

# WEYMOUTH & PORTLAND ACCESS GROUP

## MINUTES OF MEETING No. 136

Held at 2pm on Monday 11th December 2017

At Weymouth Fire & Safety Centre, Radipole Lane, Weymouth

### 1. Welcome and Introduction

**Present:** Carole Chinn(Chairman), David Harris (Secretary), Graham & June Ryan, Alaric Little (DCC Highways), Carolyn Harris, Sue Ward-Rice (WPBC), Jean Spain, Sheila Dyer, Sylvia O'Conner, Christine Pearce, Bob Irwin (Investigations Officer), Ian White (Investigations Officer),

**2. Apologies:** Marguerite Brown (Vice Chairman), Mike Kelly (President), Cllr Christine James (WPBC) Cllr Katharine Garcia (DCC), Pauline Haime, Stuart Allen (DCC), Gill Penwell, Lisa Dixon (PFD)

**3. Minutes of Previous meeting** Proposed for acceptance and approved by show of hands.

**4. Presidents's Report** [Mikes report was read by DH]:

**Portland members.** I met with Councillor Katharine Garcia to discuss how the Group might be better involved with access concerns in Portland. I am pleased to report that I think we will be seeing more Portland residents at our meetings as a result. It may be helpful if the Access Group held the occasional meeting on the Island.

**Local Access Guides.** Sue and I reported to the last meeting that People First Dorset aim to produce an Access Guide to Dorchester and Weymouth. I would like to see the guide also cover Portland and also Chickerell, and the surrounding areas. I hope that we can assist PFD, with Sue's involvement and advice. The task is ambitious but the outcome should be very beneficial to residents and visitors.

**Meeting with Weymouth Town Centre Manager and RNIB.** Carole, Ian and I met the recently appointed Weymouth Town Centre Manager, Ed Warr, who very helpfully invited Steve Hyde, the RNIB Regional Assistant Campaigns Officer (S.W.) to join us. We had a most positive and encouraging meeting which included the idea of running a joint event in Weymouth Town Centre in the Spring of 2018. If Ed and Steve agree I wondered if the RNIB might also be invited to join in the event. No doubt Carole or Ian will report further.

**Highway Obstructions.** We had a good discussion with Steve Hyde from RNIB, and Ed Warr, as to how public awareness can be increased about the problems experienced by people with disabilities, and people accompanying young children by the many forms of highway obstruction. These problems are not confined to town centres. Many difficulties result from well-intentioned actions which may result in unforeseen problems. Car parking in some streets results in insufficient room remaining for access by larger vehicles including some emergency vehicles. Dorset & Wiltshire Fire and Rescue Service have delivered leaflets highlighting potential dangers.

I hope that these are heeded, but it is also often a problem when vehicles are parked on, or partly on the highway to free up the carriageway, potentially causing injury or forcing people into the road to get round the obstruction.

**Chickerell Neighbourhood Plan.** I have responded to a Consultation Questionnaire from Chickerell Town Council to re-iterate our support for the W&PBC / WDDC Local Plan policy to encourage the provision of more accessible and adaptable homes. The same

comments have been made on the Portland Neighbourhood Plan.

**Chesil Beach Centre.** Further work has been carried out to improve the accessibility to and around the Centre. Staff are very ready to help if further assistance is required.

**Radipole Park and Gardens.** The Friends of Radipole Park and Gardens, whose Lottery Bid for improvement works including a café and toilets the Access Group supported, should hear on 13 December if their bid is successful. A related subject concerns the safety benefits of reducing the speed limit on Radipole Park Drive.

**Bus services.** First Group have made further service cuts and more are now proposed. This will add to inconvenience and more social isolation. The Passenger Panel I attended on behalf of the Group has not met for months and may be abandoned by the Company. By contrast South West Coaches have taken over the Wyke Village, Lanehouse and Pye Hill routes which were withdrawn by First Group. Their drivers are showing care and consideration for elderly or disabled passengers and those with babies or young children.

**Outstanding issues.** There are many subjects we discuss at our meetings in the hope that action will be taken by DCC or W&PBC, or other service providers. We are well aware of the budgetary problems faced by local authorities but find that many subjects which we raise get little if any further consideration. Amongst ongoing topics are;

1. Provision of Equality Assessments on relevant Council Committee reports.  
Councillor Christine James is pressing for this to be taken seriously at W&PBC.
2. Recognition that accessibility is a material planning consideration.
3. Actions concerning areas of poor air quality.
4. Obstruction and clutter on highways.
5. Insufficient progress with DCC's bus services' Real Time Information.
6. Accessibility to Polling Stations.

I look forward to our future work with Ed Warr, to our involvement with W&PBC on the West Dorset, Weymouth & Portland Joint Local Plan, the Town Centre Masterplan, and particular topics including the review of public conveniences, car parking, further pedestrianisation and traffic enforcement, and to other initiatives which aim to make the Borough a better place to live, work in, or visit.

## **5. Chair's Report.**

**Meeting with Weymouth Town Centre Manager and RNIB.** Mike Kelly, Ian White and myself had a very successful meeting with Ed Warr, Weymouth Town Centre Manager and Stephen Hyde, RNIB Regional Assistant Campaigns Officer (SW). We hope to run a joint event in Weymouth Town Centre in the Spring and will meet in the New Year to sort out details.

**Meeting with Community Highways Officer.** Both Ian and I had a meeting with Dave Carey, Community Highways Officer, regarding dropped kerbs in both Victoria Street (near Crescent Street Surgery), Southill and other problem pavements with a camber and dropped kerb.

Dave stated they only visually check kerbs and cambers and until we demonstrated, using a wheelchair and scooter, didn't realise how dangerous they were in a wheelchair or scooter.

**Local Access Guides.** Through Susan Ward-Rice both Mike and I have been trying to have a meeting with Lisa Dixon from People First Dorset. Unfortunately this hasn't been possible but we hope to meet in the New Year.

## **6. Investigation Officer's Report.**

Ed Warr appeared at the meeting wearing sight restricting glasses which he had used on his foot journey from Weymouth station to the council offices. Ian found this most compelling in that here was someone who was prepared to put themselves out in order to see the world from another's point of view. He felt the meeting had been constructive and looked forward to future cooperation.

Some of the narrower footways in Weymouth were recognised as an area of difficulty. Perhaps a map of the town centre could be produced highlighting them and showing alternative, safer, routes for normal use. It was recognised that sometimes it would be necessary to use such routes especially if visiting adjoining shops.

There was a grain storage business on Portland and an increased number of large lorries have now been driving through Castletown to access this facility on the port. The larger number of lorries travelling through the narrow roads is considered to be a serious risk by many residents and there is a meeting on Friday, 15 December to raise concerns publicly.

## **7. Highways Officer's Report**

Alaric said that several work orders had been raised for the outstanding drop kerb requirements and he believed that the work had now been completed.

Difficulties still remain in and around Victoria Street in the park district and Pilgrims Way near to Alexandra Gardens. In the Pilgrims Way case an existing drop kerbs may need to be removed as it was not possible to provide a suitable exit mechanism from that length of footway. More thought is being given to the Victoria Street situation because the difficulty arises at the conjunction of a private and local authority land boundary.

There was a short discussion about the remediation of dropped kerbs by means of a "fillet" of tarmac in order to make them safer to use. This was an inexpensive method of providing a solution and Alaric indicated that it could often be speedily accomplished.

## **8. Access Officer's Report.**

Sue Ward-Rice brought attention to the First Bus timetable changes which had recently been announced.

She further pointed out that the concessionary rates reimbursed to the bus company were the lowest in the country.

In a third point Sue indicated that the local government teams would be starting in January to work on the amalgamation of the different councils.

Sue had heard that People First Dorset had put in a bid for £5000 to the National Lottery in order to fund their initial activities they were also seeking financial help from Rotary/ Lions charitable groups.

Polling Station access. Concerns have been raised about the quality of access to polling stations in our area. Sue would be pleased to coordinate any issues that have been recognised – so if you know of a polling station which is difficult to access please let Sue Ward-Rice know.

## **9. Any Other Business**

**a). Christine Pearce** reported that the Chapelhay Skips situation had, at long last, been resolved. The skips were now all located within the compounds, and were no longer an obstacle.

**b)** On another matter Christine mentioned that the open grassed areas near the shops in Chapelhay had steep kerbs which were not easy to negotiate. These areas were being used as a "dog toilet" and were now most unsavoury.

**c) Jean Spain** had reported an area of dangerous paving where a bench had been removed in Saint Thomas's Street. This was done on the internet at the Library. She

wished to congratulate the highways team for a very rapid response making the area safe within two hours of it being reported.

**d)** Jean's second point related to the idea of social driver capability. She and her husband at the moment were in a situation where it was necessary to be out of their own house for most of the day due to her husband's condition. As he found it extremely difficult to use public transport they were now having to use taxis twice a day to go from home into town. In her previous life in Kent there have been locally available volunteer car services for such purposes and she wondered if there were any in this area.

**e)** A leaflet had been found in a holder in Weymouth library about non-emergency transport issues published by the NHS. The leaflet, although only recently arrived, contained a feedback request and the feedback date ends before Christmas. Jean asked if anybody else had seen the leaflet or knew about it – no-one within the meeting appeared to be aware of it.

**f)** A **Carers card** is available which will allow a carer access out of hours to visit a relative or friend in Dorset County Hospital.

**g) Chapelhay steps.** Work was now in hand to remodel and reinstate the railings and chains arrangement at the lower end of the Chapelhay steps to improve safety.

**h)** Carole raised a point about funding for the group. At present we have around £1200 and the annual running costs of the group are around £400. There is a need to increase our funding so that we can continue to exist. She asked for a discussion and for suggestions how we might go about raising funds.

Meeting closed at 15.45

<b>Next Meetings (All start at 2pm)</b>	
<b>at The Fire &amp; Safety Centre:</b>	
<b>Monday 12 February 2018</b>	<b>Monday 10th December 2018</b>
<b>Monday 9th April 2018</b>	<b>Monday 11th February 2019</b>
<b>Monday 11th June 2018</b>	
<b>Monday 13th August, 2018</b>	
<b>Monday 8th October 2018</b>	

**Help Line Phone numbers:** DCC highway emergencies: 01305 221020  
WPBC Help Desk: 01305 838000