

BABUS

Newsletter 36

Summer 2018 and Annual General Meeting Notice, 7th July 2018



As mentioned in the Spring Newsletter, Uno have now taken delivery of their new Volvo/MCV buses, in normal colours but with Dragonfly branding (one of the former DeHavilland planes built on the site of what is now Hatfield Business Park, including the Uno offices and depot). One is seen here at Luton Interchange on it's first week. © Suzy Scott 2018

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 36

BABUS - serving Bedfordshire Bus Users Since 2005

	<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 suzy.scott@babus.org.uk 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 Monday 13th August 2018.</p>
	<p>The BABUS Website is also the responsibility of Suzy Scott (see previous row), and you can find us at www.babus.org.uk. 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 @BABUSbeds or online at www.twitter.com/BABUSbeds You can also join our Facebook group www.facebook.com/groups/BABUSbeds/</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 simon.norton@babus.org.uk . 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, Miss Frances Horwood, BABUS Secretary, 34 Rectory Orchard, Lavendon, OLNEY, MK46 4HB, or by frances.horwood@babus.org.uk. 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>

What's Inside This Time?

Newsletter 36 – Summer 2018

Annual General Meeting and Membership Renewals for 2018/2019	Page 4
GDPR – General Data Protection Regulations – very important!!!	Page 4
Grant Palmer Liaison Meeting Summary	Page 5
Combined Joint Liaison Meeting Summary	Pages 5-6
The Town That Refused To Let Austerity Kill Its Buses	Pages 6-8 then Page 21-22

Annual General Meeting Pull Out Supplement;

Notice of Annual General Meeting 2018	Page 9
Agenda for 2018 Annual General Meeting	Page 10
Chairman's Report	Pages 11-12
Poster – please display wherever you like!	Pages 13-16
Minutes of Annual General Meeting 2017	Pages 17-19
All about BABUS	Page 20

Response from Simon Norton on the austerity article	Pages 22-23
Here To There Publishing Bedfordshire Timetable – Special Offer	Page 23
Service Changes	Pages 24-26
Travel and Tourism Centre now Mobility Hub... but STILL no bus timetables!	Page 26
More about Anglia & Thames Valley Bus Forum and BABUS	Pages 27-28

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**, or join online at **www.babus.org.uk**

Annual General Meeting and Membership Renewals

By Suzy Scott

Following the provisional date announced in the Spring Newsletter, we can now confirm we have the AGM once again at Bedford Library, on Saturday 7th July 2018. Our speaker is the new Stagecoach East Commercial Manager, Nigel Tarrant. He will do a presentation about ***Developing the Stagecoach Bus Network around Bedfordshire***. You can find all the details you need in the pull-out centre section of this Newsletter.

Also, this is the time of the year when we need your 2018/2019 membership fees. If you are due (some of the recent ones are not) to renew, a pink spot will be on your address label, and a pink form will be enclosed. If you've not got one when you expected to, or vice-versa, please contact Simon Norton (contact details on Page 2).

GDPR – General Data Protection Regulations – IMPORTANT!!!

By Simon Norton

The General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), which came into force on 25 May, regulate the ways in which organisations like BABUS can use personal data. We keep a membership list, which has your names, phone numbers, postal and email addresses (where we have these data), on a password protected file, the contents of which we will not share with anyone outside BABUS without your permission.

We are required to seek your consent to communicate with you for reasons other than a not very clearly defined "legitimate interest" (which should cover this Newsletter with its AGM notice). Please therefore, unless you have already done so,

give your consent either by ticking the box at the foot of the renewal form, and/or you can send an email to **simon.norton@babus.org.uk** or by writing to the Membership Secretary at 6 Hertford St, Cambridge CB4 3AG with the above declaration. We would prefer to receive a communication by email so we can keep them all together, saying something like "I consent to receive communications from BABUS".

Communications can be by post, email, phone or text. You can opt out of any of these if you like (e.g. by annotating the membership renewal slip), but remember, you may miss out on communications if you don't consent to receiving material by post or (if you have an email address) email. We rarely use the other methods of communication, so don't worry about being bombarded with phone calls if you fail to opt out of receiving messages!

For corporate members, we would like to have up to date details of contact people. If you've already sent a GDPR consent email, we will use the email address from which it comes as the means of contact (unless you specify otherwise). If you haven't, then please do so as soon as possible.

For both individuals and organisations, if you don't send consent in one way or another, you may not receive future newsletters.

Grant Palmer Liaison Meeting Summary, Tuesday 24th April 2018

By Frances Horwood

This meeting was postponed from February, since BABUS had no concerns about Grant Palmer services.

By the time we met in April, a serious accident, involving one of Grant Palmer's buses, had occurred on the Luton Busway. All of the company's drivers who drive on the Busway have training in doing so, and are then monitored, and there are follow-up reviews.

The company had recently purchased two brand-new vehicles, to be used mainly in the Bedford area, particularly on Service 25. These vehicles were fitted with seatbelts. It was the third year running in which the company had bought two new vehicles. They hoped these would bring increased patronage. New timetables had been introduced on Service 25, giving residents of the villages on this route a better service. Some buses which had left shortly before 09.30 had been retimed to shortly after, since free travel for bus pass holders does not begin until 09.30. Off peak journeys on the No. 68 had been improved, giving residents of Stewartby a service to Ampthill. The company's new timetable leaflets and booklets are very attractively produced, giving a favourable impression.

The company were having difficulty getting timetable leaflets into locations in Bedford town centre, since the Central Library is only staffed from 11.00 to 16.00. However, since our meeting, there is a good stock of these in the Library. If anyone has difficulty obtaining the timetable they want, it is suggested that they telephone the company, who will send them one; large print timetables are available on request.

Our next Grant Palmer Liaison meeting will take place in September. As ever, please get in touch with Frances if you'd like us to raise any of your local issues.

Combined Bus Operators and Local Authorities (Bedford Borough, Central Beds Councils, plus Stagecoach and Uno) Joint Liaison Meeting Summary, Monday 30th April 2018 ***By Frances Horwood***

There had been some changes to Stagecoach services in April. We were disappointed that new timetable leaflets were not obtainable, since Stagecoach delayed producing these in order to encourage bus users to obtain the information online. Difficulty in obtaining printed timetables is a topic which frequently comes up in conversations on buses and at bus stops. Although Bedford Borough agreed to put timetable leaflets at Borough Hall, the Customer Service Centre and the ground floor of the Central Library, these locations are not close to the Bus Station and the Library is only staffed between 11.00 and 16.00. BABUS suggested that the Post Office would be a convenient location from which to obtain timetables and so Bedford Borough have arranged for them to be available there.

When peak-time East Midlands Trains services cease stopping at Bedford, a new bus service, W7, between Bedford and Wellingborough will begin. This will be available to anyone, not just rail users, with tickets being sold on the bus. ***(ED: see the Service Changes section for a little more)***. It will serve Bedford and Wellingborough Bus Stations, as well as the railway stations.

There had been problems on Stagecoach services for several months, with vehicles liable to break down. The Bedford depot had been short of engineers but temporary staff from other depots were now working at Bedford. In addition, the day before our meeting, Bedford Depot had received 24 buses from the now-closed Kings Lynn Depot. These, some of which were only two years old, would be put into service the following day - still in the Kings Lynn service based colours (Coasthopper etc.). Rather than being repainted at Bedford, they would be spray-painted elsewhere, one at a time. Reliability had already begun to improve and should improve further with these vehicles replacing older ones.

Timetable information at bus stops in Bedford Borough is still sometimes incomplete: some stops served by more than one operator only show Stagecoach services. Bedford Borough has new software for producing timetable information, but it is not yet ready for use. When it is in use, it will be possible to update timetable information more easily. Looking to the future, we asked about plans to deal with the closure of Bromham Road Bridge for work by Network Rail. The closure will not take place until next year, so detailed plans for coping with it were not in place yet. Before then, several traffic schemes were due to be completed, and they could mitigate the effects of the closure. There would also be major work at Flitwick Railway Station, where a Bus Interchange was to be constructed; this was still at the planning stage but BABUS will keep informed of the progress of this scheme, which should bring improvements for bus users.

The next liaison meeting will be taking place in the near future. As ever, please get in

touch with Frances if you'd like us to raise any of your local issues.

The town that refused to let austerity kill its buses

***By Aditya Chakraborty, Guardian
staff columnist***

The devastation of bus services is a silent legacy of recent Tory governments. But in Witney – David Cameron's back yard – a not-for-profit service run by locals is providing a lifeline.

'The 210 bus is a lifeline, either saving them from spending their pension on a minicab or – for the young – begging parents for a lift.'

Sit on the 210 for just a few minutes and strangers start to tell you things. They tell you crap jokes. They tell you how they were once ace footballers. About their heart problems. If you're busy, they fill each other in on their just-completed trips to the GP or Aldi. And they'll talk about how lost they'd be without this squat little bus turned impromptu social club.

"If this weren't running, I'd be knackered."

"I'd be a prisoner in my own home."

Before getting off, almost every passenger turns around and tells the driver how grateful they are.

"See you Tuesday afternoon, Dave. I'll bring the jokes."

For a mere 15-seater, the 210 holds a lot of different meanings. For its operators, it's "an ice-cream van", running from Witney to Chipping Norton through five villages in west Oxfordshire that are

otherwise starved of public transport. For passengers it's a lifeline, either saving them from spending their pension on a minicab or – for the young – begging parents for a lift. It's a new service run by and for a community that has been stripped of scores of bus routes. And that makes it a journey into a huge yet silent crisis: the shredding of our bus services.

Buses hardly get a mention in austerity Britain, yet they're among its biggest casualties. Since 2010 funding for buses across England and Wales has been slashed by a third, while 134m miles of bus coverage has been lost over the past decade. Behind these big numbers are countless small stories of everyday indignity: of your nan no longer being able to get to the shops, or your teenage son struggling to clock on for a first job; of lives stripped of independence, or days out breaking tiny budgets.

Barely any of this is reflected in the London papers or what comes out of Westminster. They care more about trains. You can see why – our privatised services are big, costly and riddled with legalised larceny. But even so, buses figure far more in our everyday travel. Then again, expensive train commutes are for the all-important middle class, while buses ferry about the poor. "Bus cuts most hurt the lowest-paid, women and young, and old people who can't just drive themselves about," says Nicole Badstuber, a transport researcher at University College London (UCL). Even as he lopped tens of billions off public spending, the then chancellor, George Osborne, claimed repeatedly: "We're all in it together."

To see what a lie that was, look at the land of the 210 bus. Oxfordshire is where

David Cameron writes his memoirs in his £25,000 shed before hosting a kitchen supper.

It's where some of Downton Abbey was filmed, and Oxford colleges sit on billions in assets accumulated over centuries. It's also where the county council is so broke that it's flirting with denying disabled children free transport to school. On 20 July 2016, Oxfordshire county council scrapped all subsidies for bus services. The devastation was instant: that same day, 54 routes stopped altogether, while many more were reduced.

"Now you've got dozens of villages in Oxfordshire with nothing. Nothing at all," David Miles told me in Witney market square one morning last week. For years the parish representative on public transport, he can reel off routes, timetables and history. "Without a bus service, a village dies. Some people can't even stay in their own homes. They have to go into care homes."

The local Labour councillor Laura Price chipped in: "Once transport goes, it's harder for a village to keep its post office, its GP. They end up being these Cotswold beauty spots where people just keep a holiday home, rather than where anyone actually lives." Miles: "And in Witney we just weren't willing to accept that."

Those about to be abandoned lived on Witney's outlying housing estates, usually pensioners who remember its days as a factory town. Perhaps they or their husband had a job with Smiths Industries and got a home on the Smiths estate. Now they are retired, possibly widowed, and depend on the bus taking them into the town centre and back

home. Those buses were to be taken off the road with, as the council's own documents admit, "no alternative services to the estates served by these routes".

Witney's retirees were hit in 2016 by a national process that began 30 years earlier. In 1986 Margaret Thatcher privatised and deregulated buses everywhere outside London. From then on, any operator could run a route through Witney or anywhere else. Since they naturally wanted the most profitable commuter routes, it was left to local authorities to subsidise services with low margins but acute social need – such as getting sixty and seventy somethings out of the house.

Thatcher promised that the new regime would increase competition and reduce costs. It has left us with rocketing fares and just five big bus operators operating on a profit margin that UCL's Badstuber puts at 9%. In the capital, where routes and fares are still controlled by Transport for London (TfL), that margin drops to 2%.

By letting private operators scoop all the profit and lumbering the public sector with the cost, Thatcher created a system that was always going to fall apart. It was just a matter of when – and the breaking point came in 2010 when her spiritual son Cameron began to inflict year upon year of spending cuts on local government.

Witney's town service had been run by Stagecoach for a fee of £95,804 per year, according to documents published in March 2015. Without that public money, the transport giant wouldn't run it. (Like

the council, Stagecoach refused to comment on subsidies but says: "Oxfordshire county council has made changes to its own contracted bus services.")

Months before the service shut, Labour's Price hoped to whip up some opposition. The reaction surprised even her. Public meetings were packed out, with passengers, shopkeepers and young people fretting about their grans. "I'll always remember one lady – she was almost in tears every time she spoke." This made her wonder: why not take over the service? Sure, it was a bit of a left turn for her – the 38-year-old's CV could be summed up as: worked in publishing, DJs northern soul records, raises a nine-year-old boy. No sign here of buses as a Mastermind subject. But "when your residents are crying because they're going to be trapped in their homes, it's not enough to say, 'Aren't the Tories evil?' This felt like that one opportunity to do something practical while in opposition."

Others soon got onboard, such as bus expert Miles, who now helps with timetabling and routes for free. Frantic tin-rattling raised the 18 grand that bought an old bus, and at the start of 2017 West Oxfordshire Community Transport (WOCT) was on the road. From the start Price wanted the venture to be a co-operative: "We need people to understand they've got a stake in making it work." Anyone paying a quid can be a voting member, drivers get a proper living wage, and whatever profits might turn up are reinvested in the business.

Continues after AGM supplement



Notice of Annual General Meeting 2018

**Annual General Meeting to be held at the
Meeting Room, 3rd Floor, Bedford Central
Library, Harpur Street, Bedford, MK40 1PG
on July 7th 2018 at 11.30 a.m.**

A poster can be found in the centre pages.

Agenda for 2018 Annual General Meeting

1. Welcome
 2. Apologies for absence
 3. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of 8 July 2017 (copy circulated)
 4. Matters arising
 5. Chairman's Annual Report for year ended 31 March 2018 (copy circulated)
 6. Treasurer's Report for year ended 31 March 2018 (copy to follow)
 7. Election of Officers
 8. Election of Executive Committee
 9. Any other business
- Break for refreshments
10. Guest speaker: Nigel Tarrant, Commercial Manager, Stagecoach East (followed by an opportunity for questions).

BABUS Chairman's Report 2017.

It has been a challenging twelve months for BABUS since our AGM last year, having been re-elected as Chairman.

BABUS was under the impression that Bedford Borough Council would be progressing the implementation of their NOVUS software in order to update timetable information at bus stops within the borough where more than one bus operator uses to pick up/set down passengers on a particular corridor. Sadly, this has failed to materialise due to internal personnel changes. BABUS wonders as to when this will be completed as Central Beds Council have managed to achieve this at all bus stops in their geographical area by using a different approach to solving the issue.

We have also been disappointed by the lack of strategic thinking that hasn't taken place by the Bedford Railway Stations Travel Plan meetings on bus/rail integration at Bedford station. A myriad of problems exist including: heavy traffic in the peak periods in Ashburnham Road, Midland Road (West) & Bromham Road, private hire taxis using the bus stops in front of the station to pick up/set down passengers, no Real Time Information screen in the front bus shelter, incorrect Bedford Borough Council timetable information as well as the entrances to both the short stay and Thameslink car parks being "unfit for purpose". Both Thameslink and the Borough Council need to "up their game" if these issues are to be rectified. We have also heard of plans to redevelop Flitwick station car park to include a bus interchange point.

But by far our biggest headache at the moment are the cuts to the Passenger Transport budget by the need for the Borough Council to make drastic savings in all departments due to a dwindling financial settlement by the government. This has led to the closure of the Travel Centre at Bedford Bus Station (as well as the subsequent lack of timetable information in the town), the loss of evening and Sunday services to surrounding towns, the ending of the Borough Councils timetable book as well as the Travel Aid scheme for those who are unemployed which ends in July 2017.

People need to lobby not only their local authority, but also their Member of Parliament as well as the local media, to make sure that existing supported bus services are protected and enhanced and that the provision of bus services ranks equal to issues such as Social Care, the local economy etc., in order to aid social inclusion for those who can't drive or own a car.

Our Regional Meetings have continued over the last three months to explore issues common to all three groups respective areas. One issue that we are looking to help with is helping to relaunch the Northampton group as it is down to one member. All three groups have also become concerned by the lack of communication from Bus Users UK (BUUK) as to what is going on within this organisation, as they have failed not only to organise their AGM for this year, but also any further Training Days.

We have continued to meet representatives of Stagecoach, Grant Palmer Bedford Borough Council and Central Beds Council to raise issues on behalf of our member. I would like to thank all those mentioned for their help in facilitating these meetings. Indeed BABUS are sorry to see Jonathan Woodhouse the Stagecoach manager at Bedford Bus Station, leave for pastures new in West Yorkshire to work for Arriva. We wish him well and look forward to meeting his replacement.

Finally, I would like to thank the committee for all their hard work over the last twelve months, especially to Frances Horwood for arranging our Liaison Meetings and producing all the respective reports, and to Suzy Scott for updating the website and for producing an excellent newsletter. Unfortunately, Ian Wigley has decided to step down as a committee member due to work commitments, and I wish him well in his future endeavours. I would encourage those who are not members to join BABUS by picking up a leaflet or looking at our website or Facebook page, or if you are a member then maybe you might consider becoming a committee member.

Colin Franklin
Chairman
BABUS

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Annual General Meeting

will be held on

Saturday 7th July 2018, 11.30

At Bedford Central Library
(Meeting Rooms), Harpur Street,
Bedford, MK40 1PG.

After the formal business, our
speaker will be

Speaker will be
Nigel Tarrant,
Commercial Manager,
Stagecoach East, talking on **Developing
the Stagecoach Bus Network Around
Bedfordshire.**
All Welcome.

For more information visit our website www.babus.org.uk
(then look for Annual General Meeting 2018) or call us on
**0871 228 2287 – 24/7 voicemail – leave a name and
number and one of our volunteers will call you back**

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Minutes of the 2017 Annual General Meeting of the Bedford Area Bus Users' Society

held at Bedford Central Library on Saturday, 8th July 2017

Minutes

Present:

Colin Franklin - Chairman

Ray Smith - Vice Chairman

Simon Norton - Treasurer and Membership Secretary

Frances Horwood - Secretary

Suzy Scott - Committee Member

Stephen Sleight - Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity

Twelve others were present, including BABUS members, representatives of other bus user groups and others with an interest in bus travel.

1. Welcome

Colin Franklin welcomed all and introduced our guest speaker, Chris Pettifer, Chair of the Association of Transport Co-ordinating Officers.

2. Guest speaker

Chris Pettifer gave a very interesting and informative talk on the work of ATCO. He then answered questions from the floor, both on the content of his talk and, in his capacity as Head of Transport Operations at Bedford Borough Council, on local issues.

Formal Business of Annual General Meeting

3. Apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Alan Sprod, Peter Williams, Alan Hunter, Doreen Hunter, Elizabeth Hunter and Godfrey Willis.

4. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of 2 July 2016 (copy circulated)

These were accepted as a true record.

5. Matters arising

There were no matters arising

6. Chairman's Annual Report for year ended 31 March 2017

Colin Franklin gave the Chairman's Report.

7. Treasurer's Report

This was given verbally by Simon Norton. He said that the Society's finances were stable and the rate of membership renewals was fairly high. BABUS had 20 group members, approximately 40 individual members, 11 strategic contacts and 4 additional members. Some groups' subscriptions were in arrears and a few individual members had not paid the current year's subscription. Any people present whose membership had lapsed, could pay at the end of the meeting, as could any non members who wished to join.

8. Election of officers

The following were prepared to stand:-

For Chairman: Colin Franklin

For Vice Chairman: Ray Smith

For Secretary: Frances Horwood.

Andrew Spearman proposed that they be elected *en bloc* and Peter Blakeman seconded. They were duly elected as Officers.

9. Election of Executive Committee

The following were prepared to stand:-

Simon Norton, Suzy Scott (in a part-time capacity) and Paul Begley. Colin Franklin proposed that they be elected *en bloc* and Martin Brookes seconded. They were duly elected to the Executive Committee.

10. Any other business

Andrew Spearman said it was not possible for him to stand for the Committee as he would be returning to the West Country. He said how much he had enjoyed his involvement with BABUS and spoke highly of the organisation.

Paul Begley asked about the future of the Travel Aid scheme, permitting half-price bus fares for unemployed people in Bedford Borough. Colin Franklin said that, when this was discontinued in the near future, there would still be the Stagecoach "Back on Board" Scheme.

Chris Pettifer explained that the Travel Aid Scheme was an operators' scheme, which the Council merely administered. This scheme would continue to operate in Central Bedfordshire but the only bus companies which would accept the passes would be Arriva and Centrebus. Colin Franklin said that he had emailed the Stagecoach headquarters about their scheme, which was not available to people who had been unemployed for over a year, but he had not yet received a reply. Chris Pettifer said that, when the Travel Aid scheme was set up, it was intended to assist people in getting back to work but had subsequently been used by the long-term unemployed.

Frank Hendrix spoke about Sunday bus services: he said that Services 85 and 85A were subsidised by the Retail Park and he wondered whether services in Bedford could be similarly subsidised. Colin Franklin said BABUS would raise this at a forthcoming liaison meeting.

The new shopping centre at Rushden Lakes in Northamptonshire was mentioned. Colin Franklin wondered whether Bedford Borough Council had showed concern at the opening of this. Chris Pettifer said it was of concern to Bedford and also other areas.

Simon Norton asked whether BABUS had had any contact with the new MP for Bedford. Colin Franklin had emailed him and received a reply stating that he was still setting up his office; Colin would email again.

There being no further business, the formal meeting closed. BABUS had booked the room until 12.45 and so informal conversations continued until then.

The group for anyone who uses the bus... whichever bus you use...



If you'd like to become part of a group with a proven track record in helping as well as lobbying, across Bedford Borough and parts of Central Beds, then we'd love to hear from you! You can find our brochures in many libraries and information points around Bedfordshire. Alternatively, please call 0871 228 2287 anytime, 24 hours a day. Leave a message with your name and address, and tell us where you saw this advert, and we'll send you a brochure, and copy of our most recent Newsletter. Or, email **2018advert@babus.org.uk** or visit our website at **www.babus.org.uk**

BABUS

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Information correct at February 2018 Posters and adverts designed and published by



Calls to our telephone numbers are charged at 10p a minute plus your provider's Access Charge. BABUS generates no income from the use of these numbers.

The result is a mini-miracle, made of love and sweat. Price and a handful of others give their time for free. If a driver goes off sick, one of the directors gets behind the wheel. There's no bus depot, just a corner of a yard rented cheap. Even though he's paid only a part-time wage, the operations manager, Andrew Lyons, works 60 hours a week and will nip off on a Sunday to wash the buses. At 52, he supplements his earnings by driving a minicab; the day we meet, he's booked to do a midnight run down to Gatwick.

West Oxfordshire now fits into a small tradition of alternative bus providers. You can find community bus services in east London and west Norfolk. There are also a few of the old municipal bus companies still kicking about, especially in Nottingham and Edinburgh. Price can see the irony of a local Labour politician forming part of Cameron's "big society", in his old parliamentary seat, but she says: "This is about real localism – us doing things for our community who would otherwise be abandoned. That's a Labour tradition, not a Tory one."

'One Sunday a month, Hartley drives a load of regulars to a garden centre or to Cirencester – for free.'

After just 16 months, it not only breaks even, it's expanding. The fleet has gone from one to four buses (none less than 10 years old). The town service runs "like a Swiss watch", says Lyons, and throughout our chat his eyes barely rise from the smartphone app that keeps tabs on their progress. Other villages kept petitioning WOCT to run a service for them, so this February it began the 210 to Chipping Norton.

The 210 takes you on a trip through what austerity looks like in west Oxfordshire. You go through housing estates barely two decades old littered with bus shelters, yet with hardly any buses now driving through them. You see beautiful rolling plains, while lurching over roads so full of bumps and potholes that, as the driver Dave Hartley says, "It's like driving over braille." Yet the passengers are so cheery it feels like you're off for a bit of five-a-side. Everybody loves these buses, although they swear blind that "it's the older ones who really benefit". Even the eighty somethings use that line.

A Doncaster transplant, Price says: "I know all about left-behind towns, but here I see so much wealth and investment – then you tell people living on the Smiths estate that we haven't got this little amount of cash for a bus that enables you to carry on living your life independently." By the middle of the 2020s, Oxford will have a £7bn trainline and road to Cambridge. This is what growth looks like in today's Britain: publicly subsidised giveaways to a clutch of businesses, transport companies and estate agents, under the guise of building a "brain belt". Meanwhile, the pensioners and the less well-off are treated as unwelcome tourists in their own towns.

Here is the choice: Britons can throw tens of billions at infrastructure projects that show footloose businesses how needy we are; or we can choose policies that serve the everyday economy that the rest of us actually live in. An everyday economy certainly includes buses that help people get around their community rather than only zip along a commuter belt.

For all the popularity of its rail policies, Labour has been slow on the wipeout of bus services. It should face down the likes of Stagecoach and call for an end to the current wild west of bus provision outside London. It should plan for other regions to have the same powers over bus services as Sadiq Khan and TfL (as nodded to by Theresa May's Bus Services Act). Support the establishment of more municipal bus services. And it should compel commercial operators to co-operate with municipal and community bus services and even advertise their routes and timetables.

You don't meet many people like Price and the rest who have set up west Oxfordshire's newest bus company. One Sunday a month, when the buses are idle, Hartley drives some regulars to a garden centre or to Cirencester for free. For all we expect from public transport, it is a community service and it should be run in that spirit. On one of the few occasions I could get him off tracking the progress of the buses, Lyons explained why he jacked in a decent position with Stagecoach for the hassle of organising a local service.

"The bus to these people isn't just a bus: it's a social club," he said. "It's their whole way of interacting with the world around them. Witney is the world as far as they're concerned. That matters to me more than a secure job at Stagecoach. It just matters."

Response from Simon Norton, our Membership Officer & Treasurer;

We must congratulate Aditya Chakraborty on getting the issue of buses into a major national newspaper. However we should warn against any impression that voluntary effort can in any way replace a properly funded network.

The 210 provides 5 journeys from Witney as far as the Wychwoods, with 3 continuing to Chipping Norton. One can use the service to get to a job in Witney -- provided one can rely on being back at the bus stop by 17.20. But no chance of reaching a job in Chipping Norton, let alone Oxford, and no buses on Saturdays, let alone Sundays.

Witney has a very frequent bus service to Carterton. There one falls off the edge of the world. The Great Purge took away the service to Swindon, thereby isolating the string of villages leading to Lechlade. I used this route regularly in the 1970s as a way of getting from Cambridge to the Cotswolds, changing at Lechlade for Cirencester (current route 76/77).

On the south side of the county is the market town of Wantage. This too is on the edge of a cliff, having lost both the connectional service from Harwell to Newbury and the direct bus that used to run on Saturdays, both of which also gave access to the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). Nor is there any service to villages such as Uffington, well

known for its White Horse on the Downs but also home of an interesting local museum. Even before The Purge, however, the museum wasn't easy to visit, as it only opened on Saturday and Sunday afternoons and the Saturday bus service finished at lunchtime. I managed a visit on the last day of service, afterwards walking to Ashbury for the 47 Lambourn-Swindon - incidentally, together with the Lambourn-Newbury service that used to make timetabled connections, one of the prettiest bus routes in southern England. But in the hot weather it was an exhausting walk !

But perhaps the worst "W" of all is the small market town of Watlington, on the edge of the Chilterns AONB. It has 5 buses a day to Oxford and 2 a week to Wallingford, and that's it. The community bus that once provided a link to Lewknor, 3 miles away with frequent buses 24 hours a day on Stagecoach's Oxford Tube and Go Ahead's airport services, has disappeared. The whole area as far east as Marlow (over 10 miles away as the crow flies), which includes historic Stonor Park and the village where "The Vicar of Dibley" was filmed, is now a complete desert as far as public transport is concerned.

Simon Norton

Here To There – Printed Timetable Offer

By Suzy Scott

We have produced a bus and rail timetable, covering all of Bedfordshire – that is Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton Borough Council areas. This is a loose-leaf one which you can get updated every quarter, and your book purchase gets 20% off these too!

The book costs £35, but we have a very special offer for BABUS members – you get £5 off, and the book (including maps as well as all bus and train timetables we can get our hands on!)! Updates are subject to an additional fee, but you can get 20% off the purchase of these hard copies, when you buy the book.

You can get the discount by using the code BABUS in the checkout cart, and you can buy online via <https://tinyurl.com/ycf5snp7> or <https://heretothere.bigcartel.com> and search for Bedfordshire timetable.

As most of our customers don't have access to the Internet, we can take cheques or postal orders made payable to Here To There Publishing Ltd, and sent to the company at Apartment 4, 38-40 Stonehills, Welwyn Garden City, Hertfordshire, AL8 6PD.

We can also take card payments by telephone seven days a week (we now accept MasterCard, Visa and American Express too!) – call us on 01707 329071 and talk to one of the team – they will assist you, or Suzy will give you a call back normally within 24 hours.

Service Changes

By Suzy Scott – compiled using information from Caroline Mathieson, Central Bedfordshire Council, Centrebus, East Midlands Trains, Hertfordshire County Council, Leonard Lean, Wanderer and Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council, as well as leaflets picked up on my travels.

Following the catch-up last time, there is not a lot to report. Some Centrebus changes, overlooked Arriva changes, and road works take top billing this time round – anything overlooked will be included next time.

Welwyn Garden City Bus Station

The new bus station opened on Sunday 20th May 2018, a little behind. While there are still no staff facilities, public toilets, or enquiry office (other than the electronic information point), we did get an extra stand out of it! Bus stop numbers have been replaced by letters. First morning shot taken by the wife;



© Caroline Mathieson 2018

Wanderbus W4 and W14 - Stand B.
Centrebus 366 to Luton from Hatfield - Stand B
Centrebus from Luton to Hatfield - Stand E.

Upper Caldecote roadworks

Due to bridge re-construction, Ickwell Road in Upper Caldecote will be closed between Tuesday 3 April 2018 and Tuesday 31 July 2018 for 24 hours a day.

During the closure, Grant Palmer service 74 will not be able to serve Upper Caldecote.

An emergency shuttle bus service, numbered 74S, will be operated by Grant Palmer between Upper Caldecote and Biggleswade for the duration of the closure. This will connect with the regular service 74 at Sainsbury's in Biggleswade, in both directions of travel (timetables are available at the village shops in Upper Caldecote and at our customer service centre in Biggleswade High Street.

Alternatively, service 74 can also be caught at temporary stops located on Hill Lane, adjacent to G&M Growers.

From Sunday 11th March 2018

Arriva Luton Town Service 11 (Luton, Church Street - Wigmore Lane, Asda) This recently-introduced service is withdrawn.

Arriva Luton Town Services 32/33 (Luton, Church Street – Hockwell Ring) Revised timetable of these services, with changes to early morning and evening journeys.

From Monday 7th May 2018

Arriva Luton Town Services 28/28B (Luton, Silver Street – Hockwell Ring) Service revised to serve Bury Park.

From Sunday 20th May 2018

NEW SERVICE Stagecoach Midlands Service W7 (Wellingborough – Bedford, on behalf of East Midlands Trains)

As was explained in more detail in the Spring Newsletter, a new peak time service from Wellingborough to Bedford in the morning peak, and back in the afternoon peak, to replace train stopping calls removed to make way for expansion by Thameslink. The buses start from Wellingborough (Multi Storey Car Park) at 06.21, 06.45, 07.19, 07.43, 08.09, 08.43, before continuing to the Wellingborough Rail Station forecourt five minutes later, then 37-45 minutes later, arriving in Bedford Bus Station (Bay E) before arriving at Bedford Rail station a further 3-5 minutes later.

The return starts from Bedford Bus Station (Stop E) at 16.20, 16.50, 17.20, 17.51, 18.20, 18.56, then Rail Station (R2) eight minutes later, continuing to Wellingborough Rail Station a further 42 minutes later, then the Multi Storey Car Park a further five minutes later.

Tickets will be sold on the bus also, and you don't need to be connecting to or from a train. Adult Single £8.70, Day Return £10.20, no bus passes are valid, but railcards for the elderly and disabled etc. are welcome as usual.

From Sunday 27th May 2018

Centrebus Luton Town Services 10/10A (Marsh Farm), 17/17A (Telescombe Way) and 19 (Stopsley)

Minor timetable changes on these services.

Centrebus Luton Town Service 34/35 (St Albans – Dunstable – continues as X31 to Luton)

Wholly

revised timetable (almost all buses serve Langdale Estate, replacing X31);

Monday to Friday timetable sees an hourly service as Service 34, leaving both ends much earlier (on the hour). Four or five separate 35 short journeys will run Dunstable – Whipsnade Zoo. Mon-Fri journeys will continue as X31 to Luton, but there is no mention of this on the timetable.

Saturday sees four through buses to St Albans (only one to the station, some 34 some 35) plus a daytime hourly service from Markyate to St Albans. No Service X31 connections at weekends.

Centrebus Service 231 (Luton, Park Square – Caddington – Dunstable)

Minor changes around school times on this service.

Centrebus Service 366 (Hatfield – Welwyn Garden City – Luton Interchange)

New timetable sees buses now running a few minutes earlier throughout the day (and now, just ahead of the also-hourly 610!) So, you wait 59 minutes for one of the two, and they both come along at once...

Centrebus Busway Services AZ and ZA (Luton – busway – Dunstable – Houghton Regis – Luton)

Minor timetable changes reflecting change of point where the services change number to Dunstable – but also see under Friday 15th June 2018.

Centrebus Service X31 (Luton, Galaxy – Dallow Road - Dunstable)

Major changes to these services. Route will run (no service to Langdale Estate, now covered by 34)

Monday-Friday hourly Luton through to Dunstable (to/from 34) and an extra

hourly from Luton to Skimpot (half hourly combined to Dallow Road), and a half hourly peak Luton – Dallow Road only.

Saturday half hourly service from Luton only as far as Dallow Road/Warren Road, no services to Dunstable or continuing to/from 34.

From Friday 15th June 2018

Centrebus Busway Services AZ and ZA (Luton – busway – Dunstable – Houghton Regis – Luton) Last day of operation – services withdrawn.

From Friday 13th July 2018

Wanderbus Service W5 (Meppershall – Baldock) Will now operate on 2nd and 4th Fridays of the month, instead of every Friday.

Travel and Tourism Centre now Mobility Hub... but STILL no bus timetables ONE YEAR ON!

By Suzy Scott

Last year at our Annual General Meeting, mention had been made that the former Travel and Tourism Centre was to be reopened as a Mobility Hub – but with an information stand of bus timetables. Many months (almost a year) later, BABUS liaison meeting minutes had said at least one bus operator had tried to offer them a leaflet holder to take some leaflets, only to be told they were not allowed to stock them – despite being located in the Bus Station...

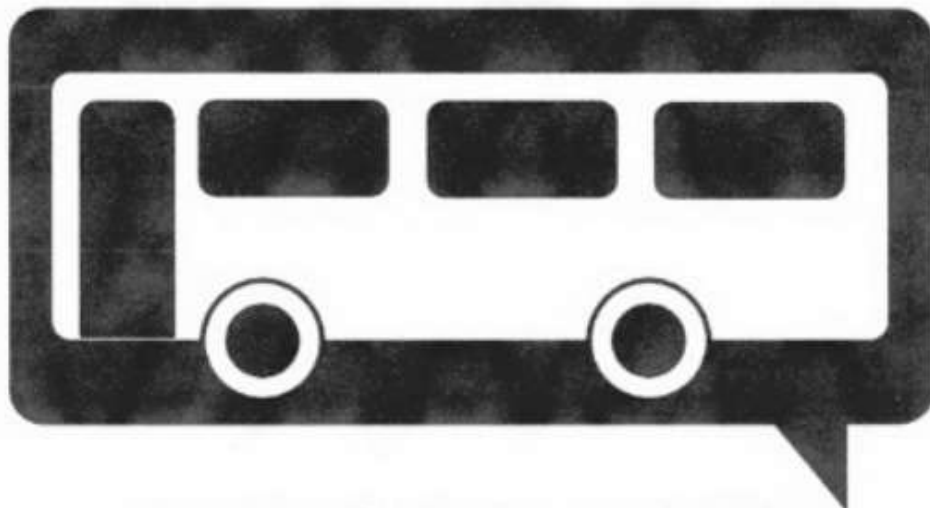
... So, under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, I requested information as to why and where about (1) letting it out now as a Mobility Hub, and (2) information as to why they aren't allowed

to stock bus timetables. The reply from the council is as follows..

"In reply to the point 1 - It was corporate decision taken by Bedford Council to close the TIC unit in the bus station. The unit was marketed and Shop Mobility, a local business offering mobility scooters, made an offer to take a new lease. The location for them in terms of being close to the Allhallows car park and having good access for people arriving in to town by bus worked well for them. (snip) The estates department followed council procedure and achieved the ' Market Rent' for the unit, in other words got the most amount of rent reasonably expected to be achieved based on the location, size etc of the unit.

In reply to point 2 - We did discuss the issue of displaying some bus timetables within the shop with the new tenant however this never ended up going anywhere. Our position is that we have not said the unit cannot be used for timetables and if required we could discuss the matter with the tenants again and I am confident a small area of the shop could be allocated for the timetables. That said, bus timetables are not part of the Shop Mobility business model so they are not obligated to do so and neither would any other business in the future. The discussion was based on the fact people had come to expect bus timetable information to be available within the unit because this is what the TIC did."

Well, as the x-files would put it "the truth is out there"... but as to what's happening now, keep an eye here!



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