

WEYMOUTH & PORTLAND ACCESS GROUP

MINUTES FOR MEETING No. 124

Held at 2pm on Monday 14th December 2015 at
Acorns Centre, Grosvenor Road, Weymouth

1. Welcome and Introduction

Carole Chinn (Chairman), David Harris (Secretary), Mike Kelly (President), Steve Rook (Treasurer), Carolyn Harris, Sheila Dyer, Christine Pearce, Sue Ward-Rice (WPBC), Graham & June Ryan, Ian White, Bob Irwin, Gordon Lake,

2. Apologies

Carole Lord, Cllr David Harris, Gill Penwell

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

 Were accepted as a true record.

4. President's Report

Post Offices

A new sub-post office has opened at Southill. Access difficulties are still apparent at Weymouth Town Centre Post Office, Mc Coll's (including Broadmeadow Sub- Post Office), Wyke, and at Fortuneswell and Easton.

Inadequate maintenance and management of access facilities

Some premises that claim to be accessible are failing to meet customer and staff needs. Some accessible WCs are also being used for storage with the result that they are not accessible for many people. Also, it appears that some Hearing Loops have been wrongly set up, or are not properly maintained.

I wonder if Access Dorset or, on a national level, Radar, have ideas as to how these problems can be addressed. I am also concerned about what I see as an increase in printed material, including posters and menus, using unsuitable font styles and size, and poor colour contrasts making the material difficult or impossible for many people to read. At a local level I suggest that the Group should ask for the opportunity to address meetings of business organisations such as the Chamber of Commerce and Weymouth BID on these issues. MK Agreed to draft a letter to be used to seek such meetings.

Air Quality

I attended a meeting arranged by Councillor Clare Sutton concerning poor air quality in the Boot Hill area because of traffic. Doctor Jon Orrell spoke of the rapid national increase in respiratory diseases, and that these can be disabling.

I said that it is shocking in our coastal location, with clean prevailing winds across the sea, that anywhere in the Borough should have air quality concerns – I added that Boot Hill is not the only area to suffer this. W&PBC Environmental Health Service will continue to monitor these concerns.

DCC Physical Activity Budget

I contacted DCC following reports that, as a result of spending cuts, this budget which includes the popular beach events which are aimed at being as accessible as possible, may be lost altogether. More information is awaited. Councillor Paul Kimber has expressed his concern about the possible total loss of this budget.

Dorchester Access Group

I attended a meeting set up in an attempt to form a group following the closure of Dorchester Access for All. I said that we had valued our contact with that group. It was mutually beneficial with many concerns shared by both groups and many shared contacts at DCC and W&PBC / WDDC.

5. Access Officer's Report

The situation at the Oasis cafe had now been reported on Trip Advisor. She would see if Trading Standards thought they had any leverage. IW agreed to do further investigation there.

The Mulberry Centre (now to be called Commercial Road offices) was still on track to be opened in February, and the appropriate signage was now being prepared. The access report for the building had been completed and was available on request. Crossing the road from the car parks was still going to be a problem. There was no possibility of getting passes for free parking for those needing to visit the offices.

There was to be another "Wheels In Motion" event at the Fire Station on 11/3/16 10.30-13.00- leaflets were available to the meeting.

6. Highways Officer's Report (No report) Sheila Dyer reported there had still been no action on the Icen Rd/ Nightingale Drive footpath "link" improvement. Although a simple job, it seems to have been forgotten again.

7. Treasurers Report

No significant change since last meeting we had £1673 in the Group bank account.. Steve requested any outstanding expenses be claimed before year end. He will be attending a Carnival-hosted event on Wednesday 16th December where he will collect a cheque for our efforts on Carnival Day - amount not known. [Post-meeting note: in the event, our cheque was for £300!]

Sponsorship of website. Steve reported that he had sent two letters to Brotherwood asking if they were able to continue their sponsorship of the group, but had received no response. It was agreed that we should discontinue our web page advertisement for them and seek new sponsorship. Ian White had been offered some sponsorship from Weymouth Mobility - he would now pursue this.

8. Investigation Officer's Report

Pavements and Drop Kerbs

I took a leaf out Weymouth & Portland council book where they asked people what they would like to see done in Weymouth, I spoke to visitors/residents also carer about access around Weymouth, the main topic was about pavements also drops kerbs. I was informed that there are

many areas of pavements which are uneven which are not safe for people who are not stable walking also the camber of some pavements makes prams and wheelchair user find themselves drifting toward the road; areas of drop kerbs where people with prams also people in wheelchair also with walking units have found that the drop kerbs have a higher step than is recommended.

As some of you are aware that the late Chairman John Lambert did an article about pavements with Harry Walton from View From On Line which was in 1/10/14 issue 270, a statement was made by Andy Martin that their team inspect roads and pavements also people can report defects also in the same issue on page 3, also on the same page the council stated that they are spending £46.000 in making more pay and display areas at the sea front band stand area with little spent making pavement safe.

Sitting Out Areas vs Pavement

I have also been informed that there are areas where the pavements have been reduced in size due to sitting out area which makes it unable for a wheelchair and a pram to pass in safety.

Rear Access to vehicles

I have to inform the group that I have myself just got a new vehicle which has a rear ramp. On looking around Dorchester & Weymouth I was disappointed not to find that the disabled parking spaces do not have the room which allows me or a carer to place the wheelchair at the start of the ramp, this places the wheelchair person being in the path of vehicle. This came true when I visited Tesco Dorchester, thanks I had family with me to inform of vehicles coming into the parking area, I did have one vehicle stopped to allow me to get my wheelchair into the back of my vehicle. I must own up myself I never thought of this myself until I got my new vehicle. The group need to look into the way we look at all issues. Also I was disappointed to be told by a member of the West Dorset council parking staff that if a disable vehicle parks in two spaces they will get a parking ticket also I was not happy to hear a comment that why should disable get free parking.

Public Awareness

Finally I am still finding out that many of the people I have spoken to do not know or have heard about the group. This need to change so more people could involved with group which would help some of the members so they are not doing it all by themselves also more information can then be given to council to make Weymouth a much safer place for all residents and visitors. I would like the group to look into finding a new meeting place as I have been inform that the Acorns is a long way for people who do not drive as taxis would very expenses which put people off coming.

9. Invitation to Radipole Lake Nature Reserve

An invitation had been given to the group to visit the Radipole Lake Nature Reserve. The reserve had had recent major improvement works and were keen to find out how accessible it now was. It was hoped that by having a group visit it would be possible to assess this and find out if any further changes might be beneficial. Carole would be trying to fix a date in the New Year.

10. Any Other Business

- a) IW proposed a change of venue for the Group meeting to allow more people to attend. One possible candidate was the Fire Station/ Community Safety Centre. Costs and availability would need to be considered.
- b) Accessible loos. IW had received a report from Mrs Marguerite Brown - a member of the public - who had first raised the issue of the mis-signed toilet at the Oasis Cafe. The report summarised her experience of several premises in our general area. DH agreed to publish it as an Annexe to the Minutes. It was agreed to try and set up a sub-group to work on a document to show how some simple adaptations might be beneficial. SWR said there was a possibility that some council funding might be available for printing such a document if it could be done before the financial year end (i.e. March 2016)
- c) Portland Bill car park It was suggested that it might be of use to discuss the situation at the car park with Jack Creeber of WPBC
- d) Guide Dogs It was confirmed to the meeting that the legal position is that all taxis are required to take/accept assistance dogs as are many other public places. There will be situations where individual drivers' health (e.g. allergies) may not permit this.

The meeting was closed at 16.00

Next Meetings (all start at 14.00):

Monday 8th February 2016 [AGM]	Monday 10th October 2016
Monday 11th April 2016	Monday 12th December 2016
Monday 3rd June 2016	Monday 13th February 2017
Monday 8th August 2016	

Annexe

Information from Mrs Marguerite Brown:

In the meantime, you may be interested in my experiences re access to Toilets for the Disabled in the Weymouth and Portland area.

2014:

Elm Tree at Langton Herring (this may be outside your area but is included as it is extensively used by Weymouth people)

Was shown a largish room containing just a toilet, when I queried the lack of equipment I was told that they usually had only people being pushed in wheelchairs and that carer assisted them in the toilet.

Enzos on Weymouth Seafront

Attending school governors Christmas dinner - was shown two narrow loos, side by side. When I again asked where the disabled loo was, I was redirected to the two loos. When I pointed out that they were not toilets for the disabled I was told "but madam, they have a flat floor"!! Incidentally, you may recall this establishment has internal steps which preclude wheelchair access and I had always thought there was nothing that could be done about it. However, having seen what Coffee # 1 have done, I think Enzos should at least investigate a similar possibility for themselves. That evening proved particularly humiliating because the conversation took place in front of a roomful of diners who then watched me put my coat on and leave (without any dinner for which I had already paid).

The New Inn, Easton, Portland

Boxing Day, an in law and friend had independently booked a table for lunch at this hostelry as my Christmas present before driving down from Southampton. The food was great, the service was nicely friendly. Again although they have more than one ladies toilet, there is no disabled loo. Luckily, on this occasion, I did get through most of my meal. There was no manager present but a polite letter failed to raise a response.

2015

Portland

A friend suggested that we should have a Sunday lunch once a month, going to a different restaurant each time. After a couple of Weymouth venues, she suggested we try some Portland ones, beginning with those along The Chesil. Not only did they not have any facilities for the disabled but **The Clifton, in Easton**, which had formerly had good facilities, told me that the grab rails had been removed!

Roger's Patisserie, Weymouth

August: A group to which I belong had decided to meet for "cafe and kuchen" in this establishment, opened post the 1995 Act. Was shown toilet labelled "disabled"? On inspection of the large loo with wide door and plenty of room to manoeuvre wheelchair, plus an alarm. However, the only grab rail consisted of a large bar on the inside of door to enable wheelchair user to push open / pull shut the door. The bar is miles away from the toilet itself. This toilet is only usable for the disabled if they have a carer with them.

The King's Arms Portesham

(Again, this is probably outside Weymouth and Portland Access's remit but illustrates the problem for Weymouth people)

September: The same group as above, booked for lunch at the King's Arms, having first asked if they had disabled facilities. However, with Roger's Patisserie experience fresh in my mind, I rang the King's Arms, to be told that the disabled loo consisted of a wide door, an alarm, the toilet itself and a chair. I can only think the chair was for the carer to watch the disabled person to perform. There are no public loos in Portesham so I had to stay at home.

Able people get fed up with having to restrict their eating choice to venues with disabled facilities. I appreciate that some places will find it harder than others. Indeed, places like Stanley's do not have a hope of doing so.

On the other hand, the wee **Sea Chef in King St**, which has very few tables, has managed to install a disabled loo. It is their only toilet but it is a proper disabled loo. So it can be done in restricted circumstances.