

## Report of Local Transport Officer: January 2020.

### Buses:

The promised workshop meeting between the Woodbridge Area Bus Action Group (WABAG) and First Bus management took place on 16th January. Unfortunately, late confirmation by First resulted in representatives from only Woodbridge, Melton, Martlesham and Kesgrave being able to attend. However, a wide-ranging and open exchange of views took place, a key element being the recognition by local representatives that First was a commercial business which had to make a profit on all its activities and by First that the result of the September 2019 changes had been a significant reduction in service to many areas. The impact of increasing traffic congestion on bus services was discussed - buses needed more time to complete their journeys with a consequent need for either more buses to provide the same service, or a reduction in service level. There seems to be no commercially or politically acceptable solution to this. The 'new look' timetable leaflets attracted praise, but there was concern that it was difficult to obtain printed copies.

Both Kesgrave and Martlesham suffered loss of service to some areas in September, as did Woodbridge, Melton and Rendlesham, a situation not helped by the ending of financial support from BT for additional journeys on the 66 group of services. In addition to this, mechanical failure had meant 20% of buses missing out the main town centre stop on the busway at Kesgrave.

It was agreed that First would consider Melton PC's suggestion for rerouting service 65 via Melton Road and using the time saved to implement *one or more* of the following:-

- serving the Peterhouse Crescent area in Woodbridge;
- serving the Black Tiles area in Martlesham;
- serving the Fentons Way area in Kesgrave; and
- serving the 'island' stop at Ipswich Hospital on journeys towards Woodbridge.

It was recognised that *not all* of these would be. The need for these changes, possible within existing resources, to be implemented *before* the next likely network review (probably September 2020) was emphasised.

Various other changes affecting only Kesgrave and Martlesham were also discussed - these would require a longer timescale to be implemented.

Whilst ways of improving services for Rendlesham were discussed, restoring the linkage with the Park-&-Ride service 800 was unlikely. The potential for using CIL funding was mentioned.

### Trains:

New timetables came into effect nationally on Sunday 15th December - locally Sunday services on the Lowestoft - Ipswich East Suffolk Line are now hourly whilst evening peak service from London make better local connections from the fast "Norwich in 90" trains.

This good news was overshadowed by problems with the introduction of the new train fleet, which resulted in a very large number of very late or cancelled trains for much of December.

Most of the bi-mode (electric *and* diesel) class 755 trains are now in service on local lines. However, the problem has moved to the Norwich - London expresses, where only a handful of the new class 745 trains are so far in service. It is hoped that the new fleet will all be in service by May.

Geof Butterwick  
Local Transport Officer  
20th January 2020