Blagdon Transport Group Meeting: Saturday, 10th May held at Lake House, Grib Lane

Present:

Renee Bolton (BTG Chair), Sue Edney (BTG), Maggie Mooney (BPC), Rowan Vince, Sean Stephens, Graham Strong, Judith Sweetman, Joyce Best, Ron Buckman, Michaela Stevens, Andy Picton, Rita Farrow.

Apologies:

Bill and Jenny McKitterick, Mary Taviner, Dorothy Woodman, Andrew Barnes, Pip Riley, Geoff Stanton, Sarah-Jane Meredith, Janet and Dominic Maskell, Jane Withers.

(All who attended the meeting were invited to have a cup of tea / coffee and a slice of cake before the meeting got underway)

Context:

- **RB** welcomed all to the meeting and thanked them for attending. She introduced all those present and each was asked to state the present bus routes they used, their interest in public transport and, if they wished at this stage, to make a comment. Immediately it became clear that few were satisfied with the present arrangements (‘not fit for purpose’ was one comment) although one or two people did voice appreciation for the bus routes which did operate: eight of those present used the 672 (Bristol) on a regular basis (JS, who used the service daily to go to work in Bristol, had much praise for the driver), fewer of those who attended the meeting travelled on the 134 (Weston) and only one used the 683 (Wells) regularly.

- **RB** then provided some essential background information. Other villages (e.g. Claverham) had spoken to North Somerset about their lack of public transport with some success and now BTG had the opportunity to ‘Get vocal: be heard’ as North Somerset encourages. She continued by outlining the present public transport arrangements for Blagdon and then went on to point out that, because the village is on the ‘wrong’ side of the A38, all the routes which travelled on the A38 (the 121, the A1, the A2 and the A4) were not accessible to Blagdon residents although some buses passed by the end of Ashey Lane. The present situation made it impossible for residents, who did not have access to their own transport, to either work or study in Weston - or indeed spend any length of time there to attend appointments, shop etc - , or to work at the Airport and, although travel to Bristol is provided, the journey takes one hour twenty minutes and there are no evening buses. RB informed the meeting that the Bristol 672 service would, from September, be operated entirely by Bugler but that the timetable and fares would remain unchanged whereas the Tuesday service to Wells would be run by Somerbus and not by Bugler.

- Following the meeting between **RB** and **MM** and two North Somerset Transport Officers in March, an email had been received from them which indicated that NS may consider a ‘kick-start’ opportunity whereby it funds the initial set-up costs of a service and lets it grow to commercial viability: Blagdon has been identified as one potential area for a ‘rural feeder’ service.

Discussion:
• **GS** felt very strongly that additional bus services were not the solution for this area at this time, neither economically nor environmentally. He believed that an extension of the ‘Helpline’ would be a better solution, deploying either a people carrier or private cars. He continued that it would be useful to conduct some market research asking what effect it would have on residents’ lives if all the public transport was withdrawn.

• **MM** and **SE** acknowledged that the ‘Helpline’ provided a valuable service for individuals on an irregular basis but a timetabled, public service was required, one which the people of Blagdon were entitled to and which should be funded by North Somerset, not operated by volunteers.

• **RV** would still prefer to travel by bus to work in Bristol but the journey simply took too long at present and he had now acquired a second car.

• **MS**, who were representing other younger residents with no access to private transport, and **SS**, were both very keen that services to Weston were daily and continued into the evening. There were new, younger people in the village, who would appreciate additional access to public transport.

• **JB** was concerned that buses which went through the village were quite often almost empty (but it was pointed out that the 672 did start and end in Blagdon)

• **AP** suggested that perhaps a ‘feeder service’ could replace the 672 Bristol bus in some ways (although this would disadvantage other villages on the route and Banes is committed to this route)

• **RBL** suggested that evening and weekend services would support the community as there was not much to do in Blagdon, especially for younger people.

• **RF** was particularly concerned that, like her, many residents may prefer to work and study in Weston but were unable to do so at present if they had no transport of their own.

**Conclusion:**

The discussion continued for some time before the meeting was brought to a close by **RB** who thanked everyone for attending and for sharing their concerns and ideas. No particular plan for ‘The Way Ahead’ was agreed upon although most present thought that a regular and frequent feeder / shuttle service linking Blagdon with the other services (Bristol, Weston, the airport) would be helpful to many residents of Blagdon, young and old, in the absence of better direct services.

**The Way Ahead** (as agreed by **RB** and **MM** at a follow-up meeting on Tuesday, 13th May)

1. The BTG will continue to liaise with NS Transport Officers and press for a ‘feeder service’ (a small bus?) which will link with the 121, A1, A2 and A4 services thus providing frequent and faster travel to Bristol, Weston and the airport from morning to evening.

2. MM will report to BPC and ensure that the council supports the BTG

3. MM will liaise with Bristol Airport re: shuttle access and parking concessions (the role of the airport had been mentioned briefly in the discussion)

4. RB and MM will hold a meeting with the ‘Helpline’ and Mini-bus volunteers (the role of the latter had not been discussed in the meeting)

5. A ‘Transport Questionnaire’ may be considered as part of a wider survey of village needs.

Maggie Mooney: 12th May 201