



Community & Voluntary Transport at



The TAS Partnership Limited
Passenger Transport Specialists

Newsletter No.26 November 2022

TAS has provided expert advice, guidance and support for the CT sector for over 30 years. This general newsletter follows from our well-received COVID-19 coverage between April & September 2020. Please let us know of any items that might be of interest to the wider CT sector. Back issues of these newsletters are uploaded on our website: <https://taspartnership.co.uk/TAS-news/>

Scotland – Plea for New Committee Members to Keep Lifeline Lanarkshire Transport Service on the Road

Daily Record: “A lifeline community transport service in East Kilbride is in dire need of new committee members in order to stay on the road. East Kilbride Community Transport helps get a number of local groups - including the elderly and disabled - to weekly meetings and events but can also be booked for outings, all at a significantly reduced cost. They also transport local schoolchildren to various locations and do pick-ups from schools as well as making sure individuals and groups who would otherwise struggle get to the likes of church. It began life nearly 40 years ago and now operates two minibuses. The service was previously saved from the brink several years ago when new committees were formed after its lynchpin of more than 30 years - I na Cumming - decided to step down. Now, the group has put out a fresh plea for folk to get on board so the service doesn't have to close its doors - leaving many groups without much-needed transport.



June Harpum, secretary/administrator for EK Community Transport, told Lanarkshire Live: ‘We are in dire need of committee members to be able to continue. The committee members would be required to attend our meetings which are usually held four to six times a year. Their input would be very welcome and hopefully they could supply fresh ideas. We have two minibuses and supply a much-needed service to the whole community of East Kilbride by taking disabled, elderly and vulnerable to church and back. We collect children from schools

and take them to their after-school care, we take groups such as stroke club, arthritis care, visually impaired to their meetings and return them home and schoolchildren to various sports centres or pitches and return. And walking groups, pensioners, pipe band, scouts and guides and care homes all have use of our buses.' To help this vital organisation or find out more about the service email ekct2019@yahoo.com."

<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/in-your-area/lanarkshire/plea-new-committee-members-keep-28029547>

Scotland CTA – Mapping Scotland Project

CTA: "Community Transport Map of Scotland - Our extensive research has also enabled us to build the first-ever map of Community Transport in Scotland featuring every one of our 168 members in urban, rural and island communities across 30 out of 32 local authorities. We hope that our map will be a useful resource for:

-) New and existing operators to identify and collaborate with their peers and neighbours
-) Politicians, policymakers and regulators to implement policies and strategies which recognise and help our sector
-) Funders and stakeholders to understand and respond to the financial needs of our sector
-) Volunteers, passengers and the public to find services and opportunities near them

The map is interactive, searchable and available here

https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=1VEGkWq6DCNOxCeDis_1XD0QSw9Nda8s&ll=57.883574066791006%2C-4.221427049999997&z=5 on Google Maps. We will keep the map

under review on an ongoing basis and make updates where possible and necessary. The map is based on survey responses from CTA members or, where we did not receive input, our own desk-based research."

<https://ctauk.org/%20mapping-scotland-project/>



Scotland CTA - Scotland Conference 2022 Review

CTA (David Kelly): "Phew! What a day! Team Scotland is now taking a collective breather after a fantastic CTA Scotland Conference 2022. It was great to have such a strong turnout and to see so many of our members together in one place for not only our first in-person gathering since Lara, Nicola and I joined CTA, but our very first in-person event since before the COVID-19 pandemic. We heard from a diverse range of speakers on the biggest issues of the day for Scotland's Community Transport sector, from driver shortages and volunteering to Electric Vehicles and new technologies. Their presentations are now available to download... I was pleased to be able to share analysis and insights from our new More Than a Minibus report, as well as our new map of the sector in Scotland. We also heard from Bettina Sizeland, Deputy Director for Bus, Accessibility and Active Travel at Transport Scotland about how much they value their partnership with us at CTA and the amazing work that our members do across the country.

For me, there were four big takeaways for CTA, Transport Scotland and all of our delegates from all of the day's presentations, discussions and questions:

- J) Funding is our #1 priority: Many members said they were concerned about future funding for our sector, especially with inflation so high and the cost of living crisis worsening. Our report's #1 recommendation – which argued that the Scottish Government and local authorities should protect funding for Community Transport and deliver fair, multi-year funding which contributes to core operating costs and matches inflation – really resonated with delegates
- J) Demand and the need for Community Transport is rising: With the world opening up after the pandemic and yet more bus service cuts being threatened across the country, it's clear that many of our communities are being failed by commercial bus operators and our public transport network. Several delegates talked about the damage proposed cuts would have where they live. CTA, government and funders alike need to focus advice, resources and support on helping charities and community groups to overcome significant barriers to set up new Community Transport schemes
- J) We need to think differently about volunteering: Our speakers provided lots of useful hints and tips for improving your 'volunteer offer' and thinking about the 'volunteer lifecycle'. We all need to think more creatively about how to recruit and retain volunteers in a changing environment. We need to challenge ourselves to reach out to under-represented communities and move out of what might be our 'comfort zone' to tackle racism and to promote equality, diversity and inclusion. Volunteering should be for everyone!
- J) Now's the time for climate action: We heard from several speakers about the exciting opportunities – as well as some of the challenges – for our sector in making the journey to net zero. Transitioning to electric fleets is just one part of the picture. There's so much potential for Community Transport operators to help people and communities to reduce their own carbon footprint. We can learn from what's worked well elsewhere to develop new walking, cycling or car club projects which reduce car use, eliminate air pollution and make our cities, towns and villages better, greener places to live

For those of you who made it to Perth, I hope you found the day as energising and thought-provoking as I did. If you were a delegate, please complete our quick survey here (<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/ScotConf22>). We'd appreciate your feedback. I know that many CTA members were disappointed to be unable to join us on the day, either because we'd



sold-out our tickets ahead of time or because they couldn't travel to attend. That's why we're sharing our speakers' presentations... and why we'll be continuing our programme of monthly online member meetings very soon with new topics and new guests. So watch this space! You can also relive some of the day's discussions on Twitter via the hashtag #MoreThanaMinibus. If you've an idea or a suggestion for a potential theme or speaker for a future event – or a takeaway

from our Scotland Conference which you'd like to share with me – I'd love to hear from you. Please get in touch via david.kelly@ctauk.org." <https://ctauk.org/scotland-conference-2022-review/>

UK – CTA Submits AMAP Autumn Budget Representation 2022

CTA: "Ahead of the fiscal event or 'mini-budget' on Friday 23 September, CTA submitted an Autumn Budget Representation to HM Treasury setting out our proposal for an inflationary uplift to the current Approved Mileage Allowance Payment (AMAP) rate for volunteer and paid drivers, which is archaic, untenable and no longer fit for purpose. Since Spring 2022, we have been leading a coalition of 11 intermediary organisations and charities from across the UK's voluntary sector who have proudly joined our campaign for a Fair Deal for Volunteers. We have presented to and discussed our proposal with senior officials at HM

Treasury, as well as elected politicians of all parties and the Scottish Government, Welsh Government and Northern Ireland Executive.

We believe that rising inflation and record fuel prices are damaging Community Transport operators across the UK. Many are struggling to deliver essential services. Our research with CTA members suggests that:

-) 65% report lower levels of volunteer recruitment or retention in the last 6 months
-) 32% have been forced to cut back services
-) 65% have been forced to increase prices or raise fares

High motoring costs are putting essential volunteer-run transport services at risk. Inflation threatens to make volunteering unaffordable for many.

If some Community Transport and other charitable schemes cannot continue, it will mean:

-) Lower levels of COVID-19 and seasonal flu vaccinations this winter, especially among the most at-risk groups
-) Higher levels of missed GP and hospital appointments, worsening patient outcomes, extending NHS backlogs/waiting times and increasing costs for taxpayers
-) Intensified demand for public services, from the NHS and social care to local authorities and Job Centres
-) Reduced autonomy and mobility for older and disabled people, exacerbating existing injustices and inequalities
-) Fewer younger people with access to school, college, university or work
-) Increased transport poverty and inequality across the UK, especially in rural, remote and deprived communities



However, this scenario is avoidable. An inflationary uplift to the current AMAP rate of 45p per mile for the first 10,000 miles – which has remained static since 2012 – would:

-) Protect vital charitable services at no cost to the Exchequer
-) Deliver a fair deal for volunteers who were the backbone of the UK's extraordinary and emergency response to the COVID-19 pandemic
-) Keep volunteering accessible and affordable for all, especially in the rural and deprived communities most severely impacted by high fuel prices and the cost of living crisis, and for those in receipt of social security
-) Mitigate the impact of the cost of living crisis on low-paid workers in key sectors of the economy, such as social care
-) Reduce the administrative and financial burden on employees and volunteers and remove the need for many to complete self-assessment tax returns
-) Deliver an effective tax cut for some employees and volunteers who currently, or would in future, receive more than the AMAP rate
-) Avoid unnecessary new red tape for charities and community groups and simplify the workings of the UK's tax system
-) Encourage employees and volunteers to share transport more frequently, reducing congestion and carbon emissions
-) Signal the UK Government's commitment to volunteers, the voluntary sector and Levelling Up

You can download CTA's Autumn Budget Representation here (<https://cta.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/CTA-Autumn-Budget-Representation-2022.pdf>)

If you would like to find out more, or talk to CTA about its campaign, please email hello@ctauk.org. Thank you to our coalition partners for their support for our campaign – Communities 1st, National Association for Voluntary and Community Action (NAVCA), National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO), Royal Voluntary Service, Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), Scottish Volunteering Forum, Volunteering Matters, Volunteer Now, Volunteer Scotland and Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA).”

<https://ctauk.org/cta-submit-amap-autumn-budget-representation-2022/>

UK - £2 Bus Fare Cap - Involving Community Transport

CTA: “CTA has started discussions with the Department for Transport on the potential for Community Transport journeys being included within the £2 bus fare cap programme due to run from 1st Jan to 31st March 2023. DfT has been working with the bus industry to shape and develop this programme including agreeing what tickets are in the scope of this programme. At CTA we take the view that our members and the wider sector should be included in this as you are often delivering in place of bus services or to people who are unable to access existing bus services and so we have asked for CT providers to be considered within this programme.

To support our discussions, we need to gather some evidence and trip data from Community Transport providers. While we would want all CT provision to be included this is not going to be possible, this is a bus fare programme and so we are looking to gather information from CT providers who are delivering a comparable service including for example;



-)] Primary purpose providers who are undertaking journeys with members/the public
 -)] Undertaking journeys for things such as shopping, medical appointments, work, social activities
- Out of scope of this programme would be trips:
-)] through a community/volunteer car scheme
 -)] only transporting your clients to your activity
 -)] undertaking day trips out

As this programme is in development we have some tight deadlines to send through information to DfT and so if you are a primary provider please can you complete the attached survey below by mid-day

Thursday 6th October. DfT have asked the CTA to reiterate that as yet no final decisions have been made on the scheme, and that all information submitted to DfT is greatly appreciated and will be used to support the decision-making process.”

UK – Motability Commits £50m to Address Challenges Disabled People Face when Accessing Transport

THIS: “The charity Motability is launching six new grant programmes, committing £50 million in funding over the next three financial years to organisations across the UK which can help address the challenges that disabled people face when accessing transport. The first four programmes – Community Transport, Wheelchair Sector, Active Travel and Research Grants, launched in April and June respectively. Motability is still actively encouraging charities and organisations to apply for funding for these programmes. Motability, a national charity set up with the vision that no disabled person should be disadvantaged due to poor access to transportation, has announced the final two new programmes for the year – Travelling with Confidence and Reducing Barriers to Driving. These are two key areas where our research and insight has shown that providing grant funding to other charities and organisations will have a great impact, helping disabled people right now to make the journeys

they want to, while Motability continues its research and innovation work into longer-term solutions to make all transport accessible.

Barry Le Grys, Chief Executive of Motability said: 'We are thrilled to be launching our final two new grant programmes for this year. Motability has historically been known for providing grants to Scheme customers, and whilst that is still an important and core part of our work, we are incredibly excited to be using our charitable funds to help even more disabled people. So many fantastic charities and organisations are already doing so much to help to address the challenges disabled people face when accessing transport and through our new grant programmes we want to enable them to enhance the lives of even more disabled people. We strongly encourage any organisation or charity that may be eligible for funding to visit our website and apply'.



The new Travelling with Confidence Grant Programme will provide funding for charities and organisations to help to alleviate the negative feelings and experiences currently felt by disabled people when making a journey via public transport. Charities and organisations can apply for grants from £100,000 to £1 million. Through the new Reducing Barriers to Driving Grant Programme, Motability hope to help charities and organisations to improve and expand private transport options for disabled people and their families beyond the Motability Scheme. Charities and organisations can apply for grants from £100,000 to £3 million."

<https://thiis.co.uk/motability-commits-50m-to-address-challenges-disabled-people-face-when-accessing-transport/>

UK – BSOG Claims by s19 Operators

DfT has published a spreadsheet detailing the Bus Service Operators Grant claims by s19 operators since 2010. The spreadsheet should be approached with some caution as within the section on 'CT Operators' there are numerous local authority operations (including some CT services but often combining claims for in-house day care and education trips), and even some quasi-commercial operators who were not eligible to use permits in the first place (but somehow slipped through the net). If these claimants are removed from the spreadsheet, it is possible to see how the total bulk of claims from genuine voluntary sector minibuss operators has diminished over the decade by 60%. There were 701 separate operator claims in 2010-2011 (with an average claim of £8,016). In 2020-2021 there were 464 separate operator claims (average claim of £4,798). Numbers of claiming operators has reduced by 34%. As BSOG is paid against a metric of eligible service kilometres, part of the decline could be a result of shorter journey distances as well as fewer vehicles in service. Otherwise, it suggests that there are simply fewer CT vehicles and operators than there used to be, or that many operators are now not bothering to claim (unlikely!). Some work undertaken under s19 in the past may now have passed over to a trading arm or have moved to s22.

'CT Operators' includes a range of voluntary sector agencies who are operating vehicles, including some of the larger national charities such as Age UK, MS Society and Leonard Cheshire. The biggest single operator claimants over the 10 years are:

-) West Midlands Special Needs Transport Ltd (now defunct) - £3,972,366
-) Greater Manchester Accessible Transport (Diesel) -£2,430,057
-) Accessible Transport Group Ltd - £1,375,454
-) Akcess CIC - £758,722
-) Doncaster Community Transport - £713,887
-) Greenwich Service Plus Ltd - £665,657
-) Merseycare Transport Services Ltd - £597,032

-) Accessible Passenger Transport Services Ltd - £542,023
-) Rotherham Community Transport Ltd - £536,810
-) Sheffield Community Transport - £440,272



UK – September Changes to the Senior Traffic Commissioner’s Statutory Documents

Traffic Commissioner: “The following changes have been made to the Senior Traffic Commissioner’s Statutory Documents this month. They are:
Statement that trailer authorisation is required to operate trailers in the introductory document.

-) A series of Upper Tribunal rulings and clarification across documents 2,3,4 and 5 regarding grace periods, transport managers, planning law and company status.
-) Update of legal provisions when an operator can apply for Regulation 31 of the Goods Vehicles (Licensing of Operators) Regulations 1995 in document 5 - NOTE the form to apply for Regulation 31 has also been updated to reflect this change.
-) Reference to requirements under Public Service Vehicle Accessibility Regulations and Public Service Vehicles (Conduct of Drivers, Inspectors, Conductors and Passengers (Amendment) Regulations 2002 in documents 6 and 13.
-) Starting points for penalties in driver conduct around falsification of drivers’ hours records by reference to intent in document 6.
-) Link to Department for Transport guidance on dual registration for specialist hauliers and removal of temporary cabotage measure in document 7.
-) Clarifications around interim licences in document 9.
-) Updates on PSV DBS checks in document 13.



**Office of the
Traffic Commissioner**

<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKOTC/bulletins/32deaa8>

Devon – Honiton Charity TRIP Marks 25 Year Anniversary

Midweek Herald: "An Honiton-based charity which coordinates community transport and the use of specialised disability equipment is celebrating its 25th anniversary. TRIP marked the occasion with a special celebration at Combe Garden Centre, with dignitaries, volunteers and those who have benefited from its services invited. TRIP was first set up in 1997 and its first vehicle was a Fiat Scudo provided by Devon County Council. The project's first office was a small room in St Michael's Day Centre, Honiton. TRIP moved to Kings Court in 1999 and in the same year a booking point was launched for the ambulance car service. A year later, TRIP moved to New Street.

TRIP started transporting people for holidays. More than 300 people were carried to places like the Cotswolds, Isle of Wight and Jersey. During the Covid-19 pandemic, TRIP served the community by recruiting volunteers to do shopping and other requests for those in isolation. Operation Rudolph was launched to make sure those in need of a hot meal for Christmas lunch got them and children were given presents. Today, TRIP coordinates a community car service, minibuses, wheelchair-accessible vehicles, mobility and disability equipment. They also have a befriending service. There are 30 befrienders and 38 who are being befriended, seven paid drivers and 37 volunteers and six minibuses.



In a letter written by TRIP founder Val Royal, she reflected on how different the organisation is from when it was formed in 1997. She said: 'How different from those days is the organisation now, having grown almost beyond recognition. The services we offer have expanded significantly and, I am pleased to say, we survived the challenges of the pandemic. Thanks to our staff, and a marvellous band of volunteers, who offered their time and help in so many ways, we were able to support a great many people during lockdown. To them, we owe a large amount of gratitude for their hard work during this difficult time. During the 25 years since I founded the charity, I have been struck by the amount of reliance and value our service users have placed on us. It's good to know our endeavours to be of service to the people of Honiton, and the surrounding area, is much appreciated. I have worked with many trustees, staff, drivers and volunteers, past and present and, to them all, I extend my very grateful thanks for their support and commitment.' Anyone interested in becoming a trustee or a volunteer car driver, ring Neil on 01404 46529."

<https://www.midweekherald.co.uk/news/21633309.honiton-charity-trp-marks-25-year-anniversary/>

Devon - Funding Could be Reduced for Newton Abbot Community Transport Scheme

Totnes Today: "A community transport scheme could have some of its funding withdrawn if plans by South Hams District Council (SHDC) go ahead. Newton Abbot Community Transport has been helping local residents get out and about since 1991 and also provides a 'ring-and-ride' service in Totnes, Dartmouth and the surrounding areas. But as part of three-yearly review of 'key partnerships funding,' SHDC's executive may decide not to give any more cash to the service. Ahead of a meeting next week, Tory councillor for Dartmouth and East Dart, Jonathan Hawkins, lead member for communities said: 'When the executive meet on Thursday 13 October I will be proposing that we do not continue to fund Newton Abbot Community Transport based on the application they submitted, but that we continue to work with them to understand how their service helps the residents of South Hams. This will help us

understand if they can demonstrate a need for continued funding. We carry out these regular reviews to help us decide if the funding is being spent in the best interests of the residents of South Hams or if it could be spent better elsewhere. On this occasion, I feel that we need more information to decide if Newton Abbot Community Transport should continue to be funded.'

Every three years SHDC reviews the money it gives to key local partners, known as key partnerships funding. This is to ensure the cash is being spent wisely and according to the terms of their agreement. But Green Party councillor for Dartington and Staverton, Jacqi Hodgson, suggested now was not the time to consider defunding public transport initiatives.

'Community transport underpins the gaps between the main transport providers and operates at a very local level and is usually very tuned in to the individual needs in the area,' she said. 'It's uniquely placed to be really supportive to people that sometimes can't access any other form of public transport. So community transport is to be supported, not to have funding withdrawn, especially at this really critical time when other services are all being withdrawn. Otherwise, it just means we're going to see more cars on the road, which is completely opposite to what we're trying to do in terms of reducing car use if we're going to make any headway with our addressing climate change.'.."

<https://www.totnes-today.co.uk/news/funding-could-be-reduced-for-community-transport-scheme-567199>



Dorset – A Christchurch Bus Means Trips & New Friends; We Need a New One

Crowdfunder for Christchurch Community Partnership: "A pivotal service in re-connecting socially isolated Christchurch residents with their community are our minibuses - they need replacing! We are a small independent charity whose mission is to reconnect lonely and socially isolated people back into community, so they can live their best life! We do this by both directly delivering services that nobody else does, and by working together with all of the other organisations and agencies, both large and small, who are also working in our community.

Christchurch has one of the highest elderly populations in Europe, and many of them live alone and cannot access transport or activities. During the COVID pandemic we were cooking and delivering 150 hot meals a week to both families and individuals who struggled to access nutritious meals and we realised that there are many of our older residents in that position. We have targeted our transport services, Dial-a-Bus and Neighbour Cars to address this, by supporting a number of Lunch Clubs and offering free places and transport where those are barriers for people. So not only do attendees get to meet new people and expand their social network – but also get a nutritious hot meal to boot!

We now urgently need to purchase a new 17 seater minibus as well as a smaller people carrier to replace our 2 ageing (and increasingly expensive!) buses - to be able to sustain and expand this invaluable service and reach many more folk in the Christchurch area. Please help us by donating whatever you can and know that you will be making an enormous difference to many lives!"

<https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/replacementdab>



Nottinghamshire – Award Recognition for CT4N Charitable Trust’s Elaine

CT4N Press Release: “A bus operator’s charity co-ordinator has scooped a prestigious award in recognition of her work to reconnect communities following the coronavirus pandemic. Over the last couple of years, Elaine Allitt has worked tirelessly to help tackle social isolation and loneliness in the community, including organising a series of day trips run by CT4N Charitable Trust as Covid restrictions were lifted. Now all her hard work has been recognised in the key worker category at BBC Radio Nottingham’s Make a Difference Awards. She received the accolade during a recent gala event at The Nottingham Contemporary after impressing judges with her commitment to helping people to reconnect and make new friends.

Andrew Grieve, Chairman of CT4N Charitable Trust, commented: ‘I am absolutely delighted and very proud that Elaine has won this award. Community Transport operates around the periphery of traditional public transport, providing vital services to members of our community who are often most in need. Elaine is an absolute natural when it comes to linking up with them and often goes above and beyond her job description to offer assistance. During the pandemic she worked hard to keep in touch with our members who were socially isolated, and to arrange delivery of hot meals, pick up prescriptions, post important letters, collect food for hampers and to provide toys to children in need at Christmas. The most impressive thing for me is that she still continues to do this post pandemic, and that her attitude is infectious to other staff at CT4N Charitable Trust.’



The BBC Radio Make a Difference Awards are a chance for people to show recognition and appreciation for those who make life better for others in their area. On receiving the accolade, Elaine said: ‘I was delighted to receive this award, but it is really the result of the efforts of the entire CT4N team who have pulled out all the stops to support the communities we serve,’ Elaine said. ‘Most recently we’ve helped dozens of other community groups to enjoy low-cost outings to attractive destinations such as local garden centres, markets and other places of interest. For many people who would usually struggle to get out and about, this has provided the opportunity to enjoy some time together, and even have a natter over a cuppa and a piece of cake when they arrive at their destination!’

See also here: <https://www.hucknalldispatch.co.uk/news/people/bulwell-woman-wins-top-award-for-reconnecting-communities-post-pandemic-3858225>

Cheshire - Public Invited to Meet Cheshire Community Transport Provider at Chester Event

Chester Standard: “A Cheshire community transport provider is inviting members of the public to attend its free roadshow event at Chester Town Hall at the end of this month. ECT in Cheshire will be at the town hall on Friday, September 30, between 10am-3pm. On the day, visitors will be able to get on board a fully accessible minibus and meet some of the group’s trained drivers and passenger assistants. The minibuses provide a door-to-door service, helping people who struggle to use mainstream transport to go to the shops, visit friends and attend GP appointments. Simon Finnie, general manager of ECT in Cheshire, said: ‘We’re keen to raise awareness of how we help Cheshire residents stay connected with their community. We want to help more people to get out and about, and our services let them do that. We’d love to meet more residents, so please come and visit us outside Chester Town Hall on Friday, September 30 between 10am and 3pm.’



ECT in Cheshire works with Cheshire West and Chester Council to provide Day Centre transport and will help passengers from their front door if needed. It also offers a door-to-door PlusBus service which enables those less able to travel to get to the shops or to meet friends. To find out more, visit www.ectcharity.co.uk/cheshire or call the team on 0151 357 4420 or email cheshire@ectcharity.co.uk. ECT in Cheshire operates across Chester, Neston and Ellesmere Port. It has 11 vehicles, 16 drivers and 10 passenger assistants. On average, passengers make

30,000 trips with the charity in a year. ECT in Cheshire is part of a larger charity that also has depots in West London, and Dorset. Established in 1979 to address the rising need for many people without access to their own transport or unable to access public transport, today ECT helps thousands of vulnerable and older people across the UK stay connected to their local communities.

<https://www.chesterstandard.co.uk/news/22564170-public-invited-meet-cheshire-community-transport-provider-chester-event/>

Republic of Ireland – Held Up as a Model by Minister, Transport Service for Disabled People Closes Due to Lack of Funding

Dublin Inquirer: “Padhraic Dormer says he would call up the Accessibility Community Transport Southside (ACTS) somewhere between five and seven times a month before it wound up a couple of weeks back. He would use it for trips from his home in Rathfarnham to the cinema, to Ballyfermot Gym, to sports events, or maybe to meet with friends in pubs like Baker’s Corner. The drivers were friendly and reliable, he says. ‘They would bring you back to your house and even make sure you got in safely. There’s no other company like ACTS that do door-to-door service,’ he says. ‘If I’m going out for an evening, I ring other companies and they can’t accommodate me.’

ACTS had run its community bus service – serving people with disabilities, mobility and sensory issues – in the south side of the city for 20 years, said Geraldine Greydon, an ACTS board member. The news on 9 September that it is winding up means a lot of people will be



left without transport in that part of Dublin. On average, the company did around 550 trips per week, she says. Pre-Covid, it was 1,100 trips, says Greydon. ‘It’s absolutely devastating,’ she said. ‘It’s a service that was run for 21 years, and it was run very well.’ In its formal statement, the ACTS board of directors said they had tried to make the funding they had work. ‘But, unfortunately, time has now run out and the company finds itself currently unable to pay its debts. Many of our travel club members, particularly those who are unable to use the public transport service, will be left with limited or, in some cases, no transport service for the foreseeable future,” it says.

The Department of Equality did not respond to queries sent Monday asking if it intends to increase funding for community transport services. Covid had a big impact on ACTS’s business operations, but the company was having increasingly significant issues too, says Greydon. ‘Our business model is out of date and we need to restructure it, but our service model is perfect.

ACTS is on-demand door to door,' she said. ACTS isn't the only community transport service in Dublin that says it is in financial difficulty and in need of more state supports. Lucan Disability Action Group (LDAG), which operates community transport service in the Lucan and west Dublin area, is struggling too, said Owen Collumb, a board member, on Friday. Community transport services like ACTS and LDAG get funding from the Community Services Programme (CSP), which is managed by Pobal, a government body which provides support services to social inclusion groups, on behalf of the Department of Rural and Community Development. But this isn't enough to cover costs, says Collumb, so LDAG is always trying to cut its costs or find ways to make money.

LDAG runs disability support services like note-taking to bring in cash to subsidise its buses, but, since 2016, larger for-profit health organisations have started to offer those services too, says Collumb. The solution isn't to put up fares on the buses because passengers can't afford it, he says. At the moment, LDAG gets Pobal funding to pay its staff €17 or €18 an hour, says Collumb. It struggles to recruit and keep staff because it can't offer as much as other companies, he says. 'We require people to have a full driver's licence with no penalty points. There's not that many people out there looking for jobs at the moment really, not with our pay rates,' he says...

Anne Rabbitte, the minister of state with responsibility for disability at the Department of Health said in the Dáil on 16 February that there is a working group looking at a plan for transport supports for people with disabilities to get to places of work and employment supports...At the Dáil debate in February, Rabbitte praised ACTS: 'We need to take a lesson from this group, based on Dublin's southside. That is a model for integration.' She also said, during the debate about seven months ago, that ACTS was not adequately funded...Greydon says ACTS never heard anything after that government debate. 'Other things became priority. This group is very marginal'..."

<https://www.dublininquirer.com/2022/09/21/held-up-as-a-model-by-minister-transport-service-for-disabled-people-closes-due-to-lack-of-funding>

Lincolnshire - Boston Supermarket Lends a Hand to the Community and Invites Other Good Causes to Come Forward

Lincolnshire World: "The Boston branch of a supermarket chain has been lending its support to a wide range of community organisations. Tesco, in New Hammond Beck Road, has been making donations – both in terms of funds and goods – to a number of causes of late, including...Boston Community Transport, which received £500. The charity offers door-to-door car service for anyone without personal transport. The cash donations were made through Tesco's Community Grant scheme. This involves nominated good causes being awarded sums of up to £1,500, with customers helping decide where funds should go through a 'blue token' voting system (to apply, visit

www.tesco.com/communitygrants). However, this is not the only way the business can help local causes, as the store's community relations manager Sylvia Goodwin explained. She said: 'We welcome any enquiries from the community that we can support either with raffle prizes or by having them in store to raise their profile. If they write to me at Tesco Store, New Hammond Beck Road, Boston, PE21 7JD, I can look into how best to support them.'"

<https://www.lincolnshireworld.com/news/people/boston-supermarket-lends-a-hand-to-the-community-and-invites-other-good-causes-to-come-forward-3853101>



North Yorkshire - Shortlist Announced for Community Awards

North Yorks Council: "The shortlist has been revealed for North Yorkshire's community awards scheme which celebrates the voluntary work of individuals and organisations. A total of 81 nominations for 48 groups and individuals have been made, from organisations helping to provide food and clothes to the vulnerable, to volunteers involved in the fight against the coronavirus pandemic. The winner of each category will receive £1,000 for the project, group or nominated relevant local charity in the case of the volunteer awards. Two runners-up in each category will receive £250. The awards ceremony will be held at the North Yorkshire Wider Partnership Conference on 30 September at the Pavilions of Harrogate. Council chair, Cllr Margaret Atkinson, said: 'We are once again delighted with the number of entries we have received. The annual awards are a great way to celebrate the organisations and individual volunteers who make a huge contribution to lives across the county. Volunteers help us to deliver critical services and many provide social networks which reduce isolation and enable people to live independently for longer. We look forward to the awards ceremony when the well-deserved winners will be announced.'...shortlisted nominees [include] Tadcaster Volunteer Cars and Services Association: The group has been providing community transport for Tadcaster and the surrounding area for over 30 years. Within the last five years the group has developed its other community activities such as its charity shop, Knit and Natter and Jigsaw Club. They carry out collection and delivery of prescriptions, food deliveries and coronavirus vaccination appointments and have a community cafe and garden. Plans are moving forward for a designated men's shed..."



East Sussex - Wheelchair User Seeks Help Reaching Beach with Closure of Brighton Seafront Lift

Brighton & Hove News: "Lack of access to the beach for people with disabilities and those who can't use steps has prompted a woman to ask councillors for help. Lina Talbot, who uses a wheelchair, struggles to reach Madeira Drive because the Madeira lift is out of action. She wants Brighton and Hove City Council to support or fund a bus service to and from the seafront. Currently, the only way to reach the beach from Kemp Town and east Brighton is by a limited number of staircases or heading to Duke's Mound or the Palace Pier for step-free access. The Madeira Lift is expected to be out of action for the rest of the year while the Madeira Terraces are restored when additional lifts are due to be added.



Ms Talbot spoke to people in St George's Road and collected 84 signatures in a couple of hours. She also applied to set up a petition on the council website but it did not appear online. She said: 'I was surprised at the enthusiasm with which everyone I bumped into in St George's Road supported it and wanted to sign my petition. They were really keen and think it is a worthwhile thing.' Labour

councillor Nancy Platts, who represents East Brighton ward, presented the petition to the council's Environment, Transport and Sustainability Committee on Tuesday (20 September). She proposed that every fifth 48 or 52 bus could 'swing through' Kemp Town to Madeira Drive to help the less mobile.

Councillor Platts said: 'Kemp Town beach is the reason why a lot of people enjoy living here and to shut off the elderly and less mobile and families with babies and toddlers makes life very difficult for them. It's all fine if you have a car and can drive down there and park and pay your parking fee but not everyone has a car or can afford one. Indeed, we are trying to discourage car use. Some residents feel they have been excluded for much of the summer season. There should have been replacement transport as soon as this was known.' Councillor Platts won the committee's backing for a feasibility study into a suitable bus service.

Green councillor Amy Heley, who chairs the committee, said that there were bus services on roads parallel to Madeira Drive as well as the number 7 serving Brighton Marina. She said: 'It is unlikely there is sufficient demand for a commercial service. Users could approach bus operators to suggest they run a service on an experimental basis. Given the commercial pressures that operators are under due to rising fuel and driver costs, they may not take the risk, unfortunately.' Councillor Heley said that running a service would cost the council between £350,000 and £750,000 a year – and that resources were focused on maintaining existing routes. Bus company chief executive Tom Druitt, who runs the Big Lemon, said that re-routing a current service would inconvenience existing passengers. He said: 'Brighton and Hove Community Transport operates door-to-door shopping services, coffee and cake clubs and special trips with support from Brighton and Hove City Council. We would be very happy indeed to run a few trial services to see if this is something that proves to be popular.'

<https://www.brightonandhove.news.org/2022/09/23/wheelchair-user-seeks-help-reaching-beach-with-closure-of-brighton-seafront-lift/>

West Sussex - Likely Lads Actors James Bolam and Sue Jameson Launch New Horsham 'Travel Buddy' Scheme

Sussex Express: "Likely Lads actors James Bolam and Sue Jameson have helped launch a new 'Travel Buddy' scheme in Horsham. It is aimed at residents who may face barriers to accessing public transport that would help them get to appointments, go shopping or attend community events. The service also aims to help reduce feelings of isolation and loneliness among local people. The launch took place at Age UK in Horsham and among those there were Marie Claire Mackintosh from Community Transport Sussex, James West of Age UK and Horsham District Council's community services director Paul Anderson – along with actors James Bolam and his wife Sue Jameson who first worked together on the TV series The Likely Lads. The couple, who live near Horsham, went on to star in When the Boat Comes In and New Tricks and they are also together in the popular current children's series Grandpa in my Pocket.

Marie Claire Macintosh said: 'We are thrilled to have two of the country's most loved actors support our travel buddy scheme at our local depot in Horsham where we serve the community week in and week out. We are delighted that so many voluntary groups like Age UK have expressed support for this new initiative along with Horsham District Council. The fact that we've already started to receive referrals is an early indication of its value and need.' Sue Jameson said: 'Everybody needs support from time to time,' and James Bolam added: 'The scheme is about building meaningful friendships and restoring a feeling of community. Knowing the residents of Horsham, it's likely to be a huge success.'



Horsham District Councillor Liz Kitchen said: 'Loneliness is unfortunately something that we can all be affected by at some time in our lives. Transport is often a factor which is not

considered when implementing new community programmes to help people and can be a real barrier to taking part in activities.' Andrew West said 'Transport is one of the keys to enabling older people to access groups and peer friendships enabling people to feel more confident and have fun.' Community Transport Sussex is looking for volunteer drivers. They will receive full training and support and can devote as much time as they are able as it is a flexible service. For more information contact travelbuddy@ctsussex.org.uk.
<https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/news/people/likely-lads-actors-james-bolam-and-sue-jameson-launch-new-horsham-travel-buddy-scheme-3875561>

West Sussex - Arun has Increased its Budget for Community Transport

Sussex Express: "A Community Transport Plan was considered by Arun District Council's Housing and Wellbeing Committee on Thursday (6 October). The committee agreed to increase the current community transport budget from £7,000 to £11,500 by transferring some funds from the day centre budget. Community Transport Sussex (CTS) will now work with the council on a plan to improve services in the district. CTS will work with existing providers, such as Arun Community Transport (ACT) which formed in 2018 following the collapse of the Sammy Transport and Arun Co-ordinate Community Transport merger. During the meeting on Thursday, CTS representatives said Arun will be the first West Sussex district to have such a plan.

Jacqui Cooke, development co-ordinator at CTS, said: 'I'm sure that we all know at least one vulnerable person who struggles to get out and I'm sure we understand what impact this has on their life. Community transport is really important, particularly for our more vulnerable residents; it provides a solution for those that struggle to use mainstream transport to get out and about. Community transport schemes across Arun already help loads of people who are socially isolated and very lonely. Without this transport, they would not be able to get out and about, and they often say it's the highlight of their week, whether it's going to appointments or other social activities.' Ms Cooke said the transport plan would help to create an 'integrated and effective' service. This could include dial-a-ride, patient transport, and community car shares.



CTS also hopes to improve sustainability by using electric vehicles. Bases for community transport could be opened in Drayton or Clapham as – while towns like Littlehampton have good community transport coverage – CTS identified gaps in the west of the district and north of the A27. The charity also noted that local bus services 'don't meet most people's needs' due to timetables and affordability. Matt Roberts, CEO of CTS, said: 'Our passengers do pay a fare but it's roughly a third of a taxi fare. Typically a dial-a-ride fare within a borough would be somewhere between £5 and £7, depending on the distance, for a return assisted journey. That journey costs somewhere between £18 and £22 to provide.'

Mr Roberts said community transport is much-needed to help people get to essential medical appointments. One Littlehampton customer needed to travel to East Grinstead for an eye appointment and asked CTS when she would need to leave to get there in time. CTS found out that she would have had to leave at 5.45pm the day before and book overnight accommodation. Mr Roberts explained this was because it was 'impossible to get there via public transport'. Housing and wellbeing chair Jacky Pendleton (Con, Middleton-on-Sea) agreed such services are 'essential' for some residents. Isabel Thurston (Green, Barnham) was 'delighted' about the new plan. 'Drawing all these services together I think is vital,' she said. 'It's tragic that our public transport is not as good as it should be.'"
<https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/news/politics/council/arun-has-increased-its-budget-for-community-transport-3873872>

Greater London (and Elsewhere!) - HCT Group Ceases Trading and Enters Administration

Route One: "HCT Group ceased trading and entered administration on Friday 23 September, bringing an end to the social enterprise after it 'ran out of road.' Neville Side, Martha Thompson and Mark Thornton of BDO LLP have been appointed joint administrators of the business. The collapse followed a period of turmoil for HCT. Since early August it had seen the sudden closure and subsequent entry into administration of its Yorkshire operations, the sale of Transport for London contracted work to Stagecoach, the closure of its business in Bristol and the disposal of operations on the Channel Islands to Kelsian Group. Writing on LinkedIn, former HCT Group Communications Director Frank Villeneuve-Smith says that the organisation 'has been rocked by multiple challenges' that date as far back as difficult trading before COVID-19 and which had been compounded by a surge in costs and the financial impact of the pandemic period. 'This has led to unsustainable commercial losses and we see our situation as irrecoverable,' adds Mr Villeneuve-Smith.

He notes that the sale of some work or the transfer of routes to other operators has protected the livelihoods of 'the overwhelming majority' of former HCT Group employees and ensured most services have continued. However, where that has not been the case and provision has ceased, Mr Villeneuve-Smith says that he is 'saddened' by the outcome. 'Closure is the last possible outcome we wanted, and is a very sad day for everyone at HCT Group. Everyone here has worked tirelessly to put the organisation on a sustainable footing and we have done everything in our power to prevent this situation, but our position cannot be sustained any further. We have run out of road.'



HCT Group announces closure

It is with deep regret that the Trustees announce that HCT Group has closed. This decision was made following a period of multiple challenges – underperforming operations prior to the pandemic, the financial impact of the pandemic and the current surge in fuel and labour costs. As a small bus operator this led to a difficult trading position and the group being unable to continue delivering and supporting its community transport services.

HCT began in 1982 as Hackney Community Transport and grew into one of the leading social enterprises in the UK, providing commercial and community transport services in London, Yorkshire, Dorset, Jersey and Guernsey. During its long period of operation, HCT Group has touched the lives of tens of thousands of people through its services and programmes, helping to tackle loneliness and social isolation, and taking down the barriers to access for the 'most vulnerable' in our communities.

HCT Group began in 1982 as Hackney Community Transport, later growing in London and further afield. Mr Villeneuve-Smith adds that its demise is not as a result of its status as a social enterprise, but because of 'unique circumstances that we are living through.' HCT's most recent accounts, for the extended period between 1 April 2019 and 28 September 2020, show a deficit of £10.3m on an income of £123.7m. During that period, it breached covenants on loan facilities but was provided with waivers by all lenders. Writing in that report, Chief Executive Lynn McClelland noted that the group had earlier implemented a 'major restructuring programme to remove

costs,' adding her belief that 'significant efficiencies' were still to be found within the organisation and that the trading position to September 2021 had improved considerably.

However, HCT was at that point in arrears to HMRC – for which a time to pay agreement had been reached – and with the Department for Transport for reasons that were undisclosed, although related to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the latter case, no such time to pay agreement had been reached by September 2021. It was expected that HCT would be making arrears payments for two to three years from that point 'and that further funding may need to be raised in the next 12-24 months to support continued growth and time to pay arrangements, the strategic report noted.'

<https://www.route-one.net/news/hct-group-ceases-trading-and-enters-administration/>

In Bus & Coach Buyer, Mark Williams has posted: "HCT Group has gone into administration, despite desperate last-ditch attempts to maintain solvency. The group which was formerly Hackney Community Transport was a Community Interest Company which absorbed any profits into a charity. By 2019, it ran more than 750 buses, with operations spread from London to the north west and even ran the bus network in the Channel Isles. It set out to prove that bus services run without a profit motive would better serve communities.

HCT began competing for commercial contracts in 1993, and over the following decade built up a large portfolio of operating companies. It became HCT Group in 2008, and began running the Channel Isles' networks in 2012/13.

Under the same Chief Executive, Dai Powell, since 1993, the cracks at HCT began to appear in 2018, when it recorded £1.5m losses and claimed it had been victim of a 'cyber attack' which had wiped all of its financial records, with no copies retained. Auditors issued a strong statement of qualification signing off that year's accounts, saying the record in the purchase of Powell's Buses was incomplete. In the same financial year, HCT sold off its Waltham Bus Garage for £6.65m to address debts, and a year later closed Manchester Community Transport (MCT) which it had acquired in 2017. Likewise Derbyshire Community Transport, which HCT acquired then returned to local ownership, having lost significant amounts of money on both acquisitions.



HCT's CEO, Dai Powell, resigned in 2020, replaced by Lynn McLelland. By this year, it was clear that the debts could not be sustained, and HCT transferred and sold its Yorkshire operations, CT Plus and Powell's Buses, its TfL operations to Stagecoach and its Channel Isles operations to Tower Transit and Kelsian Group, and shut down its community operations in Bristol. Mark Thornton, Martha Thompson and Neville Side, all of BDO LLP, were appointed as Joint Administrators of the company last Friday 23 September and the company ceased to trade on the same day."

https://www.busandcoachbuyer.com/hct-group-is-insolvent/?utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Bus%20%20Coach%20Buyer%20Newsletter%20-%20Wednesday%205th%20October%202022&utm_content=Bus%20%20Coach%20Buyer%20Newsletter%20-%20Wednesday%205th%20October%202022+CID_7f34c9c13662cdce68de7fe167b0e88b&utm_source=&utm_term=READ%20MORE

Greater London – Dial-a-Ride Friends

Transport for London: "Dial-a-Ride Friends is our new service for people who are not members of Dial-a-Ride themselves. It keeps you up-to-date with our latest news, seasonal booking arrangements and how to best contact us with any queries. So if you belong to a club, or attend an activity or meeting where the organisers might be interested in receiving In Touch magazine and other Dial-a-Ride information, this might be the service for you. How to become a Dial-a-Ride Friend – Just email us at DAR@tfl.gov.uk with the subject 'Dial-a-Ride Friends'. We will then send you a regular electronic copy of our In Touch magazine plus any other updates about Dial-a-Ride and related transport services that you might find useful."

<https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/dial-a-ride/dial-a-ride-friends>



Wales - Helping to Improve Public Transport in Rural Denbighshire

Denbighshire Free Press: "A partnership scheme is being developed to improve public transport for people in rural areas. Denbighshire County Council is partnering with the South Denbighshire Community Partnership to relaunch the county's rural community car scheme. The community car scheme aims to assist rural residents to access local facilities such



as shops, visiting friends and relatives, visiting a doctor or dentist, and to undertake personal business. The partnership will see the SDCP taking over the operation of the scheme, with impressive plans to see it expand to cover as many rural areas in Denbighshire's south as possible. Since its launch in 1979, the scheme has steadily declined in terms of both users and particularly volunteers. The business plan for the rejuvenated scheme aims to see the re-establishment of volunteers in a much wider area.

Cllr Barry Mellor, Denbighshire cabinet lead member for environment and transport, said: 'In the last 10 years, the county council has wherever possible improved public transport in rural areas. We nevertheless recognise that there will be people who need to travel on journeys that are not easily made by bus. Additionally, perhaps because of age, disability or frailty, boarding a bus or minibus for some in our rural communities may be difficult. In such circumstances, we wish to see an expansion of the current community car scheme as widely as possible across our rural area. We believe working in partnership with the SDCP is the best way of achieving this.'

Margaret Sutherland, chief executive officer at SDCP, added: 'We are delighted to be working with Denbighshire County Council on this project. It is one of a growing number of initiatives we are delivering in partnership with Denbighshire. This already includes delivering some transport, in the Edeyrnion area. We now have a bank of considerable experience from which over the coming months we aim to use to launch the community car scheme over a much wider area.' Any volunteers who may be able to help should contact the SDCP on 01490 266004 for a chat and ask for Maggie Harding. Volunteers are partly compensated for their mileage at the current maximum HMRC mileage reimbursement rate."

<https://www.denbighshirefreepress.co.uk/news/23015479.helping-improve-public-transport-rural-denbighshire/>

Wales – RVS CT: Could You Spare an Hour or Two a Week to be One of our Volunteers?

Tivyside Advertiser: "Royal Voluntary Service urgently needs volunteer drivers for its Ceredigion Country Cars service. Royal Voluntary Service' Community Transport service supports local people who are without transport and who need to make an essential journey. This could be to visit friends or family, attend medical appointments, access shopping or go to social groups. Driving and using public transport can be challenging for people with health conditions or restricted mobility. Being able to get from A to B, however, is crucial for maintaining a healthy, happy, active and enjoyable lifestyle.

Which is why our volunteers offer Community Transport services that help people get to where they need to go. It's more than just transportation. It's offering them a lifeline. Giving people the support they need to stay, safe, well and connected to their communities. Volunteers, using their own or specially-adapted vehicles, take clients to and from social visits, shopping trips, activities and appointments - expenses are paid. The service means that people don't have to feel reliant on family or friends whenever they want to go out, helping them to stay independent, active and social. They know they can count on us to deliver a driver when they

need one and what's more, it will be a driver they can get to know and trust, so they have a little company while they're on their journey too. They undergo the proper checks and carry ID so you can be sure they're genuine and trustworthy.

Our thousands of volunteers are very different kinds of people from many walks of life, but they all agree that volunteering is hugely rewarding. To find out more about the work Royal Voluntary Service does or to volunteer, email us on

pembshub@royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk, call us on 07812 485 809 or visit

www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk. Royal

Voluntary Service staff and volunteers support thousands of people each month in

hospitals and in the community. For more information, to make a donation or to find out about volunteering, please visit our website or our social media channels. Follow Royal Voluntary Service on Twitter, Facebook and Instagram @RoyalVolService #MakeADifference To make a donation to support the charity's work, visit: www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/donate." <https://www.tivysideadvertiser.co.uk/news/20246358.benefit-support-home/>



Wales - Vandals Strike and Community Charity's Minibus has to be Taken off the Road

Penarth News: "A Penarth-based community transport charity has condemned an act of vandalism which saw windows on one of its vehicles smashed. East Vale Community Transport (EVCT) provides accessible minibuses for the community of the eastern Vale, both groups and individuals. It has been operating in the area over five decades and its volunteer drivers have offered a door-to-door service that has taken people shopping, to meetings, on expeditions and visits when they might otherwise be unable to get out. Lately it has operated an invaluable service, taking local residents to get their Covid jabs and other medication.



But at the weekend, while one of the minibuses was parked at Cemetery Approach in Barry, someone smashed a window. The charity, which operates from West House Cottage, behind the Penarth Town Council offices in Stanwell Road, says: 'The knock on effect from this mindless act of is cancellation of people going for their autumn boosters, no transport for those attending much needed day centres & social isolation and a cost to us as a small charity for replacement glass.'

<https://penarth.nub.news/news/local-news/vandals->

[strike-and-community-charitys-mini-bus-has-to-be-taken-off-the-road-154078](https://penarth.nub.news/news/local-news/vandals-strike-and-community-charitys-mini-bus-has-to-be-taken-off-the-road-154078)

Staffordshire – Stafford Venues Needed for "Warm Places" during Winter for Residents unable to Turn Heating on

Express & Star: "Shivering Stafford residents will be invited to a network of warm places throughout the winter to combat the cost-of-living crisis. Stafford Borough Council is working with Midlands Partnership Foundation Trust so village halls, churches, and community centres open as friendly, inviting places to people who cannot afford to turn the heating on. The council is enlisting venues, which will be given financial support and might also offer warm food and drink, which would open their doors for around two hours at lunchtime for three days a week between mid-October and end of March. Stafford Borough Council

deputy leader and cabinet member for communities and health Councillor Jeremy Pert said: 'These would be safe, heated spaces, that would offer people a friendly welcome within their local communities with the opportunity of having something warm to eat and drink. People across our borough - as well as nationwide - are facing tough decisions because of the cost-of-living crisis. We know that one of those decisions for many of our residents and families is around eating healthily or heating. Our warm spaces scheme is one of the initiatives that we have launched to help those in this difficult position - providing them with a warm place, company within their own community and people to talk to.'

Head of primary care development & MH Programme Lead (South Staffordshire) at MPFT, said: 'We know that many people are feeling the strain as the cost of living continues to increase and individuals with mental health problems are nearly twice as likely as those without to say they have felt unable to cope due to the rising cost of living, this combined with the considerable pressure over the winter period as demand for NHS services tends to increase significantly puts our most vulnerable communities at risk.' The local authority has written to parish councils and community organisations across the area asking if they would like to join the project. There will also be funding to support community transport schemes to enable people to get to the warm hubs as well.



Along with a network of community 'warm spaces,' it is planned to have one or two larger hubs within Stafford, which can help offer support for longer during the week or where there may not be anything in someone's direct vicinity. Councillor Pert continued: 'We want these places to be easily accessible for as many people as we can - whether that be a short walk or via bus, or with the help of volunteer community transport and would welcome anyone not already actively engaged in a conversation to come forward and talk to us, so that they can be included in the building of this valuable support network for our communities this winter.' Any group interested in taking part in the warmer spaces scheme should contact warmspaces@staffordbc.gov.uk."

<https://www.expressandstar.com/news/cost-of-living/2022/10/10/stafford-venues-needed-for-warm-places-during-winter-for-residents-unable-to-turn-heating-on/>

Leicestershire – Refugee Receives Donation of Essentials from Amazon



Rugby Observer: "A Lutterworth charity which supports Ukrainian refugees has received a donation of essential products from the Amazon centre in Rugby. The Amazon Rugby team donated tinned food, toiletries, power banks, torches, and flasks to Lutterworth and Villages Foodbank, and with the help of Lutterworth Community Transport, distributed the items to Ukrainian refugees living in the town. Lutterworth Councillor Rosita Page helped arrange the support for Ukrainian families who have recently moved to Lutterworth.

Lutterworth and Villages Foodbank's Project Manager Lucy Freema said: 'We are grateful for the support from Amazon, Councillor Rosita Page, and Lutterworth Community Transport. The donated items are a great help for the refugees in our community.' Gayner Coulson, Site Leader at Amazon Rugby, said: 'Lutterworth and Villages Foodbank offers important support to people in the community and we're pleased to support Councillor Page and the charities with this initiative.' Amazon Rugby employee Sam Banfield added: 'I'm glad we can help with initiatives like this one and support our neighbours when they need it.'

Lutterworth and Villages Foodbank provides emergency food and supplies for residents and refugees in financial crisis. Lutterworth Community Transport provides a car-share scheme for disabled, vulnerable, elderly and rurally isolated people, and operates a fleet of wheelchair-accessible minibuses."

<https://rugbyobserver.co.uk/news/refugee-charity-receives-donation-of-essentials-from-amazon/>

Northamptonshire - Community Minibuses a 'Godsend' to Rural Areas

BBC: "Users of a community transport service set up to connect isolated rural areas say they would be lost without it. Ability Community Transport was created as a not-for-profit company four years ago and now serves 45 parishes. One of its first services was from Hackleton, Northamptonshire to nearby Northampton after the village bus was axed. Passenger Eileen Jarvis said the service takes 'my shopping to the door when we get home and is wonderful'. Chris is one of its volunteer drivers who was inspired to help after seeing his mother benefit from a similar scheme. Fellow bus user Eileen Jarvis said she 'didn't know anybody until I came on this bus'. Mrs Jarvis moved to the county to be closer to her son and his wife. 'He's away at work all day and she's a teacher in Northampton and it meant that I was stuck,' she said.



Another passenger said: 'If you are not able to drive or you haven't got a car... this is a godsend.' The service founders say it 'meets the needs of social isolation and loneliness'. Ability was set up as a community interest company by Lynn and Nigel Hinch, who realised there was a need to connect isolated rural areas left behind by the wider transport network. It took them six months to set up and went live on 1 January 2019 - within days Hackleton Parish

Council was in touch and was about to start a service 'the very next day'. It now has seven mini buses running services in south Northamptonshire and north Oxfordshire and is planning to keep on expanding. Ms Hinch said: 'People are registering for this service on a daily basis.'" <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-northamptonshire-63077098>

Buckinghamshire – Chilterns Dial-a-Ride Support Service gets National Lottery Money

Bucks Free Press: "A ride service helping isolated people get outside in Buckinghamshire was awarded tens of thousands of pounds amid a surge in demand. Chilterns Dial-a-Ride secured the crucial money from The National Lottery following a busy time providing food and transport during the Covid pandemic as a lifeline for many residents stuck at home. With the help of £77,000 spread over four years Dial-a-Ride can continue to support people with mobility issues to travel safely from door to door.

Chairman of The Chilterns Dial-a-Ride David Ouvry: 'During Covid, we were pleased to help with food delivery services (with One Can Trust), and providing a free service for those often isolated people needing transport to hospitals and clinics, and to Covid vaccination centres. Getting support during Covid from The National Lottery, Heart of Bucks and the Bucks Council Community Boards enabled us to do all this. Now, with the surge in demand for our services post Covid, this so timely support from the National Lottery - and also Heart of Bucks - is invaluable as we forge ahead!' The



community service provides around 6,000 journeys annually, expected to increase up to 9,000 rides over the next two years. Over the last three months, 2,000 communities and grassroots projects in England were given more than £65 million in National Lottery funding."

<https://www.bucksfreepress.co.uk/awards/bhsc-awards-2021/news/23039444.dial-a-ride-support-service-gets-national-lottery-money/>

Worcestershire - Upton upon Severn Community Buses Funding Discussed by Council

Malvern Gazette: "Town residents who rely on a community bus to get around the county are being urged to support their service to avoid missing out. At a meeting of Upton Upon Severn Town Council last week, district councillor Martin Allen spoke to the council about funding the community minibus, to help people get between the town, Worcester and Tewkesbury. This is in addition to the current route, which includes the villages to the south of the town such as Ryall, Earls Croome, Baughton, Naunton, Uckinghall and Ripple. Speaking to the council, Cllr Allen reminded them that if there is not enough support for the community bus service, the next round of government funding for public and community transport could see Upton at the back of the queue.



He said: 'We are trying to get another community minibus route - the only thing missing currently is a volunteer driver for the route riding around Worcester and Tewkesbury. We are unsure what is happening with buses after March next year. We still don't have an idea of what we are going to do - if the government doesn't give any money we are going to see a reduction in services. I have been told that if we have minibuses running in the area we go towards the front of the queue for full services.' He added there is a regular group of people using the services, showing there was a demand for it.

Upton councillors were asked to provide £100 to go towards running the community bus services. Councillors agreed that while they were in overspend on their budget for this kind of project, they did have a town development fund they could use. Cllr Mike Morgan, who was chairing the meeting and used to drive the community bus himself, said: 'I think because this brings people into the town, we can argue it is definitely a benefit to the town.' Councillors agreed to look into using the development fund to provide the £100 support for the service when they met on September 27."

<https://www.malverngazette.co.uk/news/23022230.upton-upon-severn-community-buses-funding-discussed-council/>

Cambridgeshire – Wisbech Tesco Bus can Stay on the Road after Cambridgeshire Mayor Announces Funding

Fenland Citizen: "A well-loved community bus has won a stay of execution after news it will be funded by the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority until next

spring. Wisbech Tesco 68 Bus, run by community transport provider FACT, and the Ely Zipper, run by Dews will both be funded to continue until March 25, 2023. The Wisbech Tesco Bus service runs on a circular route between the Horsefair Bus Station and Tesco in Cromwell Road was due to cease running after previous funding ran out. Campaigners along with those from Ely took their case to the last month's meeting of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority to appeal to the mayor and step in to save both services. The Zipper service runs in a loop starting and ending in Ely, connecting places including Stretham, Wilburton, Aldreth, Haddenham and Witcham. Following the announcement on Monday Both services will continue to run on their current timetables. These two services are not related to the coming withdrawal at the end of October of some routes announced by Stagecoach earlier in September.

For these services, the Combined Authority is working on an urgent tendering process for the routes, with an aim to keep as many of them going as possible. The Combined Authority Board will make a decision on funding for these services on October 19. The funding period for the Wisbech Tesco 68 bus and the Ely Zipper is the same as the proposed funding period for the upcoming Stagecoach withdrawals. That means the future of the services beyond March 2023 can be considered by the Combined Authority at the same time. The Combined Authority is looking at other options for funding for those services from April 2023.



Mayor Dr Nik Johnson said: 'There has been understandably strong feeling and worry about the Ely Zipper and Wisbech Tesco 68 bus services. I hope that this funding will provide some reassurance for those people and communities who rely on them. There are huge ongoing challenges to the buses network and this month's announcement by Stagecoach of the upcoming cancellation of a range of their bus routes across the county has also caused increased concern and distress. The Combined Authority is working on the changes needed with partners and

operators across the region to bring better buses to people regardless of where they live or their income. This is the aim of our developing bus strategy. It includes making the case to Government for more funding, and looking at bus reform, with the case for bus franchising continuing to be looked into carefully. In the meantime, I would of course encourage people to continue to use the Zipper and Wisbech Tesco bus services, where they are able. Or, if you have never used these services before, check the timetable and see if they would work for you.'

<https://www.fenlandcitizen.co.uk/news/wisbech-tesco-bus-can-stay-on-the-road-after-cambridgeshire-9276859/>

Shropshire - Oswestry: Whittington Time Team Dig for Students and Pupils

Border Counties Advertiser: "Volunteer archaeologists were joined by A-Level students and primary school pupils for an 'amazing' Time Team dig experience in Whittington last month. The dig, led by Professor Stewart Ainsworth, Visiting Professor of Landscape Archaeology at the University of Chester and long-standing Time Team expert, was designed to investigate local links to a newly identified medieval site in the area. More than 20 volunteer archaeologists, students studying History A-Level and keen to pursue a career in archaeology and pupils from Whittington Primary School were involved in three days of digging a series of test pits to help understand the site.



Davina Fairweather, project coordinator for Whittington Castle, said: 'This was an amazing experience for everyone involved. Working with professional archaeologists is something most people only ever dream of – on this occasion we could make it reality. It was especially gratifying that some of our volunteers contributed to the range of finds discovered at the site. It was also very exciting to meet so many Time Team favourites and everyone gave so much of their time.' Qube's Dial a Ride, together with Pete's minibus, provided community transport to and from the site at Halston Hall..."

<https://www.bordercountiesadvertizer.co.uk/news/23036677.oswestry-whittington-time-team-dig-students-pupils/>

