

Newsletter 28

Spring 2016

BABUS - Serving Bus Users In Bedfordshire since 2005



*Ten years ago, Stagecoach Bedford introduced a package of improvements to Biggleswade and Hitchin, under the name Mars. Subsequently this became known as the Planets network, until August 2011. The buses and routes all continue, ten years on, although Biggleswade to Hitchin is by Centrebus. Passing the under reconstruction Pilgrims Progress pub in River Street, Bedford, is 34828 (KX 06 JYK), one of the original batch of Dart SLF/Pointers. **Suzy Scott***

The Newsletter of the Bedford Area Bus Users Society (BABUS) is produced by  here to there

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Special Request from your editor

Does anyone who attends meetings, launches, promotions, in the "Greater Bedfordshire" area, take photos?

Even just areas where improvements are needed, or you want to show off some best practice? I do take some myself, and they take the plain look off the covers!

However, I'm running out of content material.

Anything you see, or find locally, I'd be happy to feature!

My contact details are on Page 3.

Suzy x

Stop Press

After the main part of the Newsletter was produced, we were made aware of the following service changes;

Centrebus/Grant Palmer Service 49 (Ridgmont – Woburn – Leighton Buzzard) Saturday service (by Grant Palmer) withdrawn from 1st May 2016.

Wanderbus Service W10 (Shefford – Hitchin – Stevenage) Service withdrawn from 31st March 2016.

Welcome to the BABUS Newsletter 28

If you have any further questions, you want to send a contribution for the newsletter, or you spot something you think is wrong, please feel free to drop us a line! For the best results, please contact one of the below, depending on the nature of your query or comment.

Your **Newsletter** is compiled by Mrs Suzy Scott, Communications Officer, who can be contacted by post at Apartment 4, 38-40 Stonehills, WELWYN GARDEN CITY, Hertfordshire, AL8 6PD. E-mail [**suzy.scott@babus.org.uk**](mailto:suzy.scott@babus.org.uk) and is produced through her company, Here To There Publishing Ltd.

Membership queries – including changes of address for your membership, or to change either way between electronic copies and paper copies should be addressed to Mr Simon Norton, BABUS Membership & Treasurer, 6 Hertford Street, CAMBRIDGE, CB4 3AG or by email to [**simon.norton@babus.org.uk**](mailto:simon.norton@babus.org.uk)

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Our website can be found at [**www.babus.org.uk**](http://www.babus.org.uk) and our Bulletin Board can be found at [**www.babus.org.uk/bb**](http://www.babus.org.uk/bb) or via the links on the BABUS homepage.

Join our Facebook group [**www.facebook.com/groups/BABUSbeds/**](http://www.facebook.com/groups/BABUSbeds/) or follow us on Twitter @ BABUSbeds [**www.twitter.com/BABUSbeds**](http://www.twitter.com/BABUSbeds)

To phone us, simply call **0871 218 then spell out BBUS on your phone. (i.e. 0871 218 2287)**. When you get through, leave us a landline number where we can call you back. If you prefer to fax, then send it to **0871 218 3293** Calls to these numbers are charged at 10p a minute Service Charge, plus your Network Charge as set by your telephone provider. These voicemails and faxes go through to Suzy by email, and will be forwarded as the situation requires. BABUS does not generate any income from the use of 0871 numbers.

Disclaimer: The views and opinions in this Newsletter are those of the individual writing them, not necessarily BABUS unless stated otherwise. The writer's thoughts are those of the person, and not any other company or group they represent.

Next Newsletter (29) Deadline Date for News and Contributions is different from the usual dates, to allow for the Annual General Meeting notice.... Monday 9th May 2016

Membership Renewals for 2016-17

By Suzy Scott & Simon Norton

Our Membership Renewals will be due soon (from 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017). However, please hold fire for now! Newsletter 29 will include a Pink renewal form, for those who need to renew. Please check with Simon Norton (contact details on Page 3) if you are unsure of your Membership status, or have any enquiries.

Our online payment facilities were recently upgraded, and the improved look and feel will make renewing/purchasing subscriptions easier to those used to shopping online. You can get a sneak peek now, by going to **<http://babus.bigcartel.com>**

Annual General Meeting 2016 –

Save The Date!

By Suzy Scott

It's that time of the year again!

When? Saturday 2nd July 2016, room open from 09.30, formal meeting starts 10.30, talk expected to start 11.15-11.30, questions/answers around 12.00, then room is open for those who want to catch up, chat etc. until 12.30.

Where? Meeting Room, Bedford Central Library, Harpur Street, Bedford, MK40 1PG.

Who? Our guest speaker this year will be from the Campaign For Better Transport, either one or two of James McColl (Campaigns Director) and Terry Figg (Bus Campaigner).

Summary Report of Bedford Borough Council Liaison Meeting, held on Monday 18th January 2016

By Frances Horwood

This meeting was postponed from December 2015. We heard of various localities where there was a demand for improved bus services. These included Cople, Elstow, Great Denham and Stewartby. A survey had taken place in Great Denham. Residents of the Cardington Road/ Kingsbrook Road area had asked, through their councillor, for the reinstatement of a service along Cardington Road.

Taxis blocking access to bus stops outside Bedford Railway Station were still a problem, but action had been taken against some offending drivers. Most work required at Bedford Bus Station had been completed; work not yet completed was mainly concerned with aspects not directly affecting passengers.

BABUS were concerned about traffic congestion in Bedford town centre, which caused delays to bus services and hence annoyance to bus users, who found services unreliable. There was communication between the Transport and Highways departments and there was a traffic management plan. In fact, increasing congestion actually provides a greater opportunity for buses.

BABUS were also aware of problems when Real Time displays did not show delays to services. The Council was seeking to supplement the electronic displays with other ways of informing

passengers waiting at Bedford Bus Station of delays.

The Council and bus operators were working on plans for combined ticketing.

BABUS is due to meet with Bedford Borough Council again in April 2016. Do let us know if there is anything you'd like us to raise on your behalf.

Summary Report of the Central Bedfordshire Liaison Meetings of Monday 1st February 2016
By Frances Horwood

As at our previous meeting, the aspects to be covered by the forthcoming consultation on bus services took up much of the time. This will now take place between April and July, with information being available on the Council's website during March. The documents would also be available in libraries. BABUS will be able to contribute to this.

There had been some timetable changes on Services 81, 73 and 42 and some little-used journeys on Service 83 had been discontinued. There would also be changes to Services E and 49. The operator of Biggleswade town services 185 and 187 had changed.
(ED: See later in this Newsletter).

The next Central Bedfordshire Liaison Meeting is due to take place in April 2016. Do let us know if there is anything you'd like us to raise on your behalf.

Summary Report of Grant Palmer Liaison Meetings of Thursday 11th February 2016
By Frances Horwood

There were no major concerns on the agenda. There had been changes to some services; the changes to Service 44 had resulted in an improvement in patronage and Service 42 was now considerably more reliable. New timetable leaflets were being produced.

The fare reductions on some short journeys in urban areas to 99p had not been in force long enough to tell if this had increased usage.

The provision of electronic displays on vehicles was ongoing, with older vehicles being retro-fitted. Two brand-new vehicles were on order and these would be used on Services 42 and 44.

Driver recruitment was ongoing and there had been improvements in pay and conditions. Although things seemed to be running smoothly at present, there was concern about the prospect of cuts to bus services which, if implemented, would cause a great deal of hardship; when cuts were proposed, opposition to them would be vital.

The next Grant Palmer Liaison Meeting will take place in May 2016. Do let us know if there is anything you'd like us to raise on your behalf.

**Summary report of Stagecoach
East Liaison Meeting of Monday 7th
December 2015**
By Frances Horwood

Since the previous meeting, some work had been done at the Bus Station: the gradient of the slope on the Concourse had been altered, work on the flooring was almost finished and an improved gate had been installed at Bay L.

Some timetable changes would be made from January. Changes to Bedford town services 3, 4, 7 and 10 would give Putnoe a 15 minute service and more choice of buses. Slight adjustments were to be made to the timetables of Services 40, 41 and 73, in order to improve punctuality. The X5 would in future serve the Tesco store in Buckingham, as well as the town centre. Arrangements during the bridge closure in Biggleswade were discussed. Stagecoach had worked with Central Bedfordshire Council on these. The Council were taking such measures as making certain streets one way. The diversion would be on a small scale, so disruption should be minimal.

Delays on a specific X5 journey were discussed; on this occasion, more than one incident had caused delays, including an accident on the A1. When such incidents arise, and roads are closed without warning, drivers may be taken by surprise and become stuck in tailbacks.

Traffic congestion in Bedford was raised, since this affected punctuality of

bus services. Stagecoach were providing the Borough Council with information on pinch points. Some improvements had been carried out by the Council.

The next Stagecoach Liaison Meeting is due to take place in March 2016. Do let us know if there is anything you'd like us to raise on your behalf.

**Forthcoming consultation on
Central Bedfordshire's Local Bus
Review**
***Statement from CBC (first
paragraph – in italics) with extra
bits from Suzy Scott (second
paragraph)***

Central Bedfordshire Council will be undertaking a consultation in relation to the Passenger Transport Strategy, with the aims of the strategy being to deliver transport services that are safe, effective and fit for purpose and provide a framework for decision making processes in relation to all PTS services.

That statement, at the moment, is the only information we currently have on the plans of Central Bedfordshire Council. We fully expect all local groups, such as ourselves, and local parish councils etc. will be asked to submit consultations. These shall be online, and we would expect (well, it has happened elsewhere – see Herts consultation in Newsletter 27) the council to be able to send a summary or information to those who ask for it. The consultation will run from April to July 2016.

As the next Newsletter (29) will be earlier, to allow us to give formal notice

of the Annual General Meeting, the next Newsletter will be out late May / very early June, which will be bang in the middle of the consultation period. We will do our best, assuming no major delays in the announcement, to have a full report on the proposals, also in Newsletter 29.

If you do respond to the council's consultation, it would be appreciated if you could send us either a photocopy of your paper submissions, or copy us in on any emails. The easiest way to do this is to email our quick address at **web info@babus.org.uk** , and Suzy will forward it then to the entire committee. Please, however, wait until April 2016 when the start of the consultation will be, to ensure all views are recorded properly.

**Summary Report of the Regional
Bus Users Groups Meeting, held on
Saturday 16th January 2016**
By Frances Horwood

BABUS hosted this meeting, welcoming representatives of the Milton Keynes and Northampton groups. These regular meetings are very valuable, since many of our concerns are common to all groups and, of course, there are bus services which we have in common. Each group provides an update on what has been happening in their area.

MKBUG reported a growing membership. Associate membership had been a success, with town and parish councils joining. The group had a good relationship with the local council and

with bus operators. A representative of MKBUG sat on various transport committees and the group was consulted by the Council on matters concerning bus users. The good relationship with the Council had been built up over five years or so. A representative of MKBUG met with Transport officials two or three times per week.

Improvements to Station Square were under consideration. MKBUG would like a shuttle bus between the railway station and the Shopping Centre. They would also like a lower speed limit on grid roads, which would make it easier for bus drivers to pull away from bus laybys.

The big news from MKBUG was that the MK Bus Users Passenger Charter, on which the group had worked for 18 months, in conjunction with the Council and bus operators, was complete. It would be the first charter of its kind, i.e. written from a bus user's perspective, and set out the responsibilities of the Council, bus operators and also bus users. An abbreviated version would form a poster, to be displayed at all bus stops.

In Northampton a "Your bus matters" event had taken place. The late Michael Barlow had worked hard to bring this about. It took place on a Wednesday, a main market day. Members of the public wanted more evening and Sunday services, but these could not be provided without subsidies.

There was dissatisfaction with Northgate Bus Station: since it was not big

enough, some services had to arrive and depart in The Drapery. In the bus station itself, services frequently had to use the wrong bay.

There had been changes in Wellingborough, where Meridian Bus had pulled out; these had resulted in a poorer service to Isebrook Hospital. There would be changes to services to Paulerspury, Potterspury and Pury End. There had been improvements to Real-Time Information, which was now genuinely real-time.

Daventry was served by Dial a Bus and the Brackley area by County Connect (demand responsive services). These had disadvantages: the service had to be booked in advance and would-be passengers could find the bus they wanted to use was already full, as Solos were used. It was necessary to be a member, so the service could not be used by visitors to the area.

BU Northampton was represented at the meeting by Alan Jones, who has been running the group single-handed since the death of Michael Barlow. If any readers of this newsletter live in the Northampton area and would like to offer assistance, please see Page 2 for contact details for Alan Jones.

In Bedford, as reported at our September meeting, the frequency of certain town services had been reduced - a commercial decision by Stagecoach. Bus users had found some services, operated by Solos, too full at busy periods. One of the services affected was the Park and Ride and those using

this service had found their journeys taking longer.

Traffic congestion in Bedford, which caused delays to bus services, exacerbated the effect of the reductions in frequency. Both Stagecoach and Grant Palmer had made some timetable alterations in order to improve punctuality.

With timetables having changed, Bedford Borough Council had produced a new timetable book. There is also a small, fold-out guide to bus services from Bedford, with town routes on one side and routes to other places on the reverse; a larger bus map is being produced. BABUS is publicised in the timetable book.

(ED: A January 2016 timetable has been produced by Bedford Borough, with a similarly-dated Stagecoach-only map folder also produced.)

Most outstanding work at the Bus Station had now been completed, such as cleaning and resealing the flooring and the erection of railings to stop pedestrians walking on the forecourt.

In Biggleswade, there were to be diversions on almost all services, occasioned by the closure of a rail bridge.

After the reports from each group, other matters discussed were cross border ticketing schemes, bus subsidies, and the implications of the increasing cost of Senior and Disabled Bus Passes to councils.

The next regional meeting will take place in April in Milton Keynes.

Service change catch up, and looking ahead to May 2016

By Suzy Scott

The calm before the storm? 😊 But it's not in Central Beds! Yet! Some more cross-border changes in Herts later in the spring, with some more cuts to the budget resulting in (non-consulted) cuts to various services. We generally limit detail to those in our coverage area, while making brief mention of some other changes that you might like – usually connecting services, or other parts of the former county of Beds.

Roughly expected for week commencing Monday 14th March 2016, we will have all the new and current timetables we have available online on our BABUS timetable library. These are available in a single download, as well as a complete all-in-one printable and/or downloadable book. The electronic timetable library will remain free forever. Here To There will be producing a ring binder-filled with all Beds areas (Central Beds, Bedford Borough, and Luton) in Summer 2016 – keep an eye on our website and newsletter for details.

Biggleswade Town Services

Further changes, to those we reported in Newsletter 27, were advised to start from 11th January 2016. Herbert's Travel announced they were to withdraw their commercial services on Services 185

and 187, which were then provided by Centrebus from the same date. At that point, the Service 80 was unaffected. This arrangement was regarded as a stop-gap measure.

From Monday 7th March 2016, Herbert's 80 and Centrebus 85, 85A will be combined into a much more substantial two bus service. The services add links to Biggleswade Hospital, and also provide Sunday services. We have added the timetables, and map, on the last three pages of this Newsletter.

Arriva

Luton & Dunstable Local Services

Many timetable changes have been registered from 1st May 2016, with Service 27 (Marsh Farm – Luton – Stopsley) reverting to run as two separate services – 27 to Marsh Farm, and 12 to Stopsley. Timetable changes are expected to Services 321, plus some further changes in Watford and Bucks. Improvements to Luton A/Z, and School Service 827 is withdrawn. Also see below for Service 61.

Service 61 (Dunstable – Aylesbury)

As a result of cuts by Buckinghamshire County Council, from 1st May 2016 the Saturday service will be every 2 hours, with the Mon-Fri service now every 1 ½ hours – 2 hours.

Service 391 (Stotfold – Baldock – Stevenage - Aston)

See under Centrebus.

Herts From May, some minor changes are being registered, with one piece of

good news. GreenLine 758 will be running one later coach back from London to Hemel Hempstead, with a Sunday service introduced.

Centrebus also see Stop Press For Services 185, 187, 85 and 85A, see above under Biggleswade Town Services.

Luton & Dunstable Local Services

Following the changes in January 2016, Arriva then reintroduced the two late journeys on the 27 commercially. From 29th March 2016, changes will apply to Service 231 (Luton – Dunstable – Caddington) and Service B (Luton – 7Dunstable – Downside Estate) will run to slightly different times. 17 and 19 services (Wigmore Lane/Stopsley Circulars) both revert to half-hourly on Saturdays. A new Service G will run from Langdale Estate to Luton, every 30 minutes, via the Busway. These are outwith our coverage area, but you can get timetables for all these from Centrebus directly, or our own website.

Service 34 (Dunstable – Flamstead - St Albans)

From Tuesday 28th March 2016, some peak journeys run up to 10 minutes earlier, with an extra bus at 07.33 from St Albans to Dunstable on Mondays – Fridays.

Services 44/45 (Luton – Peter's Green - Stevenage)

In line with this round of Herts cuts, From Monday 27th March 2016, Saturday service revised to run from Stevenage to Peter's Green only, with the rest of the Saturday service (into Beds) withdrawn.

Services 88 (Luton – Breachwood Green - Hitchin)

In line with this round of Herts cuts, the schoolday duplicate journey is withdrawn from Monday 27th March 2016.

Service 366 (Luton – Welwyn Garden City – South Hatfield)

In line with this round of Herts cuts, From Monday 27th March 2016, Saturday service revised to run from WGC to South Hatfield only, with the rest of the Saturday service (into Beds) withdrawn.

Service 391 (Stotfold – Baldock – Stevenage)

Arriva have surrendered the contract back to Hertfordshire County Council, and an emergency contract has been issued to Centrebus to start on Monday 28th March 2016. In line with this round of Herts cuts, the timetable has been reduced to one journey only, from Stotfold to Stevenage (Aston reverts to being covered by their Service 390 only).

However, in order to facilitate use of the same bus as SB16 Stevenage Outer Circle school journeys, the departure time from Stotfold is one hour later – at 10.30, arriving Lister Hospital 11.13 Stevenage Bus Station at 11.21. Returns from Stevenage will be at 13.15, and the Lister at 13.24.

Service E (Luton, Galaxy Centre – Dunstable – Toddington, for Service 42 to Bedford)

Following poor passenger use to Toddington, the service is reduced. While the service is every 30 mins Monday to Saturday, the new timetable will be every 60 minutes,

Monday to Friday, with no Saturday services. (Also see Luton & Dunstable locals for a new Service G). Buses from the Galaxy will be at 30 past the hour, Toddington on the hour, meaning it should continue to meet the 42 to and from Bedford. On Saturdays, Service 74 (see under South Beds Dial A Ride) will provide more journeys via Wingfield – see further down this Newsletter. See Pages 18 and 19 (unnumbered) for a summary of all connections from Bedford to Dunstable.

Service X31 (Luton – Dunstable – Milton Keynes or Hemel Hempstead) Timetables revised from Monday 27th March 2016 in the early evenings, thus improving reliability.

Grant Palmer also see Stop Press More details on changes shown under Newsletter 27, which started on 3rd/4th January 2016.

Services 25 (Bedford – Harrold for Rushden) Delete timetable change shown in Newsletter 27, which was an error in the first draft of the new timetable leaflet. A leaflet is therefore being reissued by Grant Palmer, showing the 25/26 services together in one. There was no changes to the actual times.

Service 27 (Bedford – Great Barford circular) Details of the improved timetable (mentioned in Newsletter 27) are ready. On Schooldays, 07.55 from Renhold to Bedford will start back at Willington, to give school links for Mark Rutherford

School, which are already provided in the afternoons. The 08.50 from Renhold to Bedford on schooldays only, will now be protracted to starting back from Great Barford, on Schoolday Tuesday mornings only, at 08.45. As a consequence, the journey (Mon-Fri) will run one minute later from Renhold to Bedford.

Service 68 from September 2015 (Bedford – Kempston – Stewartby)

Delete timetable change shown in Newsletter 27, which was an error in minutes reported to us. The timetable leaflet, however, has been reprinted from this date.

Herbert's Travel

For Services 185, 187, 80, see above under Biggleswade Town Services.

Service 83 (Sandy Local Service)

From 1st February 2016, a reduced timetable was being introduced, with buses running every 30 minutes between 09.08-14.44 (Monday-Friday) or 09.08-13.44 (Saturday), to better match demand.

Ivel Sprinter

In Newsletter 27, mention was made of an experimental service from Potton direct to Bedford. Sadly this service was withdrawn some time ago, following very poor usage.

South Beds Dial A Ride
Service 62 (Dunstable – Caddington – Pepperstock) Saturday service withdrawn from 2nd April 2016.

Service 74 (Toddington – Dunstable) With the removal of Saturday service on the 62, and the changes to Centrebus withdrawing Service E to Toddington for Bedford on Saturdays, changes here too. There will be three buses per Saturday on this service, from one. See Pages 18 and 19 (unnumbered) for a summary of all connections from Bedford to Dunstable.

Stagecoach

Further to the plans in Newsletter 27, for changes from 3rd/4th January 2016, all went well without hiccup. The only exception was Service 73 (Bedford – Sandy – Biggleswade) which had an incomplete timetable leaflet issued to passengers. The reprinted version is now available from all usual outlets, and mentions "Issue 1" in addition to the date.

Wanderbus also see Stop Press **Service W9 (Shefford – Langford – Stevenage)** Service withdrawn from 7th March 2016.

Uno

Services C1, C10, C11 (Bedford – Cranfield – Milton Keynes) Timetables revised from Monday 27th March 2016 in the afternoons and early evenings, thus improving reliability. No changes to Service C3 at this time.

Service 610/611 (Enfield – Potters Bar – Hatfield) and **Service 636 (Hatfield – Harpenden – Luton)** From 27th March 2016, these two Monday – Friday hourly services are

combined. The new Service 610/611 will give hourly services Luton – Hatfield – Potters Bar, with peak buses continue to be extended to Enfield Town. However, the off-peak service will now be extended to Cockfosters, for Piccadilly Line connections to central London.

Service 803 (Bedford – Northampton, Moulton College)

From Monday 22nd February 2016, there will be some timing changes to Service 803. These timing changes aim to address the issue of lateness caused by traffic on the routes. Service 803 will depart Bedford 15 minutes earlier in the morning.

Herts Big changes to many routes, as they appear to have taken the brunt of the March/April changes and cuts by Herts CC. GreenLine 797 is only to run at peak times, with off peak and Saturday services withdrawn. There will still be a Stevenage – Hitchin direct service as 635, but for London off peak, see the new 610/611 above). Service 615 to Stanmore will also run at peak times, with off peak and Saturday services withdrawn (ditto).

Changes to the Bedford/Central Bedfordshire Travel Aid scheme *By Suzy Scott*

Grant Palmer no longer accept these cards when issued by Central Beds Council – Bedford Borough ones are unaffected. This is with immediate effect, but is all the detail we have.

A Tale Of Two Systems

By Simon Norton

As much of Britain moves towards a system of transport apartheid in which people without access to cars or trains are stuck at home, it is timely to contrast two initiatives which aim to set out a framework for regenerating our buses. One of these is the Government's planned Buses Bill, previewed by minister Andrew Jones MP in a speech to the UK Bus Summit in London on 11 February 2016. When the Bill is published it will, of course, be on the Parliamentary website. ***(ED: I've added a summary of the Bus Minister's speech in this Newsletter for now, and we will add more in the future once it is known.)***

The other is a report produced by the consultancy Transport for Quality of Life with title "Building a World Class Bus System for Britain". Visit their website at **www.transportforqualityoflife.com** for a not quite final version.

As both visions are subject to change, we will reserve full reviews for the next newsletter. But here are some highlights.

According to the speech, the Bill will have three main foci: open data, new partnerships, and franchising. The first two of these can hardly be described as more than "tweaking" -- not surprising given that in the speech Mr Jones gives the clear impression that he regards deregulation as a qualified success. By contrast, the TQL report lists 16 desirable attributes of a bus regulatory

framework and concludes that franchising (the slightly misleading name given to the system operating in London) beats deregulation across the board, even with the benefits of partnership working.

It would also perform better financially - indeed it could save more money than has been cut from local authority subsidies and Bus Service Operator Grants in recent years, though probably not so much in the rural areas that have suffered worst.

We therefore welcome the Government interest in franchising, which seems to stem from its devolution agenda, though the Treasury may also be interested in its potential to save public money.

But Mr Jones emphasised that franchising will not be forced on local authorities - not good news for bus users in rural areas controlled by councillors who never use buses. By contrast, the TQL report calls for incentives for local authorities to move towards franchising with the aim that it should become universal.

Probably the most important of the other TQL proposals is to make public transport provision a statutory duty. This doesn't figure in Mr Jones's speech.

Is there any hope of persuading the Government that far more radical measures will be needed to make our transport system equitable, economical, environment friendly and energy efficient? Only time will tell.

Speech: The Buses Bill
Bus Minister Andrew Jones
explains the government's
forthcoming Buses Bill.

"It's a real pleasure to open the Transport Times UK Bus Summit 2016.

I'm really grateful to the Transport Times for running the event and to everyone here for coming. I've chosen as my topic this morning (11 February 2016) the government's forthcoming Buses Bill.

I want to set out clearly, and in more detail than the government has done before, why we are introducing a Buses Bill, what the bill will do, and what we expect to change as a result.

But first, I would like to provide some context.

In preparing this bill, we have one clear aim, which is this: to increase bus passenger numbers.

Buses help people get to the shops and to work, boosting our economy. Buses enable people to visit friends and family, providing great social benefits. And buses can reduce congestion and air pollution, offering great benefits to our environment.

So it is a matter of concern that over the years there has been a general decline in passenger numbers. And it explains the overriding aim of our bill; to get more people using buses.

But second, I would also like to dispel a few misconceptions by setting out what the bill will not do. The bill will not impose any particular arrangement on local authorities or on bus operators. Neither will the bill give local authorities new powers to take bus operators' assets, such as vehicles or land. Oversight of anti-competitive behaviour will be left to the Competition and Markets Authority — exactly where oversight lies at the moment.

And nor does the bill impose wholesale re-regulation.

Instead, the Buses Bill is an enabling bill. It gives local authorities new choices. Choices about how they can improve bus services in the interests of their residents, and, I believe, in the long-term interest of the bus industry too.

So, why are we introducing a Buses Bill? After all, the government is plainly on the side of free enterprise. We are in favour of cutting red tape, and giving the private sector the space it needs to grow. And there's so much about today's de-regulated bus industry that works well.

The latest Transport Focus survey shows that nearly 9 out of 10 customers are satisfied with their bus services. In my own area I can see good practice, with Transdev launching new state-of-the-art buses on route 36 between Leeds, Harrogate and Rippon.

At the same time, a challenger operator — Connexions buses — is pioneering new routes and reaching new markets.

Across the country, commercial operators are introducing smart cards, installing Wi-Fi, co-ordinating timetables, and making great strides in improving accessibility — 89% of buses comply with accessibility standards, and we are on track for virtually 100%.

All this progress is down to operators taking decisions in the interests of their passengers.

It shows that the de-regulation of the industry has been a success. But it would be wrong to pretend that there's no room for improvement. We only have to look to the streets outside this building to see how, in some circumstances, things can be done differently.

And just as in London, passengers right across the country want Oyster-style ticketing, better access to information about timetables, better information on fares before they travel, and real-time data about when the bus is going to arrive at their stop. There are many other opportunities for improvement, too.

To make sure that bus routes reflect and support local economic development, such as new housing, and new business parks.

As things stand, areas that want these improvements have a choice.

They can enter into voluntary partnerships with bus operators.

They can agree quality partnerships, which have the backing of law.

Or they can propose quality contracts, under which local authorities take on responsibility for services. But each of these choices have drawbacks.

Voluntary arrangements are only as good as the personal relationships between those involved.

Statutory partnerships force local authorities, by law, to spend public money on new infrastructure, even when everyone agrees it isn't needed.

While the quality contract scheme process — introduced in 2000 — has proved more time consuming, costly and challenging than anybody could ever have imagined.

So we believe there's room for some additional choices.

Choices that keep the best features of a de-regulated market, but that give local areas greater say over bus services.

So, first, our bill will address passengers' need for better information.

It is in everyone's interests for people to know as much as possible about the bus services in their area. So our proposal is that all operators will be required to make data about routes, fares and times open and accessible.

It will allow app makers to develop products that passengers can use to plan their journeys, and give people the confidence to leave the car at home and take the bus instead.

Second, the bill will introduce new arrangements for local authorities and bus operators to enter into partnership.

We will remove the requirement that a quality partnership scheme must always involve new infrastructure.

And we will introduce new, enhanced, partnerships that allow local authorities and bus operators to agree their own standards for all services in their area — perhaps focusing on frequency and reliability along a particular route or transport corridor, or setting emissions standards to improve local air quality, or introducing common branding, marketing and ticketing rules over a wider geographical area.

In this way, the bill will build on the strengths of existing partnership arrangements while addressing their weaknesses, including the weakness that allows a small minority of operators to block improvements that have been agreed by the majority.

This new partnership approach won't be right for every area. In many cases it may be better to leave things just as they are. For those cases, our message will be — if it isn't broken, don't fix it. The status quo is acceptable too.

Yet sometimes there will be a case for more radical change. For example,

some of the things that Londoners have come to expect can be difficult to deliver in a fully de-regulated bus market, such as a single fare structure across different operators and transport modes.

So the bill will honour our devolution deal commitments to give local authorities the choice to use new powers to franchise bus services in their areas.

I want to keep the good parts of the quality contract scheme process, which at least forces people to think things through properly, but I want to lose the parts which don't work, such as the excessive cost, the bureaucracy and the second-guessing.

The decision to take up those powers will for local areas to make.

Local areas will need clear arrangements for ensuring the powers are used accountably, the capability to meet their promises to passengers, and a system that does not disadvantage bus services that cross local authority boundaries.

Operators will need to play their part too.

This will an important decision for local areas to make, and it must be made on the basis of solid information, provided in a timely way.

We certainly do not foresee a one-size-fits-all approach in every area.

Some local authorities may want to introduce newly-integrated, uniformly

branded networks of services just as you see in London.

Others will just want to build and improve on what's already there.

Whatever approach is chosen — and that will be a local decision — we want to ensure that bus operators and the wider supply chain have as much notice of change as possible.

And that the effects on small operators are considered properly.

In every case, local authorities will need to work closely with the operators in their area to manage the process in the best interest of passengers, particularly during periods of transition which will need to be handled with care.

So in conclusion, I hope that's given everyone plenty to talk about. I can't yet tell you exactly when the bill will be introduced into Parliament, save to say that the finest minds are working on it and you will see it very soon.

We are hoping for Royal Assent by early next year.

But we are certainly not at the end of the road just yet. Everything in the bill will be subject to Parliamentary scrutiny. And it won't become law until Parliament is satisfied. So there's plenty of opportunity to shape the content. And I look forward to much debate and discussion in the months ahead.

Thank you."

Your Bus Groups Need You!

By Suzy Scott

While BABUS have accomplished quite a lot over the past months and years, we cannot rest on our laurels. At the last AGM, more left the committee than joined, meaning more work is falling to the same people. While it would be good to do more of what we do, more volunteers are needed, for occasional committee and liaison meetings in Bedford. The former are generally Saturday mornings, four or five times a year. With the forthcoming AGM coming up, we ask now, so we can have a chat with you beforehand, and discuss in more depth what is involved.

If you could give some Saturdays and occasional weekday half-days to help us, then speak to any committee member in confidence. Failing that, our secretary can be contacted. See Page 3 for full address and email contacts.

If Bedford is too far away, but you like what you've read, do you fancy helping our friends at Bus Users Northampton? The founder sadly passed away (see under Regional Groups notes), and as a result, they only have a single member doing all the work. If you have an interest in promoting and advocating the use of transport, speaking up for members, and an interest in the Northants transport scene in general, get in touch! You can write to Mr Alan Jones, 30, Meadow Close, Duston, Northampton, NN5 6RL. Telephone 01604 755030, or e-mail address is **arjones@postmaster.co.uk**

Summary of buses and connections

Bedford to and from Houghton Regis and Dunstable

Service 42 by Grant Palmer

Service 74 by South Beds Dial A Ride

Service E by Centrebuss

Summary Timetable

from Monday 29th March 2016
most journeys require
a change at Toddington

Monday To Friday

	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42
Service Number 1	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Bedford, Bus Station, Stand B	08.57	10.05	11.05	12.05	13.05	14.05	15.10	16.35	17.40			
Toddington, arrive	09.57	11.00	11.57	13.00	13.57	15.00	16.12	XXX	XXX			
Toddington, depart	10.00	11.00	12.00	13.00	14.00	15.00	17.00	XXX	XXX			
Houghton Regis, Morrisons, M1	10.09	11.09	12.09	13.09	14.09	15.09	17.09	18.01	18.52			
Dunstable, White Lion Retail Park, W2	10.12	11.12	12.12	13.12	14.12	15.12	17.12	-----	-----			
Dunstable, Square, S1	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	18.08	19.02			
Dunstable, Asda Superstore, J1	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----			

Monday To Friday

	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42	42
Service Number 1	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Dunstable, Asda Superstore, J1	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----			
Dunstable, Square, S1	07.02	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----			
Dunstable, White Lion Retail Park, W1	-----	07.46	09.46	10.46	11.46	12.46	13.46	14.46	15.46			
Houghton Regis, Morrisons, M2	07.13	07.49	09.49	10.49	11.49	12.49	13.49	14.49	15.49			
Toddington, arrive	XXX	07.55	09.55	10.55	11.55	12.55	13.55	14.55	15.55			
Toddington, depart	XXX	08.50	09.58	11.03	11.58	13.03	13.58	14.58	16.18			
Bedford, Bus Station	08.35	10.00	11.00	12.00	13.00	14.00	15.00	16.00	17.20			

XXX - through service, no need to change buses

29.03.2016

Summary of buses and connections Bedford to and from Houghton Regis and Dunstable

Service 42 by Grant Palmer
 Service 74 by South Beds Dial A Ride
 Service E by Centrebuses

Summary Timetable

from Monday 29th March 2016
 most journeys require
 a change at Toddington

	Saturdays	
	42	74
Service Number 1	42	42
Service Number 2	74	74
Bedford, Bus Station, Stand B	09.00	11.05
Toddington, arrive	09.55	11.58
Toddington, depart	10.30	12.00
Houghton Regis, Morrisons, M1	10.48	12.18
Dunstable, White Lion Retail Park, W2	-----	-----
Dunstable, Square, S1	-----	18.08
Dunstable, Asda Superstore, J1	10.57	12.57
		42
		74
		XXX
		17.40
		XXX
		XXX
		18.45

		18.51

Sundays - NO SERVICES

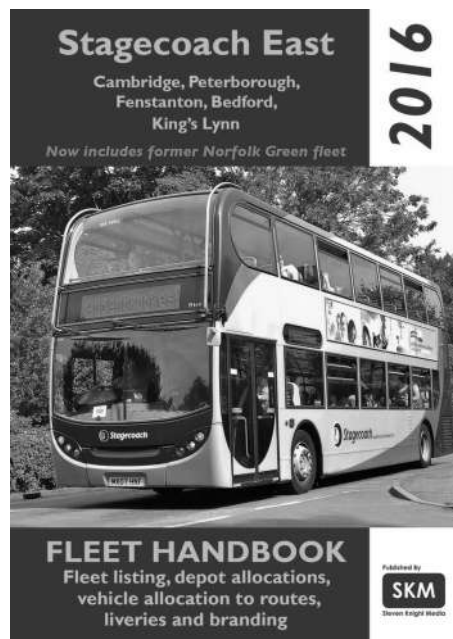
	Saturdays	
	42	74
Service Number 1	42	74
Service Number 2	42	42
Dunstable, Asda Superstore, J1	-----	10.00
Dunstable, Square, S1	07.05	-----
Dunstable, White Lion Retail Park, W1	-----	-----
Houghton Regis, Morrisons, M2	07.12	10.08
Toddington, arrive	XXX	10.27
Toddington, depart	XXX	11.03
Bedford, Bus Station	08.20	12.00
		74
		42
		11.30

		11.38
		11.57
		11.58
		13.03
		14.00

Sundays - NO SERVICES

XXX - through service, no need to change buses

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85 Biggleswade Town service

Mondays to Saturdays		MF	MF	MF	MF	MF		
Bells Brook, Sainsburys	0710	0802	0902	1602	1712	1802	1912	2007
Biggleswade, Bus Station	0713	0805	0905	1605	1715	1805	1915	2010
Biggleswade, Station.	0715	0807	0907	1607	1717	1807	1917	2012
Teal Road, Mill Lane	0717	0809	0909	1609	1719	1809	1919	2014
Sun Street, Fairfield Rd	0719	0811	0911	1611	1721	1811	1921	2016
Winston Crescent, Northfields	0721	0813	0913	1613	1723	1813	1923	2018
Banks Road	0723	0815	0915	1615	1725	1815	1925	2020
Stratton Cres, Sutton Ave	0725	0817	0917	1617	1727	1817	1927	2022
Biggleswade Hosp, Pottton Rd	0727	0819	0919	1619	1729	1819	1929	2024
Kings Reach, Venus Way	0731	0823	0923	1623	1733	1823	1933	2028
Chambers Way Roundabout	0735	0827	0927	1627	1737	1827	1937	2032
London Road Retail Pk	0738	0830	0930	1630	1740	1830	1940	2035
Kitelands Road	0741	0833	0933	1633	1743	1833	1942	2037
Mead End	0744	0836	0936	1636	1746	1836	1945	2040
Biggleswade, Bus Station	0748	0840	0940	1640	1750	1840	1949	2044
Biggleswade, Station.	0750	0842	0942	1642	1752	1842	1951	2046
Teal Road, Mill Lane	0752	0844	0944	1644	1754	1844	1953	2048
Bells Brook, Sainsburys	0755	0847	0947	1647	1757	1847	1956	2051
then every hour until								

Sunday & Bank/Public Holidays		MF	MF	MF	MF	MF
Bells Brook, Sainsburys	0902	1102	1502	1702		
Biggleswade, Bus Station	0905	1105	1505	1705		
Biggleswade, Station.	0907	1107	1507	1707		
Teal Road, Mill Lane	0909	1109	1509	1709		
Sun Street, Fairfield Rd	0911	1111	1511	1711		
Winston Crescent, Northfields	0913	1113	1513	1713		
Banks Road	0915	1115	1515	1715		
Stratton Cres, Sutton Ave	0917	1117	1517	1717		
Biggleswade Hosp, Pottton Rd	0919	1119	1519	1719		
Kings Reach, Venus Way	0923	1123	1523	1723		
Chambers Way Roundabout	0927	1127	1527	1727		
London Road Retail Pk	0930	1130	1530	1730		
Kitelands Road	0933	1133	1533	1733		
Mead End	0936	1136	1536	1736		
Biggleswade, Bus Station	0940	1140	1540	1740R		
Biggleswade, Station.	0942	1142	1542	-		
Teal Road, Mill Lane	0944	1144	1544	-		
Bells Brook, Sainsburys	0947	1147	1547	-		

Notes:

MF Mondays to Fridays only

R Bus continues on request of passengers already on-board

Mondays to Saturdays

	MF	MF	MF	MF
Bells Brook, Sainsburys	0722	0832	0932	1532
Biggleswade, Station.	0725	0835	0935	1535
Biggleswade, Bus Station	0727	0837	0937	1537
Mead End	0733	0843	0943	1543
Holme Court Ave	0736	0846	0946	1546
London Road Retail Pk	0739	0849	0949	1549
Chambers Way Roundabout	0742	0852	0952	1552
Kings Reach, Venus Way	0746	0856	0956	1556
Biggleswade Hosp, Potton Rd	0750	0900	1000	1600
Stratton Cres, Sutton Ave	0752	0902	1002	1602
Banks Road	0754	0904	1004	1604
Winston Crescent, Northfields	0756	0906	1006	1606
Sun Street, Fairfield Rd	0758	0908	1008	1608
Biggleswade, Station.	0800	0910	1010	1610
Biggleswade, Bus Station	0802	0912	1012	1612
Teal Road, Mill Lane	0804	0914	1014	1614
Bells Brook, Sainsburys	0807	0917	1017	1617

then every hour until

Sunday & Bank/Public Holidays

Bells Brook, Sainsburys	1002	1202	1402	1602
Biggleswade, Station.	1005	1205	1405	1605
Biggleswade, Bus Station	1007	1207	1407	1607
Mead End	1013	1213	1413	1613
Holme Court Ave	1016	1216	1416	1616
London Road Retail Pk	1019	1219	1419	1619
Chambers Way Roundabout	1022	1222	1422	1622
Kings Reach, Venus Way	1026	1226	1426	1626
Biggleswade Hosp, Potton Rd	1030	1230	1430	1630
Stratton Cres, Sutton Ave	1032	1232	1432	1632
Banks Road	1034	1234	1434	1634
Winston Crescent, Northfields	1036	1236	1436	1636
Sun Street, Fairfield Rd	1038	1238	1438	1638
Biggleswade, Station.	1040	1240	1440	1640
Biggleswade, Bus Station	1042	1242	1442	1642
Teal Road, Mill Lane	1044	1244	1444	1644
Bells Brook, Sainsburys	1047	1247	1447	1647

Notes:

MF Mondays
to Fridays
only

£1.50

Flat single
ticket

75p

Child single
ticket

£10.50

Weekly
ticket

£30

Monthly
ticket

Town map

