regarding flooded roads

John Yunnie said he was speaking on behalf of residents in the North of the county in recording appreciation of bus drivers in dealing with problems caused by recent flooding events.

Zoë Paget said that a range of sources of information were available when considering what advice should be provided to drivers, including assessment of weather conditions, information from the police, and reports from drivers of inbound services from Kettering. She pointed out that different designs meant that there were variations in water tolerance between different vehicles.

Additional bus stops for M50 in Sharnbrook

John Yunnie asked if consideration could be given to creating an additional stop in Templars Way, Sharnbrook together with a review the location of the existing stop at the A6 end of the road.

Any other business

A range of topics were discussed, including: problems experienced with roadworks on A428; availability of MK Metro timetables at Bedford Travel Shop; use of different design vehicles on Route 7 in Putnoe; information displays Tesco, Cardington Road; upgrading of bus stop information for M1/M2 services.

LOCAL TRANSPORT BILL

Press release from Bus Users UK published 28 November 2008

BUS USERS UK, the independent organisation which represents the interests of bus passengers, has welcomed the enacting of the Local Transport Bill.

The new Act enables Passenger Focus, the rail passengers' watchdog, to broaden its remit to encompass bus passengers, giving bus passengers statutory representation throughout England for the first time.

'We are already working closely with Passenger Focus' says BUS USERS UK Chairman Gavin Booth, 'and we are looking forward to strengthening what is already a good relationship between us.' Although the role of Passenger Focus will be clarified in secondary legislation next year, it is widely recognised that BUS USERS UK's unique role will be different from that of Passenger Focus. 'Having a statutory body will focus more attention on bus passengers' concerns, which is something which has been urgently needed for years', says Gavin Booth, 'and our role will become even more vital in this new era. And we have already identified plenty of synergies with Passenger Focus'.

BUS USERS UK is hopeful that the Government has 'got its sums right' with the rest of the provisions of the new Act. 'We naturally welcome any measures that improve the lot of bus passengers', says Gavin Booth.

'We especially welcome the fact that the new legislation recognises the value of bus operators working in partnership with local authorities to achieve a common goal, that of improving bus travel and benefiting users', he continued.

BUS USERS UK has yet to be convinced that Quality Contracts will necessarily deliver the right results. 'There has been a lot of talk as to whether some sort of franchising will be better than the current system', says Gavin Booth. 'We are concerned that bus services can all too easily become a political football, and we hope that any such arrangements will contain safeguards to prevent bus services being used for political expediency rather than really benefiting users. But we will be happy to be proved wrong and will remain open-minded until we see how any Quality Contract works out in practice. We don't wish to prejudge the issue.'

THE SAGA OF GREAT BARFORD BUS SHELTER

By Alma Tebutt

This is about the continuation of the saga of the Great Barford Bus Shelter.

In June 2008 I sent to the Parish Council my paperwork with regard to replacement or refurbishment of the Bus Shelter. A second copy of the plan to replace the first copy which was lost (the original was also lost so this was the second replacement) had been passed to the Parish Council.

July Parish Council meeting

During the Public Participation part of the meeting I asked about plans for the bus shelter and at the request of a parishioner the possibility of another shelter being erected on the other side of the road at the bus stop near the Golden Cross pub. I was interrupted by a parishioner who disagreed that a new bus shelter should be erected there. The discussion came to a very noisy end. I heard one of the Parish Councillors mutter "brick it up". Most of the content of the discussion what there was of it was about vandalism and very little about the needs of the public who have to use public transport. At this

point I was almost in despair and ready to give up the whole project.

The next day I rang a parish councillor who advised me to put the subject on the next months' agenda to get an uninterrupted hearing. I spoke to John Squire the Acting Clerk to the Council. He was very helpful and agreed to include the item in the following months' agenda. At the August meeting I read to them a prepared document with the reasons why I believe the bus shelter should be updated. At the time I was pleased with the reaction; where the Councillors seemed to be sympathetic. I thought I had reason to believe the matter would soon be resolved. On attending the Great Barford Parish Plan Groups Planning for Real day on Saturday 30th August I realised that they made little reference to bus shelters. All I could find was a Removal of Bus Shelter card. I would have preferred the word Renewal and I started to worry again at that point.

At the September Parish Council meeting a parishioner reported that at the weekend someone had vomited in the bus shelter this was contaminating the floor and walls inside and outside the bus shelter. The Parish Council agreed to call in "The Hit Squad" to deal with it immediately.

The Acting Clerk reported he had written to Mr.D.Curtis a Structural Engineer for advice on what to do with the bus shelter. He enclosed photo images to give an idea on what might be done. At this date he had not received a reply.

I attended the October meeting with some trepidation. After item 4 on the agenda the public was invited to ask the Parish Council questions or ask for information. A maximum of 15 minutes was allowed. I noticed that item 13 was to Discuss Further Changes to the Bus Shelter and decided to wait until then for their comments. One subject discussed was the fact that the "Hit Squad" had not been to clean the Bus Shelter.

The discussion about the Bus Shelter surprisingly started with provision of a new Bus Shelter on the other side of Bedford Road outside the Golden Cross Public House. I had dropped this proposal after advice, to be discussed at a later date. It became clear why it was on the agenda. After a short conversation by the PC about a new shelter being used for smokers it was dismissed.

Paperwork was then produced to discuss the existing bus shelter. Photographs were passed to the Council. The Clerk then passed three

photographs to the three bus users present. One was a new free standing bus shelter, one was the existing bus shelter and one was a new bus shelter superimposed in front of the old bus shelter. I heard a remark about who will choose and someone said ask the people who use buses this was ignored by other Councillors.

The discussion the Council held was difficult to hear from the public seats and it was over in seconds. I am not sure exactly which one was chosen because there was a picture in a magazine which I had only a glimpse of. I suspect it was one I felt was not suitable for the job. I managed to mouth to one of the councillors that it should have weather protection down the sides and she passed this remark to the rest. There was no discussion about when work would start or how long it would take. I am very concerned that this Bus Shelter will be with us for a long time and care should be taken to get it right.

I couldn't interrupt the discussion because it was an agenda item. I felt the Parish Councillors did not consider closing the meeting for a few minutes to let the three people at the meeting who use buses regularly give an opinion. It was almost as though we weren't there. The decision was made so quickly I hardly had time to take breath. I should have come away from the meeting ecstatic, instead I came away depressed and very worried.

On page 21 of the November edition of *The Bridge* (Great Barford Parish Magazine) there is a page of information of news and transport for Great Barford.. Opposite on page 20 is a request from the Parish Council for more volunteers to help with the Parish Plan. Where does transport come in the scheme of things? It suggests to me that this includes everyone except those who use buses.

Postscript (or finale?)

This should be a time for celebration. The Parish Council agreed at the November meeting to replace the bus shelter. I was concerned that the Parish Council took only a few minutes to make a decision on something that affects a considerable number of parishioners who rely on public transport.

At no time did the Parish Council ask the opinion of parishioners who were at the meeting and are regular users of public transport to give their opinion on what would make an acceptable bus shelter. There was time to close the meeting for a few minutes.

The Parish Council consists of people who rarely if ever see the inside of a bus. It would have been a golden opportunity to hear from people who travel all the time on public transport.

In the November edition of *The Bridge* the Parish Plan was much in evidence on the opposite page to the BABUS news. Paragraph 2 states that "the whole community could have a say in what they would like to see happen in the parish". I heard the remark "get it out of the way" regarding the issue of the bus shelter. I find this unacceptable public transport is a very important part of many peoples' life. Oh by the way the issue of another bus shelter opposite was thrown out. Please send complaints to the Parish Council. I tried my best.

THOUGHTS FROM GREAT BARFORD

By Alma Tebutt

These thoughts are contributed to *The Bugle* the magazine of Great Barford Parish Council.

Many years ago my husband John and I decided to move to Great Barford. One of the reasons was that it had a good bus service. In those days small buses trundled between the villages several times a week and there was a good service direct to Peterborough. The years have gone by and sadly times have changed. Many more people use their own transport and do not need buses and trains. As a result the buses have depleted to a half hourly direct service through Great Barford. I don't know how we would manage without this service and commuters are very grateful for it but it doesn't cover the needs of people who wish to travel across the country. While I am able with the help of BABUS I will continue to campaign for a better service for everyone.

Ivel Sprinter

The Ivel Sprinter run by volunteers recently held their AGM. More Committee Members and volunteer drivers are needed to continue this excellent service. Travelling on these little buses is reminiscent of the good old days when the noise level of people chatting cheered the bus along. Without the Ivel Sprinter a number of Parishioners living in Great Barford and other villages would not be able to shop independently. Please help if you can, ring Trish

on 01462 701323. She would be delighted to hear from you.

LONDON TRAVELWATCH

From London Travelwatch's website we see the following from their casework file. Although London Travelwatch (formally called London Transport Users Committee) primarily covers the Greater London area it also covers trains to Bedford though has no responsibility for other transport in our area.. Nevertheless they are very effective and it is worth taking a look at their website to see what can be done on behalf of bus users: www.londontravelwatch.org.uk/about/

Mrs T and her family suffered considerable delays and extra expenses while on a trip with Eurostar. She was initially offered £375 compensation, which was deemed inadequate. After TravelWatch's intervention, Eurostar agreed to increase this amount to £1656.

Mrs S had been trying to convince London Buses to erect an enclosed bus shelter near to a local residential home for elderly people to protect them from inclement weather while waiting for buses. She had been told that this was impossible because of the width of the pavement. London TravelWatch requested a new survey of the site and London Buses has now agreed to adapt the current bus shelter.

Ms T and her companion were on a visit to London. Owing to a fault on their Oystercards, it appeared that they did not have the correct ticket for their journey and were issued with penalty fares. After London TravelWatch contacted the Independent Appeals Service, the penalty fares were refunded.

BABUS MEETINGS

BABUS Committee members and advisers will be involved in the following meetings over the next few months. If you have any issues you would like raising, please contact a member of the Committee (see page 1 for email and phone).

13-Jan-09 RTP Forum Bedford
30-Jan-09 Bus Users UK Bus Surgery
12-Feb-09 Beds C C liaison meeting
25-Mar-09 RTP Forum Lidlington
23-Apr-09 Stagecoach liaison meeting 10.15
14-May-09 Local Authority liaison meeting
23-Jul-09 Stagecoach liaison meeting 10.15
10-Sep-09 Local Authority liaison meeting