

## **Minutes for the Quality Bus Partnership Meeting held on Friday 9 March 2007 2-4pm Hastings Town Hall.**

### **Present:**

Sarah Cook (SC)	Transport Planner, Hastings Borough Council
Don Benn (DB)	Passenger Transport Manager, East Sussex County Council ESCC
Jon Wheeler (JW)	Transport Strategy Manager, ESCC
Mark Evans (ME)	Transport Officer, ESCC (Leading on the set up of Eastbourne QBP)
Keith Hayward (KH)	Parking Enforcement Manager, Hastings Borough Council
Neil Instrall (NI)	Operations Director Stagecoach in Hastings
Paul Harding (TB)	Stagecoach Operations Manager
Cllr Matthew Lock (Cllr ML)	Lead Member for Transport & Environment, ESCC.

### **1. Introduction and Apologies:**

Councillor Lock chaired the meeting.

Apologies had been received from:

Paul Southgate (PS)	Managing Director of Stagecoach in Hastings & East Kent
Cllr John Wilson (Cllr JW)	Lead Member for Environment & Safety, Hastings Borough Council

### **Minutes Prepared by:**

Julie Nolan

### **2. Minutes and actions from previous meeting (8 December 2006)**

**Day Rider Tickets:** NI circulated figures comparing the number of Dayrider, day return and free concessionary journeys in Hastings for the year. He advised the meeting that various factors were pulling against each other, but it would seem that day rider tickets are replacing day return tickets. There has been a 40% overall growth in concessionary travel, varying from route to route, but experience would suggest that growth has come from existing passengers. The actual figures are to be kept confidential between the QBP partners as disclosure is governed by rules under the Competition Act 1998.

From 1<sup>st</sup> April the bus companies will start to be paid by the number of concessionary journeys made rather than a fixed sum based on the number of passes in circulation. ML queried whether the concessionary scheme has resulted in a reduction in traffic, as he felt it was important to prove that this is having the desired affect, particularly in relation to the controlled parking zone proposals for St Leonards. **Action: JW will look at traffic counts**

**New Bus Stop – St Helens Crescent:** DB advised the meeting that as a quick fix was needed, it was proposed that a plate be attached to a lamppost outside La Marne Court.

Residents will be consulted and it is hoped that the plate can be installed in May/June. **Post meeting note: Residents of Le Marne court were overwhelmingly in support of the new bus stop!**

**Railway Station:** DB confirmed that the Station Plaza and Priory Quarter planning applications were in. Under the Priory Quarter scheme 7 new bus stops were proposed. The conclusion of the Atkins report had been similar to that of Brett's, in that they considered there was a good spread of services and Section 106 monies would be best spent on extending services into the evenings. (£90,000 per year for the next 5 years had been asked for through S106 form ESCC, the sum being index linked).

**Bus Shelter – Havelock Road:** DB advised the meeting that Bus Stop G was considered to be too small for the number of buses serving that stop. It was proposed to move the stop further towards the lights, in order that additional bus length could be accommodated. This could be paid for by Seaspaces as part of their Gap Site development Section 106. ESCC are currently looking into how this can be achieved. **Action: JW to speak with Seaspaces and chase up design options for the stop.**

**Parking Attendant Training:** KH confirmed that the PA's induction training included equalities, but did not touch specifically on DDA. The training does cover bus stop enforcement. NI confirmed that drivers do get training on what to do when they cannot access bus stops with low floor buses because of parked vehicles.

### **3. Minutes of the QBP Stakeholder meeting on 20 December 2006.**

It was noted that the Stakeholder Group is working as a focus for complaints and suggestions, and it was felt that the Stakeholders now have a better understanding of the processes involved in delivering bus services. NI raised the issue of questions being submitted directly to Stagecoach after meetings, by members of the group who had not attended the meeting itself. It was agreed that a deadline for questions should be upheld, with any questions submitted after that date being referred to the following meeting.

NI queried whether there should be time limit on how long any individual can serve on the group, as he felt that there was a danger that meetings could become stale. ML agreed that new representatives would be able to put a fresh point of view, and felt that stakeholders should be asked if they wish to adopt this, or whether they are happy with the current arrangements. DB also felt that there might be a need to invite new members to represent different parts of the town.

**Action: SC to write to all Stakeholders asking for their views.**

### **4. Parking Issues**

**Conquest Hospital:** KH advised the meeting that although there has been an increase in parking in the area, there was not a significant increase in illegal parking.

**Bus Stop Clearways:** KH reported that they are continuing to deal with clearways, and the number of Penalty Charge Notices issued on bus stop clearways was 25% up on last year, from 756 to 946. He felt that the increase was due to more clearways being in place, and PA's being trained to concentrate on buses, with tickets being issued rather than drivers being just moved on. NI felt that the practice of a PA travelling on buses was extremely useful and something that should be looked at for Eastbourne as they introduce controlled parking and a Quality Bus Partnership.

### **5. Highway Issues**

**Bus Lane Extensions:** JW advised the meeting that the work to the Warrior Square bus lane should commence in April. In Winchelsea Road contractors were on site at the moment and the programme was due to be finished next week.

**Traffic Signals - Battle Road Bus Corridor:** Siemens are due to carry out work at this location, and will look at any adjustments that can be made to improve bus punctuality.

**Bexhill / Hastings Link Road:** Consultants are working on ancillary measures, and exhibitions will be held within the next couple of months on the measures proposed. ML still felt that it was important that a fast bus service be introduced on the new road and be in place from day one, linking the employment and housing development sites. Research shows that most of the traffic using Bexhill Road originated from the Bexhill / West St Leonards area, but while conceding that the new road will be as valuable as a bypass for Battle as for St Leonards, ML felt that the introduction of new faster routes are important as they send a clear message that controlled parking is not about revenue raising but about new services for the public. PH confirmed that Stagecoach's commercial manager was looking at this possibility, and it was agreed that this item should be included on the agenda for the next meeting. **Action: SC to include this on the next agenda.**

## 6. QBP Action Plan

SC referred the meeting to the attachments sent out with the minutes of the last meeting. The number of targets for 07/08 and 08/09 are to be reduced from 21 to 14 on the advice of the Peter Brett Report, but as some of the 14 are to be included in the Punctuality Improvement Partnership (PIP) targets, the number will be 10.

Partners were asked to consider including an additional target relating to customer satisfaction and how this might be monitored. The QBP already have very good survey figures from the Brett and Shires reports. The Peter Brett report carried out their surveys in Hastings town centre, whilst Shires had carried out their survey on the buses themselves. DB felt that there may be an issue with funding, but NI felt that it was important that the surveys be independently compiled and it would be better to pay for independence than face criticism about a lack of impartiality. He suggested that perhaps the local colleges' Business Studies unit could be approached to carry out surveys as part of the syllabus to be carried out every year, as a way of involving local students and saving money. However, DB felt that the use of students may be seen as not professional, but any consultants employed could be asked to utilise local students in the carrying out of surveys.

SC confirmed that the Stakeholders have been asked for their in-put into the Action Plan. The plan will be a process of continual improvement, and will incorporate a vision statement as suggested by Brett.

**QBP Delivery Framework:** A decision will soon be needed on whether the QBP remains voluntary or becomes a Statutory Partnership. SC advised the meeting that government guidelines state that any infrastructure improvements have to be in place before a statutory agreement is signed. The group agreed that this was unachievable. It was also felt that statutory status may result in the group becoming more cautious and that progress may inevitably be stifled. It was provisionally agreed that the proposal to Cabinet should be that the group remains voluntary, although Paul Southgate will have the final say for Stagecoach. SC will arrange a meeting between DB, SC, ML and JW to agree the details, ready for the next meeting on 8 June, before putting their recommendation to Cabinet before the end of July. Once this has been done, the Action Plan can be re launched and it was agreed that this should be publicised with the press and stakeholders invited to see the documents being signed and sealed. **Action: SC to arrange meeting. (Meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> March)**

## 7. Bus Stop Improvement Programme

JW advised the meeting that Phase 5 of the scheme is ongoing. Some works have slipped into April but all works should be completed by the end of April beginning of May. Phase 6 will be designed during 2007/8 and built over the 2008/09 financial year. Works to be carried out in 2009/10 have been identified in the draft capital programme. Additional bus stop improvements may be carried out as an integral part of other schemes. JW confirmed that stops at the western end of Stonehouse Drive, Grove School and Ironlatch Avenue would be looked at.

## 8. School Children & Child Fares (standing item)

No particular problems were reported, but it was noted that Helenswood School have been more proactive lately in relation to problems encountered with their pupils.

NI reported that Kent CC have announced a new scheme they will aim to issue all secondary school children with free bus passes that will be available to use 7 days a week. A Pilot scheme will be run in Canterbury and Tunbridge Wells first, and Stagecoach is looking to operate 20 more double decker buses in Canterbury to cope with the expected increase in demand. ML expressed surprise that Kent can afford to fund such a scheme, and it was felt that the scheme might cause 'cross border' problems.

## 9. Any Other Business

**Route N<sup>o</sup> 99/710:** NI announced that from 2 April service 710 would change number to become the 99 and would be increased in frequency from every 20 to 30 minutes, to address overcrowding.

**Concessionary Fares:** NI advised the meeting that from 1 April 2008 the Government are planning for the concessionary scheme to go England-wide, but that it will be locally managed and funded. This will result in a situation where the cost of travel for people on holiday from other parts of the country, will fall to the local authority where the journey is being made. This is a particular issue for holiday towns popular with retired people. There may also an issue with drivers needing to be familiar with the different concessionary passes from around the country and therefore Stagecoach have suggested that either the English rose or cross of St George be incorporated in the design of these passes to differentiate them from passes from Scotland or Wales, which will not be valid. Government have yet to issue further details about the scheme.

**ESCC Transport Review:** ML advised the meeting that the ESCC Transport Review is currently out to consultation. Social Services are having an information day on 15 March and Passenger Transport will also be holding an evidence-gathering meeting in Lewes on 27 April.

This will help to inform decisions which need to be made about the future of the public transport services provided by ESCC. **Action: DB will pass details onto Stagecoach.**

**Stagecoach Roadside Information:** NI advised the meeting that a new member of staff-Michael Couzens-Cook has replaced Steve Hewitt maintaining roadside infrastructure.

### Date and Time of Next Meetings:

Friday 8 June at 2pm in Hastings Town Hall

Friday 7<sup>th</sup> September 2-4pm in Hastings Town Hall

Friday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2-4pm in Hastings Town Hall

## **Distribution List**

Those present and apologies, plus:

- Greater Hollington Partnership
- LSP Co-ordinator (HBC)
- Bus Users Stakeholder Group
- HBC Elected members



**MOVING HASTINGS FORWARD**  
QUALITY BUS PARTNERSHIP

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### **Present:**

Don Benn (DB)	Passenger Transport Manager, East Sussex County Council (ESCC)
Sarah Cook (SC)	Transport Planner, Hastings Borough Council
Paul Harding (TB)	Stagecoach Operations Manager
Keith Hayward (KH)	Parking Enforcement Manager, Hastings Borough Council
Neil Instrall (NI)	Operations Director Stagecoach in Hastings
Danny Millis (DM)	Stagecoach Trainee Manager (DM)
Jon Wheeler (JW)	Transport Strategy Manager, ESCC
Cllr Matthew Lock (Cllr ML)	Lead Member for Transport & Environment, ESCC.
Cllr Roy Tucker (Cllr RT)	Lead Member for the Environment, HBC.

### **1. Introduction and Apologies:**

Councillor Lock chaired the meeting.

Apologies: Julie Nolan (minutes)

### **Minutes Prepared by:**

Sarah Cook

### **2. Minutes and actions from previous meeting on 9 March 2007.**

**Bus shelter Havelock Road:** A design for lengthening 'Stop G' in Havelock Road has been drawn up and will be discussed at the next ESCC programme meeting on 14th June. Seaspace will be asked to contribute to the cost to meet their S106 planning consent conditions on Lacuna Place.

**Warrior Square Bus Lane:** Bus lane signs are still required and a stage 3-safety audit has yet to be carried out. Concerns have been raised about safety on the zebra crossing, as visibility of pedestrians to approaching vehicles could be obscured by queuing traffic on the westbound section. ESCC to feed back results of the safety audit when available. **Action: Jon Wheeler**

### **3. Minutes of the QBP Stakeholder meeting on 4 April 2007.**

Matters arising: The bus stops at the Hastings Centre (on the Ridge) and in Hillside Road have been reported to be regularly blocked by parked cars. SC will enquire of HBC traffic, whether it would be appropriate to install clearway markings. **Action SC.**

### **4. Parking Issues**

**Conquest Hospital:** KH advised the meeting that although there has been an increase in parking in the area around the hospital, there had not been a significant increase in illegal parking.

**Bus Stop Clearways:** KH reported that the number of Penalty Charge Notices issued on bus stop clearways (Code 47) in April & May was 67 and 111 respectively. This is just 10 less than in the same period last year.

## 5. Highway Issues

**Bexhill / Hastings Link Road:** Cllr Lock had invited Paul Adams from Seaspaces to join the meeting to present information to the Partners on the Link Road Proposals. It had been evident from discussion held at the ESCC Passenger Transport Review meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> April that Stagecoach were unaware of the economic and housing development accompanying the proposals.

The Link Road Exhibition will be in Priory Meadow shopping centre on 12 & 13 of June (10am – 4pm)

Paul Adams outlined the proposals, details of which can be found at [www.seaspaces.org.uk](http://www.seaspaces.org.uk) and [www.eastsussex.gov.uk](http://www.eastsussex.gov.uk).

These include a corridor of development either end of the proposed Link Road to connect with business, housing & education developments planned for Ore Valley, Station Plaza, and Priory Quarter. In north Bexhill there is proposed to be ½ million square foot of employment space for 1800 jobs, in addition to 1100 mixed use/size homes, for an estimated 3000 people. (Release of land for N. Bexhill development is dependent on approval of the Link Road and a proportion of housing would be on the market at the time it is open to traffic.)

The new road is predicted to reduce the number of vehicles using the A259 Bexhill Road by 33-35% and will help link existing economic attractors such as Ashdown House, Conquest Hospital, Queensway as well as London Road in Bexhill and Bexhill's town centre.

Public transport options and a multi-modal approach to transport will be promoted alongside the development, right from the start, which includes ideas for a rail station at Wilting Farm. The Highway Agency is also working on proposals for improving the link between Queensway and the A21.

Regarding bus services for the Ore Valley development, Paul Southgate said that Stagecoach has capacity to divert existing services, but none for new services, unless developer contributions can be secured to 'kick-start' a route. The north Bexhill development will probably require new resources to serve it. In Shepway, Stagecoach has entered into an agreement with the developer directly, rather than go through S106. Don Benn added that diverting a service such as the 21/A would carry with it an element of risk to revenue, particularly on the supported evening parts of the service. Paul Southgate welcomed more information as to how these services would be planned and delivered with involvement of Stagecoach from an early stage.

Paul Adams confirmed that they had adopted Stagecoach's advice and will be providing for a bus route to Ore station along with a road layout favouring through routes, not cul-de-sacs.

Paul Southgate expressed concerns about the problems faced when trying to encourage workers to use public transport to employment, (as experienced in the Greater Hollington area previously) and that there might be challenges to be overcome with capacity, on services also used by school children.

Neil Instrall, Paul Southgate and Jeremy Cooper (Stagecoach Commercial) would welcome further involvement in the development of the road network & bus route planning, at an early stage.

**Action: Paul Adams was asked to involve Stagecoach and keep QBP Partners updated on regeneration plans, the Link Road application and the development of new bus routes.**

## Other Highway issues:

Siemens have undertaken a survey of the Battle Road traffic signals and their report is expected at the end of June. **Action: JW to summarise report at the next meeting.**

Due to extreme variability in journey times through this junction, it was suggested that vehicles are banned from making a right hand turn from Sedlescombe Road North, into Battle Road, northbound. **Action: SC to ask HBC Traffic to consider the request.**

The proposal for a controlled parking zone in Central St Leonards is on hold, awaiting the outcome of the results of an Economic Impact Study into its possible effects on the area. Partners will be invited to participate in developing the brief of the study.

Cllr Lock stated that together, ESCC & HBC were looking at how the planned regeneration of the town will affect car-parking provision, but emphasised that there is already a big focus on public transport provision, as part of the proposals.

## 6. QBP Action Plan

### QBP Delivery Framework:

Don Benn, Paul Harding & Sarah Cook met on 22<sup>nd</sup> March and discussed the QBP delivery framework and the Punctuality Improvement Partnership.

The draft Action Plan had been circulated before the meeting. A discussion was held about targets relating to average vehicle age and % of scheduled miles operated using low floor vehicles. The point was raised that now that Hastings has low floor vehicles operating, we are in a better position than at the start of 2002, when we had no low floor vehicles and an aged fleet. As stepped buses are replaced with low floor ones, their actual age will become less important, compared to their accessibility.

It was agreed to create a new target for percentage of scheduled miles operated using low floor vehicles, but to keep the vehicle age target and set targets for future years, based on discussions around a bulk replacement of part of the fleet.

The issue as to whether the figures reported in the Action Plan should include data from ESCC Local Rider services alongside data from Stagecoach was discussed. A consensus was reached that they should continue to be excluded in order to retain comparable results with previous years figures.

Don Benn added that all the main daytime ESCC tendered services use low floor vehicles, (stipulated in contract) but schools services won't be required to be low floor until 2015. Seating capacity on school routes can be a problem, which is why stepped double deckers are often used. Low floor buses, including double deckers have less seating capacity than stepped vehicles. Paul Southgate indicated that routes 26, 99 & 711 would be considered for priority for replacement to low floor next, but stressed that this would depend on the availability of vehicles, as complete routes would need to be changed together. (Route 711 uses a fleet of 17 vehicles in total.)

Neil Instrall commented that target 8 states that we aiming to achieve 100% of bus stops having timetable information at them, but realistically, some stops are only used as drop-off points, so the figures should reflect this. The group agreed that the Action Plan wording should be changed accordingly. **Action: NI to provide information on location and number of drop-off stops in the borough. SC to change Action Plan wording.**

### Punctuality Improvement Partnership (PIP) Framework

Punctuality for May to October 2006 was 88.5%. The question was raised as to whether current punctuality monitoring complies with the Traffic Commissioners output (4.1 to 4.7). **Action: Don Benn to ask Linda Sawyer at ESCC and feedback at next meeting.**

As the figures reported are an amalgamation of Stagecoach & ESCC data, ESCC urged Stagecoach to help with timely feedback of data, in order to correlate with ESCC surveys and aid analysis.

It was suggested that a sample on-bus survey might be helpful to identify the reasons for punctuality delays (traffic bottlenecks/passenger loading etc) on the Arrows, 26/A and coastal services. **Action: Don Benn & Paul Harding to investigate how this might be carried out.**

The PIP document is still in a draft format and will need to be finalised with it's own action plan before the new QBP Action Plan is published. **Action: DB, JW, SC, PH/NI**

Government punctuality targets are 95% and Paul Southgate stressed that he could not agree to set our QBP targets at less than this, which the group agreed. He reported that Stagecoach Kent achieve 90.9% punctuality.

Partners agreed that the QBP Action Plan should acknowledge the government target figures, with local problem/improvement areas identified in the PIP for action. The QBP's key aim will be for reduced journey times and improved punctuality. The addition of the PIP will hopefully give passengers a clear message of our commitment to improvement.

It was also highlighted that without the Link Road, Stagecoach predicts that punctuality problems will continue to rise, along with journey times, but when/if it is constructed, traffic movement patterns will undoubtedly change, possibly affecting punctuality in other areas of the town, e.g. on The Ridge.

## **10. Bus Stop Improvement Programme**

The next meeting of the bus stop improvement project team is on June 14 at County Hall. More information regarding phase 6 will fed back at the next meeting.

## **11. School Children & Child Fares**

DB reported that ESCC has made the decision to adopt a new policy from September 2008, to charge parents half the cost of school transport for new entrants into denominational primary and secondary schools, with various exemptions. This is not expected to affect the numbers of children traveling by bus or traveling by car. It has been introduced as part of the ongoing County review of the transport services it provides.

## **12. Any Other Business**

DB asked that the bus stop clearways in Queens Road (Priory Meadow) be repainted please. **Action: SC to pass the request on to Highways.**

## **10. Dates and Time of Next Meetings:**

**Friday 7<sup>th</sup> September 3-5pm m in Hastings Town Hall**

Friday 7<sup>th</sup> December 2-4pm in Hastings Town Hall