

WEYMOUTH & PORTLAND ACCESS GROUP

Minutes of Meeting 101 held on Monday 8th November 2010 at The Acorns, Grosvenor Road, Weymouth

1. PRESENT

Mike Kelly (President), Carolyn Harris (Vice Chairman) David Harris (Secretary), Steve Rook (Treasurer), Julia Willoughby (WPBC), Gordon Lake, Terri & Ray Bartlett, Graham Ryan, June Ryan, George Dyer, Sheila Dyer,.

2. APOLOGIES

John Lambert (Chairman), Joan Heynes, Anne Kenwood.

3. MINUTES OF MEETING 100 HELD ON 9th August 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** (November 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.** (November 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) Further changes to Licensing are being introduced nationally. Requirements are due to be “handed down” from the Secretary of State.(November 2010)

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

Equality Act

With this legislation coming into effect last month we await plenty of guidance and, in due course, Case Law to show just how effective it is going to prove.

For further information the Government Equalities Office web-site is;

www.equalities.gov.uk/equalitybill.aspx

The Department of Transport has published guidance on taxi accessibility.

There has been criticism that Codes of Practice have not yet been published and I understand that guidance has yet to be published by the Charity Commission.

Government Spending Review

The expenditure review will have a profound and serious impact on many services that are highly valued by disabled people and carers. It is also likely to impact upon many projects and building proposals and I believe we will need to be vigilant to try to ensure that matters of particular importance with regard to accessibility are not significantly badly affected.

Court Victory

It is interesting to hear when other Access Groups have a success. Stroud Action Group recently took legal action against a shop known as The Card Factory for the unsatisfactory access to its new shop. The action was successful and the firm was required to make the building more accessible. Recourse to legal action is expensive and should be a last resort but, and I am reminded by our Chairman's success in pressing for improved access to The Springhead at Sutton Poyntz, we can usefully quote such outcomes when we come across premises or services that fall short of the standards expected.

Dave & Carolyn Harris had noticed that a newly opened cafe in the premises previously occupied by "Zoom the Loom" in St Mary's St had two steps just inside the threshold. This may be a similar situation as they could not remember steps under the previous occupancy. JW will follow this up with the council planning department.

Weymouth Transport Package

Work is proceeding towards completion next year. Dorset County Council will be represented at a meeting of the Accessibility and Transport Group of the Weymouth and Portland Environmental Partnership tomorrow. A paper is being presented by Ian White and County Councillor David Harris and list issues for discussion including journey start points and most likely journeys, parking for blue badge holders, business access and access to buses. Ian White and I are likely to attend and if there are any other issues you wish Ian or me to raise we should be pleased to do so. At their previous meeting Matthew Piles (DCC) reported that the bus stop areas on The Esplanade and by Debenhams will be re-organised and Councillor Christine James advised that there is a willingness to reconsider the arrangements for disabled parking after the road works are completed.

With a great deal of re-signage needed I hope that DCC will recognise the national pressure to make streets more "inclusive" by reducing excessive signage and clutter. The planning application for the bridge which will connect the 2 sections of the Rodwell Trail over Newstead Road will be submitted shortly and I believe that Sheila and George Dyer will be reporting on this.

Olympic Accessibility Standards

Guidance has been published which provides information on the design and management of the Olympic venues. It is hoped that the guidance will also be observed, where possible, beyond the venues themselves on wider subjects related to the 2012 Olympics.

Borough Council contact with group

The Group has been in discussion with Weymouth and Portland Borough Council on the consultation regarding on street sitting out areas for cafes and pubs etc. and with regard to the Weymouth Pavilion and TIC.

Building Regulations, Part M and Lifetime Homes

Following the last meeting I spoke to Mike Groves, the W&PBC Principal Building Control Surveyor, about the operation of the Building Regulations with regard to the interpretation of Part M. I believe that W&PBC are mindful of the need to achieve reasonable accessibility in accordance with the legislation but he says the “Common sense needs to be applied”.

No doubt there will be further changes to Part M and perhaps on the promotion of Lifetime Homes. Some people in the building industry continue to argue that provision of easier access is expensive. With good design it does not have to be.

Public conveniences

I don't know whether anybody on the Group has been in recent discussion with the Borough Council on this subject. Many of the public conveniences in the Borough are still in poor condition or lack satisfactory washing / drying facilities, drawing considerable adverse publicity, whilst others have been closed.

Allotments

Kris Hallett is promoting improvements to the allotments at Westham Crossroads and suggests that works should be carried out to make them more accessible for people with disabilities.. I suggest that we support these efforts.

Reynold's Institute Social Club (at the corner of Dorchester Road and Springfield Road, Broadway.)

A recent planning application would have improved access to the building but has been refused. I spoke to the Case Officer and was disappointed that he did not acknowledge that the importance of improving access to this community use building is a material planning consideration. I understand that the application decision will be subject of an appeal and suggest that the Access Group should support the appeal. In a recent appeal concerning a Listed Building at Fordington, Dorchester, the Planning Inspector in allowing the appeal agreed with me that ease of opening windows and the comfort of elderly residents are material planning considerations.

5. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The following topics were discussed in the meeting:

Equality Framework for Local Government

The EFLG work was progressing and a Peer Group Challenge meeting was being planned for 24/25 November. If John Lambert was unable to attend, the Sheila Dyer would try to go in his place.

Web Site advertising

Web Site update and sponsorship income. Brotherwood had sponsored the work and paid £100 to allow updating the web site & acquiring the web address permanently. A link to their site was now on the front page.

Tourist Information Centre move to Pavilion building

A reponse to our report had been received and gave an explanation of the four main points. The main changes that were planned were due to be put in place by a project starting in January to replace the present entrance canopy. A ramp to the Ritz cafe entrance would be provided at the same time. The detailed response follows:

“Dear John, In Lindy's absence, Melanie has asked me to respond to your report

I have read the Access Group exercise report very carefully and would comment as follows:

1. We were assured by both the contractor and Building Control at the time of construction that the new door to the Café Ritz met DDA standard requirements. Having said that, we had seen

previous difficulties being experienced by unaccompanied wheelchair users with this door and have been directing these customers through the main door while we are awaiting the construction of a small ramp into this entrance. We resisted doing it during the height of the season, but intend to carry out these works shortly.

2. As you may or may not be aware, we received Planning Permission last month to replace the outside canopy at

the main entrance and to make the main doors fully automatic. These works will be carried out in January

3. We are also well aware that the disabled toilet in the foyer does not meet me dimension requirements. There is nothing we can do about that- we cannot extend as the walls are concrete and are over 2 feet thick and are load bearing. To create the right dimensions would cost large sums of money we don't have!

4. Another problem we are well aware of, is the fact that there is no disabled access to the HST loller ie the Green Room and Balcony theatre seating. Again, given the construction of the building, an internal lift is not possible, leaving the two options of an outside lift (very expensive) or some form of Stainer Chair lift up the main stairs. We are currently obtaining costs and looking at the possibilities for the latter option

On her return from leave next week, Lindy will be compiling a report to the Conch]'s Scrutiny Committee detailing the results of the Equally Impact Assessment of the TIC move to the Pavilion, and will include the above details, May I thank you for an excellent report, and assure you that we will do everything we can to mitigate those shortcomings you have correctly identified at the Pavilion

With best regards

Roland Green

Pavillon Business Manager”

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)

A reply had been received from DCC but was inconclusive in that it merely suggested that WPBC need to set up some mechanism for assessment and prioritisation of these requests so that county could then progress the most important ones. JW Suggests that we consider using the Group as a agent to do the Assessment and Prioritisation work (we would need a volunteer to do this). This could then be linked to the WPBC so that there was a single consistent way of handling these requests. Ian White may be interested in following this up?

7. TREASURER'S REPORT

At present we have £755.37 at the bank. Steve had written to the Weymouth Carnival organisers to find out if we were likely to be getting a contribution this year – no reply as yet.

Normal expenses costs are expected.

8. INVESTIGATIONS OFFICER'S REPORT

Sheila had no further reports than mentioned elsewhere. She gave notice that after twelve years working for WPAG on committee that she planned to resign with effect from our next AGM in February mainly due to family commitments. She would continue to be a member of the group.

9. ACCESS OFFICER'S REPORT Julia Willoughby requested volunteers from any member of the Group who lived in the Littlemoor Electoral Ward. The council needed help from local groups to decide how to spend some grant money within that ward. If you are interested in helping then please contact Julia. Her email address is JuliaWilloughby@weymouth.gov.uk or she can be contacted by phone or post at WPBC offices.

10. PUBLICITY OFFICER'S REPORT

Nothing to report.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Bus stop by Wilkinsons

Graham & June had noticed a bus stop being constructed outside Wilkinsons store. Was anything known about it? JW/MK were to be at a relevant meeting tomorrow and would try to find out.

Natural England – Coastal Footpaths

Mike Kelly said there was more work and consultation activity in the local area. (From a brief look on the Natural England web site there are detailed proposals for work to be done on the Coastal Footpath between Rufus Castle on Portland and Lulworth Cove. The plan is to have the necessary works on this stretch completed before the Olympics). Consultation in local area is expected soon...

Dates of Future Meetings during 2011

(Quarterly Meetings all Start at 2pm) 14 February

WEYMOUTH & PORTLAND ACCESS GROUP

AGENDA FOR MEETING No. 102

To be held on Monday 14th February 2011,
Acorns Centre, Grosvenor Road, Weymouth, immediately following the AGM

1. Introduction of those present
2. Apologies
3. Minutes of Meeting 101 held on 8th November 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

WEYMOUTH & PORTLAND ACCESS GROUP
AGENDA FOR
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

To be held at 2pm on Monday 14th February 2011
At Acorns Centre, Grosvenor Road, Weymouth

1. Introduction of those present
2. Apologies
3. Approval of Minutes of AGM held on 8th February 2010
4. President`s Report
5. Chairman`s Report
6. Treasurer`s Report
7. Election of Officers for the Coming Year