

WEYMOUTH & PORTLAND ACCESS GROUP

Minutes of the SPECIAL GENERAL MEETING held on 14th February 2011
at The Acorns, Grosvenor Road, Weymouth

1. PRESENT

Mike Kelly (President), John Lambert (Chairman), David Harris (Secretary), Steve Rook (Treasurer), Carolyn Harris, Peter Bennet, Mick Watts (WPBC), Julia Willoughby (WPBC), David Baxter, Alan Christopher, George Dyer, Sheila Dyer, Kate Wheller (Cllr), Ian White, David Harris (Accessibility Group Chairman, W&P Partnership), Graham Ryan, June Ryan, David Dowle.

2 APOLOGIES

Terri & Ray Bartlett, Joan Heynes, Anne Kenwood (Cllr).

3. MINUTES OF THE 2009 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The minutes were read and approved. (Proposed MK; Seconded SD)

4 REPORT OF PRESIDENT

Future of the Access Group: After 21 years of good and effective effort the Access Group faces an uncertain future. We all know of the sterling work John Lambert has put in and I know John values what has been a team effort.

There have been marked advances in legislation and also the understanding and support of the local authorities. However the expenditure review is having a profound and serious impact on many services that are highly valued by disabled people and carers, and by others who will disproportionately suffer in terms of mobility and access where public services are reduced. I also anticipate that the need to save development costs will impact upon many projects and building proposals and those concerned with accessibility will need to be vigilant to try to ensure that accessibility needs are not marginalised.

In my view there is most definitely a continuing need for W&PAG or some similar organization.

If under item 8 of today's meeting W&PAG is put on hold I would suggest that we identify a means for its re-emergence so that whatever happens nationally the local access needs of disabled people will continue to be championed and the useful liaison with the local authorities maintained. If there is any question of W&PAG continuing there is a need to recruit new members. Action on the next item may however have a bearing on whether W&PAG itself needs to continue or whether some other group will take on a similar role.

Networking with other Groups: In order to be as effective as possible organizations and groups concerned to achieve good access need to network effectively. This is a subject that the

Weymouth and Portland Accessibility and Transport Group has been acting on and I hope that County Councillor David Harris, who chairs that Group, will be able to attend today's meeting. I also believe that Sheila and George Dyer wish to report on their contact with the recently formed Access Dorset group.

I would suggest, in the short term, that it would be timely to seek a joint meeting with Dorchester Access for All, if they are agreeable to this. Although I believe that Access Groups need to focus on their locality there is with the development of Joint Working between Weymouth and Portland Borough Council and West Dorset District Council. With the introduction of shared management of those councils, and the end of W&PBC's agency to act for Dorset County Council as local highway authority resulting in DCC being responsible for highway works and related matters in Weymouth, Portland and Dorchester alike, there is, at this time, particular common interest between our two local access groups.

Local Transport Plan: Dorset County Council, together with Bournemouth and Poole Borough Councils are consulting on "LTP3" which will succeed the current LTP. I would

be pleased, with the agreement of the meeting, to make representations on behalf of the Access Group. If anybody would like to work with me on this before the comments need to be finalized I would propose that I prepare a draft response and e-mail it for comments before the response is given.

5 REPORT OF CHAIRMAN

Pubs/Restaurants/Cafés Access Reviews: This was started, but the list of premises amounted to hundreds which was a massive undertaking while the manpower was so short that it was abandoned. However, about 20 premises were inspected by 2 or 3 members and they will be kept on file. It seemed that those that were reasonable to adapt had been suitably adapted.

Parking Time for Blue Badge Holders: Last May, I contacted the Equalities & Human Rights Commission regarding the above, and received a long response. In effect, it was the Council's right NOT to do anything to help with the cost or length of parking time for Blue Badge Holders. Our hands are tied.

Special Schemes for Disabled People in the Borough – Focus Group from Policy Development Committee. Help was approved but it is highly improbable any extra funding will become available to help disabled people's access to the Town Centre.

Equalities Assessment for Weymouth & Portland Borough Council (WPBC).

Sheila was part of the Focus Group in November, representing people with disabilities in the Borough. Much was discussed, and it was to be reported back to the Council that although Council officers are doing their best to help, and are well trained, this is not the case with many Councillors, plus, of course, there is never any funding to help improve the lot of disabled people.

Disabled Parking Spaces in Council Car Parks. Sheila and George spent many hours visiting established car parks with the Parking Manager of WPBC, this for the second year running. They proposed areas in order to upgrade disabled parking spaces to the correct size and location. Work at Southill to improve this area is underway at present.

Ken Isaacs Memorial Rose Bowl. The sterling work of the Access Group was recognised through the presentation of the above award to myself as Chairman, by Councillor Anne Kenwood.

Website Advertising. I acquired a sole sponsorship of our website by Brotherwood Automobility Ltd for £100.00 per year.

Tourist Information Centre. The TIC was uprooted from its prominent position on the Seafront to the Pavilion, on which we were not consulted. No buses run along the Seafront to the Pavilion. Consequently, Gordon Lake and I turned up to review the accessibility and found many faults. Their response was as follows: (See Appx A)

National Sailing Academy. I was invited by the Chief Executive Officer of the Sailing Academy, along with Jess Nagel, a former Mayor of Weymouth and Portland, to inspect its disabled facilities. These can only be described by one word – EXEMPLARY!!

Dual Purpose On-Street Parking Bays: ie 10am-5pm Disabled Only, other times for use by other road users. Sheila has been in contact with the Parking Department at WPBC regarding the above. Both able-bodied and disabled residents, and visitors, have been getting confused over eligibility criteria of these special bays. These are situated along the Esplanade near the back of Marks & Spencer, in Maiden Street and near the Loop car park in Commercial Road. Sheila wrote a comprehensive letter which has helped, it would appear, to hopefully have them changed over to Disabled only, 24/7.

Sheila understands that the Senior Leadership Board has approved the change of use, and this is all part of something called the Lean Review. We now await a vote by the Management Committee, but we are lead to understand we can be optimistic!

6 REPORT OF TREASURER

The Treasurer presented the accounts and commented that we received £41.62 more than we spent. Our sole income is still the donation from Weymouth Carnival from manning the ticket stall which was £50 more than recent previous years. So we need to continue to be vigilant about our costs and think about possible income streams for the future.

We have been awarded a grant of £2000 from the Synergy Housing Community Fund, this thanks to the efforts of David Dowle who spotted the opportunity and David Harris who wrote the application form.

[NOTE – this cheque was received on 16/2/11.]

The accounts were accepted. A copy of the Accounts is below.

WEYMOUTH & PORTLAND ACCESS GROUP

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT for the year ended 31st December 2010

2009	Income	2010	2009	Expenditure	2010
£		£	£		£
250.00	Donation re Carnival	300.00	6.02	Refreshments	17.64
			72.03	Postages & Stationery	31.45
	R Brotherwood	100.00	25.00	Subscription RADAR	25.00
	(sponsor of website)		168.15	Insurance	172.50
				Web-Site	70.99
			73.40	Travel	20.80
			69.50	Carer costs	20.00
164.10	Excess of expenditure over income			Excess of Income over expenditure	41.62
414.10		400.00	414.10		400.00

CASH ACCOUNT

2009		2010	2009	Represented by:	2010
1187.85	Bank balance b/f 1.1.10	1,008.75	1008.75	Bank balance 31.12.10	1,055.37
6.81	Cash in hand b/f 1.1.10	21.81	21.81	Cash in hand 31.12.10	16.81
250.00	Add Income	400.00			
1444.66		1,430.56			
414.10	Less Expenditure	358.38			
1,030.56		1,072.18	1,030.56		1,072.18

S Rook

Hon. Treasurer

These accounts have been examined and agreed in accordance with vouchers and documents presented for examination:

Signed AM Carter Date 21/1/11

7. **SUMMARY OF SITUATION** As we approached the date of the AGM it became clear that we were unlikely have enough volunteers to fill all the Committee posts Several of our long standing members have health issues and are unable to continue in their previous roles. We have not had anyone else indicate that they are prepared to come forward and fill any of the posts.

After varied discussion a pragmatic way forward was decided. There was a brief election to agree officers in specific roles to allow the organisation to move forward until the next meeting.

It was agreed that there was a need for more publicity about the group – this would help (hopefully) to attract new members and my provide more people prepared to volunteer in the future.

JW had reserved a slot in “Insight”, WPBC information brochure, which the group could use for this purpose. DH would provide some words and DH/CMH would attend a photo opportunity this week to provide a suitable current image.

8. ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR THE COMING PERIOD (until 9 May 2011)

The following committee members were elected unanimously.

MIKE KELLY, Hon. Publicity Officer;

JOHN LAMBERT, Hon. Chairman – responsibility limited to chairing meeting.

DAVID DOWLE Hon Vice-Chairman;

STEVE ROOK, Hon. Treasurer;

DAVID HARRIS, Hon. Secretary

Investigations Officer – The vacancy would not be filled at this time but will be reconsidered at a future meeting.

9. AOB – The following items raised during the meeting are noted for future consideration:

a) Cllr David Harris showed a footpath and cycleway path of the borough which had been developed. Copies were distributed to all those present. He pointed out that grants were available to voluntary organisations to help with the production of such maps. He suggested that WPAG might consider the development of a map of Weymouth Town centre showing accessible routes and premises. He can be contacted via WPBC offices.

b) A Dorset Access Group exists – Sheila Dyer suggested that consideration be given to joining this organisation.

The meeting closed at 3.50pm.

NEXT MEETING was arranged for 14.00 on Monday 9th of May at The Acorns.