



Staines Shopmobility



Your Service News

Issue 17

September 2011

Special points of interest:

- Blue Badge Reform
- Travel Guides
- MidasPlus Donation

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Annual General Meeting

Welcome to the September edition of your service newsletter. Summer is nearing its end, the evenings are drawing in and temperatures are dropping; this can mean only one thing, the shops are putting out their Christmas stock! Well let's hope we enjoy a nice Autumn before we have to worry about Christmas.

Next up in the Shopmobility calendar is our annual general meeting. This is being held at the Methodist Church Hall, Thames Street, Staines on Friday 23rd September. A buffet will be available from 1pm with the meeting due to commence at 1.30pm. Mobility equipment will be available to hire from Shopmobility between 11.30am and 12.15pm; all equipment must be returned to Shopmobility when the AGM ends. The service will be closed for general use on this date. Free parking is available in the Riverside car park for the AGM and permits can be obtained from Shopmobility.

Our guest of honour is the Worshipful the Mayor of the Borough of Spelthorne, Councillor Sam Budd. Guest speaker will be Dr. John Belstead who will give a talk on 'Medicine - Past & Present'.

Members of Staines Shopmobility can nominate someone to become a trustee by completing the nomination form available from the shop. Members will also be asked to vote on proposed changes to the constitution of Shopmobility and copies of the proposed changes are available from the shop.

Wheelchair Stock

Staines Shopmobility has ordered another Enigma wheelchair to further enhance its mobility fleet. The Enigma wheelchair has a modern design and incorporates quick release wheels with lighter materials, enabling them to be used for our Holiday Hire service.

The new chair is on back order and we hope to have it available for use this month. This replaces an older manual wheelchair, which will be offered to our members free of charge. Please contact us if you would like to take the old wheelchair off our hands.

Blue Badge



Reform Programme

The Blue Badge scheme is currently being reformed with a number of changes being introduced; the following information will hopefully answer any questions you may have. The information has been taken from the DFT website and reproduced for guidance only.

Q: Why is the scheme being reformed?

- Few changes have been made to the Blue Badge scheme in England since it was established in the 1970s. It needs to be reformed to reduce current problems, deal with future challenges and help ensure that disabled people have fair and equal access to the benefits the concession offers regardless of where they live.
- Current problems include high levels of abuse and misuse of badges, increasing demand for badges and pressures to extend eligibility, inconsistent administration and assessment and inefficient service delivery by some local authorities.

Q: What measures are you delivering in the reform programme?

- The programme consists of a number of complementary projects that, when implemented together, will help local authorities to improve operational efficiency, reduce public sector costs and improve customer services. They will also help to prevent abuse of the scheme.
- The main measures are to:
 - Implement a new badge design that is harder to copy, forge and alter. This includes changing arrangements for printing, personalising and distributing badges to prevent fraud from happening in the first place;
 - Amend primary and secondary legislation to provide improved powers for local authorities to tackle abuse and fraud;
 - Transfer control of eligibility assessment funding from the NHS to local authorities;
 - Amend legislation to require wider use of independent mobility assessments to determine eligibility, including where previously that assessment was carried out by a GP;
 - Extend eligibility to more disabled children under the age of 3 with specific medical conditions;
 - Provide continuous automatic entitlement to a badge to specific severely disabled service personnel and veterans;
- The project will also deliver an on-line application facility and should result in faster, more automatic renewals for people whose circumstances do not change between renewal periods;
- Raise the maximum fee for a badge that local authorities can charge from £2 to £10;
- Enable disabled Armed Forces personnel and their families posted overseas on UK bases to apply for a badge;
- Issue new good practice guidance to local authorities to help them make improvements in scheme administration and eligibility assessment

Q: Why is it taking so long? Reforms were promised 2 years ago, but nothing has changed.

- In 2008, the previous Government set out a high-level strategy to reform the scheme within five years. Our reforms will substantially be delivered within a year.
- The first changes will be delivered as early as April this year.

Blue Badge Reform Programme - Frequently Asked Questions Cont.

Ensuring Fair Allocation of Badges

Q: Why are you requiring wider use of independent mobility assessments?

- Independent health professionals such as physiotherapists and occupational therapists are often best placed to assess eligibility due to their professional knowledge of mobility.
- Some applicants may find that they are refused a badge on renewal if their original eligibility assessment was less robust than that undertaken by an independent health professional. This is not because of a change to the groups of disabled people who are eligible for a badge, but because of a more robust assessment of that eligibility.

Q: Who will pay for mobility assessments?

- From April 2011, we are transferring control of existing funds for eligibility assessments from the NHS to local authorities to support the use of independent mobility assessments.

Q: Will this money be ring-fenced for Blue Badge administration?

- No. The Coalition Government has made clear that it wants to provide greater financial autonomy to local authorities.

Q: What changes are you planning to the scheme's eligibility criteria?

- We're closing an existing gap in eligibility by extending the benefit to more disabled children, under the age of three, with specific medical conditions. Once these children reach the age of three they will be able to apply for a badge under the other categories of eligibility.
- We've commissioned independent research to look at the impacts on existing holders and local authorities of extending eligibility to people with a severe temporary mobility impairment, lasting at least one year. We'll make a decision on this later in the year.

Q: What extensions to eligibility are *not* included in reforms?

- We have no plans to extend eligibility to any other groups of disabled people. With over 2.5 million badges already on issue, it is important that we ensure the scheme remains sustainable in the long term and protects preferential parking facilities for those who most need them.

Improved and Effective Prevention of Abuse and Enforcement

Q: What changes are you making to the badges?

- The badge will be harder to copy and to forge and the physical security features of the badge will be enhanced, with the use of new technologies and printing techniques.

Q: What changes are you making to enforcement powers?

- We plan to introduce new or amended powers for local authorities to tackle abuse and fraud. In particular to:
 - extend the grounds available to local authorities to refuse to issue and to withdraw badges
 - provide local authorities with a power to cancel badges that have been lost, stolen, have expired, or have been withdrawn for mis-use
 - provide local authority authorised officers with a power to recover, on-the-spot, badges that have been cancelled or misused

The Badge Fee

Q: What changes are you making to the fee?

- Under current legislation, local authorities can charge a badge fee of up to £2 for those whose applications are successful. This fee is payable on issue of a badge (not on application) and has not changed since 1983.
- The legislation will be changed so that local authorities can charge successful applicants up to a maximum of £10. It will still be for local authorities to decide the fee that will be payable locally.

MidasPlus Donation

We are pleased to announce that MidasPlus have kindly donated £1,990 to purchase 2 new mobility scooters. This has enabled us to buy 2 Orion scooters, which went into service during August. The Orion scooters encompass the latest safety design features including brake lights and reverse warning beeper to ensure a safe, comfortable ride for members. The scooters are also fitted with crutch holders allowing members to get off the scooters when they are in the town. We would like to thank MidasPlus for their generous support of our charity. If you would like to know more about MidasPlus and their work please visit their website at www.midasplus.org.uk



New Orion scooters

Business Plan Review

The trustees of Staines Shopmobility will be carrying out a full review of the current business plan, in October of this year. The business plan is a comprehensive outline of the charity, its objectives, strategies, the market it is in and its financial forecasts. It sets out a clear strategy to take the charity forward and monitors its success through a series of goals and objectives; the plan is also an important aid when applying for grant funding. The current business plan will cover a 3-year period from 2011 to 2014 and the review will include the current Risk Assessment document. A good risk assessment allows the charity to identify the risks it faces and to put in place a set of controls and procedures to mitigate these risks. This review is carried out on an annual basis as part of the charity's governance process.

Accessible Guide Books

We have a number of travel guide books to give away free of charge. These are published by Rough Guides and Open Britain and are packed full of information on accessible days out, places to stay and where to park. We currently hold a minimal stock of the following books:

Open Britain 2010 - the definitive guide to accessible Britain RRP £9.99

Open London 2010 - the definitive guide to accessible London RRP £9.99

Rough Guide to Accessible Britain—Great days out for disabled visitors RRP £6.99

Please ask a member of staff for your free copy but hurry as we have a small number of these and they will be given out on a first come, first served basis.

Staines Shopmobility has been busy promoting its services at a number of recent events, including:

NFSUK Awareness Days

Awareness days were held on the 13th and 14th of May as part of a nationwide campaign to promote Shopmobility. Press releases were issued locally, with a number of schemes taking part throughout the United Kingdom. Members of the public were encouraged to come along and try out mobility equipment allowing them to find out which type of equipment best met their needs.. They were also able to ask questions relating to equipment and how the service works.

Open Day

This was held on the 29th of June with invites sent to over 300 local business people and a range of local / county councillors. This allowed them to see at first hand the important work carried out by Shopmobility. Attendees were able to try out mobility equipment and to speak with members of the scheme. The day was not particularly well attended but we did meet several new friends who offered to help us with our work.

Two Rivers Summer Fete



Staines Shopmobility took part in the Harry Potter themed summer fete by selling “every flavour jelly beans”. A team of volunteers took to the streets to sell bags of jelly beans around the Two Rivers centre and in the High Street. Unfortunately, as it was a summer fete, the weather decided to let us down and it rained all day. This prevented us from having a sales table out by the walkway and meant many people stayed at home. We would like to thank those that volunteered and helped to raise £25 on the day.

Spelthorne Partners’ Marketplace

A partners’ marketplace for local organisations that are supported by Spelthorne Borough Council funding was held at the council offices on July 21st. This was an opportunity to make the new councillors aware of the work carried out by these groups. There were 21 new councillors elected at the May elections so it is important to make them aware of our work, as this may help when we apply for any future funding. A good number of local charities attended and met most of the new councillors, prior to their attending the full council meeting.

Magazines

We have a number of specialist magazines, dedicated to mobility and accessibility issues, in the shop. These are available free of charge so please take a copy when you next visit us.

Staines Shopmobility
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Mustard Mill Road
Staines
TW18 4WB

Phone:
01784 459416

Email:
stainesshopmobility@talktalkbusiness.net

Opening Times: 9.30 am—4.15pm
Monday to Saturday

Staines Shopmobility – Board of Trustees

Gerry Ceaser—Chairman

Terry Collier—Treasurer

Wyn Pockett—Trustee

Walter Bates—Trustee

Simon Bhadye—Trustee

Keith Goldson—Trustee

June Wallen—Trustee

Vic Drinkwater—Trustee



Making Staines Accessible

We're on the web!
www.stainesshopmobility.co.uk

Do you have a story or info you would like to see included in future newsletters? Please speak to a member of staff or contact us via the details listed at the top left of this page. We would also welcome any comments or suggestions to help us improve your service newsletter.

If you would like to support our work by way of a donation then please send a cheque payable to 'Staines Shopmobility' and post to the address above. To make a donation online please visit:

<http://uk.virginmoneygiving.com/charities/stainesshopmobility>



Useful Links

Spelthorne Committee for Action Now (SCAN)

SCAN promotes improved access to premises, services, information and leisure in Spelthorne. Telephone: **07967 499829** www.spelthorneaccess.org.uk

Age Concern Spelthorne

Age Concern provides help and advice for older people and services include holidays and outings, insurance, library service for the housebound and a handyman service. Telephone: **01784 444200** www.ageconcernspelthorne.org.uk

Spelride / Dial A Ride

Spelride is the accessible transport service for Spelthorne and Dial A Ride covers residents of Runnymede. Spelride Telephone: **01784 446253** Dial A Ride Telephone: **01932 425875**

Spelthorne Borough Council

Spelthorne Borough Council provides local services and information for Spelthorne. Tel: **01784 451499** www.spelthorne.gov.uk