

BABUS

Newsletter 32 Spring 2017



Uno Mercedes Citaro 312 (BN 58 BJK) is seen at Bedford Bus Station. © Suzy Scott 2016

The newsletter of the Bedford Area Bus Users Society, or

BABUS, is brought to you by 

public transport information in one place

Welcome to BABUS Newsletter 32

	<p>This BABUS Newsletter is brought to you by Mrs Suzy Scott, who can be contacted by post at Apartment 4, 38-40 Stonehills, WELWYN GARDEN CITY, Hertfordshire, AL8 6PD. E-mail <u>suzy.scott@babus.org.uk</u> and is produced through her company, Here To There Publishing Ltd. She is our Communications Officer [on a part-time basis]. We welcome contributions and corrections from everyone, and please note that the next Newsletter deadline shall be on 1st May 2017, to accomodate the date of the Annual General Meeting (still to be confirmed, but will be in July 2017).</p>
	<p>The BABUS Website is also the responsibility of Suzy Scott (see previous row), and you can find us at <u>www.babus.org.uk</u>. To sign up for the Bulletin Board, which is also there, send Suzy an email with your preferred user name, own name, email, and membership status (i.e. committee, regular member or non-member) so we can set you all up accordingly.</p>
	<p>We are also on Social Media! Find us on Twitter <u>@BABUSbeds</u> or online at <u>www.twitter.com/BABUSbeds</u> You can also join our Facebook group <u>www.facebook.com/groups/BABUSbeds/</u></p>
	<p>Our Treasurer and Membership Secretary is Mr Simon Norton who you can contact by post at 6 Hertford Street, CAMBRIDGE, CB4 3AG or by email to <u>simon.norton@babus.org.uk</u>. Simon can deal with Changes of Address, Change from Paper to Digital newsletter (or vice-versa,) Membership Renewals and queries on Payments, and Accounts Payable.</p>
	<p>For everything else, contact our lovely Secretary, be addressed to Miss Frances Horwood, BABUS Secretary, 34 Rectory Orchard, Lavendon, OLNEY, MK46 4HB, or by <u>frances.horwood@babus.org.uk</u>. To contact us by telephone, call 0871 218 2287 (BBUS). Leave a message, and we will return your call. We legally need to tell you this costs 12p per minute, plus your Network Operator's Access Charges. Fax us on the same cost basis – 0871 218 3293.</p>

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Who Are We?

BABUS – or Bedford Area Bus Users Society in full – are a voluntary Bus User Group. Our aims are threefold;

- to represent the interests of bus users who either live, work or travel through the Bedford area
- to encourage people to use buses
- to act as a focal point between bus users, bus companies and local authorities

BABUS has an interest in all bus services operating in Bedford Borough, and most of Central Bedfordshire. BABUS is affiliated to Bus Users UK, the national watchdog for bus passengers, and liaises with several other groups which have areas bordering our own.

Members receive a Newsletter, usually every quarter, to keep you informed of our activities. If you have access to the Internet, either at home or at a library, café etc. you will be able to access our website, www.babus.org.uk This includes Members Area access to our Bulletin Board, which keeps you updated between Newsletters.

If you are not already a member, why not join us? Send a Cheque/Postal Order (payable to BABUS) for £5 (Individual/Family) or £12 (Group/Corporate) to Simon Norton, **6 Hertford Street, CAMBRIDGE, CB4 3AG**, with a note of your name and address! If you'd like to receive an information pack, then just call us on 0871 218 2287, and leave your name/address on our answerphone. We will send you a full information pack.

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.

Annual General Meeting and Membership Renewals for 2017/2018

By Suzy Scott

More information on these will be enclosed with your next Newsletter. We are presently looking at one of three dates in July.

BedsBuses timetable website (the follow-on from the BABUS online timetable library)

By Suzy Scott

With all the recent (and much more forthcoming!) bus changes in Bedfordshire, I've updated BedsBuses. As at Tuesday 21st March, there is an updated Bus Timetable Section and Index To Services, and is valid from Sunday 26th March until Sunday 30th April 2017. (Version from 1st May 2017 to follow soon).

The file includes changes to Uno etc. from this weekend, and forthcoming changes to the 81, 84A, and 99.

The detailed website will follow in the near future, but for now, simply visit **www.bedsbuses.info**

Hard copies of the complete timetable are on pre-order, and we should have more information on this soon.

Stagecoach East Liaison Meeting, 6th March 2017

By Frances Horwood

Since our last meeting, the resurfacing work at Bedford Bus Station had been completed. The BABUS representatives were pleased with the result and the metal tubes now in position at the bays.

There is still work to be done on the bay doors.

We discussed the provision of bus information after the Travel and Tourism Centre closes at the end of March. There was a possibility that whatever business took over the premises, would house racks for timetable leaflets. Racks for these could be provided at each bay but there was a risk that they would be scattered underfoot.

The matter of delays caused by congestion was raised, as at previous meetings. It is sometimes necessary to make adjustments to timetables, if delays mean that drivers cannot keep to scheduled times. There was to be resurfacing of a road used by buses when going into or out of the Bedford Depot but this would only take a few days and the impact on bus services should be minimal.

BABUS asked whether there was a maximum number of pushchairs which could be carried on a bus, when a wheelchair user was not present. It was up to the bus driver to decide whether there was room for another pushchair; these vary in size a great deal and parents may have difficulty in folding some models.

Our next liaison meeting with Stagecoach will take place in June. Please get in touch if there are any issues which you would like us to raise on your behalf.

Summary Report of Joint Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Councils Liaison Meeting held on January 30th 2017

By Frances Horwood

As our last meeting had been in October 2016, a number of timetable and route changes had taken place since then. In Central Bedfordshire, Route 73 was now serving Engayne Avenue in Sandy again, the Council having constructed a turning circle in order for this to happen. Local residents had welcomed this change.

There would be Real Time Information screens at several stops in Sandy. Routes 72 and 73 had lost some evening journeys, in line with the Council's decision not to subsidise services after 18.30. Service 74 had a different operator, Grant Palmer, instead of Stagecoach, but the timetable had not altered much. The Council and the operator had publicised this service widely and all the Council's bus stops on the route had new timetable cases.

In Bedford Borough, Route 40 (Bedford to Milton Keynes), an underused service, since most passengers to Milton Keynes preferred to use the X5, had been withdrawn in late November. This had brought changes to Route 41 (Bedford to Northampton), which now served Bromham Village and Biddenham. An hourly service on the route went from Bedford to and from Stagsden, via Bromham Village and Biddenham, giving these intermediate villages a half-hourly service to and from Bedford on this route. There had also been changes to Services 51, 52 and 53 and a slight alteration to Service 24. From January, there had been minor changes to the Ivel Sprinter and, from January 29th,

changes to Service 50, in order to improve reliability at peak times.

Both Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Councils had held public consultations. The Central Bedfordshire Consultation on Passenger Transport took place last year. It had been decided to implement the proposed criteria for subsidies, meaning that services on Sundays, after 15.00 on Saturdays or after 18.30 on weekdays would no longer be subsidised. However, there would be no change in the times during which concessionary passes could be used. Passes would no longer be automatically renewed but would have to be applied for.

Bedford Borough Council had held consultations on Early Concessionary Travel and on the Travel and Tourism Centre. Regarding Concessionary Travel, the statutory period for free travel for pass holders is between 09.30 and 23.00 on weekdays and at all times on Saturdays and Sundays. Bedford Borough Council had been more generous than this, permitting free travel before 09.30 and after 23.00 on weekdays as well, but there was a need to make savings. The Council had proposed a fare of £1 for holders of concessionary passes to travel within the Borough before 09.30 and after 23.00 on weekdays; this would not apply to journeys on the X5, for which the full fare would have to be paid. Where villages had a very limited bus service the £1 charge might be waived. Responses to the consultation showed that most pass holders who responded were in favour of the proposed £1 charge and this would come into force on February 1st.

Regarding Bedford Borough Council's public consultation on the Travel and Tourism Centre, it had been decided to close this facility. Increasingly, people are accessing both travel and tourism information electronically. The Centre had not been intended to be primarily for travel information but this is what it had been mainly used for. BABUS was against the closure of the Travel and Tourism Centre and made a submission to the consultation; committee members also responded as individuals. We are keen that information should be easily available in a paper format as many bus users do not use computers, for various reasons. It is not intended to have a staffed facility for either travel or tourism information. BABUS welcomed the opening of this facility in Bedford Bus Station and we are disappointed that the decision to close it has been taken.

Our next liaison meeting with Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire Councils will be in May. Please get in touch if there are any issues which you would like us to raise on your behalf.

Intalink Explorer article in Newsletter 31 – an update

By Suzy Scott

Further to the list of operators we did for Newsletter 31 (that sell and accept Intalink Explorer tickets), it can now be confirmed that Uno have extended the validity of these to cover all their Cranfield services – C1, C3, C10 and C11 – in addition to the rest of the information given.

Bedford Borough Council decides to close the Travel and Tourism Centre, less than 2 years after flagship opening – on 31st March 2017.

From Bedford Borough Council

The Council has to make significant savings over the next three years as a result of a reduction in funding from Central Government and rising costs.

The Travel and Tourism Centre located at Bedford Bus Station currently provides a range of travel and tourism related services including a high volume of train ticket sales.

It is proposed to discontinue services that are available from commercial operators including train and coach tickets and bus travel information and to focus on providing information about tourist attractions in Bedford Borough. In order to reduce costs it is proposed to close the current Travel and Tourism Centre and deliver information mainly through self-service facilities at Council buildings or, potentially, other outlets.

Bedford Borough Council – Concessionary Bus Pass Changes from 1st February 2017

From Bedford Borough Council

Concessionary bus travel in Bedford Borough before 9.30am and after 11.00pm on weekdays is changing from 1 February 2017 when most free travel will be replaced by a £1.00 fare.

Who is affected?

Bedford Borough residents who have an English National Concessionary Travel pass (pensioners and qualifying disabled people).

Which bus journeys are affected?

Only journeys on weekdays that are wholly within Bedford Borough and start before 9.30am or after 11.00pm are affected. Travel at other times will continue to be free for pass holders.

What are the changes?

Pass holders will be able to travel on most of these journeys for a fare of £1.00 per journey.

The full fare will be charged before 9.30am and after 11:00pm on X5 services and on journeys beyond the Bedford Borough boundary. Travel on these services will continue to be free at other times. ***(ED: Stagecoach East have stated that Concessionary fares will be available on Service X5 during these hours).***

Are there any exceptions?

Yes, on routes where there is only one morning service (at present this applies to route 26 from Knotting, Melchbourne and Yelden) and on community transport services. Travel on these services will be free for journeys within the Borough and for a fare of £1.00 for journeys beyond the Borough boundary.

Do companions of a disabled pass holder have to pay?

No. A companion of a disabled person with a companion pass can travel free at any time within Bedford Borough.

Is the Door to Door service affected?

No. The fare for Door to Door services will continue to be free for journeys within the Borough (however, membership and booking fees are charged by the service operator).

Central Bedfordshire Bus Changes from May 2017 – in brief (see Service Changes Section for more details).

By Central Beds Council

Following the implementation of the Central Bedfordshire Passenger Transport Strategy which was adopted in November 2016 there will be some changes to bus services and routing with effect from Tuesday 2nd May 2017. Below is a list of frequently asked questions and answers that may be asked by customers. A list of all services affected and the changes that will occur is attached.

What are these changes?

Central Bedfordshire Council are implementing their newly adopted Passenger Transport Strategy to bus services within the area that are currently funded by the Council. This will mean that from Tuesday 2nd May 2017 bus services operating after 6:30pm on Mondays to Fridays, after 3pm on Saturdays and all day on Sundays will no longer be funded. Whilst the Council are withdrawing funding for these services the bus operator may choose to continue running them commercially. Concessionary bus passes will still be able to be used at any time of the day.

Why are these changes happening?

Central Bedfordshire Council consulted on a draft Passenger Transport Strategy from April – July 2016. This strategy means that the Council has a clear and open policy to apply across the area regarding funding allocation to local bus services. The consultation received over 1000 responses and was advertised on buses throughout the area as well as on the Central Bedfordshire Council website

and through many other media channels. Responses were received in both paper and electronic format from individuals, town / parish councils, businesses and other organisations across the authority. All of these comments were considered and a number of changes made to the draft strategy before it was put before the Full Council in November 2016. At this meeting the strategy was adopted. The changes that are due to occur from Tuesday 2nd May 2017 are the result of the new strategy being applied to bus services that currently receive funding from the Council.

Why have these changes not happened before?

Currently the government is reducing the amount of money it spends in many areas – this is known as austerity and has resulted in the reduction in funding provided to local authorities. Decisions have to be made by local authorities as to where the funding should be allocated. Bus service funding is only a discretionary (optional) service and local authorities are not obliged to fund buses. This is why less money is being allocated to bus services and these changes are now occurring.

Why have passengers not been consulted on these changes?

Passengers were given the chance to have their say during the Passenger Transport Strategy consultation period from April – July 2016 and many comments were received. The overwhelming result of the consultation was that those who responded were happy with what was proposed and agreed with the Council's proposals to change the method of funding bus services as well as not fund bus services

operating after 6:30pm on weekdays and 3pm on Saturdays as before these times are when the majority of people need to use the buses. Respondents were also happy with the proposal to classify bus routes into 'Primary', 'Secondary' and 'Least Used' with regard to frequency of services. Consultation has also taken place with bus operators to determine when and where bus routes are used and not used in order to determine the future provision of bus routes in certain areas.

Has the Council thought about the impact these changes will have on the disabled, elderly and other vulnerable groups?

As part of the development of the Passenger Transport Strategy an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) was carried out. This found that the changes agreed within the Passenger Transport Strategy would not be detrimental to any specific group of residents within Central Bedfordshire and the strategy prioritises delivery of transport services to the elderly and vulnerable.

Our bus driver has said the route's being cancelled! Will there be any replacement?

We have asked bus companies to inform their drivers of the changes that are occurring on Tuesday 2nd May so they can pass the information on to you. In most cases drivers will do their best to try and inform you of any changes. Although there are some services that are being cancelled in nearly every case there is either an alternative service serving that location currently or there will be another service starting on or after 2nd May but this may not be provided by the current operator. Please refer to the bus service changes

spreadsheet to see what will be changing on or after 2nd May. ***(ED: See Service Changes section from Page 17 for more information).***

I like travelling to a town outside Central Bedfordshire. What will be happening to services operating from Central Bedfordshire into Herts / Bucks / Cambs / Milton Keynes / Bedford?

Central Bedfordshire Council currently fund some services crossing over into other areas and this funding will be ending for services that operate predominantly within the other area or where the other local authority no longer wish to have a reciprocal arrangement regarding cross border funding. Whilst we will try to ensure as many existing services as possible continue there may be some changes to the cross-border services and priority would be given to the parts of the services or towns wholly within Central Bedfordshire.

If Central Bedfordshire Council stop funding the service why can't the bus company just keep operating it?

Unfortunately without funding from the Council it is very difficult for bus operators to cover their costs on poorly used routes and the costs of operating a bus can be up to £500 per day, per vehicle depending on the length of the route. Even with a reasonable amount of passengers operators cannot cover their costs without assistance from the Council. We have worked with bus operators to identify which services are not used in great numbers with a view to supporting those that benefit the most number of people.

When I get on the bus at 10am there's always lots of people on there. Why are you reducing the service? Why is it not viable?

We recognise that some bus services are well used especially by concessionary pass holders. Unfortunately whilst some journeys may be busy others at less popular times of the day may operate with only a handful of people or even empty at some times and these journeys can cause the whole service to become unviable. If there are journeys that regularly run empty or with a small number of people on the Council have to look at whether we should still support the service or whether it could be revised to operate when the most number of people need it and will use it. The cost per day of operating one bus is in the region of £300 - £500 per day so even if one or two journeys are busy this is not enough to make the service viable overall.

Can I still use my bus pass before 9:30am?

The Council were originally proposing to stop concessionary travel prior to 9:30am but due to the amount of comments regarding this during the strategy consultation this was removed and you will be able to continue using your pass 24 hours a day for travel within Central Bedfordshire. Bedford Borough Council have recently introduced a scheme to pay £1 to travel prior to 9:30am so whilst your journey commencing within Central Bedfordshire will still be free if you need to make an onward journey within Bedford Borough prior to 9:30am you will have to pay for this.

My bus pass is expiring in June. Will I still receive a replacement?

If you have used your bus pass within the past 12 months then for June 2017 renewals you should receive a replacement in the post a week or so before the old one expires. If you have not used your pass within the last 12 months but wish to retain this benefit please ask the Customer Service Agent to renew your pass on your concessionary pass record and you should receive a replacement when your pass expires. Going forward the Council are looking at ways of improving the pass issuing / renewal experience for customers. Further information will be available regarding June 2017 pass renewals shortly.

My regular bus service has changed. Will I still be able to use my pass on the new bus?

Concessionary passes are valid on all buses operating within Central Bedfordshire regardless of operator. The ENCTS concessionary pass scheme is a mandatory scheme by central government and local authorities have to administer it and follow its rules.

We'd be happy to pay something towards our bus journey as part of our concessionary bus pass in order to keep the bus services going.

The ENCTS concessionary pass scheme is a Government scheme that states that all local authorities must offer free travel for pass holders from 9:30am to 11pm weekdays and all day on Saturdays, Sundays and Public Holidays. We are unable to change these rules and as such cannot start to accept any payments as part of the concessionary scheme. Pass holders are free to pay the full adult fare

for their journey rather than use their concessionary pass should they wish to support the bus service further.

We used to have two bus services at this location giving us several travel options. Why have you reduced it to only one service now?

As part of the new strategy we have had to look at locations which have two or more services funded by Central Bedfordshire Council. We have had to consider what users would need as an essential service (i.e. to access doctors, pharmacy, shops etc.). In general we consider two supported services as a poor use of funds which could be used in other areas to improve service to locations which have very little public transport provision. In the locations where services have reduced from two to one the remaining service generally allows connections at nearby locations onto other services allowing travel to main towns which may no longer be available directly. Similarly towns / villages that have a railway station are seen to benefit from this transport link and this has been taken into account as part of the decision regarding any reduction in bus services.

Why are some services continuing to operate outside of the strategy times?

Bus operators are free to operate whatever route they choose on a commercial basis so some services previously funded by the Council may continue to operate after funding is withdrawn – this will be entirely at the bus operator's discretion. Some other services are funded from money from large developments (Section 106 funding) and these services will continue

to operate outside of the strategy times. This developer funding is controlled by clauses agreed through the planning process and is not bound by the Passenger Transport Strategy.

I've heard of Section 106 funding. Can this money be used to keep my service running?

As part of our recent work we have identified several pots of S106 money that can be used to keep services running that would otherwise have been reduced. Going forwards our aim is to try and utilise as much of this money as possible to keep the bus services at their current levels. Unfortunately in some areas there have not been many large developments and there is none of this money available. S106 is generally site specific and so in areas where there has been no developments we are unable to reallocate S106 money from other locations.

We used to like travelling on the market day services and they were well used – why have you stopped these?

There are several Tuesday only services operating to market towns outside Central Bedfordshire. These are seen as a luxury and nearly all locations they serve have an alternative bus route to access essential local services. Whilst these Tuesday only services are well patronised due to the costs of operating a vehicle on a service (covered above) they are not viable without Council funding even with 40 – 50 passengers travelling each week. We are looking at possible alternatives for some parts of these services.

There is another route that operates nearby, can it be diverted to serve our location?

In looking at the current bus service network we have looked at a number of options for diverting existing routes to serve more places and have made several changes. Unfortunately every extra diversion comes with a time cost which over the course of a day's operation can add quite a lot of extra time into the existing route and makes the journey much longer for current passengers. Some services are operated commercially by bus operators and the Council are unable to reroute these services as that is up to the bus operator. We are happy to work with bus operators to divert existing commercial routes but ultimately the final decision would be up to the operator.

I regularly use Dial-a-Ride services within Central Bedfordshire. Will these be affected by the changes?

At present the Dial-a-Ride services will continue unchanged although as part of the new Strategy we will be examining how the Council funds these services going forwards however the Council has committed to continue to fund Dial-a-Ride services in the future. Either ourselves or the current Dial-a-Ride operators will keep users updated with developments as they occur.

I use the Central Bedfordshire Travel Aid scheme. Will this be changing?

The Travel Aid scheme has remained unchanged for over 30 years and at present has a very low takeup. The scheme will remain the same at the present time but we are examining

options regarding how to redevelop / relaunch the scheme.

My bus to / from work has been cancelled / I can't travel home on a Saturday evening now. What can I do?

We have committed to fund services which benefit the highest number of people and unfortunately there are some services which are not well used but do provide a link for a small number of people which we are no longer able to subsidise. Similarly, bus patronage on Saturday afternoons / evenings in general reduces after mid-afternoon and we can no longer fund these services. Central Bedfordshire Travel Choices www.cbtravelchoices.co.uk/home or 01582 813018 can advise you on other options for travel including car / taxi sharing, walking and cycling options.

Where can I get information regarding the revised bus services?

The Council will be updating information at all bus stop locations fitted with timetable cases during April 2017 in preparation for the changes to take effect on 2nd May 2017. Information will also be publicised on the Central Bedfordshire and Travel Choices website and via Central Bedfordshire libraries and drop in centres. Unfortunately we will not be producing a printed booklet as the Council no longer has the funding to do so and these go out of date very quickly as operators change services. ***(ED: Here To There Publishing will be doing one in late Spring/early Summer, complete with regular updates)***. Bus operators will also be doing additional publicity if their routes are affected.

You are still replacing bus shelters and putting in Realtime screens / raised kerbs. Why can't this money be used to keep the buses going?

We have a small amount of money to maintain our existing infrastructure and sometimes receive some additional funding to improve the local environment, although this is not guaranteed. If this money is allocated it can only be used for its intended purpose for infrastructure and cannot be reallocated to fund bus services. Sometimes Section 106 money (mentioned above) is also allocated for improving bus stops but the use of this money is bound by agreements in the planning process and as such it cannot be reallocated.

I often use the services provided by community bus operators Flittabus / Ivel Sprinter / Wanderbus. Will these be affected?

These organisations are staffed by volunteers and receive no regular funding from Central Bedfordshire Council apart from concessionary pass reimbursements although we work closely with these organisations. As the vast majority of their services are not paid for by Central Bedfordshire Council they will be continuing as normal.

A Woburn Safari Bus? ***By Simon Norton***

For some time Woburn Abbey and Safari Park has been a disaster area for sustainable tourism -- people without cars are barred from the Safari Park and have the greatest of difficulties visiting the Abbey, especially since cuts to the buses serving Woburn village (which in my student days used to have regular services 7 days a week on United Counties 141 Aylesbury-St Ives).

It has occurred to me that one way round this would be to run a bus service under the City Sightseeing brand. This normally offers expensive hop on hop off guided tours of cities such as Cambridge and Oxford, but has the potential to offer much better value for money for tours where the journey as well as the destination is of interest, as is the case with the Safari Park.

A possible route for the Woburn Tour would run from Flitwick and Ampthill via Woburn Center Parcs, Woburn Abbey, round the Safari Park and back to the Abbey, Woburn Village and Woburn Sands. Clearly a tour of the Safari Park could not use open top buses, but closed top double deckers would be suitable. It could appeal not only to visitors arriving at Woburn Abbey on the tour bus but also to those arriving by bike, motorbike or soft top cars, which are banned from the Safari Park for the same reason as open top buses. And also to those who as they go round prefer to have an expert on board to tell them what there is to be seen.

The Woburn Tour would be run by a partnership which could comprise the

following:

Bus industry: Stagecoach, Grant Palmer, Arriva and Centrebus all connect with the above route and would therefore be in a position to sell through tickets from places such as Bedford, Milton Keynes, Luton, Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard. In addition there would be the operator that actually runs the Woburn Tour, if not one of these.

Rail industry: The Woburn Tour should be marketed all over south-east England including London, with its millions of local residents and tourists. In particular Thameslink and London Midland, who serve the stations at either end and can offer through ticketing from other places on their network, should be involved, as should the Marston Vale Community Rail Partnership, for whom promotion of the facility as an add on to rail travel on the line would surely fit in with their aims.

Woburn Park and Center Parcs would also be naturals to promote the facility, which would benefit their staff as well as bringing in visitors who might not otherwise come.

Other public and private sector organisations might also join in return for compensating benefits; for example businesses could offer discounts to tour customers, and local authorities (from Central Beds Council to parish councils) could offer discounted fares to residents.

I would hope that the following could be negotiated:

(a) Free travel for all Woburn Park/Safari Park and Center Parcs staff for journeys to/from work.

(b) Free travel for registered guests at Center Parcs for the duration of their stay and on their arrival and departure days, except to go round the Safari Park.

(c) Discounted rates for local residents (except to go round the Safari Park), who would be charged normal bus fares rather than the premium rates normally charged by City Sightseeing services.

(d) Discounted admission to the Abbey, Safari Park and other attractions for ticket holders.

The above was suggested to me by reading the Visitor Bus Toolkit produced by Nat Taplin, who successfully developed open top tour buses in the New Forest. See www.newforestnpa.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/1120/visitor_buses_toolkit

As Nat has told me he's moving to Frome I've suggested to him the development of a similar service for nearby Longleat, which has a Safari Bus but not much in the way of regular public transport links from the nearby towns of Frome and Warminster.

Central Beds Cuts - an alternative view

By Simon Norton

Elsewhere in this newsletter is a reproduction of Central Beds Council's explanation of their cuts, and in it they say (in effect) that most people surveyed have accepted that only the most basic journeys in some areas can be made by bus. Given the oft quoted dictum that one can get whatever result one wants out of a survey by choosing the questions appropriately, one wonders to what extent the "clarity" which Suzy rightly attributes to the explanations is linked to the apparent willingness of Central Beds bus users to vote for Christmas in the role of turkeys. At any rate, I feel that the point of view of bus campaigners needs to be put forward. ***(ED: This related to the lack of follow-up from such consultations I've seen too many times – see previous Newsletters re the "highlighter pen" logic used in Herts, with no follow up publicity given to changes to the plan – like the 404/405 services which were saved, and passengers none the wiser that it was to be cut!)***

In *The Road to Wigan Pier* George Orwell remarked that necessities were becoming more expensive and less available than luxuries. This is certainly true of present day transport. The bus is the only truly inclusive mode of transport: unlike driving and cycling, and to some extent walking, it doesn't demand traffic skills; unlike cycling and walking it doesn't demand physical fitness; unlike cars and taxis it doesn't demand much in the way of financial outlay, and can be used en masse without causing congestion or environmental problems; and unlike trains it can go anywhere.

A rational implementation of an "austerity" policy would, therefore, start by underpinning a comprehensive bus network catering for the vast majority of journeys beyond walking distance, while severely restricting low occupancy cars. This would have saved both private and public money, the latter because decent buses are far cheaper to provide than massive roads (including, in Central Beds, the Dunstable Bypass) or Heathrow Runway 3, or ill thought out public transport schemes such as HS2 or the Dunstable Guided Busway.

But, some might say, it is better to spend money on infrastructure, giving lasting benefits, rather than the one time benefits of revenue support for buses. However, in practice we're more likely to see increased congestion due to traffic growth, and (for both roads and aviation schemes) more noise and climate change emissions. For more details of this argument, read the Campaign to Protect Rural England's latest report on the effects of road building -- see www.cpre.org.uk/resources and click on "The End of the Road ?" or "The Impact of Road Projects in England".

Before the industrial age transport played little part in most people's lives, and one might spend most of one's life within a few miles of one's birthplace. Now, even the most basic of needs -- getting to work, school, healthcare or obtaining food -- are liable to require a journey beyond walking distance. So why haven't we advanced to the extent of regarding transport as a basic need on a par with healthcare and education ?

Here is a suggested list of minimum standards for public transport in an area such as Central Beds.

Primary routes: on weekdays (including Saturdays), hourly from the morning peak to mid evening (thus allowing time for London day trippers to return after the evening peak) -- thus adding up to about 13 journeys in all; late evening buses at weekends, and a 2 hourly service on Sundays (plus some evening buses to enable people to return from weekends away). The Sunday network should also cover major places of interest -- in Central Beds, Whipsnade, Woburn Abbey and Shuttleworth.

Secondary routes (covering routes between towns not provided by the primary network and, together with the latter, serving almost all communities): 2 hourly weekday service from morning to evening peak with provision for school travel -- thus adding up to about 6 journeys in all.

Remote villages: the few remaining communities should have worktime and school time journeys, plus shopping buses at least 2 days a week. These might run on an "as required" (demand responsive) basis where there was no existing regular demand.

How would this be paid for ? Mainly, we would hope, by savings on extravagant infrastructure projects. There is one way in which local authorities do currently have powers to raise all the money that would be needed: through a workplace parking levy, which would have the additional advantage of steering employers to sites which had good alternatives to car access.

There is also scope for raising the money needed for support by using the powers of the Bus Services Bill (currently going through Parliament) to procure a more efficient network, and by regarding bus

revenue support as a first call on Section 106 funding because of the difficulty in raising money for revenue funding in other ways (until we have a workplace parking levy).

Here is a suggested list of primary, secondary and Sunday routes wholly or partly within Central Beds.

1. The main Bedford radials are all primary routes: to Milton Keynes via Cranfield; to Ampthill and Flitwick with hourly services for Stewartby, Houghton Conquest, Maulden, Millbrook village and Center Parcs, continuing hourly to Dunstable and Luton via Toddington; to Luton via Clophill and Barton le Clay; to Hitchin via Shefford with hourly services for Arlesey and Henlow Camp; and to Biggleswade, with hourly services for Ickwell and half hourly for Sandy.

2. From Leighton Buzzard, primary routes to Dunstable/Luton, Milton Keynes and Aylesbury, with alternative routes used to cover some off route villages. From Dunstable, primary routes to Aylesbury via Tring, Luton via Caddington, and St Albans or Milton Keynes via the A5 (with detours such as Whipsnade Zoo). From Hitchin via Henlow to Biggleswade.

3. The main east-west route through the district would be shared by a pair of secondary routes, linking Hitchin and Biggleswade with Milton Keynes and Leighton Buzzard, both via Chicksands, Flitwick/Ampthill and Woburn Sands.

4. Secondary routes serving Biggleswade: via Wrestlingworth and/or Potton to Royston, St Neots (via Sandy and Blunham) and to Cambourne (via Gamlingay) for Cambridge. Serving Dunstable: via

Sharpenhoe and Barton le Clay to Shefford; and via Whipsnade and Studham to Hemel Hempstead town and station. Plus the route from Luton doing a loop to Upper Sundon, Harlington, Toddington and Chalton.

5. On Sundays, remove cars from the B4541 north of the Chilterns Visitor Centre, which is within earshot of the popular escarpment walk, with a shuttle between Whipsnade (Bison Car Park) and Luton via the guided busway, serving a new park & ride site, allowing free travel to those who had paid for parking at the Visitor Centre. The latter would cost more than now and the revenue would be used to finance the service. This would go with a 2 hourly loop route from Luton to Aylesbury via Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard returning via Wendover, Tring, Whipsnade and Markyate (or the same in reverse) that would be provided as part of the primary network.

6. Also on Sundays, divert Luton-Bedford via Streatley and Sharpenhoe; divert Bedford-Biggleswade to do a loop via Shuttleworth; and run a service between Flitwick, Woburn and Woburn Sands on the lines of the "Woburn Safari Bus" mentioned elsewhere in this newsletter.

Service Changes – January to April 2017 (Before the Central Beds review starts over the May Day Bank Holiday weekend)

By Suzy Scott

Okay, following last time's bumper selection, this time is a little quieter. As usual, we show these in date order. The forthcoming changes from May are shown from Page 18 onwards. You can download a complete timetable snapshot at **www.bedsbuses.info** with an update for the May changes to follow soon.

From Monday 29th January 2017

Stagecoach Northamptonshire Services 49/50 (Bedford – Clapham – Kettering) Minor changes in timetable, as well as no longer working across Kettering.

From Monday 19th March 2017

Stagecoach in Bedford Service 51 (Bedford – Clapham – Rushden)

Changes to the timetable affecting the first departures to and from Rushden on Monday to Friday. These departures will now depart 10 minutes earlier.

From Sunday 26th March 2017

Uno Service 610/611 (Enfield /Cockfosters – Potters Bar – Hatfield – Luton Station)

Changes of around 15 minutes on many peak time buses, mostly at the London end. Still the same level of service, just a bit more reliable.

From Monday 3rd April 2017

NEW SERVICE Courtney Buses Luton Flyer Service 350 (Luton Airport – Slough – Reading – Bracknell)

New twice-daily service. No concession passes will be accepted, with fares starting from £25. For more information call **0118 973 3486** or visit **www.courtneybuses.com**

From Saturday 8th April 2017

Metroline Services 84/84A (New Barnet – St Albans – Luton) Withdrawn north of St Albans, thus removing from Bedfordshire.

From Sunday 9th April 2017

Stagecoach in Bedford Service 81 (Bedford – Wilstead – Luton) The 04.35 Monday to Friday departure from Bedford bus station will now leave 10 minutes earlier and will arrive 10 minutes earlier throughout.

Stagecoach in Bedford Service 99 (Milton Keynes – Luton)

The 06.45 Monday to Friday departure from Central Milton Keynes and the 05.45 Monday to Friday departure from Luton Airport will depart 10 minutes earlier and arrive 10 minutes earlier throughout.

Advertisement



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www.atvbf.co.uk

We are an informal, online, bus enthusiast community, where bus operators, vehicles, services, historic happenings, service changes, politics, legislation, and much more, can all be discussed. We cover an area which expands to almost anywhere that can be reached on a day trip from Cambridge – about 100 miles.

We cover the whole of Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire, Essex, London, Surrey, Berkshire, Norfolk, Suffolk, Cambridgeshire, Buckinghamshire, Oxfordshire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Leicestershire, and beyond!

Visit the Forum online at
www.atvbf.co.uk

**Service Changes – May 2017 onwards
(mostly, but not all, as a result of the
Central Bedfordshire Council bus
review)**

***By Suzy Scott, using information from
Central Bedfordshire Council,
Hertfordshire County Council,
Centrebus and Grant Palmer.***

This is a bit more complicated... there are changes, cuts, improvements (!) and some brand-new services, as part of these changes.

There is an introductory article, complete with the best FAQ I've seen regarding changes like this, on Pages 7-12. Some changes are across the border, or run on cross-border services. After this feature, you will find the council's list of changes, which is to add some more information to this published below.

This information is correct as Thursday 24th March 2017, but may be subject to change before the date. Please double check before travelling!

Further changes MAY happen in June, but this information is not presently ready. We will pick up on that, and last minute changes to this lot, in Newsletter 33 (Summer 2017).

At the moment, www.bedsbuses.info now has a Supplement of May Changes, which (at the current time) has all bar two of the new timetables – but please keep checking back regularly. A new final file will be updated when the May/June changes have settled.

**From w/c (May Day Bank Holiday)
Monday 1st May 2017**

Centrebus Service 20 (Luton – Sundon – Toddington – Flitwick - Pulloxhill)

Withdrawn, see new Service 78 for a replacement.

**Grant Palmer Services 20/21
(Woodlands – Bedford – Abbeyfields)**

Service 20 is running earlier than now in the morning, and there are some changes to both routes in the afternoon peak.

NEW SERVICE Grant Palmer Service 34 (Milton Keynes, The Point – Magna Park – Ridgmont – Ampthill – Flitwick – Ampthill Heights)

While the weekly shoppers bus 197 is withdrawn, this is a sort of improvement. This service runs every 2 hours, six days a week, instead of once a week.

Centrebus Service 34 (St Albans – Markyate – Dunstable)

Changes to route around Dunstable (also see G), and alternate journeys divert to serve Dunstable Downs, Whipsnade Zoo and Kensworth, as a partial replacement for their withdrawn Service X31 (north/south of Dunstable). These journeys become 34.

**Arriva Service 38/38A/38D
(Dunstable – Parkside – Toddington)**

Services withdrawn. See Services 47 and 74 for other services.

Grant Palmer Service 42 (Bedford – Ampthill – Flitwick – Toddington)

Changes to running times, including a thinning out of the Saturday service. This means the Saturday late afternoon buses won't run beyond Flitwick.

NEW SERVICE South Beds Dial A Ride Service 43 (Leighton Buzzard – Hockerliffe – Totterhoe – Dunstable – Studham)

A new service of sorts, replacing existing facilities on withdrawn Services 49, 73 and X31. The service levels planned are;

- A Tuesday shopping bus to Leighton Buzzard, from Great Billington, Totterhoe, Dunstable Downs,

Meadway to Dunstable town centre. There is a separate similar service from Eggington, Hockliffe, and again to Dunstable, which has two buses in the direction to Leighton Buzzard.

- Three return journeys on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays, between Studham, Dunstable Downs, Meadway and Dunstable town centre.

Grant Palmer Service 44 (Bedford – Clophill – Flitwick) Daytime services mostly extended to Amptill Heights (Wagstaff Way). As with the 42, a thinning of service on Saturday afternoons.

NEW SERVICE South Beds Dial A Ride Service 47 (Dunstable – Leighton Buzzard – Woburn – Ridgmont – Tingrith) Another new service, replacing parts of Services 39, 48, 49 and X31. The service levels planned are;

- A Tuesday shopping service to Leighton Buzzard from Tingrith, Eversholt, Milton Bryan, Woburn, Ridgmont, Husborne Crawley, Apsley Guise and Woburn Sands. A second service will provide a facility from from Woburn and Ridgmont areas Eggington and Stanbridge. There will be two buses to Leighton Buzzard, with one bus back.
- Monday/Wednesday/Thursday/Friday shopping facility from Hockliffe, Woburn, Ridgmont, Husborne Crawley, Apsley Guise areas, to Dunstable.

South Beds Dial A Ride Service 48 (Westoning – Eversholt – Woburn – Milton Keynes) To be withdrawn, but replaced by new Service 47.

Centrebus Service 49 (Leighton Buzzard – Woburn – Ridgmont) To be withdrawn, see new Services 43 and 47.

South Beds Dial A Ride Service 62 (Dunstable – Pepperstock) To be withdrawn, see new Service 232.

NEW SERVICE South Beds Dial A Ride 74 (Dunstable – Tebworth – Toddington) This service is advertised as a new route, but will replace the current links on that route. The service provided will be;

- One bus (Mon-Fri)/two buses (Saturday) to Dunstable and Houghton Regis from Chalton, Toddington, Tebworth, and Wingfield.
- There will be two buses back from Dunstable, but the second bus will be earlier on Saturdays, versus the rest of the week.

Grant Palmer Service 77 (Hitchin – Toddington) Service withdrawn. Partial replacements will be provided by a new Flittabus Service FL10, and a change to the existing Wanderbus Service W12.

NEW SERVICE Centrebus Service 78 (Luton – Streatley – Harlington – Barton-le-Clay – Shillington – Campton – Meppershall – Shefford) New service provides most of the links presently provided by Services 20 and 79. Four return journeys per day, with the first and last not serving Harlington.

Centrebus Service 79 (Luton – Barton – Shillington – Shefford) Service withdrawn, but see new Service 78.

Herbert's Travel Service 95 (Letchworth – Clifton Park – Shefford – Biggleswade) Service to be withdrawn.

Centrebus Services 188/190 (Blunham – Sandy – Potton – Biggleswade – Henlow – Hitchin) Minor timetable changes, but on Saturdays, service revised to run Hitchin-Biggleswade only after mid-afternoon (no service north of Biggleswade).

Grant Palmer Service 197 (Biggleswade – Shefford – Ampthill-Flitwick – Milton Keynes) Service withdrawn, but see new Service 34.

Grant Palmer Service 200 (Biggleswade – Broom – Shefford – Clophill – Ampthill – Flitwick) Same number of buses Mon-Fri, with one extra bus from Siloed to Flitwick in the morning, and returning in the evening. Morning buses will run up to one hour different from the present service. Saturday afternoon service withdrawn.

Centrebus Service 231 (Luton – Slip End – Caddington – Dunstable) The 18.10 journey on Saturdays from Luton to Dunstable is to be withdrawn.

NEW SERVICE South Beds Dial-A-Ride Service 232 (Pepperstock – Aley Green – Caddington – L&D Hospital – Dunstable) Service replaces Service 62 on slightly enhanced timetable, and additionally serves Woodside. There will be three buses to Dunstable, and two to Pepperstock, on Monday to Friday (presently one on Monday or two on Tuesday-Friday). There will, however, be no service on Saturdays.

NEW SERVICE Flittabus Service FL10 (Maulden – Clophill – Silsoe – Flitton – Greenfield – Pulloxhill – direct to Hitchin) New Tuesday return service will provide a partial replacement for Grant

Palmer Service 77, but will not serve Barton-le-Clay (see Service W12 below).

Centrebus Service G (Luton – Dunstable – Langdale Estate) There are minor changes to the timetable of the G to fill some gaps left in the service to Langdale Estate by the re-routing of the 34 (last bus slightly later, an earlier first bus on a Saturday into Dunstable & an extra afternoon bus on a School Holiday between Dunstable & Langdale Estate).

Wanderbus Service W12 (Shefford – Shillington – Meppershall – Shefford – Clifton Park – Henlow – Hitchin) This Tuesday shopping service will additionally divert to serve Barton-le-Clay, as a partial replacement for Grant Palmer Service 77. (Also see Flittabus FL10).

Centrebus Service X31 (Luton – Dallow Road – L&D Hospital – Dunstable – Hemel Hempstead or Milton Keynes) Major changes to these services, which will now only operate between Luton and Dunstable with additional running time to make the service more reliable. Journeys to Milton Keynes and Hemel Hempstead have been withdrawn. The service will now operate from stand G2 at the Luton Galaxy Centre. By changing stand at the Luton Galaxy Centre, it is hoped that Centrebus will be able to improve reliability and avoid congestion at peak times at these busy stops.

Changes to subsidised bus services

Changes take effect from May 2017

Existing Subsidised services		
Route Number	Route Description	Changes to service
1A	Caldecote - Biggleswade	No change
20	Luton - Sundon - Toddington - Flitwick - Pulloxhill	To be withdrawn, replaced by new route 78
32/33	Leighton Buzzard Town Services (High Street - Weston Avenue - Brooklands)	Support to be withdrawn for Saturday afternoon journeys after 15.00
36A/ 36C	Leighton Buzzard Town Services (Linslade - High Street - Billington Park)	No change but funded from section 106 in future
37	Leighton Buzzard - Heath & Reach	No change but funded from section 106 in future
38	Parkside - Houghton Regis - Salters Way - Dunstable	To be withdrawn, replaced by new routes 47 & 74
42	Toddington - Flitwick - Ampthill - Houghton Conquest - Bedford	Support withdrawn for Monday-Friday journeys after 18.30, Saturday afternoon journeys after 15.00
44	Silsoe - Flitwick - Ampthill - Clophill - Bedford	Support to be withdrawn for Monday-Friday journeys after 18.30, Saturday afternoon journeys after 15.00. Support also withdrawn for 09.25 Silsoe-Flitwick journey on Saturdays

48	Westoning - Eversholt - Woburn - Milton Keynes	To be withdrawn, partly replaced by new route 47
49	Leighton Buzzard - Woburn - Ridgmont	To be withdrawn, replaced by new routes 43 & 47
62	Dunstable - Ridgeway Avenue - Caddington - Pepperstock	To be withdrawn, replaced by new service 232
72	Bedford - Haynes - Shefford - Henlow - Hitchin	Support to be withdrawn for evening services after 18.30, Sunday and bank holiday services
73	Bedford - Moggerhanger - Sandy - Biggleswade	Support to be withdrawn for Sunday & bank holiday services
73	Totternhoe - Eaton Bray - Billington - Leighton Buzzard	To be withdrawn, partly replaced by new route 43
74	Dunstable - Tebworth - Toddington	Enhanced timetable to be introduced
77	Toddington - Flitwick - Clophill - Barton - Hitchin	Support to be withdrawn
79	Luton - Barton - Shillington - Shefford	To be withdrawn, replaced by new route 78
81	Bedford - Clophill - Barton - Luton	Support to be withdrawn for evening services after 18.30, Sunday and bank holiday services
85/85A	Biggleswade town services	No change
89	Henlow Camp - Shillington - Hitchin	No change
95	Biggleswade - Shefford - Clifton Park - Letchworth	Support to be withdrawn
96/ 96A	Letchworth - Stotfold - Arlesey - Letchworth	No change
97	Arlesey - Stotfold - Letchworth - Hitchin	No change
112	Biggleswade - Sandy - Tempsford - St Neots - Biggleswade	No change
140	Toddington - Eversholt - Flitwick - Ampthill	No change

150	Aylesbury - Leighton Buzzard - Heath & Reach - Milton Keynes	Support to be withdrawn - service operates commercially
162	Stewkley - Bletchley - Leighton Buzzard	No change
164	Leighton Buzzard - Cheddington - Tring - Aylesbury	No change
165	Leighton Buzzard - Aston Abbots - Wingrave - Aylesbury - Stoke Mandeville	No change
167	Leighton Buzzard - Cheddington - Ivinghoe	No change
188/ 190	Blunham - Sandy - Pottton - Biggleswade - Henlow - Hitchin	Support to be withdrawn for journeys after 18.30 Monday-Friday & 15.00 Saturday.
193	Biggleswade - Pottton - Sandy - St Neots	No change
197	Biggleswade - Shefford - Ampthill - Flitwick - Milton Keynes	Support to be withdrawn, partly replaced by new service 34
200	Biggleswade - Broom -Shefford - Clophill - Ampthill - Flitwick	Amended service to be funded partly from section 106
231	Luton - Slip End - Caddington - Dunstable	Support to be withdrawn for Saturday afternoon journeys after 15.00
Busway B	Dunstable - Downside	Support to be withdrawn for evening services after 18.30, Sunday and bank holiday services
Busway C	Dunstable - Beecroft - Weatherby	Support to be withdrawn for evening services after 18.30, Sunday and bank holiday services
X31	Hemel Hempstead- Studham-Whipsnade-Luton - Dunstable - Hockliffe - Bletchley - Milton Keynes	Support to be withdrawn. Partly replaced by new routes 43 & 47, new commercial service 34
New Subsidised Services		

34	Ampthill-Flitwick-Ridgmont-Milton Keynes	Partly replaces journeys on current route 197. Funded by s106
43	Studham-Dunstable-Leighton Buzzard	Replaces journeys on current routes 49, 73 & X31
47	Dunstable-Woburn-Ridgmont-Tingrith	Replaces journeys on current routes 38, 48, 49 & X31
74	Dunstable-Toddington	Replaces journeys on current routes 38 & X31
78	Shefford-Shillington-Barton-Luton	Replaces journeys on current routes 20 & 79
232	Pepperstock-Caddington-Dunstable	Replaces journeys on current route 62
Bus providers will have the option of continuing to run services outside of these times, but they will no longer be subsidised by us.		

Contact us...

by telephone: 0300 300 8308

by email: customers@centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

on the web: www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Write to Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House,
Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, Bedfordshire SG17 5TQ