

TUNBRIDGE WELLS PUBLIC TRANSPORT FORUM

Minutes of a meeting held on Wednesday 16 June 2010 at the Town Hall, Tunbridge Wells.

Present:

Councillor Peter Bulman, TWBC (Chairman) (PB)
 Peter Davies, representing Cranbrook & Weald Tourism Forum (PD)
 Lene Beynon, Borough Engineering Officer, TWBC (LB)
 Michael Coggles, Chairman, Access Group (MC)
 John Goodfellow, on behalf of the Royal Tunbridge Wells Town Forum (JG)
 Alan Hewett, Travel Planner, NHS (AH)
 Norman Kemp, Company Secretary, Nu-Venture Coaches Ltd (NK)
 Martin Lewis, Chairman Tunbridge Wells & District Railway Travellers' Association (ML)
 Councillor Bill Hills, TWBC (BH)
 David Candlin, Head of Economic Development and Regeneration, TWBC (DC)
 Mike Applebe, on behalf of Hawkhurst Parish Council (MA)
 Sam Bryant, Sussex Community Rail Partnership (SB)
 Councillor John Cunningham, TWBC (JC)
 Mike Gibson, Southeastern (MG)
 Steve Wallis, Southdown PSV (SW)
 Tim Sparrow, Sussex Community Rail Partnership (TS)
 Daniel Washington, Public Transport Planner, KCC (DW)
 Tim Walker, on behalf of Lamberhurst Parish Council (TW)

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Action By:

- (1) Apologies were reported from John Spurling (TWBC), Graham Harmer (Arriva), Network Rail; Austin Blackburn (Go Coach).

CONFIRMATION OF CHAIRMAN

- (2) Pursuant to Full Council Minute FC10/10, Councillor Bulman assumed the Chairmanship of the Forum for the municipal year 2010/11 and no objections were received from members of the Forum. It was noted that former Borough Councillor and Chairman of the Public Transport Forum, Peter Davies, would continue to attend the Forum, in a new role as representative for the Cranbrook and Weald Tourism Forum and PB thanked him for his previous contribution to the Forum.

MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING

- (3) The minutes of the last meeting held on 27 January 2010 (previously circulated) were agreed as correct subject to the following amendments:
- (a) Paragraph (19) Concessionary fares became a County responsibility from April 2010 and not 2001.
 - (b) Paragraph (5) was amended to read 'The Chairman recalled that planning permission had been granted for 1200 cars on the site. AH confirmed that a significant number of these spaces had already been built within the multi-storey car park located just beyond the works' entrance'.

- (4) Matters arising:
- (a) Paragraph (10) Accessible buses – **MC** complained that the numbers were still too low and should have reached at least 50%. He also queried the lack of wheelchair ramps and signage for both elderly seating and wheelchair spaces. **NK** responded that regulations for wheelchair ramps would not come into force until 01/01/2015 and 01/01/2016 for single deck and double deck buses respectively.

PRESENTATION – SUSSEX COMMUNITY RAIL PARTNERSHIP (CRP)

- (5) **SB** gave a presentation (as attached with these minutes as Appendix A). The objective of the CRP was to increase the awareness of the rail services between Uckfield and East Grinstead, both in the local community, schools and within the tourist industry. Timetables were available and special events were being promoted to incorporate the railway element. In answer to questions regarding the use of station car parks, he confirmed that the CRP worked closely with local partners, wherever possible. Due to the limited availability of parking in some locations, they were also investigating alternative transport links to local stations. Their priorities for the future were to improve and promote sustainable access to stations, to market their services within the local area, maintaining their partnerships and working with young people. Their next stakeholder meeting would be held on 21 June 2010 at 5pm in the offices of Tandridge District Council in Oxted and anyone interested would be welcome.

UPDATE FROM NETWORK RAIL AND SOUTHEASTERN

- (6) **PB** asked **MG** if South Eastern trains could provide season ticket holders with a number of designated car parking spaces on Saturdays at Tonbridge station as market traders made it difficult for commuters to park.
Action: MG advised that this could be investigated. MG
- (7) **Timetable changes: PB** congratulated **MG** on the new timetable, which had greatly improved the service for commuters and school children travelling from Tonbridge. It was noted that there would be further small changes to the timetable in December 2010.
- (8) **National Station Improvement Programme:** Tunbridge Wells' ticket offices had already been the subject of considerable improvement in recent months and further work was intended by the end of 2010, including new flooring and more space for the ticket office. Improvements were also planned for to the toilets, waiting rooms and cafes. More cycle parking spaces were to be allocated with improved lighting. In answer to a question from the Chairman, **MG** advised that the new automated barriers had to be left open as they were unsupervised due to staff shortages. **JG** asked whether a designated drop off point might be provided in particular for passengers with heavy luggage, disabled people and also for taxis not licenced by Tunbridge Wells.
Action MG to update at the next meeting. MG
- (9) **Thameslink: MG** distributed a report (attached with these minutes as Appendix B) which explained the aims of the north-south Thameslink route through London. It was noted that there had been some opposition as a result of this proposal.
- (10) **London Bridge: MG** reported that, due to the change of Government, London Bridge rebuilding work was on hold awaiting funding and delays and cut backs were anticipated.

UPDATE FROM BUS COMPANIES

(11) **NK** from Nu-Venture (provider of KCC funded services for Goudhurst/Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells/Tenterden) updated that services would be affected by road works and closures on the A228 during the summer months.

(12) In answer to a question from **PB**, **DW** confirmed that information on road closures was distributed by KCC to a wide range of contacts including bus operators. **PB** also enquired over the potential installation and use of electronic signs to inform drivers of delays and alternative routes and **DW** undertook to investigate and report back to the Forum.

Action: DW to investigate and report back on any proposals for installation and use of electronic signs on delays and alternative routing.

DW

(13) Concerns were raised by **MC** that without funding and improvements in public transport, the DWP aim to encourage disabled people into the workplace would be more difficult to achieve. He also commented on the need for better information services for both elderly and disabled people. There was also further discussion on the provision of concessionary fares and it was noted that many bus operators considered that they were receiving inadequate funding from the scheme and this was making some bus services very difficult to operate commercially.

UPDATES FROM KHS AND TWBC

(14) **LB** reported that work on the extended bus bay outside the Body Shop had now been completed. **DW** reported that KCC had marked out the new bus stops and the extended and additional standing/waiting areas in Meadow Road and Victoria Road.

(15) **Bus Service Operators Grant: DW** reminded members of the Forum that the Bus Service Operators' Grant (BSOG) grant was based on mileage and passenger numbers. Discussions had commenced to review this arrangement but had subsequently been placed on hold as a result of the change in Government.
Action: DW to update at the next meeting.

DW

(16) **Kick-Start routes for 6 & 7 between Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone: DW** advised that this scheme, together with all KCC Local Transport Plan (LTP) schemes had all been put on hold and were under review, in the light of the new Government's announcement on spending cuts. Some bus stops which had already been paid for in respect of the 277 & 281 bus routes would, however, still go ahead.

(17) **Changes to bus stops at Royal Victoria Place:** Three planned bus stops, one on Grosvenor Road and two on Mount Pleasant Road, would also still go ahead and should be in place by the end of September. **JG** raised a query over the proposed relocation of the stop for the 281 Service from outside Tesco to outside Currys. The former was a very popular stop and there was concern that members of the public would have difficulty carrying heavy shopping to the new location. **DW** advised that the change had been made for safety reasons, at the request of Arriva, to avoid buses having to immediately cross two lanes of traffic. **PB** enquired whether there had previously been any accidents as a result of this situation but **DW** was unable to advise and the Arriva representative was not present at the meeting to be able to respond.

Action: DW to investigate whether the 281 Service stop might be retained outside Tescos.

DW

- (18) **Timetables at bus stops and new bus stop maps:** **DW** reported that he was awaiting the initial draft of the Tunbridge Wells 'where to catch your bus' map which would be placed in most of the bus stop shelters in Tunbridge Wells. The maps would provide details of all services, with those operating a minimum of a 2-hourly service, Mondays to Saturdays, illustrated on the map. In answer to a question from MC regarding information signs for visually impaired people, **DW** advised that bus stops in Tunbridge Wells town centre already had a verbal announcement facility and only the roll-out of smart cards was needed to make this operational.

Action: DW to update further when more information available.

DW

- (19) **Bus Service re-tendering:** **DW** reported that following the re-tendering exercise earlier this year, a number of services had changed operator. These included the No. 26 (Maidstone/Goudhurst) service, which was now operated by Nu-Venture; the Nos. 231/233/237 (Edenbridge/Tunbridge Wells) services which were now operated by Southdown PSV; the No. 234 (Edenbridge/Tunbridge Wells) service which was now operated by New Enterprise and the No. 401 (Chartwell House/Tunbridge Wells) service which was now operated by Go-Coach. **DW** additionally reported that Metrobus had begun to operate a commercial Sunday service on the No. 291 (Crawley/Tunbridge Wells) service.

UPDATE RE: PEMBURY HOSPITAL TRAVEL PLAN

- (20) **AH** reported that the Maidstone travel plan had been approved. Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge would be used as transport hubs. An application would be made for over 100 extra patient parking spaces and potential for more staff cycling spaces had also been identified. **AH** was awaiting information from Arriva about their ticketing zones in relation to the hospital. In respect of follow up clinic appointments, it was intended that these would be allocated to the hospital nearest to the patient's home.
- (21) **MC** raised issues relating to the need for fast clear access routes for ambulances and improvements to the A21. He was concerned over procedures for emergency admissions to Ashford and indicated that it could take up to 75 minutes for a cardiac patient to be transported from Tunbridge Wells to Ashford hospital.

MASTER PLANNING AND TRANSPORT STRATEGY

- (22) **DC** advised that the Draft Tunbridge Wells Borough Transport Strategy (2010) was available on the TWBC website.
<http://www2.tunbridgewells.gov.uk/pdf/Draft%20Borough%20Transport%20Strategy.pdf>
- (23) Consultation on the draft would run for eight weeks from 14 June to 9 August 2010 and exhibitions would be held across the Borough. Access online would be available via the Consultation Portal at <http://consult.tunbridgewells.gov.uk>
- (24) Documentation would also be available to view at the Gateway in Tunbridge Wells and assistance would be available by contacting transport@tunbridgewells.gov.uk

FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS

- (25) **Action: Any agenda items for the next meeting should be submitted to the Chairman by 22 September 2010 and copied to LB.**

All

NEXT MEETING DATES

- (26) The next meeting was scheduled to take place on **Wednesday 6 October at 6pm (Committee Room A).**