**Rural Dorset Working Group Meeting – 06/10/2023**

Owen Clark, Strategy and policy manager, from Dorset Transport team provided an update.

* Dorset  bid for Government funding for rural transport.  Dorset was not successful and it seems that less rural places won the funding – the conurbations seemed to be more successful.
* The Government  did announce a small amount of funding for Local Authorities who didn’t get the bus service improvement funding, DC got £150k for this year.  Feeling is that our funding award was on the low side.
* Dorset Transport have retendered bus operators on a new model, focusing on market towns to give the council more control over timetables.  The focus is to  try and prioritise what we have already and to maintain this.
* Nationally, there is a move to introduce a national multi-operator scheme and this will be looked at by DC.  This will enable passengers  to travel across the county using different bus operators, but buying just one ticket. Other aspects of this include group travel and a youth fair, similar to a young persons rail discount.
* Dorset Council are continuing to push the issue of rural transport with the Government. They have also briefed Dorset MP’s re issues with buses  in order that they can raise these on DC’s behalf.
* **Please let me know of any real life case studies you have regarding issues/barriers caused by transport difficulties in order that I can feed these to Owen.**
* Dorset Transport are starting work on a joint local transport plan for DC plus BCP – this will be the plan for the next 10 to 15 years.
* DC want to engage with the public and groups around this strategy – **please let me know if your organisation would like to take part in developing the strategy?**
* The Government  have committed to the £2 cap on bus fairs until end 2024.
* Owen is going to present to the group on the South West rural Mobility Strategy at the next meeting.

**Other updates**

* Citizens Advice have an Advice Bus that they are getting out to rural locations across East Dorset and Purbeck.
* Wellbeing Hubs – being launched in Poole Dolphin Centre, NHS initiative alongside the VCS. As yet, it is not clear where the other hubs will be.
* Emma at BCP college - wants to work more in communities rather than base it all at the college – outreach offered.

With warm wishes,

Wendy

Wendy Allwood

Communications & Networking Project Worker   
#HelpAndKindness

Tel 01305 59 59 52

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