
Newsletter of BABUS-Bedford Area Bus Users' Society Spring 2011

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The AGM for 2011 is at 10 a.m. 11 June in the Salvation Army Congress Hall, Commercial Road, Bedford MK40 1QS. See back cover for announcement

Publicity for BABUS

Mr Grant Palmer of Grant Palmer is displaying an advertisement for BABUS on the rear of his buses (see below: photo © Colin Franklin). We are very grateful for the opportunity to make this excellent publicity. We have already received some new members as a result.



MEMBERSHIP

Our membership year runs from 1 April until the following 31 March. **To continue to receive all the benefits of membership**, renew your membership by sending a cheque for £3 (£12 for group membership) payable to **BABUS**, to the Membership Secretary, Simon Norton, 6 Hertford Street, Cambridge, CB4 3AG. Please enclose a stamped addressed envelope if you would like a receipt by post; alternatively ask for a receipt by email.

For enquiries, contact BABUS through the website at <http://babus.org.uk> or on the BABUS Enquiry Line 0871 218 2287 or 0871 218 BBUS (24 hour answering and fax service). **NOTE THIS IS A NEW NUMBER, DISREGARD ANY OTHER ON PUBLICITY.** If you leave a message and would like us to call you back, please leave a phone number. You may send a fax to 0871 218 3293

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FROM THE DEPUTY MAYOR

Last issue, we published a photograph of one of the new bus stops with its Bedford Borough Council branded timetable. Officers of BABUS assisted by others have been doing a review of information at bus stops in the area. This has been welcomed by Bedford Borough Council and we reproduce the text of a letter from Cllr Charles Royden, Transport Portfolio Holder and Deputy Mayor, Bedford Borough Council. It was sent in response to a BABUS letter acknowledging the work undertaken by the Transport Team at Borough Hall in dealing with the shortcomings highlighted in our Audit Report on roadside information on Bus Services in rural areas, and requesting that thanks be passed to the team members plus an assurance that budgetary provision would be made to complete the task.

“Dear BABUS

Thank you for your kind letter regarding appreciation for the work carried out by Bedford Borough Council to better inform passengers. I will convey to the team your words of encouragement and do my utmost to see that suitable advertising of information is widespread across the Borough.

You will recognise that Mayor Dave Hodgson, is committed to increasing bus use and we have not suffered the loss of services experienced by other local councils. Indeed, whilst other authorities are cutting services, Bedford has provided a new Sunday service which I understand is doing very well and is appreciated by residents.

I would like to thank you for taking the time to write to me. I would also like to express my appreciation for the work which you do. I am impressed by the contact I have had with your Officers and hope that we can strengthen our working relationship in the future.

Yours, with best wishes

Charles Royden.

PRESS RELEASE FROM STAGECOACH MIDLANDS

The letter above shows that despite cuts imposed by the government the Bedford Borough Council are doing their best to retain support for bus services. In Northamptonshire the situation is not so good but this press release illustrates what Stagecoach are doing to mitigate the cuts.

PLANNED SERVICE CHANGES FROM 8 MAY (OUNDLA AREA)

Earlier this year Northamptonshire County Council announced its intention to withdraw £3.1m funding for socially desirable, but uneconomic bus services and to replace this with £700k support for alternate community bus and dial-a-ride schemes.

Since that announcement, Stagecoach Midlands has been meticulously analysing the facts and figures to see if it would be possible to run reduced frequencies on some of those supported bus services or to operate sections of these routes on a commercial basis without any funding from the local authority.

Following a six week period of evaluation and meetings with the County Council, Stagecoach Midlands made the following changes in the Oundle area from Sunday 8th May 2011:

Routes 23 and 25 withdrawn.

Route 24 revised approximately hourly timetable:

In the peak, journeys to & from Peterborough retained.

Off peak, the route extended to Peterborough rail station.

In the off peak, the route will also serve the St Peters Road and Rockingham Hills area of Oundle.

Some journeys continue to run via Stoke Doyle, Wadenhoe, Aldwincle and Islip to/from Thrapston.

Route 24 journeys to Southwick withdrawn.

Steve Burd, Managing Director for Stagecoach Midlands said: “We were extremely disappointed by the County Council’s announcement in January to cut all of its existing £3.1m local bus support budget which will greatly affect bus passengers in many parts of Northamptonshire, particularly in the rural areas.

We have looked to see if it is possible to run reduced frequencies or revised routes on a commercial basis on the supported services and journeys and I am delighted that in most cases in Oundle we have been able to do this. It was, however, sadly always inevitable that it would not be possible for us to continue to run some of these routes without the financial support of Northamptonshire County Council.

These cutbacks will clearly have a detrimental impact on efforts to improve the local

environment and represent a step backwards in encouraging greater use of sustainable travel in Northamptonshire.”

More detailed information and full timetable can be found at www.stagecoachbus.com/northants.

There are also changes being made in the Northampton, Kettering and Wellingborough areas from the same date. Changes will be made in the Corby area in September.

BABUS IN ACTION

Members will be aware from previous Newsletters that BABUS officials hold a growing number of Liaison Meetings with bus operators and local authorities on matters of bus interest. The meetings have recently expanded to include other user groups such as Passenger Focus and Rail Commuter Associations.

A brief synopsis of sessions since the last Newsletter is given below.

Bedford Borough Council

Since the introduction of the Unitary Authorities we have held joint meetings with both Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Councils. At the end of 2010 Central Beds indicated that they no longer wished for “joint” meetings but would be prepared to continue the dialogue with BABUS on an individual basis. Bedford Borough accepted this arrangement and thus from 2011 we have held individual meetings with each authority.

There has been one session with Bedford Borough and items on the agenda included the ongoing changes to bus services within Kempston. These appeared to BABUS to be a constant “drip feed” based upon who shouted loudest with no apparent overall picture of the total needs along with the problems surrounding Route 10 in Brickhill where BABUS found itself in the rather unique position of studying an area that didn’t want bus services rather than the other way round! We were advised of the new tendering process for rural routes to be introduced in February and we requested an involvement in the detailed timetable compilation as part of the evaluation process. We further referred to Colin Franklin’s proposals re Bus Station parking along with the survey of roadside information in the rural areas.

There are major changes in the Bedford area being considered for July 2011 (again see separate article) and a new Borough wide timetable book will be introduced at that stage.

Central Bedfordshire Council

A small group met for the first individual session with C.B.C. at Technology House in February. The main agenda items concerned the cuts in services planned for 28 March, details of which have been on the BABUS Bulletin Board for some time (but see also separate article), the ongoing problems surrounding Route 90 in the Arlesey/Henlow area together with a perceived lack of response to the BABUS survey of rural bus stop information undertaken in mid 2010. In the case of the latter item we were pleased to note that, as a result of the 28 March changes in the Biggleswade area some 130 bus stops are to have new information affixed. Alas, there is no such progress in the Flitwick/Amphill or Cranfield areas.

New publicity in the form of area Timetable booklets was produced to cover 28 March changes

Stagecoach East

Two liaison meetings have been held with Stagecoach East; one attended by The Chairman, Vice Chairman and Secretary with the other by Vice Chairman and Secretary.

The most recent meeting, in March, centred upon the increased use of Double Deckers – which we were advised is to grow further as vehicles within Stagecoach East are cascaded from Peterborough. Other topics included displaying BABUS publicity both within the Travel Shop and on board the buses, initial thoughts on changes to services in July, overcrowding on Route 1, the impact on bus services of the Bedford Victorian Fayre, timetable “bunching” between Amphill and Flitwick and the constant traffic problems around St. Paul’s Square especially on Market Days.

A separate meeting was convened to discuss the future of the Bus Station in Bedford.

Grant Palmer

A further meeting has been requested with Grant who has offered to include Centrebus in the debate as they are the replacement operator in much of East Beds

Arriva MK

The tendering process recently undertaken by Milton Keynes Council has resulted in a new operator for the current 1A/1C and the meeting planned with the current operator was cancelled at short notice.

Passenger Focus

This independent passengers' watchdog has recently added a bus and coach portfolio and the East Anglia representative has taken a close interest in the problem areas around Bedford and the BABUS activities in trying to resolve them.

Linda McCord initially visited us just before Christmas and accompanied the Chairman and Secretary on a fairly intensive itinerary which covered the X5 coach, the Bedford Borough Rural Bus Stop programme, Bedford Bus Station and car parking, bus routes in Kempston and Route 200. As time ran out she made a return visit early in the New Year as "a stranger to Biggleswade" and critically studied information available, signing, bus destination details, the Bus Station and took much photographic evidence. The secretary was on hand but NOT to offer assistance. She has since taken up with both local authorities the issues she observed.

Bedford Commuters' Association

Three officers have now met representatives of Bedford Commuters' Association to discuss a range of road/rail "interface" issues at both Bedford Midland and Flitwick Rail stations. This consisted of a "site meeting" at Bedford Midland Station and then (joined by member Alan Sprod) a lengthy debate over interchange issues at Flitwick, representation with local authorities and the rail operator.

Publicity

Our original publicity material is now out of date and the Committee decided to apply for a grant to replace both the leaflets and posters. Designs were prepared by Suzy Scott and submitted to Bedfordshire Rural Transport Partnership for approval and for the required funding. Following approval the printing was undertaken in Bedford and we obtained many extra copies through a deal that Colin Franklin obtained through his membership of the North End Club in Bedford. The finished items were collected by the Secretary before the printers closed for Christmas and delivered to the Publicity Officer.

Since then, we have steadily been sending out publicity material to parishes etc – this is still ongoing as it is no small task.

Grant Palmer also made a very generous gesture in offering free advertising for BABUS on the rear of his buses serving Bedford. Again, Suzy designed the content and now you can spot a "BABUS" bus in the area – it appears to

be paying dividends in membership already – **Thank you Grant!** See photograph on front cover of this *Newsletter* taken by Colin Franklin.

Stagecoach East (see earlier item) are prepared to place leaflets in the timetable racks at the entrances to their buses – again, thanks are due.

The Publicity Officer has delivered leaflets and posters to every library in our area.

AGM

The last page of this newsletter forms the official notification of the 2011 Annual General Meeting to be held in Bedford on Saturday 11 June and members are warmly invited to attend.

Following the formal business section our Guest Speaker this year will be Philip Norwell from Stagecoach East who have plans for the Bedford area to be introduced in July and will, hopefully, be in a position to share these with us and to take questions.

Borough Council rural bus stop work

Readers will recall that during the Spring of 2010 a very detailed survey was undertaken by BABUS of the information about bus services provided at the roadside in rural areas. Bedford Borough Council responded positively and initiated a programme of updating such information across the area by the erection of new flags and timetable cases. A photograph of a location at Wilden appeared in the last Newsletter. We have now undertaken a "one year on" review across the area and, whilst the task is not yet complete, we have been impressed by the work undertaken. B.B.C assures us that the work is ongoing and should be completed by the end of the financial year. In the event of this not being achieved funding will be sought to "see it through". Furthermore, it is hoped that a troubleshooting "man with a van" will then be available to cope with any remedial/updating work necessary.

We were so impressed with the response by B.B.C to our report that we asked the Borough Councillor with the transport portfolio to thank the team involved. The text of his reply is on page 2.

BABUS COMMENTS ON CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE DRAFT LOCAL TRANSPORT PLAN 3, PUBLISHED JAN 2011)

BABUS comments are in italics.

LTP3 embodies a vision which aims to create an integrated transport system that is safe, sustainable and accessible for all. Comment: *The Draft Plan does not indicate how an integrated transport system will be achieved. It does not set out a vision for what an integrated transport system should look like.*

LTP3 is a long term framework for investment taking account of specific issues in infrastructure and services covering Apr 2011 to Mar 2026 supported by a 3 year rolling programme of measures updated on annual basis. Comment: *There needs to be a clear statement of objectives together with measures and deliverables to assess progress.*

LTP3 states that Central Bedfordshire has aspirations to be both globally connected and deliver sustainable economic growth. Forecast increases in housing and employment likely to result in increase in local trips and local road traffic combined with peak congestion on strategic road network (M1, A1, A5, A421). Sustainable transport services are required for new developments so that they might be integrated into local communities. Existing communities to benefit from improved provision in new cycle routes and commercially viable bus services. Comment: *Needs to be a fundamental review of the current bus network – both commercial and supported to determine if existing and potential demand is being met. Such a review must not be purely financially driven and needs to take account of interchanges between bus routes and bus-rail. Provision of timetable booklets for bus services has improved but such publications, by their nature, are inflexible. Timetables should reflect the needs of passengers and be extended beyond the constraints of a particular bus route. Through ticketing should be a condition of council supported services. Following a detailed survey by BABUS members the standard of provision of roadside information for existing and potential bus users was found to be appalling in comparison with other local authority areas.*

51% of journey-to-work trips are to locations outside Central Bedfordshire. Comment: *Hardly surprising given that Central Bedfordshire as an administrative entity has no rational, realistic or sustainable basis in terms of economy and geography.*

Access to local health services is good but to hospitals is difficult. No hospitals in Central Beds and access can be difficult. Residents face an average of 46 minutes journey time by public

transport to hospital compared to 30 minutes nationally. Comment: *What proposal is there to reduce journey times and travel costs to hospitals by 53% to bring Central Beds council-tax payers in line with national average?*

LTP3 provides a strategic framework for reduced environmental impact of transport by reducing demand and discouraging car use. Comment: *How?*

LTP3 provides a framework for walking, cycling and public transport networks so that everybody has access to a mode of transport to the services they require. Comment: *Access to public transport services requires access to clear and well-presented information.*

Local Area Transport Plans are envisaged for Arlesey & Stotfold and for Sandy & Biggleswade. Comment: *But not for Flitwick & Ampthill, and for Shefford?*

In drafting LTP3 use was made of survey of 2 000 residents to inform decisions on priorities. Comment : *This is 0.8% of population?*

In Central Bedfordshire there is mismatch between short (less than 2 miles) journeys and cycling/walking; poor integration between modes presents barrier to public transport use. Comment: *Having recognised the problem some indication of practical solutions would be welcome. Is a Central Beds Intalink operation a possibility?*

For commuting there is a lack of integration between north and south Central Bedfordshire in terms of journeys to work. Comment: *Why is this an issue; Bedford is the main source of work for former Mid Beds and Luton for former South Beds. This highlights the illogical economic basis for the existence of Central Beds. Central Beds Council public transport team is located outside Central Beds area!*

LTP3 acknowledges that improvements might improve viability of bus services – paper-based, electronic and personalised information provision. Tailored bus stop specific timetables. Comment: *Given the dire situation in Central Beds as detailed by BABUS, any progress from the current low base might produce results.*

Car Parking – need to reduce spaces for long-stay commuter parking, reducing congestion. Comment: *Surely car parking at stations should be encouraged to reduce congestion on surrounding streets. Cost of station car parking needs to be addressed as it is perceived to be excessive.*

RESUME OF BUS SERVICE CHANGES 2011

January 4 Route 68

Further changes to Route 68 in Kempston to serve Spring Rd and the eastern end of Elstow Road, continuing to and from town via Ampthill Rd rather than Kempston Rd.

February 18 Route M50

Minor retimings on weekdays and extension of Sunday journeys beyond Rushden to Kettering

March 28 CBC

Major service revisions across Central Bedfordshire to reflect "Spending Review" cuts in bus subsidies – new timetable booklets issued to show changes to services.

March 28 Hertfordshire

Reduction in services but only Route 79 Luton to Meppershall in BABUS area

April 4 Cambridgeshire

Reduction in bus subsidies causes Route 152 Bedford – St. Neots to operate only to and from Kimbolton (still supported by Bedford Borough). Minibus 150 to operate Kimbolton to St. Neots

April 17 Cambridgeshire

Further reductions to Stagecoach and Whippet services primarily in the evenings and on Sundays but some minor rural routes in entirety. Loss of Route 404 (WO) Huntingdon - Bedford

May 8 – Kettering area

May 22 Routes 1A/1C

Milton Keynes retendering process

July 25 Bedford Borough

Revised rural "tendered" services in North Bedfordshire – details awaited

July 25 Stagecoach East

Major revamp of commercially operated services throughout the BABUS area – come to the A.G.M. for details.

There are other dates around this timescale in adjacent authority areas

THERE IS PLENTY GOING ON!

FRAGMENTS IN TIME – OR "WHERE WAS BABUS?"

(1) ONE HUNDRED YEARS AGO

One hundred years ago, the Motor Bus scene burst on to Bedford's streets – I wonder if anyone then thought of a need for BABUS?

In June 1911 Henry Burridge formed the "Bedford Motor Omnibus Company" and with two vehicles commenced operating services from a garage in Whitbread Avenue. He ran on three routes initially:

St. Peter's Green to St. Michael's Road via Kimbolton Road (taking ten minutes)

St. Peter's Green to Beverley Crescent via Dame Alice St and Bromham Road (again ten minutes)

St. Peter's Green to Kempston (Bedford Rd) via High St, St. Mary's St, Cauldwell St and Kempston Rd (again a ten minute journey)

There were seven round trips a day (except Sundays) on the first two routes with an extra one on the Kempston service, probably to get the vehicle to and from the Whitbread Avenue garage. For the technically minded the two buses were a Ryknield 20 seater and an Argyll 20 seater.

Within a year an "extended service of Motor Omnibuses to all parts of the town at popular penny fares" was running with the services now numbered 1, 2 and 3:

1: Beverley Crescent – St. Peter's – Foster Hill Rd – Park Rd or St. Michael's Rd

2: Queen's Park – High St/Silver St corner – Castle Rd – George St

3: St. Peter's - High St – Cauldwell St – Kempston

The journey time on the No 3 now took 25 minutes which suggests an extension in Kempston – probably the first use of the historic terminus – King William.

Three buses were now required but spare capacity existed to operate "trips" – probably the first ever bus trip from Bedford was advertised in the Bedfordshire Times of 25th August 1911:

" A pleasant country trip next Sunday afternoon. A motor char-a-banc will leave St. Peter's at 2.45pm for St. Neots. Fare 2/- return. Seats may be booked"

Followed by:

" By Motor to Sandy Flower Show. The B.M.O. co will run two special motor char-a-bancs on Thursday next leaving St. Peter's at 10.30am and 2.45pm returning at 6.30pm and 8.30pm Fares: 1/- each way"

Presumably the first motor buses seen in the rural areas – but no need for BABUS yet

(2) FIFTY YEARS AGO – A TALE OF TWO BUS STATIONS

On 1st December 1960 (OK – Fifty and a quarter years ago!) at 2.15pm Bedford's "New" Bus Station opened. It was constructed to replace the existing Bus Station at St. Peter's which in turn was built to replace various locations around the town which served as bus terminals.

Let's turn back the pages

By 1939 Eastern National were operating their country routes on weekdays from terminals at the Fairground (today's Commercial Rd Car Park) for routes to the south; St. Peter's Green for services to the north and east; St Mary's Street for Northampton and the LMS Station for Cambridge. On Sundays the reduced level of services enabled St. Peter's Green to serve everywhere. Thus confusion for passengers was rife and the level of services circling the town centre to gain the "right" direction was considerable. On top of this, of course, came the frequent town services.

Other operators such as Birch Brothers and the remaining independents also used the roadway at St. Peter's.

Things had to change and Eastern National placed the following in the local paper:

"The Company has pleasure in announcing the completion of its NEW OMNIBUS STATION at the Broadway, St Peter's, Bedford at which point all services of the Company, to and from Bedford, will now arrive and depart (with the exception of local town services and Route 29 Bedford to Cambridge. The latter will continue to operate to and from the L.M.S station but will pass the Omnibus Station" "A further facility for your convenience"

The bus station was built on a very angular site with five end on bays into which the vehicles had to reverse and an island adjacent to the street. The travel office, waiting room, parcels office etc were in a new building at one side with the company offices above.

It soon became "one of the most congested – not to say dangerous – spots in the centre of town"

After the Second World War bus travel increased as did the size of vehicles and with the disappearance of most of the small independents St. Peter's became a nightmare situation on certain days such as Market Days. With the transfer of all Eastern National Services

in Bedford to United Counties in 1952 thoughts soon turned to a replacement Bus Station. During the late 1950's many small streets and cramped houses between Bromham Road and Midland Road were demolished and a new shopping precinct, housing in the form of blocks of flats, car parking facility and replacement bus station were constructed.

And so at 2.15pm on 1st December 1960 the last bus left St.Peter's bound for Northampton crewed by Driver Lack and Conductor Warnes of Yardley Hastings whilst at Greyfriars the Mayor of Bedford cut the ribbon to allow the first bus (from Hitchin) to arrive with Driver Payne and Conductor Tisinbom of Bedford – each being given a £5 Premium Bond.

Still no BABUS - but the rest, as they say, is history.

SAVE OUR BUSES

Sophie Allain of Campaign for Bettertransport has written to us and we reproduce her letter.

Dear bus campaigners

I am writing to update you about the Save Our Buses campaign and to ensure you have at your disposal the campaign resources available.

Since the launch of the Save Our Buses campaign on the 3rd February we have had a huge amount of interest from the media, from other charitable organisations and from the public. I would be very grateful if you could advertise and promote the campaign in any way that you can.

As I am sure you are well aware, government spending cuts could have a devastating effect on our vital bus services. If we don't make a stand now, it will be too late. Across the country lifeline buses are being axed by local authorities, and many commercial buses are also in jeopardy.

We have prepared a short campaigning guide for people who find out that bus cuts are being planned in their area and want to campaign to save their bus but do not know where to start. The guide can be found on our website at <http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/campaigns/save-our-buses> and is reproduced below.

The guide will give you an overview of who makes decisions about bus cuts and posits campaigning ideas.

- You can follow the campaign via buses blog http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/campaigns/public_transport/buses/blog

- Our interactive bus cuts map is a campaign tool to try and make transparent the effects of cuts in local areas. This is a crowd sourcing project so please do inform us if you know about a cut that we have missed. You can see the map at:

<http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/campaigns/save-our-buses/map>

- We have a directory of local groups so that people can find others who are already campaigning on buses. If you have a new group and would like to be listed for others to see in our directory contact laura.fenn@bettertransport.org.uk
- We also provide research materials to help campaigners make the case for the social, economic and environmental value of buses. Find reports attached and linked below:

Buses Matter, January 2011

<http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/system/files/Buses+Matter.pdf>

Transport, Social Equality and Welfare to Work, October 2010

<http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/system/files/Citizens+advice+CBT+report.pdf>

- As the campaign goes forward we want to be able to provide local campaigners with resources like flyers and stickers. We would like the views of local activists on what they would find helpful. Email ideas to sophie.allain@bettertransport.org.uk
- We have a more in depth campaign guide looking at a broad range of campaigning issues around buses:
<http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/node/2202>

If you have questions, comments or ideas please contact: Sophie Allain

Buses Campaigner

Campaign for Better Transport

Unit 16 Waterside, 44-48 Wharf Road

London, N1 7UX: www.bettertransport.org.uk

NOTES FROM EASTERN

BEDFORDSHIRE

from Peter Hirst

Worth noting is the new Unobus 635 route from Hitchin then via Stevenage before speeding down the A1(M) to Hatfield for connections with the 797 and 724 GreenLine services. The 635 route is an extension of the old 634 route that ran from Hatfield just as far as Stevenage. Uno

have taken over the franchise for the 700 route from Stevenage via Hitchin, Letchworth and Baldock to Bishops Stortford and Stansted Airport (itself a good bus service hub for Essex). Their timetable runs the two routes, 635 and 700, together. It is obtainable via their website, or via Herts. County Council's Intalink website.

NOTES FROM GREAT BARFORD

from Alma Tebbutt

There is good news that a new bus service started in Great Barford on Tuesday 29 March. It is hoped that people will use it enough to persuade the authorities that this facility is badly needed as well as the X5 which is restricted to main routes and cannot cater for people living along long winding country roads. Please use it as much as you can. It will run on Tuesday and Thursday afternoon every week.

The bus travels from Willington, along the High Street to Silver Street to Bedford Road and Tesco in Goldington Road.

Your correspondent made a trial journey on 29 March. There were no new signs indicating bus stops. She waited opposite the doctors' surgery in Silver Street and right on time the bus appeared. There were two people from Willington on the bus who said they were anxious to have the service but would have preferred it to continue into Bedford. If the service is used constantly it could be improved. Pick up times are:

Silver Street 14.45 arriving at Tesco 14.55

Tesco 16.00 arriving at Silver Street 16.10

Ivel Sprinter

The fortnightly journeys to Tesco for May and June will be as follows:

Monday May 2nd 09.57 – return 11.30am

Monday May 16th 10.30 – return 12 noon

Monday June 06th 09.57 – return 11.30am

Monday June 20th 10.30 – return 12 noon

The monthly journeys to Bedford – return 1.00pm

Monday May 16th 09.57am

Monday June 20th 09.57am

The monthly journeys to St, Neots – return 11.30am

Thursday May 12th 09.15am

Thursday June 09th 09.15am

Enquiries: Ivel Sprinter please ring Lesley on 01234 870957, BABUS ring Alma 01234 871210

All articles express the views of their authors and do not necessarily express the views of BABUS.

BABUS – Annual Report to Members for 2010-11

Although this contribution has historically been attributed to the Chairman it aims to cover a range of activities where all the members of the Executive Committee have been involved.

To say that the last year has been busy sounds trite and is, almost, an insult to those of us who have given many hours in our attempts to improve matters for bus users across our area. It certainly has been a demanding year, marked by significant success and progress in many areas with other issues demanding patience and persistence.

The work of the 'formal' Committee has benefitted from support from Alan Sprod on Ampthill/Flitwick issues, from Peter Hirst on Biggleswade matters, and from John Smith with his special knowledge and appreciation of the complex pattern of bus routes in Sharnbrook.

We must also acknowledge the professional and wise counsel provided by Stephen Sleight, Transport Officer, BRCC together with his assistance in preparing our submission for grant aid to cover printing costs for our new publicity campaign.

BABUS has, again, been given access to officers of the two unitary authorities that administer our area of influence. For most of the last year liaison meetings have been held jointly with Bedford Borough Council and with Central Bedfordshire Council. In the case of the latter authority the interests of BABUS are, essentially, limited to the area east of the M1 motorway; the former Mid Bedfordshire District Council area. BABUS has achieved a very open and productive relationship with Bedford Borough Council and most of the credit for that must go to our Secretary, Godfrey Willis. He has established valued connections with elected councillors and the officers in the public transport team at Borough Hall. It is now quite usual for Godfrey to be consulted in advance on changes affecting provision of roadside information, development of bus routes in urban and rural areas, and, particularly issues affecting services to and from Kempston.

Earlier in 2011 the mechanism for liaison meetings held jointly with the two authorities was terminated when Central Bedfordshire Council withdrew from this arrangement. Whilst BABUS has some obvious concerns that the application of arbitrary political boundaries might adversely impact on cross-boundary bus services it is too early to form too negative a view of the position. It should be pointed out that BABUS can only operate with the support and goodwill of the local authorities and bus operators.

In Spring and early Summer 2010 BABUS members carried out an audit of roadside information provision in rural north Bedford and in Central Bedfordshire. Following delivery of the audit reports to the two councils Bedford Borough set up a team to initiate a rolling programme of bus stop upgrades. By now about half the rural parishes have seen bus stop upgrades. Central Bedfordshire has been slower to respond but work has now commenced and some results may be seen in the Biggleswade area.

BABUS has continued to meet with Stagecoach in Bedford and commenced meetings with Grant Palmer. Changes to bus services between Kempston and Bedford generated a deal of coverage in the local press, not all of it accurate. BABUS has worked with the Borough Council, Grant Palmer and with Stagecoach to try and resolve some of the issues of concern to Kempston residents. Some progress has already been achieved with further, beneficial changes in prospect.

BABUS is fortunate to enjoy an open and supportive dialogue with Mr Grant Palmer. Discussions have taken place on access for Grant Palmer vehicles at Bedford Bus Station and the new 68 service between Bedford and Stewartby. We are particularly appreciative of the initiative taken by Mr Palmer in placing, at his own expense, advertisements for BABUS on the rear of some of his vehicles.

Following a very detailed survey of the use of the outer part of Bedford Bus Station and the provision of disabled parking bays in surrounding car parks, BABUS has had discussions with Stagecoach and with Bedford Borough Council. We feel that the present arrangements could be improved and that more bus services should and could be brought into the area of the Bus Station.

BABUS has concerns about the present 'drip-feed' of changes to bus services across Bedfordshire and adjacent areas. It is felt that ongoing changes to timetables are not helpful to bus passengers and does little to engender confidence among potential and existing bus users.

BABUS has been involved in the public consultation exercise undertaken by Central Bedfordshire Council in its attempt to prioritise resources. Our submission suggested that there is a lack of strategic thinking and planning in Central Bedfordshire. BABUS has also submitted a detailed response to the Central Bedford Draft Local Transport Plan 3 raising concerns about intended policies not being borne out by actions.

Later in 2010, representatives from Passenger Focus, the statutory body charged with representing the interests of bus users started to take an interest in the work of BABUS and a number of meetings and visits have taken place. We are sure that this new support is already proving beneficial in the way we work.

Two other important issues where BABUS is involved are participation in Bedford Stations Travel Plan and joint discussions with Bedford Commuters' Association over bus access to Flitwick Station.

This past year has been unprecedented in recent times for bus service cuts due to the general economic situation but BABUS has been listened to and cuts in "our" area do not compare with those in adjacent ones. There is no doubt that services will continue to come under pressure but BABUS will continue to work with local authorities to try to minimise any adverse impact on bus passengers.

BABUS has an excellent website and bulletin board where many of these issues are being raised and discussed.

It is almost standard procedure in groups such as BABUS to make a plea for new, active members with relevant skills to join the Committee. This is not empty rhetoric; there is a critical need for volunteers to come forward *now* to support the key tasks and to ensure that BABUS may continue to exist beyond the next year or two.

Peter G Williams, Chairman; Godfrey Willis, Secretary
May 2011

STOP PRESS

Changes on the Bedford to Northampton and Bedford to Milton Keynes routes
from 22 May 2011

Existing services 1, 1A, 1B, 1C from Arriva/MK Metro between Bletchley, Milton Keynes, Newport Pagnell, Lavendon or Astwood, and Bedford will now run as far as Lavendon (except on Sundays, when the 1 will continue as 1A to Bedford).

Stagecoach *Pluto* P1 between Bedford, Lavendon and Northampton will be revised and run via Olney as it used to, being renumbered to 41 giving a 60-minute long journey to Northampton. In addition, Stagecoach will operate a new Service 40, between Bedford, Astwood, Newport Pagnell, and Milton Keynes, replacing Arriva 1-1C.

Bedford Area Bus Users' Society
 Balance Sheet and Source & Application of Funds
 covering 1 Apr 2010 - 31 Mar 2011

		(Value for 2009-10)	Note:
Opening balance at 1 Apr 2010	578.28		
Current account	7.58		
Project account	585.86		
	Total funds		
 Expenditure			
Website fees & Domain name renewal	-86.81	(-34.49)	1
Newsletter expenses	-38.63		
FMH Room hire	-45.00	(-37.00)	
Hall hire AGM	-35.00	(-25.00)	
BUUK Subscription	-17.50		
Treasurer's expenses	-42.38		
Vice-Chairman's expenses	-9.10	(-8.70)	
	-		
Printing leaflets & Posters	356.65		2
Postage costs incurred by Publicity Officer	-30.06		
	-		
	Sub-total	661.13	(-105.19)
 Income			
Subscriptions, individual	219.00	(+327.00)	3
Subscriptions, corporate	156.00		
BRCC Grant	356.65		
	Sub-total	731.65	
 Closing balance at 31 Mar 11			
Current account	648.80		
Project account	7.58		
	656.38		

Note: 1 This sum covers domain name renewal fee which was not incurred in 2009-10, plus website fees for two years. The 2009-10 figure covers only one year website fees

Note: 2 If the one-off leaflet printing cost is excluded 'routine'

expenditures in 2001-11 increased by £200

Note: 3 Income from subscriptions increased by £48. This is not sufficient to cover the increase in expenditure.

I have examined the above entries and confirm that they are in accordance with the records of the Society

John W Smith BSc(Econ), FCA

Honorary Independent Examiner, 7 May 2011

Bedford Area Bus Users' Society

Annual General Meeting of the Bedford Area
Bus Users' Society will be held at the
Salvation Army Congress Hall,
Commercial Road,
Bedford MK40 1QS
on Saturday 11 June 2011 at 10:00 am

Following the business proceedings there will
be a talk by Mr Philip Norwell, Commercial
Director, Stagecoach East.

All are welcome. Light refreshments