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## Newsletter of BABUS-Bedford Area Bus Users' Society December 2011

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**About the photo:** From Bus Users UK Code of Good Practice - *Bus users deserve a high level of up-to-date and accurate bus service information.* 'High-level' does not mean eight feet above pavement level, as in this example in Flitwick where a notice is wrapped around the pole just below the flag.

*The Committee would like to say Merry Christmas & Happy Holidays to all BABUS members and friends. Best wishes for the New Year too.*

### 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 by post; alternatively ask for a receipt by email.

**For enquiries, contact BABUS through the website at <http://babus.org.uk> or on the BABUS Enquiry Line 0871 218 2287 or 0871 218 BBUS (24 hour answering and fax service). NOTE THIS IS A NEW NUMBER. If you leave a message and would like us to call you back, please leave a phone number. You may send a fax to 0871 218 3293**

## **FROM THE CHAIRMAN**

### **New members**

BABUS is pleased to welcome new personal members located in Milton Ernest, Barton-le-Clay, Potton, and Sharnbrook, as well as Bedford. New corporate members now include Cranfield Parish Council and Potton Town Council. We are seeing positive results from our attempts to generate awareness through the new recruitment leaflets and the ongoing efforts of our webmistress, Suzy Scott. Recently we have found that a number of non-members are making contact with BABUS through the website in order to raise queries and concerns. Whilst there are limitations on the amount of effort we can and should apply to these approaches they are helpful in broadening our perspective on issues arising across our territory. As a secondary matter it is always possible that these contacts may result in new members joining.

### **Outline of activities**

After a brief lull in the Summer when holidays and family interests received the attention they deserve our work has resumed and at some intensity. The Committee meets formally every quarter. However, in the last year or so, that arrangement has been unable to cope with the rate of issues being raised and the time demanded for responses. Much of this burden has fallen on the shoulders of our Secretary who has, at times, been invited to attend discussions with Bedford Borough Council at very short notice – even a day or so. In order to progress the work of BABUS and safeguard the interests of members we have now adopted a policy of meeting as small ad hoc sub-committees of two or three. These small working parties tend to favour The Swan in Bedford but have been known to frequent coffee shops found between Potton, Kimbolton and Flitwick – at zero cost to BABUS finances, it may be said.

The new bus timetables introduced in August (see Summer 2011 Newsletter) together with some subsequent adjustments have placed considerable demands on our time. We have been invited to work with Bedford Borough Council and Grant Palmer in progressing major changes to services covering some of the rural communities north of Bedford. We have been pleased to work with Central Bedfordshire Council, the Borough, Stagecoach and Grant Palmer in introducing a revised and much more effective service between Bedford and Ampthill/Flitwick. That may rightly be claimed as

a major success for BABUS, achieved through quiet diplomacy and cooperation of all the parties concerned.

### **Communications with Members**

As this Newsletter approaches publication there are a number of priority issues that require our attention. These include possible changes to the operation of Bedford Bus Station, on-going problems with Service 50 from Bedford to Kettering, providing considered responses to draft Local Area Transport Plans in Central Bedfordshire, and impact of road works on bus operations. Any member with appropriate expertise and skills who feels they are able to make a contribution to these or any other issues would be welcome.

In the Summer 2010 Newsletter I suggested that 'electronically-connected' members might consider making greater use of the electronic bulletin boards. A recent check has shown that just over half BABUS personal members have email and Internet access. Of these 'electronic' members only about one-third are registered to use or make active contributions to the bulletin boards.

Having said that we are always mindful that a significant number of personal members do not have internet access and we endeavour to protect their interests in our dealings with third-parties when we are presented with statements such as '*... the details are on our website. . .*'. Often that is not good enough. Of course, the cost of servicing electronic members is lower than for those who do not have email because we do not incur printing and postage costs for them. That does not imply we consciously operate a two-tier membership system.

Incidentally, corporate members are sent paper copies of the Newsletter as we feel that is helpful in reporting our activities within their organisations.

## **BUS SERVICE CHANGES SINCE THE LAST NEWSLETTER**

### **Bedford Borough**

The major changes to both commercially operated and local authority tendered services as detailed in the last newsletter came into operation over the 21<sup>st</sup>/22<sup>nd</sup> August weekend. As mentioned elsewhere, the number of complaints which followed was very low bearing in mind the size of the change and even the local

newspaper "Letters to the Editor" columns were devoid of much comment. One or two issues did arise, however, and following evaluation were generally rectified with a set of changes from 30<sup>th</sup> October.

From that date the following further changes were introduced:

Route 3: Minor retimings by up to ten minutes on Sundays.

Route 4: Run as a through route with Route 10 to reinstate the service from the Putnoe area to the Tesco Store at Goldington and the doctor's surgery in Riverfield Drive. Buses return to town as Route 10. Minor retimings were made by up to ten minutes.

Route 10: Similarly linked with Route 4 and after serving The Boundary "loop" continues to Tesco's before continuing to town as Route 4.

Route 5A: New service number picking up the former Route 10 journeys to Elms Farm Industrial Estate. Service operates every thirty minutes between 05:30 and 07:30 in the morning and from 16:40 to 18:10 in the evening on Mondays to Fridays.

Route 8: Minor retimings by up to ten minutes on Sundays.

Route 25: Retimed to improve reliability. Service runs every 75 minutes rather than hourly to give more running time and thus raise performance. Last journey from Bedford retarded until 18:30

Route 26: Retimed to retain most connections at Harrold with Route 25 and also to allow more running time in Rushden.

Meanwhile from 9<sup>th</sup> October Route 50 operated by Stagecoach Midlands was retimed as a result of a series of complaints regarding punctuality at the south end of the route. This service is now linked with a local operation in Kettering which removes the tight turnrounds there and thus avoids the situation whereby late running northbound had an immediate effect on the next southbound journey and so on. Journey times have also been extended.

BABUS has had several complaints that the Travel Shop in Bedford is not able to supply information or answer queries on Route 50 as it is not operated by Stagecoach East. Following a meeting between both "branches" of Stagecoach and BABUS we hope that this has now been resolved.

Also Arriva The Shires, as part of some Milton Keynes changes withdrew their last remaining service into Bedford the Sunday 1A from Lavendon. This had run almost in duplication to Stagecoach 41 and thus had received little or no patronage.

### **Central Bedfordshire**

With the bulk of service changes having taken place in March there have been few further changes to report. However, in August, some alterations occurred in the Marston Vale area.

Stagecoach 160 and 165 between Bedford and Leighton Buzzard were withdrawn as a result of changes to school service requirements from the new term. Furthermore Grant Palmer withdrew their Route 10/10A serving intermediate points between Flitwick and Milton Keynes or Leighton Buzzard.

This resulted in new Route 49 marketed as "South Midlands Connect" and running twice a day in each direction on weekdays between Wootton and Leighton Buzzard via a lengthy, albeit scenic ramble through Marston Moretaine, Lidlington, Brogborough, Ridgmont, Husborne Crawley, Aspley Guise, Woburn Sands, Woburn, Hockliffe and Eggington taking almost an hour for the trip. Villages between Wootton and Aspley Guise are only served on request and the route connects at Wootton Village Hall with Stagecoach 53 buses to and from Bedford. The service is operated by Centrebus.

### **BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL BUDGET 2012 CONSULTATIONS**

As members living in the Borough will probably know, Bedford Borough Council produced a very detailed consultation document relating to ways it believed that money could be saved in the next financial year and residents were invited to comment on a whole host of issues. BABUS, as an organisation recognised by the Borough, responded to the relevant transport items.

The two items directly of concern to BABUS were:

Environment & Sustainable Communities: ESC8 – Park and Ride facilities

Finance & Corporate Services: FCS36 – Concessionary Fares.

and an edited transcript of our responses is shown below:

**Proposal ESC8: To cease provision of customer facilities at Park and Ride site.**

Bedford Area Bus Users Society (“BABUS”) represents bus users throughout much of the former county of Bedfordshire and thus covers the Borough in its entirety. Being mindful of the recent favourable comparative position for bus users within Bedford Borough against adjacent Local Authority areas. BABUS has worked closely with the Borough Transport Team to retain an acceptable level of bus services and facilities for passengers. One such benefit has been the opportunity for intermediate passengers to use the Park and Ride bus service to and from Bedford.

Proposal ESC8 seeks to close all facilities at Elstow Park and Ride site and to ensure that intending passengers have only a short wait before joining a bus.

BABUS is mindful of the need, in this economic climate, for Local Authorities to save money but believes that to enable waiting passengers to have the shortest delay in boarding a bus (and thus achieve the estimated savings of £20k) that all routes passing should divert into the site and provide a more frequent service to Bedford. As there is already no differentiation at intermediate stops to town between a bus emanating from the Park and Ride site and one from elsewhere this would have no detrimental effect at those stops.

Routes 42, 44 and 81 need to be considered and timetable implications would need to be examined.

BABUS wish their proposal to be adopted.

**Proposal FCS36: Discretionary Concessionary Travel**

Bedford Area Bus Users Society sees one benefit to residents is the opportunity to use concessionary pass facilities outwith the minimum national scheme statutory requirements.

Proposal FCS36 seeks to offer the minimum national requirements only and for concessionary pass holders travelling before 09:30 on Mondays to Fridays to pay the full public fare.

BABUS is mindful of the need, for Local Authorities to save money but believes that the focus of attention should not be on issues where Bedford Borough has been held up as a responsible and innovative organisation compared with adjacent councils – especially when the estimated savings are quoted in the consultation paper as only £100,000.

There are various categories of concessionary pass holders travelling before 09:30 on Monday to Friday and these can be listed as follows:

- (1) Those travelling to work and, as mentioned in the proposal, an element of these would have to remain but be unable to use the pass facility but BABUS questions the assumption that 50% of current journeys are in this category.
- (2) Those needing to reach hospital, doctor,/ dentist or optician appointments where, to maximise the use of the working day these normally commence at 08:30 to 09:00. BABUS asks whether the Local Authority has sought the views of these service providers (outside this consultation process) to ascertain whether they are prepared to change procedures.
- (3) Passengers from rural areas where the bus timetable is such that the only practical journey or, indeed, the ONLY journey requires them to join the bus before 09:30. Examples such as Stevington, Odell and Bolnhurst come to mind.
- (4) Shoppers looking either for access to town businesses before they get busy or to enable them to return home the same morning.
- (5) Disabled pass holders which may include college students.

BABUS wishes to table three alternative scenarios for consideration as part of the consultation process:

Proposal 1: That discretionary travel be retained for journeys within the Borough prior to 09:30 but that a flat fare be charged for all such journeys. The level of this fare is open to consideration by financial experts but needs to be (a) on an easily administered basis on each bus such as 50p or £1 and (b) a standard fare from all parishes/wards rather than some complex scale based on distance etc – the

whole thing needs to be kept simple. BABUS believe this option (based on the categories quoted above) will bring in considerable revenue and allow the council to make its projected savings.

Proposal 2: All concessionary pass holders be invited to purchase an Annual Supplementary Pass which would entitle the holder to free travel before 09:30 on Monday to Friday within the Borough. Again, financial experts will need to determine the likely take up of this facility by the "groups" referred to and thus the appropriate annual charge.

Proposal 3: This is a combination of (1) and (2) with the Annual Supplementary Pass holder still paying a flat fare. The cost of the Pass will need to be balanced against the flat fare charge.

Finally, BABUS believes that removing all discretionary arrangements pre 09:30 will lead to an artificial peak hour on the first journeys after 09:30 with subsequent safety issues for the elderly and frail and adverse effects on the punctuality of such journeys.

**At the time of publication of this newsletter the results of the complete consultation were not known.**

## **CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE LIAISON MEETING**

BABUS met with representatives from C.B.C on 21<sup>st</sup> October. With all the activity taking place in Bedford Borough we had perhaps "taken our eye off the Central Beds ball" in that we had not held our Liaison meeting since February. There have been some changes to the personnel dealing with public transport and thus there was an element of catching up to be done.

Items discussed included:

- Buses to Fairfield Park, Stotfold
- Buses serving Arlesey Rail Station and Shefford Health Centre
- 2012 Budgets
- Feedback from the August TT changes
- The absence of a service between Wootton and Cranfield
- Bus Stops and roadside information
- Publications

As our Chairman, who is our Central Bedfordshire "specialist" was unable to be present on this occasion a one to one meeting

between him and Paul Dodge of C.B.C is likely to take place in the near future.

## **YELLOW PERILS**

It has become quite common when travelling around the area, especially within Bedford Borough, to come across a yellow sign stating "This road closed between xx and yy" or "This road closed on two days in the next fortnight" – often involving lengthy diversionary routes. When such roads are part of bus routes the provision of the regular and reliable timetable is jeopardised as intending passengers often do not get details of revised services which can entail catching a connecting bus to some point to gain access to the main service or using buses provided by different operators neither of whom know where the other bus is!

The issue came to a head in October when "yellow notice" roadworks disrupted every bus route north of Bedford. This is a totally unacceptable state of affairs and, whilst we understand that some roads are in a poor state of repair and that another winter is just around the corner BABUS believes that better planning and co-ordination is essential.

Accordingly BABUS sent an email to Bedford Borough Council:

"You will recall at the recent Local Transport Forum, concern was expressed over the number of daytime road closures and the effect on bus services. It is clearly understood that the state of some roads is poor and that the next winter is just around the corner and that it is often a public utility that requires to carry out work rather than the Local Authority but this week we seem to have reached an all time high (or low if you are a bus user) in the north of the Borough with EVERY regular bus route affected in some way:

Route 25: Diverted via Stevington not Pavenham due to Oakley road closure and further truncated at Sharnbrook due to High St closure.

Local Authority minibus linking Pavenham.

Route 26: Diverted in Sharnbrook via Colworth due to High St closure.

Route 27: Diverted inbound due to St Mary's St closure

Route 28: Terminating at Swineshead due to culvert repairs at Upper Dean. Special Local

Authority minibus serving Pertenhall, Kimbolton, Tilbrook, the Deans to special timetable.

Route 29: Diverted via Souldrop and A6 not serving Sharnbrook Surgery (its purpose!!) due to High St closure

Route 30: Diverted via Souldrop and not serving Sharnbrook Surgery (again what it was laid on for!) - same reason

Route 50: Diverted via Souldrop and Lodge Rd Sharnbrook omitting most of the village.

Route 51: Unable to serve all of Oakley due to road closure.

There are some roadside posters, but not at all stops and how any potential bus passenger is expected to know where to wait and at what time is baffling.

Accepted that it is half term this week and that some roads MAY be quieter it is still, surely, an untenable position for Bus Users when not a single route in the area is running through the day as per the published timetable?"

The response was:

*Thanks for your e-mail.*

*In response I do understand where you are coming from but nonetheless road works are essential and clearly have to be done despite the recognition it can create short term inconvenience. Bus operators and users complain about the condition of roads and uncomfortable bumps etc.*

*However I accept the level of road improvement is currently unprecedented and it is accepted that we need to try and do more to minimise the overall inconvenience to bus users (partly recognised by the fact these are being done at half term). We also need to ensure that alternative instructions are communicated to bus users which in part will be aided by improved planning.*

*As a consequence whilst little can be done in relation to these changes we are planning a meeting to discuss road closure planning with operators and I will ensure BABUS are added to the list. I have also copied in colleagues in Highways so they are aware of your concerns.*

Whilst the meeting has still to be held we believe this a positive step by the Borough and for BABUS to have an input. We are also watching the position in Central Bedfordshire.

## **FROM THE COMMITTEE ROOM**

Since the publication of the last newsletter your full Committee has only met on only one occasion to discuss routine business – on November 12<sup>th</sup>. We have had “Working Party” meetings as mentioned by our Chairman and been active on other issues (see “BABUS in Action”).

Items discussed at the full meeting were:

Feedback from the service changes in August and October (\*)

Borough Council proposals for 2012 Budget (\*)

Membership(\*)

Publicity

Other meetings attended by representatives (\*)

Roadside bus information

Business Cards

Northampton Bus Station (\*)

Contact with Centrebus

Smartcards.

Items marked with (\*) are referred to in more detail in separate articles in this newsletter.

Indeed BABUS surely gets responses by Action not Talk!

## **NOTES FROM GREAT BARFORD**

Our notes from Great Barford this time relate to our correspondent rather than bus services. Unfortunately Alma Tebbutt who is also a Committee Member and our Publicity Officer has been indisposed for much of the autumn. She has been having treatment at Bedford South Wing Hospital and awaits the next steps. She advises that she is missing her BABUS duties!

We wish her all the best and hope to see her back on duty in the near future.

## **BUSES TO RETURN TO BEDFORD BUS STATION!**

Over a year ago, our Vice Chairman Colin Franklin, on behalf of the Society produced a detailed report on occupation of the central area of the Bus Station (i.e. the area outside the Stagecoach section) with proposals to relocate some of the existing occupants and replace them with buses brought in from “on street” termini such as Harpur Street.

Since then, greater emphasis has been placed on this plan following the arrival of Grant Palmer buses working the rural routes to the north and east of Bedford.

Bedford Borough Council has now produced proposals which will cater for the plan's requirements – the relocation of the current taxi rank and parking facilities and the return of buses to the Bus Station! It is understood that when the refurbishment is complete Grant Palmer will move from Greyfriars QD stop and Cedar Coaches from Harpur St.

The Borough Council has now (15 Dec 2011) issued the required legal notice setting out their plans for reducing spaces for taxis and blue badge holders within the Bus Station area in order to concentrate all bus services within the facility. The plans are open to consultation until 19 Jan 2012. We would urge all BABUS members – individual and corporate representatives, to support the plans by writing to: Diane Hale, Technical Manager, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, Borough Hall, Cauldwell Street, Bedford MK42 9AP. Do not delay – write now!

BABUS action again!

## **REDEVELOPMENT OF NORTHAMPTON BUS STATION**

Although “over the border” BABUS has been advised that as part of a major shopping centre development in Northampton, the existing Bus Station is to be moved to the site of the former Fish Market. The relevance to BABUS is two fold – firstly, as the next item explains, in Bedford we are shortly to take buses from “on street” terminals and replace them in the Bus Station whereas the Northampton scheme does just the opposite and, secondly, as the new Bus Station will not be as large as the one it replaces it is proposed that current route 41 (Bedford – Olney – Northampton) revert to “on street” rather than centrally calling at the Bus Station.

At present The Drapery is earmarked as the terminal with other routes either being in the new Bus Station or nearby streets. BABUS has put its views to the local BUUK group and we await developments. For those members old enough to recall, it will bring things full circle as prior to 1953 Eastern National Route 50 from Bedford terminated at Victoria Promenade which was not centrally located at all for either the town or bus interchange to other locations.

## **FLITWICK COMMUTERBUS**

During the year representatives have met with their opposite numbers from Bedford Commuters Association (BCA) to discuss matters of common interest.

One issue concerned the introduction of a weekday commuter bus service from Ampthill, Maulden and the Flitwick Estates to connect with morning and evening London trains at Flitwick Station. Some possible timings were prepared and local operator (and Corporate Member) Grant Palmer was approached to ascertain feasibility. As there were possible variations on routes within the area some postcode data was necessary to ascertain exactly where the bulk of Flitwick travellers come from – this data is held by the train operator for season ticket holders and is still awaited.

In the meantime, friends at BCA have advised that as numbers of commuters continue to rise First Capital Connect are introducing three twelve car trains in each direction between Bedford, Flitwick and London from 12<sup>th</sup> December. Two of these also serve Harlington in the morning.

If the bus is introduced it certainly won't serve the station's appalling brick bus shelter opposite the Post Office – it was demolished in mid November!

## **FLITWICK BUS SHELTER**

**By Alan Sprod**

Goodbye and Good Riddance! The grim bus shelter opposite Flitwick Post Office (photo page 1) is no more.

The Flitwick Town Council website has a news item:

### ***Works to Bus Shelter in the High Street***

Amey have advised that demolition works will take place at the bus shelter in the High Street (railway side) from Monday 21st - Wednesday 23rd November 2011. Further works will then take place during Thursday 24th - Friday 25th November.

## **NOTES ON RECENT / FORTHCOMING CHANGES**

**By Simon Norton**

Following an email about forthcoming changes to Grant Palmer buses on 5 December, I had a

look at their website and that of Central Bedfordshire council. The latter says nothing, nor does the former about changes on that date, but it does refer to the fact that they are giving up the 74, 202 and 231 later that month. It is not clear whether these tenders are being withdrawn or will be taken over by another operator.

Of these, the 74, a weekly market service which I have used occasionally, falls within the BABUS area. Incidentally I believe that a much more frequent service on a modified route (essentially replacing the Luton-Barton section of 79, the rest of which would be timed to connect with the 81) could make a useful contribution to the overall network. I would regard this as more or less mandatory if a station was provided at proposed M1 junction 11a. The 231 is only an isolated journey in a service mainly operated by Centrebus. Presumably it is an essential journey for some people to get to/from work.

The 202 has been drastically cut in recent years and I hope it doesn't disappear altogether. If it does, then it bears out the lesson that cuts are often self-perpetuating because they lead to loss of patronage.

## **PROMOTING BABUS IN BITE-SIZE**

We now have a supply of BABUS business cards. These are compact, and give all our key contacts in one. If you get a paper copy of this newsletter, you should find a few cards enclosed in the envelope to pass on to friends and neighbours. Failing that, most committee members will have supplies at forthcoming meetings. Unable to attend? No problem! Simply send a SAE to our Secretary, who will be happy to let you have as many as you like. Pass one on to your friends at bus stops, meetings, groups, etc. The cards include details of our phone number, where we'd be happy to return a call to anyone who has questions - including prospective members.

## **BABUS WEBMISTRESS UPDATE** **By Suzy Scott**

The BABUS website has been expanded in terms of content. We now have timetables for every local bus, community bus and coach service, across the whole former Bedfordshire county. We have also opened up our Bulletin Board for a trial period - meaning anyone can view the messages (email addresses etc. still

remain secret!), but you will need to be a registered member, and logged in, to make a posting. Don't forget, Bulletin Board access is available to all BABUS members, and we have members-only areas on the BB where you can access minutes of meetings, and so forth.

We can be contacted by phone on 01763 252868, or via [www.heretotherepublishing.com](http://www.heretotherepublishing.com)

Our recently-launched transport blog takes the transport stuff out of her online diary, and expands beyond the traditional South East England/Scotland bus coverage. This can be found at [www.heretothereshop.com/blog](http://www.heretothereshop.com/blog)

## **HERE TO THERE PUBLISHING LTD** **By Suzy Scott**

Your webmistress has recently combined her personal web projects, including the BABUS website and Bulletin Board, into a new company. Here To There Publishing Ltd was initially setup to produce timetable books for areas where there are no comprehensive timetable books - like Herts, Cambridgeshire, Luton, and also the likes of National Coach Services.

We can also produce a personalised timetable for your local area. If your Parish Council, shop, attraction or whatever, whoever, wherever, needs a timetable, or would like one done at low cost - we'd be happy to help.

## **TOP OF FORM**

Though this will be old news by the time you read this it may be of interest to readers who are **thinking** of going to London by train. It is contributed from BCA newsletter.

The platform extensions needed to allow 12-car trains to operate on the Bedford to Brighton Thameslink route from December were finalized with works completed at Flitwick and Harlington stations on Tuesday 15 November. First Capital Connect lengthened its first services from eight to 12 carriages on 12 December this year.

Reference to [www.thameslinkprogramme.co.uk](http://www.thameslinkprogramme.co.uk) confirmed that the services to be extended to 12-carriage length from 12 December 2011 will be:

- Bedford to Brighton: 0658, 0730, 0748 and 1706 (arrives London Bridge 1827)
- Brighton to Bedford: 0802, 1604 (arrives St



Pancras 1732), 1630 (arrives St Pancras 1802) and 1702 (arrives St Pancras 1832)

The number of 12-carriage services each station will have from 12 December 2011 are:  
- Bedford, Flitwick, Luton, Harpenden and St Albans - three in the morning; three in the evening

- Harlington, Leagrave and Luton Airport Parkway - two in the morning

## **TAILPIECE – CHRISTMAS ON THE ISLE OF WIGHT**

Former BABUS Chairman John Yunnie, now a resident of the Isle of Wight, has sent details of the Christmas Day services to be operated this year by Southern Vectis. Five routes each see an hourly service from approximately 08:00 until 23:00 with the last journey of all scheduled to arrive back at Newport Bus Station at 00:33 Boxing Day morning. On Boxing Day itself a normal Sunday timetable applies. So far both Grant Palmer and Stagecoach have declined to follow suit in Bedford!!

The level of service in the Isle of Wight compares very well with provision across much of England and Wales. Details may be found at <http://islandbuses.info/pdfs/xmas2011.pdf>

At the beginning of June 2012 there are two consecutive Bank Holidays to mark the Queen's Jubilee and we face the prospect of three successive days with a Sunday service. We are prompted to ask why bus operators, unlike train operators who will probably be operating to a Saturday timetable, perceive that there is such a reduced market for their services on Bank Holidays.

## **TAILPIECE – THE CRYSTAL BALL**

Looking back, it has been action packed for bus users in "our" area with many changes since the start of the year both within the Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough areas.

Looking into the crystal ball for next year it is very unclear what might be coming in our direction. It certainly seems that in the present economic climate belt tightening will be the order of the day and suggestions are that even the normal "go ahead" Milton Keynes will be looking at contraction of services.

BABUS will continue to meet all eventualities and in our diplomatic yet effective way produce the best possible for bus users. The increase in the number of Parish Councils memberships helps in this role. If you believe you can help in your area, you know someone who might be interested in joining or can simply put leaflets or posters in prominent places please do not hesitate to contact our help line 0871.218.2287 or email us at [www.babus.org.uk](http://www.babus.org.uk)

Merry Christmas (especially if you're going to the Isle of Wight!) and happy travelling in 2012.

## **STOP PRESS**

Zoe Paget, Stagecoach Operations Manager in Bedford leaves at the end of the year for a new post within the company at Cambridge. Zoe leaves Bedford with our best wishes for the future and our thanks for her support. The position at Bedford is being taken up by Kieran Lawson.

Changes to services 82, 188 and 190 in the Biggleswade/Potton area are planned from the first weekend in February involving through journeys between Hitchin and Sandy.

Bedford Borough Council met on 7th December to consider the Budget 2012 implications in the light of the consultation exercise - the BABUS proposals re "Flat Fare" etc (see item on page 4) were discussed. A full council meeting early in January will ratify decisions.

## **BABUS IN ACTION**

The list below is a summary of other meetings attended by your Committee members in recent months. As mentioned in the last newsletter it is impossible, given the number of meetings, to give a full report of each. We continue to summarise the bigger sessions with Bus Operators, Local Authorities but any member wishing specific details from other sessions should contact the Secretary – [godfreywillis116@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:godfreywillis116@yahoo.co.uk).

<b>DATE</b>	<b>SUBJECT</b>	<b>VENUE</b>
19-Jul	Working Party Meeting	Bedford
19-Jul	Bus Service provision at Potton/Sandy	Biggleswade
29-Jul	BBC Liaison Meeting (part 2)	Borough Hall
11-Aug	Delivery of Publicity Leaflets to Libraries	Various
08-Sep	Bedford Stns Travel Plan	Borough Hall
15-Sep	Rural Transport Forum	Bedford
16-Sep	August service changes feedback Meeting	Borough Hall
13-Oct	Working Party Meeting	Bedford
05-Oct	Visit Grant Palmer new depot	Flitwick
14-Oct	Local Sustainable Transport Forum	Borough Hall
21-Oct	CBC Liaison Meeting	Technology House
07-Nov	Stagecoach Liaison	Bedford Bus Station