

Newsletter 30

Autumn 2016

BABUS - Serving Bus Users In Bedfordshire since 2005



Brand new this year is another Enviro200 for Grant Palmer, with a higher quality interior, and a new paint scheme on the outside. © Suzy Scott

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

Welcome to the BABUS Newsletter 30

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!

Your **Newsletter** is compiled by Mrs Suzy Scott, 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 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

Website or Bulletin Board queries should be addressed to Mrs Suzy Scott, 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

Any other written communications with the Society should be addressed to Miss Frances Horwood, BABUS Secretary, 34 Rectory Orchard, Lavendon, OLNEY, MK46 4HB. E-mail frances.horwood@babus.org.uk

Our website can be found at www.babus.org.uk and our Bulletin Board can be found at www.babus.org.uk/bb or via the links on the BABUS homepage.

Join our Facebook group www.facebook.com/groups/BABUSbeds/ or follow us on Twitter @BABUSbeds 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, as the income all goes to the Service Provider, in return for providing us with a free telephone service.

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.

Editor is sorry for the delay and brevity with this one, due to health.

Next Newsletter Deadline Date for News and Contributions is Friday 2nd December prompt please. This is a little later than usual, so we can add in the usual Christmas & New Year service arrangements details in Newsletter 31.

Bedford Borough Council: Low Cost Early Morning Bus Travel for Pensioners and Disabled People - Consultation

(ED – not mentioned in the consultation notice, but can be seen in the descriptive table below, the council want to charge a £1 fare for all journeys on Service X5...)

Proposed Changes to Bedford Borough’s Local Concessionary Travel Scheme

Bedford Borough’s local concessionary travel scheme applies only to Bedford Borough residents who have an English National Concessionary Travel pass. The local scheme allows extra travel concessions over and above the national scheme.

The Council is proposing to make changes to the local scheme and is consulting residents about the proposals. The table below shows the concessions under the current scheme and the proposed concessions under the new scheme.

	Current Scheme	Proposed Scheme
Journeys at any time on weekends and bank holidays ¹	Free	Free
Journeys starting between 9.30am and 11pm on weekdays ¹	Free	Free
Journeys at any time by a companion helping a disabled pass holder who cannot travel alone	Free	Free
Journeys on “Door to Door” Community Transport at any time	Free	Free
Journeys starting before 9.30am or after 11pm on weekdays wholly within Bedford Borough	Free	£1.00
Journeys starting before 9.30am or after 11pm on weekdays travelling outside Bedford Borough	Normal fare	Normal Fare
Journeys on the X5 before 9.30am or after 11pm on weekdays wholly within Bedford Borough (will also apply to any other similar premium bus services)	Free	Normal Fare
Journeys on the X5 before 9.30am or after 11pm on weekdays travelling outside Bedford Borough	Normal fare	Normal Fare
Journeys wholly within Bedford Borough starting before 9.30am on a rural service where there is no other morning service ²	Free	Free
Journeys travelling outside Bedford Borough starting before 9.30am on a rural service where there is no other morning service ²	Free	£1.00

¹ National Scheme

² Routes to be identified through the consultation process

Pensioners and disabled people who qualify for a concessionary bus pass are legally entitled to free bus travel for journeys starting between 9.30am and 11pm on weekdays and all day at weekends. The Council has to pay the bus operators for the cost of this free travel.

These savings can be used to protect other essential Council services like care for the elderly. To bridge the funding gap without making savings would require the equivalent of every household paying an extra £309. The proposed £1.00 fare is expected to save the Council around £100,000 each year.

Why are we proposing changes?

The Council has to make savings of £21 million over the next three years as a result of a reduction in funding from Central Government and rising costs, particularly support for older people with care needs. Like all areas the Council must look at reducing expenditure. BABUS Newsletter 30 – Autumn 2016

What do we currently offer?

Bedford Borough currently also pays for the cost of free travel before 9.30am and after 11pm so that up until now pass holders have been able to travel free of charge at any time.

Disabled people who cannot travel alone are also allowed to have a companion travel with them for free.

What are we proposing to change?

We are proposing to ask pensioners and disabled pass holders to pay a low fare of just £1.00 for any journey starting before 9.30am or after 11pm on weekdays. Bus travel will still be free for pass holders at other times.

A companion helping a disabled person who is not able to travel alone will still be able to travel free at any time.

What about villages with only one morning bus services?

We understand that for some more remote rural villages there may only be one bus service in a morning. We will consider allowing free travel on these services before 9.30am where the whole journey is within Bedford Borough. The £1.00 fare would need to be paid for journeys travelling outside the Borough. We want to hear your views on which services, if any, should remain free.

What do other councils do?

Many other councils no longer offer any kind of concession for early morning travel. Pass holders often have to pay the normal fare.

How do I find out more and have my say?

More detail about this proposal can be found in the draft Travel Scheme. It is called a draft because we are seeking the views of the community before proceeding. We are particularly interested to hear whether you agree or disagree with the proposal, how you think this may affect people in the

community, or of any rural service that you feel should still be free for pass holders.

You can tell us what you think in the following ways:

Online – complete an online response form at www.bedford.gov.uk/earlytravel

Email – consultingbedford@bedford.gov.uk

Write to – Consulting Bedford, 6th Floor, Borough Hall, Cauldwell Street, Bedford, MK42 9AP

Hard copies of documents are available at Borough Hall, the Customer Contact Centre and at all Borough Libraries.

The consultation will run from Monday 9 August until 4 October 2016. Comments received will be published.

What happens next?

Once the consultation is closed we will consider carefully all the responses that have been received. Responses received will form part of the final report to the Executive of Bedford Borough Council at its meeting on 2 November 2016. All those who have taken part in the consultation will be kept informed and key stakeholders written to when a decision is made.

Summary Report of Grant Palmer Liaison Meeting on June 9th 2016

By Frances Horwood

There had been a few timetable changes: Service 49 on a Saturday had been withdrawn and there had been minor timing changes to Service 42, in order to improve punctuality. The routing of Service 27 via Cople had proved successful.

A new service, No. 24, from Bedford to Lincroft Middle School via Kempston, Great Denham and Bromham, was being introduced and would be available for use by the general public. The peak-time service had already started and a more frequent service would begin in August. The route would serve Bedford Railway Station, Bedford Hospital and Bedford College.

The company had purchased two brand-new buses, which would be used on Service 42. They were larger than the current vehicles. New drivers had also been recruited.

We wondered how the opening of the Western Bypass had affected congestion; we were told no negative reports had been received but the full effect could not be judged until September. Traffic flow would be affected in the case of accidents or flooding.

Our next Grant Palmer Liaison Meeting is due to take place in late September. We hope we might be able to travel to Flitwick on one of their new buses!

Summary Report of Stagecoach East Liaison Meeting on June 6th

2016

By Frances Horwood

Most of the items discussed at this meeting were updates on matters raised at previous meetings. These included publicity for the code for mobility scooters, updating of roadside information and arrangements during the bridge closure at Biggleswade.

BABUS representatives were pleased that a new Great Denham service, No.11, would begin in July; residents in that area had been wanting improved bus services.

We asked whether the opening of the Western Bypass had reduced congestion but it was too early to tell, particularly as Tavistock Street had only recently reopened. The potholes on the Bus Station forecourt were raised and we were told this was to be resurfaced. One BABUS committee member raised the poor condition of road surfaces on parts of the X5 route to Oxford; he thought these were bad enough to be detrimental to vehicles using the roads. He would contact the councils concerned (Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire), as would Stagecoach.

Our next liaison meeting with Stagecoach is due to take place in September.

**Minutes of Annual General Meeting
of the Bedford Area Bus Users'
Society**
**held at Bedford Central Library on
Saturday, 2nd July 2016**
By Frances Horwood

Present:

Ray Smith - Chairman
Colin Franklin - Vice Chairman
Simon Norton - Treasurer and
Membership Secretary
Frances Horwood - Secretary
Suzy Scott - Communications Officer
Ian Wigley - Committee Member
Stephen Sleight - Bedfordshire Rural
Transport Partnership
Eight others were present, including
BABUS members, representatives of
other bus user groups and others with
an interest in bus travel.

1. Welcome

Our Vice Chairman, Colin Franklin,
welcomed all to the meeting.

2. Apologies

Apologies had been received from:-
Andrew Spearman, John Smith, John
Yunnie, Alan Hunter, Peter Williams,
Peter Ballantyne (MKBUG) and Alan
Sprod.

**3. Minutes of the Annual General
Meeting of 4th July 2015**

These had been circulated. Suzy Scott
proposed that they be accepted as a
true record and Martin Brookes
seconded, with those present agreeing.

4. Matters arising from the Minutes

There were none.

**5. Chairman's Annual Report for
year ended 31st March 2016**

Ray Smith gave his report, which will be
printed in the BABUS newsletter.

Colin Franklin thanked all the bus
operators and council officers who had
hosted liaison meetings over the course
of the year. He also stressed the
importance of the regular regional
meetings, at which representatives of
BABUS meet up with representatives of
Milton Keynes Bus User Group and Bus
Users Northampton. He thanked Simon
Norton, Suzy Scott, Frances Horwood
and the rest of the committee for their
work for BABUS during the year.

**6. Treasurer's Report for year ended
31st March 2016**

This had been circulated and nobody
present had any comments to make.

Our treasurer, Simon Norton, said that,
a year ago, our funds were recovering,
having been on the brink. This year,
however, we were solvent.

7. Election of officers

There was one nomination for Chairman:
Colin Franklin was proposed by
Frances Horwood and seconded by
Leonard Lean. Colin was elected and
chaired the rest of the meeting. There
was one nomination for Vice Chairman:
Ray Smith was proposed by Colin
Franklin and seconded by Les Taylor and
elected by the meeting.

There was one nomination for Secretary:
Frances Horwood was proposed by
Martin Brookes and seconded by Suzy
Scott and elected by the meeting.

There was one nomination for Treasurer:
Simon Norton was proposed by Leonard
Lean and seconded by Ian Wigley. He

was elected as Treasurer and would also serve as Membership Secretary.

8. Election of Executive Committee

Ian Wigley was willing to stand again. Suzy Scott had previously stated that she wished to stand down from the Committee but would continue to edit the newsletter and look after the website until a new Communications Officer was found. However, she agreed to serve as a Committee Member, on a temporary, part-time basis.

Sue Beaumont, who was attending the meeting as a representative of Houghton Conquest Parish Council, volunteered to join the Committee.

Colin Franklin suggested that these three be elected *en bloc*, they were proposed by Ray Smith and seconded by Les Taylor and elected by the meeting.

9. Any other business

Les Taylor raised the problem of vehicle breakdowns on Grant Palmer services: when buses were only hourly, breakdowns caused great inconvenience to bus users. He asked whether drivers carried mobile phones to contact the depot. Ray Smith assured him that they did. Colin Franklin pointed out that one vehicle had been damaged in an accident on the Busway, so there was more pressure. Ian Wigley mentioned the new vehicles which had been purchased and were now in service; some older vehicles, which had been replaced, had been retained. Les Taylor thought that the small vehicles which Cedar Coaches had, which must have been sold off, would have been ideal to replace vehicles which had broken down.

Sue Beaumont said Central Bedfordshire did not link bus services with parking: parking spaces at doctors' surgeries and railway stations were in short supply, so people needed to travel to them by bus rather than driving.

As Paul Dodge, retired Public Transport Manager at CBC, was present, Colin Franklin asked him to comment. Paul said that, although provision of bus services and parking were completely separate, they did have the same director, and executive councillors should be considering roads, parking and buses. Parking at railway stations was the responsibility of the train operator. Colin asked Paul if he would give Sue the names of people to contact, and Paul said he would do so.

Simon Norton said that CBC had not taken advantage of developer funding which was available. Paul Dodge said the Council had carefully considered how best to use such funding. However, there were strict criteria regarding the use to which the funds could be put.

Leonard Lean asked whether the opening of the new section of the Bypass had reduced the traffic on other routes into Bedford. Colin Franklin said Shakespeare Road was still congested. It was considered that it was too early to judge the effect of the opening.

Ian Wigley said parking facilities at Amptill Surgery were inadequate already and more houses were being built in the town and also in Flitwick. Paul Dodge said that on some occasions when Section 106 money from developers had been used to provide a bus service, there had been little patronage. Colin Franklin considered that planning applications should only be passed if bus services were to be provided and roads were wide

enough for these. Simon Norton said bus services should be running once some of the houses were occupied but Paul Dodge explained that, if this happened, the money would run out too soon.

Paul Spelzini of the Potters Bar and St. Albans Transport User Group said the same problems with developments and Section 106 money arose in his area.

In one case, there were facilities for buses, including a bus gate, but no buses ran. In the case of train services, the heavily used Thameslink services from St. Albans City Station were promoted, with services from St. Albans Abbey Station, more convenient for some, being largely ignored.

Having two layers of council could make things more difficult than in areas with a unitary authority.

Guest Speaker

Steve Chambers of the Campaign for Better Transport then gave a very interesting and informative talk on "Save our Buses", this being a current campaign of the CBT. There was then a question time in which a number of those present participated.

Chairman's Report ***by Ray Smith***

At last year's AGM, John Smith stepped down as Chairman, as he was moving to Bath, so I took over as Chairman.

We have held meetings this year with Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils, Stagecoach and Grant Palmer, at which a number of issues were discussed, including the updating of bus stop flags and timetable displays.

Our regional liaison meetings with Milton Keynes and Northampton bus user groups took place last September at Milton Keynes, in January at Bedford and in May at Milton Keynes. We discussed various topics, including disabled access and cuts in funding to local services. Each group has continued to monitor their local council's financial situation to see what the impact might be on bus services.

We held a number of meetings with Central Bedfordshire Council. Topics discussed included the closure of Biggleswade Railway Bridge, the problem of traffic congestion and the likelihood of funding cuts. Herberts Coaches withdrew from the Biggleswade town services, which are now operated by Centrebus. Central Bedfordshire Council was considering altering the times during which bus passes could be used and restricting their use until after 9.30 on weekdays.

At our Bedford Borough meetings, matters discussed included the updating of bus stop information and the problem of taxis and private hire cars parking at the bus bays at Bedford Railway Station.

We held a number of meetings with Grant Palmer. Matters discussed included his purchase of two new vehicles and the recruitment of new drivers. We have a good relationship with Mr. Palmer and are kept up to date when changes take place.

When we met with Stagecoach, we discussed wheelchair access, the weight and dimensions of mobility scooters which are permitted to be carried and use of the wheelchair space for pushchairs, which is an ongoing issue.

It is with regret that I have to announce that Mrs. Suzy Scott has decided to step down from the Committee. She has worked long and hard to edit and publish our newsletters and administer our website.

We now need a new Communications Officer to carry out these responsibilities; if necessary, the two parts of the role, could be carried out by two different people. There is also a need for committee members without specific responsibilities. They should have internet access – not necessarily at home, since it is available at libraries.

We have some challenging times ahead, with services under threat from central government cuts to local authority funding. Time will tell how services will be affected.

Planned Visit to Kimbolton ***By Simon Norton***

I am organising a group visit to Kimbolton Castle. This historic building, now used as a school, does occasional public open days, but they are always on Sundays which is no use to people who rely on buses. However, they do allow group visits at other times (when it's not in use by the school), and I have been offered one on Fri 28 Oct, which is during half term. So, if you're free that day, why not take advantage of this unique opportunity?

Participants from Bedfordshire would probably find it most convenient to use the 11.10 bus from Bedford to Kimbolton (Grant Palmer 28). The tour would start immediately on arrival ending around 14.00. Participants would have the choice between returning on the 14.00 bus, though this might entail leaving the tour slightly before the end, or spending more time in the village and catching the 16.00. There are also buses to St Neots at 14.05 and Huntingdon at 14.36 (HACT 150 and Whippet 400 respectively).

No up-front payment is needed - pay your own way to Kimbolton (or use your concessionary pass) and pay the usual 5 pounds admission fee when you get there. But please let me know beforehand ASAP -- the castle would like an idea of numbers and I'd like to be sure there are enough seats on the buses (note that I will be publicising the event to other groups). Please phone 01223 569623 (leave a voicemail if out), email **s.norton@dpmms.cam.ac.uk**, or write to Simon Norton, 6 Hertford St, Cambridge CB4 3AG.

Bus Service Changes ***By Suzy Scott***

This listing below brings things up to September 2016's changes. Our Online Timetable Library was missing the last update for some reason, but all the new timetables will be up for download from w/c 3rd October 2016. Suzy's company Here To There Publishing will also be introducing these timetables as a hard copy. These will be in a ring binder, with updates sent regularly to allow the timetable to be always up to date.

Whitbread Wanderbus have been given a grant to add a second bus, and more services, to their network. These changes appear on the next page.

Stagecoach in Bedford Service 6 (Bedford Bus Station – Brickhill)

Times of afternoon school journey revised from 4th September 2016.

NEW SERVICE Stagecoach in Bedford Saturday 11 (Bedford Bus Station – Great Denham)

New half hourly service from Bedford Bus Station via Rail Station, Bromham Road, A4280, Biddenham (on main road), A428, then a one-way loop around Great Denham. This service runs half hourly Monday to Saturday, from 3rd July 2016.

ED: I note that Service 11 is usefully timed between the main service 40/41, to combine to give a 15 minute service to the Railway Station and Bromham Road. However, the 40/41 appear to be running later and later every time I use them. Suggestion time – how about inter-working the 40/41 with

the 11, and give the former a bit more running time?

NEW SERVICE Grant Palmer Service 24 (Bedford Bus Station – Great Denham)

New hourly service from Bedford Bus Station via St Paul's Square, Bedford Hospital, Kempston Road, Bedford Road, Saxon Centre (Kempston), High Street Kempston, Cemetery Road, The Branston Way, King Alfred Way, to Great Denham. Service runs hourly from 1st August 2016.

Centrebus Service 49 (Leighton Buzzard – Ridgmont)

To update and correct what we had in Newsletter 29, the daytime service has been reduced to two off peak shopping journeys, between Leighton Buzzard (Tesco) and Ridgmont Station. This happened from the beginning of May 2016.

Stagecoach in Bedford Service 81 (Bedford Bus Station – Luton Galaxy Centre)

The timetable has been revised in both peak times, to allow for changes of running time on Service 99. This happened from 4th September 2016.

Elsewhere in Bedfordshire;

- Stagecoach Service 99 (Luton – Milton Keynes) is reduced to run every hour in the evening peak, from 4th September 2016. There are also timetable changes throughout the day as a result.
- Centrebus 366 (Luton – South Hatfield) revised from the same date, to encompass changes to their Round wood School network.
- Metroline 714 (Luton – New Barnet) withdrawn from 23rd July 2016, but Service 84A (St Albans –

New Barnet is extended to Luton every hour, except evenings and Sundays.

New service operating every Monday morning to Biggleswade Retail Park, Sainsburys and Asda (for Town Centre).

Whitbread Wanderer Changes and Improvements from April 2016
By Whitbread Wanderbus, extra formatting and the like by Suzy
(ED: This adds further details to what was in Newsletter 29.)

As from Monday 4th April Whitbread Wanderbus are placing an extra vehicle into operation, meaning that the majority of their services have been revised. Please see below a summary of the revisions.

Service W1 – Wednesdays – Shefford – Stotfold – Henlow – Langford – Broom – Southill – Stanford – Bedford

Will now run every Wednesday, will additionally serve Stotfold but will no longer serve Clifton. Minor timetable amendments to accommodate these changes.

Service W2 – Wednesdays – Shefford – Clifton – Meppershall – Upper Stondon – Shillington – Upper Gravenhurst – Campton – Bedford

Will now run every Wednesday, will additionally serve Clifton. Minor timetable adjustments to accommodate these changes.

Service W3 – Mondays – Shefford – Campton – Upper Gravenhurst – Shillington – Lower Stondon – Meppershall – Clifton – Henlow – Stotfold – Biggleswade

Service W4 – First Thursday of the Month – Shefford – Clifton – Stanford – Southill – Broom – Langford – Henlow – Stotfold – Welwyn Garden City

Now operating on the morning of the first Thursday of the month – will now additionally serve Clifton Park but will no longer serve Valarian Way / Tansy Avenue in Stotfold. Minor timetable adjustments to accommodate these changes.

Service W5 – Fridays – Shefford – Clifton – Henlow – Stotfold – Baldock

Will now run every Friday afternoon – revised routing within Shefford and Stotfold, minor timetable adjustments to accommodate these changes.

Service W6 – Fridays – Shefford – Campton – Upper Gravenhurst – Meppershall – Shefford – Broom – Clifton – Shefford (Circular)

Minor alteration of route to combine first two journeys, minor timetable adjustments to accommodate these changes.

Service W7 – Fridays – Shefford – Clifton – Henlow – Arlesey – Letchworth – Baldock

Will now run every Friday morning – revised routing within Shefford and will serve Baldock Tesco after Letchworth Sainsbury's, minor timetable adjustments to accommodate these changes.

Service W8 – Mondays – Shefford – Clifton – Southill

Monday afternoon service to serve club at Southill Village Hall – please call for details 0300 123 3023.

Service W9 – Second Thursday of the Month – Shefford – Clifton – Henlow – Langford – Broom – Upper Caldecote – Ickwell – Northill – Thorncote Green – Hatch – Little Barford – St Neots

New Service operating on the morning of the second Thursday of the month to Eynesbury Tesco and St Neots Town Centre.

Service W10 – Second Thursday of the Month - Shefford – Meppershall – Shillington – Stondon - Henlow Camp – Stotfold – St Neots

New Service operating on the morning of the second Thursday of the month to Roxton Garden Centre and St Neots Town Centre.

Service W11 – Third Thursday of the Month – Shefford – Campton – Meppershall – Upper Stondon – Lower Stondon – Shillington – Upper Gravenhurst – Milton Keynes

Will now run on the morning of the third Thursday of the month and will additionally serve Stop J3 at Milton Keynes, The Point.

Service W12 – Tuesdays – Shefford – Campton – Upper Gravenhurst – Shillington – Lower Stondon – Upper Stondon – Meppershall – Shefford – Clifton – Henlow – Henlow Camp – Hitchin

Will now operate every Tuesday morning and will additionally serve Meppershall,

Henlow and Henlow Camp. Will now terminate at Hitchin and no longer serve Letchworth Morrison's. Minor timetable adjustments to accommodate these changes.

Service W13 – Third Thursday of the Month – Shefford – Clifton – Henlow – Langford – Broom – Southill – Stanford – Milton Keynes

Will now operate on the morning of the third Thursday of the month - minor route changes in Clifton, will additionally serve Stop J3 at Milton Keynes, The Point.

Service W14 – First Thursday of the Month – Shefford – Campton – Upper Gravenhurst – Shillington – Lower Stondon – Upper Stondon – Meppershall – Welwyn Garden City

Will now operate on the morning of the first Thursday of the month - will additionally serve Upper & Lower Stondon and will run direct via A1(M) to Welwyn Garden City. Minor timetable changes to accommodate these changes.

Excursion to Cambridge – Fourth Thursday of the Month

A regular excursion to Cambridge is planned for the fourth Thursday of each month which will be available to all – it is planned to arrive around 10:30am and depart around 13:30. Places will be allocated on a strictly first come first served basis at a cost of £10 Return. Concessionary travel passes will not be accepted – cash fares only. Please email thewanderbus@gmail.com to book your space or call 0300 123 3023.