

WEYMOUTH & PORTLAND ACCESS GROUP

Minutes of Meeting 100 held on Monday 9th August 2010 at The Acorns, Grosvenor Road, Weymouth

1. PRESENT

John Lambert (Chairman), David Harris (Secretary), Steve Rook (Treasurer), Carolyn Harris, Julia Willoughby (WPBC), Gordon Lake, Terri & Ray Bartlett, Graham Ryan, June Ryan, George Dyer, Sheila Dyer, Ian White, Joan Heynes, David Dowle.

2. APOLOGIES

Mike Kelly (President), Alan Christopher, Anne Kenwood.

3. MINUTES OF MEETING 99 HELD ON 10th MAY 2010

Outstanding actions from previous meetings:

Nothe Gardens A large sign to be placed at the entrance to the gardens showing, e.g. where are the slopes and how steep they are. **JW States these signs are not yet in place – a re-organisation of highways and footpaths responsibilities (and therefore staff) between WPBC & DCC meant there would be some further delay.**(May 2010). **Still Pending** (August 2010)

BT Payphones DD reported that the open fronted kiosk is still opposite W H Smith in St Mary Street but anyone in a wheelchair or scooter would be hard pressed to use it as there are two benches in front of it which are back to back and close together. **JW Will pursue this matter (awaiting results of re-organisation as above)**(May 2010). **JW States this is now County responsibility – she will find contact at County.** (August 2010)

Taxi Licensing

The Borough Council has recently consulted on taxi licensing but MK did not know what action will be taken. He thinks that pressure should be maintained to improve taxi accessibility and driver awareness. A recent High Court judgement that required Liverpool City Council to lift its refusal to accept Peugeot E7 taxis. JW stated that the issue in other authorities came about because they had policies which required the use of London Black Cabs. The Peugeot E7 was considered by many disabled people to be a more flexible/suitable design. **JW states there is no such policy in WPBC. The council were now considering whether minimum quotas for disabled friendly vehicles should be required of licensed operators** (May 2010). **JW will find contact at WPBC.** (August 2010)

An error was discovered in the Investigation Officers report for the May meeting. The sentence referring to other groups attending in Section 8 about the Mock Assessment should now read "The other organisations were Dorset Community Action, Multicultural Network, The Lantern Project (finding vulnerable people homes), Carer's Association and Dorset Association for the Disabled." **The minutes have been amended to this effect.**

All previous actions having been reviewed, the meeting was satisfied that the minutes of the previous meeting represented a proper record of the business of that meeting.

4. PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Weymouth Transport Package

Dorset County Council has not consulted further with the Group as far as I know. The whole community is affected but, as in so many cases, I have no doubt that disabled people are adversely affected more than most by these major works.

I would like reassurance that the result of the road works and related measures including the Park and Ride scheme, bus service changes and development of off-road cycleways (also for pedestrian and mobility scooter use) will be the success promised. The planning application for the bridge connecting the 2 sections of the Rodwell Trail over Newstead Road is programmed for October.

Council contact with group

Weymouth and Portland Borough Council's record on consultation has been good in the past. I appreciate the difficulties arising from staff reductions and spending cuts but I hope that Julia can reassure the Group that we will be consulted on further projects and proposals under consideration including the upgrading of the Seafront, Greenhill Gardens and Brewers Quay. Are the Weymouth TIC / Pavilion alterations to be reviewed?

Lifetime Homes

The Building Regulations continue to be revised but there is currently some doubt about revisions to Part M which refers to disabled access and to the level of promotion of Lifetime Homes. The specification for Lifetime Homes has recently been reviewed but their development, as opposed to the less demanding standard homes complying with Part M, is patchy. There is also concern that Part M is not always operating as intended (Mike Sansom, Head of Building control at Brighton and Hove Council has written an article in Access). There are also concerns that the "access" content of many Design and Access Statements submitted with planning applications are very poor in terms of understanding and content.

The majority of Lifetime Homes are provided as social housing with some areas (Wales leads) building more than others. The current challenges are great with reductions in social housing grant, pressure to keep down build costs and little interest from builders of market housing. This is set against a background of the lowest house building rate in the UK since 1923 and a report by CABI saying that British homes are on average smaller in floor area than those of almost all other European homes.

This is not an easy time to press for the provision of Lifetime Homes yet they will represent a long term saving over the lifetime of a building and, if these requirements are adopted as standard, the additional build cost is negligible. The Government shows a continued commitment to sustainability and, in this respect has amended Part L of the Building Regulations. Adoption of Lifetime Homes criteria would relate well to that commitment and, with the agreement of the Access Group, I would like to write to those concerned with these policies.

Access to historic buildings

A report on the subject has been produced by an Access Consultant, Stephen Turner. He recommends reading of the guide "Easy Access to Historic Buildings" saying that provides much good advice on adaption of historic buildings though there is a concentration on larger, non-domestic buildings. However Stephen also insists that the age of the building should not itself be an impediment. Old buildings have been adapted and need to be able to continue to adapt, to keep them in good use and maintenance.

Low energy lights

Such lighting should provide energy efficient light sources which can provide good quality lighting and an inclusive environment. However there can be problems with slow warm up or unsuitable use or installation. Advice is available to architects and builders in the "Code for Sustainable Homes", in the "Access Manual: Auditing and Managing Inclusive Built Environments", or on www.eu.wiley.com.

Public conveniences

The Borough Council, faced with the problem of high costs of provision and maintenance are to introduce charges for use of the Swannery Car Park toilets. This could be discriminatory but I would like the Access Group to provide a considered response. Many of the public conveniences are in poor condition or lack satisfactory washing / drying facilities. I am concerned that publicity I have seen on the subject does not indicate any commitment to improve the toilets in return for the introduction of charges.

With regard to Changing Places (best practice advised in BS8300:2009) 137 have now been installed in the UK with a further 25 due to be installed. Given this is the total for the whole country it is lamentable.

Highway obstructions

Problems with badly designed or located A boards and with some pavement seating areas has again been apparent this summer. I note that Dorchester Area Access for All face similar problems.

5. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Equalities Framework for Local Government (EFLG): Ask about date of meeting at WPBC , reference May minutes, last para of item 8 **JW will get dates** (August 2010)

Ken Isaacs Memorial Rose Bowl – presented to me in May by Cllr Anne Kenwood, who, as the outgoing Mayor, was asked for her personal choice of someone doing good voluntary work for WPBC, and kindly chose me for my work as Chairman of the Access Group. (Round of congratulatory applause).

Rachel Felton from Disability Go did not turn up to the meeting

York Buildings, disabled bays being (or have been) removed. Gordon Lake queried what has replaced these four bays. See Appendix 1 for answer – Copy passed to GL at the meeting.

Website advertising: Would it be prudent to ask for sponsors to advertise on our website? Mark Golsby, Sheila and George's son-in-law, set up and updates our website for free. He tells us that by 31st October this year, the free web address will not be available. A new web address can be bought for a one-off payment of £70.99. I believe we can keep the current address, which is www.weymouth-access.co.uk Meeting agreed to paying this cost for renewal and to proceed to seek such advertising. **JL will approach several local companies for this purpose.**

Emily Cooter: Emily is employed as Organisational Development Officer at WPBC. She will initially be sharing the Access Liaison Officer roll with Julia. I met her (along with Julia) on 5th August. I subsequently received the following e-mail from Emily:

As discussed, we would really value the group's input into the equality impact assessments we are undertaking this year (2010-11).

Tourist Information Centre move to Pavilion building – the equality impact assessment (EqIA) has been completed (attached separately) but our Scrutiny Committee are going to review it in October. We would be really grateful if the group could do a spot of ‘mystery shopping’ and send any concerns / suggestions to me before the end of September. It would be a really valuable tool for Scrutiny to have when they review the assessment. And, more importantly, you will give us an insight into what needs to be done better to make the new TIC as accessible as possible. **GL/JL to take this forward**

Harbour – this EqIA is in its final draft. It is attached separately and I would really appreciate any comments you have on this. If you can get any feedback you have back to me before the 25 August that would be ideal. Again, feel free to mystery shop!

The other EqIAs, which we have not yet started, are as follows:

- Crematorium
- Preparations for 2012 and the seafront regeneration scheme
- HR recruitment and selection policy

I will be sure to involve you as we progress with these.

Park & Ride scheme clarification

Access Audits of cafes/restaurants/pubs: I have done St Mary Street, David Dowle has done three establishments, Peter Bennett now unable to do any. Not heard from David Baxter. Alan Christopher is going to do some more on Portland.

Weymouth Town Centre: Reference Ian White’s report, Appendix A, within May minutes. Could we have a separate meeting with interested parties regarding access for disabled people in Weymouth Town Centre? **IW will meet Matthew Piles & Cllr David Harris to progress this item.**

6. SECRETARY’S REPORT

The method for getting public dropped kerbs seems to have changed again. I submitted one local to where we live via the previous system and received a phone call a few days later to say that these were now being prioritised locally by local councillors. As this was just a few days before the General Election, I have not taken this further. JW reports that the system should be the same as before. Inputs from Dorchester Group who have been nominated by West Dorset District Council as “agent” for the Dorchester area by their local council suggest some new mechanism might be needed now that highway authority has been transferred County for the W&P area. **DH Will send a letter to County to find out what is needed now for Weymouth.** (August 2010)

7. TREASURER’S REPORT

At present we have £786.61 at the bank.
Normal expenses costs are expected.

8. INVESTIGATIONS OFFICER’S REPORT

Nothing to report over the last period other than items already discussed in meeting. Sheila took the opportunity to remind the meeting that arrangements for the “Draw Stall B at Weymouth Carnival 18th August” were complete and it would this year be staffed by some Access Group members, Some from the Talking Newspaper and some from the Weymouth Club for the Disabled.

9. ACCESS OFFICER’S REPORT JW requested all members of the group to be active in monitoring access provision around the area.

A factsheet project was under way in the Council – the concept was to provide a

leaflet giving basic factual information about specific conditions so that people having to deal with a disability could get a rapid introduction and some practical guidance. She provided an example leaflet about Aspergers Syndrome in Draft form.

POISE – a project to provide a portfolio of positive images of people with disabilities being active in the area – for use in future publicity material. (such as the leaflets above).

A “**Changing Places**” full accessibility toilet was being planned as part of the proposed new Beach Rescue Centre intended for the beach area near the old Aquarium (opposite Dorothy Inn).

10. PUBLICITY OFFICER'S REPORT

Nothing to report.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Ray and Terri Bartlett gave out the date of the next Dorchester Access Group meeting as 19th August at 6.30pm in the Corn Exchange. All were welcome to attend.

Dates of Future Meetings during 2010

(Quarterly Meetings all Start at 2pm) 8 November

WEYMOUTH & PORTLAND ACCESS GROUP

AGENDA FOR MEETING No. 101

To be held on Monday 8th November 2010,
Acorns Centre, Grosvenor Road, Weymouth,

1. Introduction of those present
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of Meeting 100 held on 9th August 2010, and matters arising
4. President's Report
5. Chairman's Report
6. Secretary's Report
7. Treasurer's Report
8. Investigations Officer's Report
9. Access Officer's Report
10. Publicity Officer's Report
11. Any Other Business