

Newsletter No.28 January 2023

Edited by John Atkins (Principal Consultant)

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/

UK – Government is Still Committed to Mandatory Taxi Training. Leader of the House of Commons Penny Mordaunt has affirmed that the Government is intending to pursue the issue of introducing compulsory training for taxi and private hire drivers in disability awarness, to meet the sector's requirements under the Equalities Act. https://www.taxi-point.co.uk/post/penny-mordaunt-latest-to-assure-mps-of-government-commitment-to-mandatory-taxi-disability-training



UK – School Staff Advised on Risk of Assault by Pupils. This article offers



advice for school staff on mitigating the risk of assault. This equally applies to staff involved in transport provision, and the measures cited of risk assessment, training and PPE could usefully be adopted by CTs which deliver education contract work.

https://www.localgovernmentlawyer.co.uk/education-law/343-education-features/52295-assaults-on-

school-staff-how-can-schools-mitigate-the-risk-of-school-staff-being-assaulted

UK - First Motability Community Transport Grants are Confirmed. The

much-anticipated service investment in CT that was promised by Motability has come to fruition with initial grants being made to Argyll-based Interloch Community Transport & Sheppey Matters. Interloch CT provides door-to-door services aross the Cowal and Bute areas. A new minibus has been provided for wellbeing and support agency Sheppey Matters to enhance its Sheppey Wheels community transport



services on the Isle of Sheppey. https://www.motaclarity.co.uk/news/new-motability-grants-awarded

Scotland – Highland Council Extends its Grant-aid to Local CTs for Another Year. Following a review of resources, Highland Council has voted to continue its financial support for community transport during 2023. 26 individual CT operators will benefit from the £359,000 fund. Two new projects have also been developed to replace little used public bus services in Nairnshire and the north Black Isle, funded by savings in the bus contracts. A third similar project is being developed in the Glenelg area. Other CTs have been funded to provide home to school transport.

https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/14918/grants_to_continue_support_for_community_transport_initiatives_agreed

Scotland - People Carrier Trial by Edinkillie Community Association — Passengers Wanted. A pilot eight-week MPV service is being offered by Edinkillie Community Association for residents of Edinkillie (south of Forres) without access to any public transport service. The eight seat vehicle will be operated as a community car scheme using volunteer drivers. The trial runs until 17 December and further details are available on 07984 888312 or email edinkilliebus@gmail.com to book. https://www.forres-gazette.co.uk/news/passengers-wanted-for-free-bus-trials-293336/

Scotland – Council Withdraws Minibus Hire for Community Groups. Following concerns about insurance, West Lothian Council has decided to withdraw its minibus fleet from use by the community. The Council claims that it "risks both legal action in the event of an accident and potential scrutiny of its Goods Vehicle Operators Licence and damage to the repute of those named on said licence." https://www.edinburghlive.co.uk/news/west-lothian-council-stop-hiring-22973295

Scotland - A Week in the Life of Jeff Zycinski. Former head of BBC Scotland and author, Jeff Zycinski has profiled his week, including his work with Inverness charity Partnerships for Wellbeing (P4W), which promotes health and wellbeing. "Community transport is the other big thing we do at P4W", said Jeff. "We recently added a wheelchair-accessible car to our wee fleet and I spend Thursdays submitting grant applications so we can buy

another one to help meet the demand from disabled people in the city." https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/lifestyle/5077300/my-week-in-5-pictures-jeff-zycinski-talks-walking-and-podcasts/

Scotland – Greenock User of MyBus is Campaigning for Service

Restoration. The door-to-door service offered by Strathclyde Partnership for Transport has been subject to pressure from passenger Alice McCaughey in Greenock who wants to see the service restored to pre-COVID levels. Her campaign is also supported by local councillor John Crowther. Talks with the authority are to take place, but SPT is facing reduced demand for services since lockdown.



https://www.greenocktelegraph.co.uk/news/23163510.crunch-talks-loom-future-greenock-mybus-disabled-service/

Scotland – Call for Sunday Dial-a-Bus in Largs. Campaigning is also taking place from Largs Community Council to introduce a Dial-a-Bus service on Sundays between Largs and West Kilbride. This would augment the limited Stagecoach service, which the bus company cannot extend. It is suggested that the Skelmorlie MyBus could be expanded.

https://www.largsandmillportnews.com/news/23150763.dial-a-bus-service-call-sundays-largs-west-kilbride/

Hampshire - Support for CT Services has been Cut. After much



deliberation over the past year
Hampshire County Council – which
once hosted one of the best developed
and resourced CT sectors in the country –
has confirmed that an £800,000 reduction
would be effected in the year 2023 / 24.
This cut includes local bus support as well
as that for CT, although the committee
report outlined reductions to Dial-a-Ride,
Call & Go, and Taxishare services. Fare
increases and reduction of concessions
has also been proposed. Direct cuts to CT

provision includes £58,400 from Dial-a-Ride and Call & Go, and £76,800 from group transport services (20% reduction of current allocation). A further £50,500 is to be withdrawn from Taxishare (25% reduction of current allocation). It is proposed that all the CT services are reconfigured under a new Connect branding. https://www.portsmouth.co.uk/news/politics/hampshire-county-council-bus-and-community-transport-funding-slashed-with-services-to-reduce-3913223

Devon - Dawlish Community Transport Benefits from Co-op Shoppers. At the Dawlish Co-op, a Community Fund of £2,724 has been raised from customer purchases and match funding by the store. Dawlish CT is one of three local charities that shoppers chose to support.

https://www.middevonadvertiser.co.uk/news/boost-for-community-transport-charity-572776

Devon – Award for Dawlish Community Transport for its service. In recognition of its work in combatting loneliness and improving mental health, Dawlish / East Teignbridge CT has won an Owl (Outstanding With Loneliness) award. The award was presented by Dawlish Town Council, and was shared with Assist Teignbridge Volunteer Centre. https://www.teignmouth-today.co.uk/news/owl-award-honours-for-community-groups-573679

Devon – Freemasons Donate Money to Exe Valley CT. A £5,000 donation has been made from the Freemasons to support the Exe Valley Market Bus. The contribution from All Souls Masonic Lodge is to be set against a target of £50,000 for a new minibus. The service has been operational for the last 45 years. https://www.devonlive.com/news/devon-news/freemasons-give-exe-valley-market-7813084

Devon – Wine Tasting Fundraiser at TRIP CT in Honiton. Wine tasters gather in the Mackarness Hall in Honiton and raised £350 for TRIP, sampling 100 different wines. https://www.midweekherald.co.uk/news/23147191.wine-tasting-evening-raises-funds-honiton-based-charity/

Somerset – Nailsea CT Needs More Volunteer Drivers. In order to maintain its vital services in the towns and villages of Clevedon, Portishead, Yatton, Long Ashton and Backwell, Nailsea & District Community Transport has appealed for more volunteer drivers to keep its eight vehicle fleet moving. Prospective volunteers should phone 01275 855552 or email office@ndct.co.uk. https://www.somersetlive.co.uk/news/somerset-news/vital-bus-services-under-pressure-7797375

Somerset – Nailsea CT to Potentially Benefit from Council Windfall. Following a sale of land which raised £1.6m, plus Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) receipts, Nailsea Town Council is considering a number of funding options to benefit the town. One of these is a "a new electric bus service for the town, working in partnership with Nailsea and District Community Transport." https://www.somersetlive.co.uk/whats-on/new-running-track-arts-centre-7855391

Somerset – Midsomer Norton & Radstock Community Minibus is Alive and Well, and Looking for New Users. At a recent AGM, the operators of the Midsomer Norton & Radstock Community Minibus have announced that the once-threatened CT service will continue. Additional users and

volunteer drivers are required, however, and enquires should be made to either Melvyn Johnson on 01761 452585 or Nick Rogers on 07817 476535. https://www.mnrjournal.co.uk/news/midsomer-norton-and-radstock-community-minibus-needs-your-group-580059

Gloucestershire – Buses4Us is Nearing a £250k Funding Target to Keep Bus Service in Place. In partnership with Newent Community Transport, local action group Buses4Us have been fundraising to relaunch a bus route between south Herefordshire and the Forest of Dean. They have now secured over £200,000 and Newent CT are providing a minibus service to link residents of the surrounding villages with Newent town centre.

https://www.theforester.co.uk/news/newent-campaign-buses4us-drives-toward-ps250k-funding-target-571728

Gloucestershire - Lydney Dial-a-Ride Launches Robin DRT Service. One

of the Rural Mobility Fund projects – The Robin – has now lauched in the North Cotswolds and Forest of Dean areas, the latter a two vehicle operation by Lydney Dial-a-Ride. The bookings platform has been provided by Padam Mobility.





Meanwhile, Mark Harper (local MP and Secretary of State for Transport) has responded to complains about the reductions of services in the Forest of Dean area. https://www.theforester.co.uk/news/mark-harper-will-monitor-bus-situation-closely-in-the-forest-amid-concerns-580368

Gloucestershire – Stagecoach Cuts Impact on 150,000 Bus Journeys a Year, CT to Take up the Slack? As Gloucestershire County Council fails to find alternative bus provision in the county, it is suggested that local CT operations can step in, including the new Robin service (see above). https://www.gazetteseries.co.uk/news/23140646.150-000-bus-journeys-affected-stagecoach-cuts/

Worcestershire – Malvern Community Action is Commemorated in Buzzard Sculpture. Two metallic Buzzard sculptures have been unveiled in Rose Bank Gardens, Malvern to mark the 50th birthday of the charity Malvern Community Action, which offers the Out & About car scheme, and minibus services for Malvern, Upton and Tewkesbury.

https://www.malverngazette.co.uk/news/23138387.buzzards-sculpture-will-lit-celebrate-malvern-charity/

Worcestershire – Crowdfunding Drive in Pershore. Wychavon District Council in partnership with Pershore Plus Volunteer Centre is seeking to raise £82,000 for a new minibus and three part time drivers. The service would operate in Pershore as well as the villages to the north of the town. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-hereford-worcester-63821434

Warwickshire – Release Those 'Happy Hormones' Driving for VASA. A new appeal for volunteers has been made by VASA, which provides a range of services in South Warwickshire. VASA points out the feelgood factor that individuals can experience when doing something for others, such as driving for its long-established CT service. Those interested in volunteering should contact on 01789 262889 or email hello@vasa.org.uk.

https://www.warwickshireworld.com/news/people/south-warwickshirevolunteering-how-your-time-could-be-invaluable-for-others-and-benefit-you-3936270

Wales – Brecon Dial-a-Ride Shop Appeals for Volunteers. An awardwinning shop in support of Brecon Dial-a-Ride (operated by Brecon & District Disabled Club) is seeking additional volunteers. The shop has just completed a successful year of trading from a new location and generates around £65,000 profit per year for the minibus operation. Dial-a-Ride can be contacted by phone on 01874 624060 or email at office@brecondialaride.org. https://www.brecon-radnor.co.uk/news/brecon-dial-a-ride-appeals-for-charityshop-volunteers-581307

West Midlands - Trial Merger of Coventry Ring and Ride and On-Demand DRT buses. In a plan to save funds, Coventry Ring and Ride and West Midlands Bus On Demand are to merge, creating what is described by Transport for West Midlands as the "UK's largest Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) service". Ring and Ride usage has declined to only a quarter of its pre-COVID level. The On Demand service, which is booked via an App platform, has also seen recent low levels of usage. Ring and Ride services outside Coventry will continue to run as normal.

https://www.coventrytelegraph.net/news/coventry-news/coventrys-ring--ridedemand-25475404

Derbyshire - Options are Being Explored to Replace the Spondon Flyer. Derbyshire Community Transport has been participating in discussions with



Derby City Council to provide a trial DERBYSHIRE replacement bus service in the Spondon area, following TrentBarton withdrawing its Spondon Flyer service. The trial service is expected to link Park Farm with Allestree and Darley Abbey,

and to enable journeys from the edge of Spondon to the village centre. The transport needs of Waingroves have also been served by Derbyshire CT's 148 route. https://www.derbytelegraph.co.uk/news/derby-news/new-bus-service- launched-replace-7822678.

https://www.derbytelegraph.co.uk/news/local-news/derbyshire-village-cutbus-cancellation-7864666.

Suffolk – GoStart Community Transport Amongst Nominated Charities

for Share of Award. Inside copies of the I pswich Star and East Anglian Daily Times are tokens enabling readers to vote for a charity of choice. GoStart CT in Sudbury is hoping for a decent share of a £16,000 fund which it intends to put towards a new electric vehicle. GoStart has recently been involved with providing transport for Ukrainian refugees and taking people to warm space hubs with its fleet of five vehicles and over 20 volunteer drivers.



https://www.eadt.co.uk/news/23126601.sudbury-meet-charity-offering-lifeline-transport-need/

Norfolk – Call for Free Community Transport to Support Those with Mental Health Issues. A number of support measures are being called for by the multi-agency Mental Health Campaign in North Norfolk, including a CT service. Artist and former teacher from Cromer Bev Broadhead, feels that a free community transport service would help people get to warm public places and sports facilities.

https://www.northnorfolknews.co.uk/news/23169344.better-mental-health-services-called-amid-cost-of-living-crisis/

Kent – Kent County Council Opens CT Grant Programme for 2023. CT operators in Kent can now apply to the Council for grant support. Grants can be used to purchase a vehicle or equipment, and / or the initial costs involved in setting up a community transport scheme. The Kent CC website includes examples of varous transport projects that have benefitted from grant support last year: Hadlow Community Transport, Tunbridge Wells' Community Car Service, and We are Beams. https://www.kent.gov.uk/leisure-and-community/community-grants-and-funding/our-current-funding-opportunities/community-funding/community-transport-grant#tab-3,4 Kent County Council has also been promoting its useful guidance on how to set up a CT operation here:

https://www.kent.gov.uk/__data/assets/pdf_file/0007/77263/Setting-up-a-community-transport-scheme-in-Kent-toolkit.pdf

Leicestershire - Melton CT Benefits from Generous Donation. Operating out of the Melton Learning Hub, Melton CT was struggling to raise funds for a much-needed new minibus. Its efforts have been given a boost by a donation by Barry Pritchard which has matched the sum raised so far and enabling the new vehicles to be ordered. Volunteer drivers are also welcomed – if interested call Angie Butcher on 01664 482903.

https://www.meltontimes.co.uk/news/melton-community-minibus-service-saved-by-generous-donation-3910880

Yorkshire – Volunteers Sought in East Riding for Community Lift. A councillor from East Riding of Yorkshire Council has fronted an appeal for more volunteers for both the car and minibus services provided by Beverley Community Lift. The service has been operational since the early 1970s when a minibus was donated by the Round Table.

https://www.hu17.net/2022/11/18/beverley-community-transport-is-needs-more-east-yorkshire-volunteers/

East Sussex – Manager of Bluebird CT Raises Cash for Poppy Appeal. Deputy manager Mark Collins of Hassocks has raised £26,000 for the British



Legion during two weeks leave from his day job with CT Sussex. Mark is a military vehicle enthusiast who accepted the two-week Poppy Appeal challenge. https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/news/people/haywards-heath-deputy-transport-manager-raises-ps26000-for-poppy-appeal-in-hassocks-3923753

Surrey – Free Christmas Travel on Hoppa CT Services. Passengers on the Hoppa Shoppa services to Cranleigh, Farnham, Godalming and Haslemere are offered free travel up until Christmas. This gesture is part of Hoppa's celebration of 20 years of operations in the Waverley district. https://www.haslemereherald.com/news/jump-on-hoppas-door-to-door-shoppa-bus-for-free-this-christmas-574434. The Hoppa services are featured in a new video here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZLOt0eF0MSw&t=3s

Cambridgeshire – New App Available for FACT Bus Route 33. Passengers on the 33 bus route operated by Fenland Area CT can now take advantage of the digital platform that was recently launched in Wisbech, developed by GoAscendal Labs,. https://www.fenlandcitizen.co.uk/news/new-app-to-help-improve-number-33-march-town-bus-service-9286914/

Northern I reland – Mental Health Survey Reveals Anxiety About Transport. A survey of 1,498 adults living in Northern Ireland conducted by Mental Health Foundation has indicated that lack of affordable transport is a barrier to mental wellbeing for 20% of respondents. Karen Hall, Head of Northern Ireland for the Mental Health Foundation said: "Our community organisations are already responding, but they need support. Increasing the capacity of organisations that provide debt services and community services will enable people to stay connected and get support when they need it...we ask for them to include maintaining and extending free or subsidised public transport to allow people to connect with friends and family." https://www.mentalhealth.org.uk/about-us/news/new-survey-finds-high-levels-anxiety-across-ni-due-money

Northern I reland – South Antrim Community Transport Picks up Award. The Spirit of Volunteering Awards ceremony was held in November at Mossley Mill, Newtownabbey and South Antrim Community Transport was presented with the prestigeous Lord Lieutenants Award. https://www.northernirelandworld.com/news/people/prestigious-recognition-for-newtownabbeys-volunteers-3880845

Northern I reland – Lack of Accessible Taxis in Derry/Londonderry and Belfast, and Disability Action Can't Accommodate Demand. A BBC radio programme has recently featured Deborah Ferris, who has spoken out about the dearth of wheelchair-accessible transport which has restricted her life, particularly during evenings and weekends. NI's taxi provision has been on the decline for some time, and the Disability Action door-to-door service in the two cities cannot cope with demand. https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-63825231

Northamptonshire – Long-established Wellibus Service Needs Funds. In operation since 1973 in Wellingborough, the popular Wellibus is struggling to survive. A financial appeal for £5,000 has been launched by operator Shire Community Services and donations can be made via GoFundMe page 'Save Our Wellibus' here: https://www.gofundme.com/f/save-our-

wellibus?utm_source=facebook&utm_medium=social&utm_campaign=p_cp%2 Oshare-sheet&fbclid=IwAR2PI4_RUPbLBPBKuz7Qi-

soNaGo9YJrkc38Nm3TEVYcRI3ii51PGsgOvjw.

https://www.northantstelegraph.co.uk/news/people/much-loved-wellibus-faces-risk-of-closure-amid-rising-costs-3922757

Staffordshire – Council Funds CTs to Get Passengers to Warm Hubs Stafford Borough Council has supported around 25 venues to become designated warm spaces this winter, and funding has been provided for local CTs to supply transport to those in need.

https://www.staffordbc.gov.uk/news/theatre-and-dance-studio-latest-offer-warm-spaces-people-stafford

Hertfordshire – Welwyn Hatfield Community Bus Future is Secured. A new partnership with Communities 1st will see Welwyn Hatfield Borough Council's community bus services (Shopper Hopper and Jimmy Mac's Lunch Club) transfer to the voluntary sector operator after the council threatened to withdraw the in-house service.

https://www.whtimes.co.uk/news/23159785.future-secured-welwyn-hatfield-community-bus-service/







Glimpse into the CT Past - TAS Community Transport Photo Archives





Decline of Door-to-Door Minibus Services - TAS Commentary

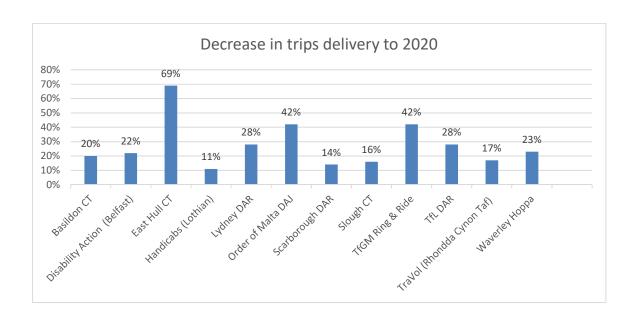
Operators which provide door-to-door accessible minibus services may currently be struggling to get passenger usage back up towards pre-pandemic levels of delivery. But the reality is that the decline of Dial-a-Ride / Ring & Ride type services was already apparent long before COVID-19 played havoc with the lives of people throughout the world and depopulated the passenger schedules. TAS has examined the operations of a number of bigger CT providers, serving mostly urban areas where demand might be expected to be overwhelmingly strong. It is true that the few years prior to the pandemic had not been easy for the CT sector, with public sector support often being reduced or curtailed altogether. This might be an obvious reason for the reduction of trips being delivered – less money for vehicles and drivers = fewer services and vehicle hours, resulting in more journey requests being declined. But in many of the sample services that we have looked at, funding levels have remained reasonably stable.



The 12 sample services in the graph below have all seen a decline in the number of single passenger journeys over the period up to year end March 2020, when COVID restrictions started to kick in. The percentage of decline is gleaned by comparing the number of trips at the end of the first year of the comparison period with those from the last. Obviously for some services the decline over five years is more gradual than others where data covers a shorter period. In most cases

there is definitely a consistent year on year trend, which appears worrying.

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Operator	Decrease	Period
Basildon CT	20%	5 years to 2020
Disability Action (Belfast)	22%	5 years to 2020
East Hull CT	69%	5 years to 2020
Handicabs (Lothian)	11%	5 years to 2020
Lydney DAR	28%	4 years to 2020
Order of Malta (Falkirk / Stirling) DAJ	42%	5 years to 2020
Scarborough DAR	14%	3 years to 2020
Slough CT	16%	2 years to 2019
TfGM Ring & Ride	42%	5 years to 2020
TfL DAR	28%	5 years to 2020
TraVol (Rhondda Cynon Taf)	17%	4 years to 2020
Waverley Hoppa	23%	3 years to 2020
Average level of decline	28%	-

We cite the above operations merely to illustrate a general trend – there is no suggestion implied that these operators are in any way remiss or inefficent. There are also some operators that have managed to grow their services or maintain them, so the trend is certainly not universal. But where decline is noted, there is no single causal reason and each operator will be facing different circumstances, often outside its immediate control.

One or more of the following issues, however, may be a determining factor:

a) The pattern of trip-making across the general population has changed. The number of trips undertaken has declined whilst the length of trips has risen.

- b) Serving a demographic of passengers who are nearing the ends of their active lives, there is a need for operators to continually attract new users, as existing customers become more inactive and less independent, but younger cohorts have a reduced need for Dial-a-Ride services;
- c) The demand for Dial-a-Ride-type services when they started reflected the fact that older women, in particular, were far less likely to hold driving licences and therefore were more dependent on public transport; the proportion of older pensioners without driving licences and without a car has steadily reduced since then. [In 2015, 43% of those aged 80 and over held a driving licence by 2020 that had risen to 62%. By 2020, 61% of single pensioner households had access to a car.]
- d) Meanwhile, the design of cars, particularly control systems, has significantly improved over the same period with the effect that older people with a variety of impaired functions feel able to drive safely for much longer than they previously would have done.
- e) Support for car use by disabled people has grown, as evidenced by the Blue Badge scheme stable across the last few years at around 231,000 despite practical measures to tighten eligibility, as well as the number of vehicles provided through the Motability scheme;
- f) The ability for more 'accessible' journeys to be delivered by the conventional bus and taxi service network due to continuing accessibility improvements, reduces the requirement for specialist services;
- g) Increasing home support and delivery services being accessed by passengers (a trend now much enhanced during the pandemic) can result in fewer in-person journeys needing to be made;
- h) Economic recession for those fare payers, the ability to afford a journey might be constrained (less relevant on services where concessionary passes are valid);
- i) There can be a mismatch between demand and supply due to lack of planning or review of services especially where services were designed some years ago;
- j) Specialist services are often inadequately marketed and fail to fully exploit potential usage;
- k) The destinations served have changed in nature; major flagship stores closed down or a switch to the sort of business that is not attractive to users;
- k) Some dial-a-ride services become monopolised by a small number of regular users whose journey needs are accommodated in schedules to the exclusion of new users;

- I) Related to the above, some dial-a-ride services fail to exploit multioccupancy potential and deliver more bespoke, single-passenger journeys as would a taxi;
- m) Some dial-a-ride services find that they are increasingly serving passengers with more complex needs and / or more specialist mobility equipment such trips take longer to complete (especially with the increased time it takes to board / alight the vehicle and secure the passenger), and so reduce the overall capacity of the service;
- n) Funding support from public sector bodies may have progressively declined over the five years, reflecting austerity measures and changes in policy some services have been reduced in scale in line with diminishing subsidies.

Almost all CT services suffered a decline in delivery of journeys due to the pandemic, so even those that had fared better in the years up to 2020 have to consider recovery measures. The main dilemma for operators and commissioners faced with longer-term diminishing take-up may be whether to increase marketing in the hope that passengers will return, or to adjust the operational model to reduce the levels of resource committed. Whichever way an operator chooses to respond, it will be clear that the post-COVID recovery period (accepted by funders and commissioners) will not stretch much further, and that the scale of operation that was needed five years ago can't be sustained indefinitely. This is a matter that many local authorities and other commissioners will also be mulling over.



If you require any advice or support please contact us on 01772-204988 or email john.atkins@taspartnership.com