



NEWSLETTER No 2, Spring/Summer 2012

Dear Member

Welcome to our Spring/Summer newsletter. What better way to enjoy the countryside in the summer than a trip by bus!

One of the things we are researching and hoping to put together is a brochure/leaflet of some of the attractions around the area accessible by bus including those that are perhaps less well known. A sort of bus routes hidden gems. So if you know of a particular place, church, museum or anything unusual which can be readily reached by bus do please let us know.

We've been very busy again and below is a summary of what we've been up to.

Bath City Conference 2nd May

Bath Bus Users Group was very lucky to be offered an exhibition stand at the conference as there was quite a waiting list. Our stand attracted a lot of interest as transport was a key issue in the discussions and question and answer sessions taking place throughout the day. We displayed leaflets from all the bus operators and people seemed genuinely surprised at just how much was available.

Bus travel definitely isn't being promoted widely enough.

One of the best deals is the Bath Rider which is a multi-operator ticket for the whole city. The daily cost is £4.95 for an adult and £3.70 for a child. But it can only be bought at the Bus Station, the Visitor Centre in Abbey Churchyard and at the tourism centre on Platform 2 at the Railway Station.

Although the ticket covers a wide East-West and North-South area beyond the inner city it means that unless you are within walking distance of these venues it will cost you an extra £2.50 or thereabouts to travel into town to buy it.

We have raised this with the Council to request the ticket can be purchased at other outlets and you may have seen our letter in the Chronicle (17 May) pointing this out.

From the conversations and feedback we had it is clear that the public want to use the buses more but the biggest deterrent is the high cost of fares.

Other cities in the UK have fare structures which include flat fares and much wider use of multi-operator tickets and we are constantly pushing this with the operators and the Council.

The time may be coming when a serious campaign needs to be launched to address this as more people on the buses would reduce congestion and improve air quality and generally contribute to more sustainable transport.

If any of you have ideas about promoting this please contact us.

Bus Surgery 4th May

We have been collaborating for over a year with Bus Users UK to arrange for a bus surgery to be held in Bath. We were very pleased this finally happened and although the location provided by the Council was more in the tourist belt than closer to the local, residential bus travelling population, it proved to be a valuable opportunity to get reaction from bus passengers. Bus operators, Council transport officers and ourselves were on hand all day to answer questions and take written comments.

Bus Users UK sent us the results of the public survey and the key comments were

- the very high cost of fares (no surprise there)
- multi-operator tickets should be widely available as there are several operators in the city
- the Bus Station information office to be open all weekend
- Real time information screens to be positioned in the centre of the bus station as opposed to one end
- the lack of a comprehensive timetable covering all operators for the city/area

More information on Bus Users UK and all that they do on behalf of bus passengers is available on their website www.bususers.or

Meet the Manager 8th February

Natacha Tagholm has been appointed as Regional Customer Services Manager South West and Wales and is holding open sessions throughout the region to give passengers the chance to discuss local issues.

She came to Bath bus station on 8th February and she mentioned that there is a plan for a customer panel to be formed in Bath which will have representatives from a broad cross section of the community.

She said that she was in the process of a wide-ranging revamp of marketing throughout the region. So watch this space as nothing concrete as yet

Meeting with Roger Symonds, Cabinet Minister for Transport

21 February

At all of our meetings with the Council and Bus operators we continuously raise the issue of the importance of a good and affordable public transport system as a sustainable and green alternative to the car.

Our committee met with Cllr. Roger Symonds and Andy Strong in February.

We raised the question of 'transport hierarchy' that theoretically informs policy making. The hierarchy has pedestrians as a first priority followed by public transport and private transport last. We suggested this often seemed to happen in reverse and asked how deliberately this hierarchy was brought to bear on planning and transport decisions.

Air quality continues to be a major issue in the city so it is a positive move that First's trial for the hybrid bus on the Park and Ride routes has been successful.

Bus Grant

In March, Norman Baker, LibDem Minister for Transport announced that Bath is to have 8 new low carbon buses as part of the Coalition Government's Green Bus Fund. First Somerset & Avon have been awarded a grant of £650,442 for the fleet that will emit one third less carbon than their diesel counterparts.

Don Foster, MP for Bath was quoted in the Chronicle

"Buses are a crucial part of Bath's infrastructure so as a Liberal Democrat I am absolutely delighted that we are backing the environment and making significant investments in low carbon transport.

Bath residents make good use of our buses but my Liberal Democrat colleagues and I want to get more people out of their cars and on to public transport."

Roger Symonds, LibDem Council Cabinet Minister for Transport added

"This excellent initiative and award by Norman Baker MP will help us, through our partners First, to deliver an excellent P&R service with these hybrid buses. It will also help the council towards its carbon reduction targets and in making our air quality better."

Whilst this is good news and a green step forward it still doesn't solve the problem of all the main routes being too expensive for families to use them.

For a family and more than one person travelling together it is still cheaper to get a taxi or go by car.

Local News

Last December we had a site visit in the snow to ask for the bus stop outside the Hadley Arms at the entrance to The Avenue in Combe Down to be moved as the bus stop was in line with some massive tree roots. These became very slippery and were difficult to walk over especially for anyone with a buggy, shopping trolley or a stick.

The bus stop is now being moved and we were assured last week it will definitely happen this summer. Unfortunately too late for one elderly resident who had a bad fall and suffered a fracture and spent some time in the RUH.

We have kept up the pressure on the Council to speed this up before there is another serious accident.

Please let us know of any other local issues you would like us to follow up.

We're sorry we felt it necessary to put up our subscription from £3 to £5 a year. (That's still about the cost of a couple of bus trips into town!), but we are digging deep in our own pockets to go to meetings and we need to spend some money on publicity materials to raise our profile and keep the various issues alive.

For those of you who haven't yet renewed we hope you will continue to support us and we look forward to hearing from you!