



# Community & Voluntary Transport at



The TAS Partnership Limited  
Passenger Transport Specialists

## Newsletter No.34 July 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 – House of Commons Rural Mental Health Report. The House of Commons Environment, Food and Rural Affairs Committee has just published a report on Rural Mental Health (Fourth Report of Session 2022–23). The report notes that “while access to nature and the countryside is consistently identified as beneficial for people’s mental health in general and often prescribed through ‘green social prescribing’, our evidence is clear that the isolation inherent in rural living represents a significant challenge to the mental health of adults, children, and young people living in rural areas.” At TAS we noted 57 mentions of ‘transport’ in the report, primarily citing inadequate transport as a causal factor in poor mental health. There is no specific mention of community transport as a solution (though there is evidence from Dorset with a reference to NORDCAT and the need to book 24 hours in advance). The Government’s response is threefold:

- ) New rural transport strategy due (was due in 2022!)
- ) Rural Transport Fund and DRT (in line with recent DfT doctrine but not necessarily the panacea that the department thinks it is!)



House of Commons  
Environment, Food and Rural  
Affairs Committee

### Rural Mental Health

Fourth Report of Session 2022–23

*Report, together with formal minutes relating to the report*

Ordered by the House of Commons to be printed 9 May 2023

J Bus Back Better money (still a mystery to many as to the basis for how this is being allocated geographically!)

We also note that the Health Minister resisted the suggestion that Integrated Care Systems (ICS) could intervene. (In the ever-changing world of NHS reform, readers may wish to note the functions of the ICS here:

<https://www.myhsn.co.uk/top-tip/how-are-nhs-icss-icbs-and-icps-different>).

<https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/39991/documents/195139/default/>

UK – The Ongoing Challenge to Solve Rural Transport Problems is Highlighted in Prescient 1983 Video. Not unrelated to the rural issues noted in the item above, TAS has in its possession a copy of a 1983 East Sussex County Council VHS production entitled Renewing the Links (now uploaded to YouTube), which TAS director John Taylor feels – despite the



film's vintage – has much to tell us today. John

commented that “my desire to put this in the public domain is to deter magical thinking on behalf of firstly the DfT and then LAs in respect of rural transport.

There is no magic solution – not Total Transport nor DDRT – to replace the need for financial support to compensate for the inherent costs of rurality. At one point the government committed to the concept of ‘rural proofing’ its policies. I had some communications with

the civil servant in the DfT given the thankless task of applying this concept...For me, although I appreciate the nostalgia – the locals watching the village cricket match are priceless – this really should be required viewing for anyone tackling rural transport because to make progress they need to have an answer to the question of why this initiative and several more that followed it up to the DfT's last Total Transport funding scheme, did not make any headway.” Our thanks to Roger French for uploading this for us. You can view the Renewing the Links video here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQzn7Y8LZaI&t=16s>

UK - CTA Conference: Inclusive Transport & the Role of Community-led Solutions. The remote conference was held on 16th May and CTA offered a wide-ranging selection of presentations and discussion, including:

- ) Overview of the conneCTing programme in England – Caroline Whitney, Director for England, CTA
- ) DfT Tackling Loneliness through Transport – Why this is important – Tom McCaskill-Baxter, Head of Tackling Loneliness, Accessible and Inclusive Travel, DfT
- ) How Community Transport has tackled loneliness – Community Transport Association
- ) A policy Update on the Bus Service Operators Grant Fund – Millie O’Driscoll BSOG Policy & Reform Lead, DfT
- ) Exploring the way forward: The next steps for the NHS Volunteer Responder programme – Damien Greenhalgh, Project Manager – Voluntary Partnerships NHS England
- ) Connecting with health – how a volunteer car service can connect people to health – Mark Wynn, Director, Heywood, Middleton & Rochdale Circle



The event can be viewed here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XpPe6vQICEU>



CTA has also highlighted the role played by volunteers in the CT sector as part of Volunteers’ Week here:

<https://ctauk.org/volunteers-week-22-year-old-drushti-shares-her-volunteering-experience-at-swan-ct/> and <https://ctauk.org/nvw-23-volunteering-in-community-transport-sector/>

CTA England – Two CTs Announce Lottery Fund Awards. CTA has reported on two new Lottery awards:

- ) Community Transport Waltham Forest “has received a grant of £140,660 from The Heritage Lottery Fund made possible by National Lottery Players. The funding will enable Community Transport Waltham Forest to create a unique collection of reminiscences and oral histories in Newham, gathering travel and transport stories from Newham residents across all communities. The project will also include the creation of a unique travel quilt filled with memories and a bespoke travel trunk to house the collection. The Charabancs and Cadillacs Reminiscence project involves a practical and interactive approach to reminiscence and oral history with a cross-cultural perspective,

celebrating differences and sharing common experiences of Newham Communities with start up planned for end of May this year."

<https://ctauk.org/ct-waltham-forest-receives-140660-grant-from-the-heritage-lottery-fund/>

- J) Knighton and District CT who have secured a £99,950 grant from the National Lottery Community Fund.

<https://twitter.com/CTAUK1/status/1661689865803538433>

East Sussex – New FlexiBus Service is Launched. This is a new DDRT service supported by DfT BSIP funds and has been launched by East Sussex County Council in partnership with The Routing Company (TRC), which has provided the booking and scheduling platform Pingo. TRC says: "The new FlexiBus services will serve around 50,000 households in East Sussex that currently have either no or very low public transport provision. The service, which deploys in ten on-demand transport zones, delivers on a 15-vehicle contract announced by TRC in April 2023...The new service is provided in partnership with WeDRT, which will manage the 10 dedicated vehicles in addition to deploying non-dedicated vehicles in periods of high demand. It starts with five zones in Bexhill, South Downs, Stonegate, Hailsham, and Sedlescombe. The remaining five zones in North Lewes, West Crowborough, Uckfield, North Wealden and Rye will launch on May fifteenth. Ten vehicles will operate fully on-demand, with the five additional 'semi-flexible' services commencing operation on 24 July..."

<https://theroutingcompany.com/newsroom/trc-celebrates-east-sussex-launch>

More information here: <https://www.eastsussex.gov.uk/roads-transport/public/bus-service-improvement-plan/flexibus>

Roger French has left his impressions as an early FlexiBus customer here:

<https://busandtrainuser.com/2023/05/11/east-sussex-joins-the-drt-club/>

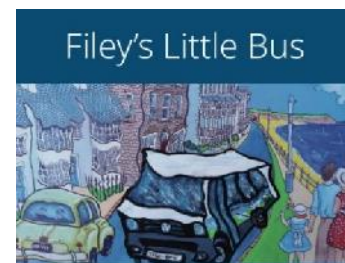
North Yorkshire – Volunteer Drivers Needed in Richmond Area. A new drive to recruit volunteers is in hand at Stokesley & District Community Care Association, which is seeking drivers for its car scheme to cover the Richmond, Catterick and Leyburn areas. Anyone interested should contact the volunteer co-ordinator on 01642 710085 or email

[volunteering@stokesleycca.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@stokesleycca.org.uk) or visit the website

[www.stokesleycca.org.uk](http://www.stokesleycca.org.uk). <https://www.richmondshiretoday.co.uk/volunteers-drivers-wanted-for-community-transport-scheme/>

North Yorkshire – Filey CT service makes its final run. After running the Filey Little Bus for 17 years, volunteer driver Colin Galway is stepping down but hopes some other organisation might be able to continue the service. Members of the community have been invited to complete a survey organised by Filey Town Council here:

<https://online1.snapsurveys.com/interview/8fc2b03b-07e1-4635-b5b0-160c345f4c55>.



<https://www.thisisthecoast.co.uk/news/local-news/final-stops-for-fileys-little-bus/>

North Yorkshire – Cut Price Travel in Bedale. In a measure designed to assist passengers with the cost of living crisis, Bedale Community Minibus has reduced its fares on regular services and halved its group travel rates.

Contact on 01677 425329 or at [www.bedaleminibus.org.uk](http://www.bedaleminibus.org.uk).

<https://www.darlingtonandstocktontimes.co.uk/news/23494471.bedale-community-mini-bus-slashes-prices-half/>

Devon – Dawlish CT Seeks Volunteer Drivers. With a new accessible vehicle 'Oscar' joining the fleet, Dawlish Community Transport says: "We are desperate for more minibus drivers, getting people out and about is what we are about. We are proud to be specialising in wheelchair transportation, helping to access shops, health appointments, services and leisure activities. We want people to join our team who give their time to volunteer. We don't just drive



cars, there are many other volunteer opportunities to get involved in. The more drivers we have, the more we can do for our community." Dawlish CT can be contacted on 01626 888890 or by email [office@etcta.co.uk](mailto:office@etcta.co.uk).

<https://www.middevonadvertiser.co.uk/news/volunteers-drivers-needed-for-transport-charity-612142> More about 'Oscar' here:

<https://www.middevonadvertiser.co.uk/news/transport-teams-very-own-oscar-ceremony-611735>

Devon – Totnes CT Service 'Bob the Bus' Launches New Service. Totnes and Rural Community Transport which operates as Bob the Bus reports that it is "starting a new Saturday morning service from 27th May. The bus will link Follaton and Bridgetown with Totnes town centre. Passengers should note that departure times are different from Bob's Monday-Friday service. The bus leaves Follaton on the hour at 09:00, 10:00, 11:00 and 12:00. The Bridgetown circuit starts from the bus shelter opposite the Seven Stars at 25 minutes past the hour. Chair of Trustees Steve Grove explained: 'We're operating this service with a single bus, so there has to be a different timetable from weekdays. Please pick up a timetable on the bus, or visit

[www.bobthebus.org.uk](http://www.bobthebus.org.uk).

Remember it's Saturday mornings only, and check the times of your last bus. We've

spoken to our passengers, and there's strong support for this service, so we



look forward to seeing you on board. We take cash or card payments, and bus passes are valid all day at weekends. This is only possible thanks to our fantastic team of volunteer drivers. But we need more! Please email [bobthebushire@yahoo.com](mailto:bobthebushire@yahoo.com) if you have a D1 category on your licence and a few hours to spare. We can arrange shifts to suit your availability."

Somerset - Trustees Needed for CT Organisation. Melvyn Johnson, chair of Midsomer Norton & Radstock Community Service Vehicle Trust has appealed for volunteers to assist in the management of the minibus operation. He said "we are seeking voluntary clerical help following a number of Committee members resigning post Covid. Primarily we need a person...with the ability to draw up and monitor a maintenance policy / regime, undertake recruitment, training and management of drivers and to conduct risk assessments, implement control measures and monitor their effectiveness in reducing risk. Also they should be willing to monitor and maintain our Health and Safety policies, GDPR and other aspects of operating a minibus under our Section 19 permit, the permit under which we are allowed to operate. A person with some transport knowledge and experience would be ideal." Melvyn can be contacted at [marmeljohn@yahoo.com](mailto:marmeljohn@yahoo.com) or 01761 452585. <https://www.mnrjournal.co.uk/news/imperative-midsomer-norton-and-radstock-community-minibus-needs-saving-611520>

Somerset - BBC Broadcaster Sara Cox Joins Battle Against Loneliness. The latest celebrity to add weight to alleviating loneliness amongst older people is BBC radio presenter Sara Cox. Not only is Sara publicising the cause but she is serving as a volunteer driver for the charity Re-engage, which is organising tea parties in Weston-super-Mare. <https://www.thewestonmercury.co.uk/news/23466622.tv-presenter-sara-cox-help-older-people-battle-loneliness/>

Greater London - Westway CT Celebrates Coronation with Volunteer Driver's Extraordinary Contribution to Community. Westway CT reports that it "participated in the nationwide Coronation celebrations on May 7th. The highlight of this momentous occasion was the exceptional dedication of volunteer driver Tim Sai Louie. As a member of the Westway CT team since 2020, Tim Sai Louie was not only invited to attend the prestigious Big Lunch Celebration at the Great Town Hall in Kensington and Chelsea but also received the 2021 Mayor's Award for his exceptional volunteer service. This recognition highlighted his remarkable commitment to serving the borough and its residents. Tim Sai Louie offered to drive fellow community members to the lunch who couldn't have made it without community transport. Reflecting on his involvement, Tim Sai Louie shared 'Having received the Mayor's Award in 2021, I was invited to the lunch. However, I recognised that there might be others who also wanted to attend or needed a ride there. So, I volunteered to take them along.' Westway CT was happy to help and provided the minibus; by supporting gatherings that bring people together, Westway CT aims to create lasting memories and combat social isolation. Volunteer drivers make a huge difference to the services that Westway CT offers to its members, they are part

of the team, and it means more people can be helped to stay active and connected to their community. As an organisation deeply committed to creating a sense of belonging and togetherness, Westway CT continues to champion initiatives that strengthen community bonds and combat social isolation."



Scotland – TAS Concludes Detailed Review of Community Transport in Outer Hebrides. In one of our more interesting engagements, TAS has delivered an extensive review of community transport amongst the remote communities of Scotland's Western Isles. The work was commissioned by the Community-Led Local Development - Local Action Group, funded by the islands' authority Comhairle nan Eilean Siar. A specific website was created for the review, and some of the outcomes are available to read here: <https://getabout-hebrides.co.uk/>.



Scotland – Falkirk's New Stay Connected Service is Launched. Long-established Forth Valley CT operator Order of Malta Dial-a-Journey has commenced a new service called Stay Connected with support and funding from Falkirk Health and Social Care Partnership. Dial-a-Journey's Business Development Officer Martin Kenny, commented that this "is a targeted transport service aimed at some of the most isolated people within our community, who otherwise



wouldn't get the chance to attend the activities they enjoy and meet up with friends more regularly. Simply by providing a lift where there wasn't one before, we can open up possibilities, give a boost to an individual's wellbeing and bring communities together." [New transport initiative will help vulnerable Falkirk residents beat social isolation](#)

Scotland – Nairn CT is Recruiting Volunteers. Based in the Highlands, Nairn Community Transport requires additional drivers for its four minibus operation for local groups and members.

Gary Henderson, trustee of Nairn CT said: "Volunteers can give as much time as they are able to. We currently support a variety of different community groups and charities ranging from sports to community lunches. As with anything that is voluntary, people tend to move on and they can join for what could be a few months or a few years. Often it happens that new drivers join when their children are involved in a community group, and then they go on when the child is no longer in that group, so it's constantly changing."

Anyone interested can email [contact@nairncc.co.uk](mailto:contact@nairncc.co.uk) or call 01667 453476. <https://www.inverness-courier.co.uk/news/nairn-transport-charity-on-the-look-for-volunteer-drivers-313187/>



Scotland – Former Councillor Turns Star Volunteer Driver in

Inverclyde. A profile of Ciano Rebecchi – described as “the district's longest serving councillor with 34 years under his belt prior to retirement” – highlights the sterling work he now does as a minibus driver for Inverclyde Voluntary Council of Social Services. Ciano commented “I decided not to go for re-election and they were short of drivers. I leave the house at 7.30am and pick up the escorts before collecting the children and then doing the drop-off run after school. I take around ten children to Craigmarloch. I love listening to the kids, helping them get to school, and if they have wee problems, you can talk to them. You build up a relationship with them. One of the older pupils sits in the front and he knows every single stop you make on the run...I am very proud of my service. I was born and bred in Greenock and I never had any any ambition like that. I always had ambitions to help people.”



<https://www.greenocktelegraph.co.uk/news/23509562.ex-inverclyde-councillor-school-run-disabled-pupils/>



Scotland – Transport Scotland Announces Phase Two £58 million Fund for Zero-emission Buses. The second phase of the Scottish Zero Emission Bus Challenge Fund (ScotZEB), is to provide £58 million for EV buses. This new phase now includes coaches and community transport operators. CTA's David Kelly said: "The launch of Phase 2 of ScotZEB is a positive step forward in the community transport sector's transition to zero-emission fleets and in Scotland's Just Transition. We hope this vital funding will build on the success of the Plugged-In Communities Grant Fund to close the Net Zero funding gap faced by local charities, community groups and social enterprises delivering accessible transport solutions across the country. We welcome the changes to Phase 2 which will require consortia to include smaller and non-profit operators and lead to greater investment in community transport. Our members look forward to closer collaboration with partners across the bus sector to ensure no community is left behind in our journey to net zero."

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/news/58-million-for-zero-emission-buses/>

Scotland – Wick CT Needs Minibus Drivers. Another Scottish Highlands CT seeking volunteers is Wick and East Caithness Church and Community Transport. Drivers are needed to enable passengers to get to Tesco on Thursday mornings for their shopping. Anyone interested in helping is asked to call Anne and Francis Dunnett on 01955 605180. <https://www.johnogroat-journal.co.uk/news/call-for-volunteers-to-drive-wick-community-minibus-for-shop-313741/>

Scotland – East Kilbride CT Driver's Retirement Prompts Search for New Staff. The long-established East Kilbride Community Transport lost driver Stephen Kostric at the end of May due to retirement. Secretary June Harpum said that the new driver will be "paid on a part-time basis with a minimum of 10 hours per week, and also a transport coordinator. We will need to find a driver before the beginning of August when the schools go back." Anyone interested in the post should contact June on 07849486937 or chairperson Ann Cushley on 07950509437. <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/in-your-area/lanarkshire/lifeline-lanarkshire-bus-service-appeals-30012566>

Scotland – MyBus Service in Inverclyde Faces Criticism. A user of the MyBus door-to-door accessible minibus service commissioned by Strathclyde Partnership for Transport has accused the service of failing its passengers and offering her only a single journey. Alice McCaughey said: "I am absolutely disgusted with what is happening. We are getting a terrible service. You can't send disabled and elderly people on a bus one-way, it is no good to people at all. We are getting left stranded. People use this service because they can't get on and off normal buses or wait at bus stops for any length of time. This is supposed to be a service for Inverclyde, but what is happening is drivers are covering a much wider area. I book three or four weeks in advance. I go into town Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. My health has not been good recently and I really rely on the bus. But I was told that they could only take me one-way. That's no good to me. I now have to use taxis or not go out at all." SPT responded saying that its "acceptance of trip requests remain high

across the region, including Inverclyde where we meet almost 91 per cent of all requests. Our call handlers and schedulers work hard to facilitate as many trips as possible from within the available resources. We are always happy to discuss users' individual requirements, and will endeavour to satisfy trip requests where we can...we are currently carrying out a thorough review of the MyBus service. We recently reported on a number of actions we would be taking forward over the next three to 12 months at our operations committee, to support the ongoing success of the service."

<https://www.greenocktelegraph.co.uk/news/23533276.fears-future-inverclyde-disabled-dial-a-bus-service/>

Scotland – Strathclyde Partnership for Transport Commits £1.3m to CT Operations. A total of 18 CT services is being supported, some of whom have been detailed in the local press as follows:

J) Coalfield Community Transport has received £82,291 to support its services in East Ayrshire. Stephen Dornan chair of SPT said: "Community transport groups have a vital role to play in helping connect our communities, and SPT is delighted to support their important role through this grant funding. Coalfield Community Transport is over two decades old, and it is a crucial service in helping people from across East Ayrshire travel around the area and its work with disadvantaged groups in particular is a vital service."

<https://www.cumnockchronicle.com/news/23541475.coalfield-community-transport-funding-boost-spt/> (Coalfield CT us also in discussion with North Ayrshire Council around potential service development:

<https://www.largsandmillportnews.com/news/23550350.north-ayrshire-council-community-transport-scheme-explored/> and

<https://www.ardrossanherald.com/news/23567938.north-ayrshire-council-launches-hopper-service-coast/>)

J) South Ayrshire Community Transport has received £106,825. SPT board member and South Ayrshire councillor Duncan Townson commented: "SACT is a beloved community transport charity in my area, supporting families across the region with affordable and accessible transport services. Their focus on connecting rural communities is both vitally important and hugely valued by the community and this six-figure grant is very much welcome."

<https://www.ayradvertiser.com/news/23541002.south-ayrshire-community-transport-receives-funding-bus-expansion/>

J) SOOPiR (Strengthening Opportunities for Older Adults in Renfrewshire) bus project has received £8,500. Jim Paterson, SPT board member and Renfrewshire Councillor said: "SOOPiR is a relatively new service but it is very encouraging to see SPT value its work and provide grant funding to help it continue..." <https://www.the-gazette.co.uk/news/23553670.community-transport-group-renfrewshire-receives-funding-boost/>

J) Community Transport Action Group (CTAG) has been allocated £30,000 "to expand its healthcare appointment transport service for the elderly, disabled and those on low income. The move comes after a successful early

pilot scheme partnered by South West Community Transport for the G81 area and will now be extended across West Dunbartonshire after the council brought the venture in-house..."

<https://www.dumbartonreporter.co.uk/news/23553629.community-transport-scheme-rolled-across-dumbarton/> and

<https://www.clydebankpost.co.uk/news/23553495.clydebank-community-transport-scheme-rolled/>

- J Community Transport East Renfrewshire has received £25,000 "to continue operating their group transport to local voluntary and community groups with a volunteer car scheme, which provides transport for patients to GP, clinic, and hospital appointments."  
<https://www.barrheadnews.com/news/23553618.community-transport-project-east-renfrewshire-receives-huge-grant/>
- J Getting Better Together (based in Shotts) is allocated £97,000: "£40,000 will be used for the core funding of vehicle maintenance, staff and training costs; while a successful application for a further £57,000 will go towards replacing two high-mileage accessible vehicles..."
- J Glenboig Development Trust is to "receive up to £25,000 to help with the running costs of its transport service, which supports local nurseries, youth groups, older people and voluntary organisations."
- J Larkhall District Volunteer Group "has been awarded up to £59,500 to continue its varied transport services during 2023-2024".
- J Blantyre Volunteer Group will receive up to £28,000 "for community transport running costs in the year ahead"; and
- J East Kilbride Community Transport "has been granted up to £15,000".  
<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/in-your-area/lanarkshire/225k-funding-boost-lanarkshire-community-30066287>

Scotland – Huntly CT Driver is Forced to Retire. Volunteer driver Norman Kinnaird has been forced to retire – after nine years of driving the Huntly Community Bus in the Highlands – following the loss of his leg due to a blood clot. Norman reflected: "Quite simply, I loved doing it and I have no regrets from my time at the minibus. It's the life and soul of the whole area and – oh God – I just pray it stays on the road... I'm going to miss it like hell, if you want to know the truth. I've had to stop serving the public and that's the one thing I love doing – that's my biggest heartbreak."

<https://www.grampianonline.co.uk/news/biggest-heartbreak-for-huntly-volunteer-minibus-driver-who-313621/>

Scotland – Galloway CT Pays Tribute to its Volunteers. As part of Volunteers Week, Galloway Community Transport is celebrating the



contribution that its volunteer drivers make. Sue McMinn (Co-ordinator) said: "The fantastic team of volunteer drivers provides vital transport for individuals and groups across Galloway. During Volunteers Week, GCT manager Jon Betts and myself would like to say a huge thank you to the team of drivers whose contribution makes the work of GCT possible..."

<https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/local-news/celebrating-role-dumfries-galloways-unpaid-30117743>

Lancashire – Blackburn CT Driver Wins Employment Tribunal Case. After being dismissed following a dispute over holiday pay, Anthony Russell has now benefitted from an Employment Tribunal ruling in his favour. His former employer Blackburn with Darwen Community Transport must now pay £8,465 in compensation for unfair dismissal and £4,024 in lost holiday pay.

<https://www.lancashiretelegraph.co.uk/news/23509935.driver-payout-blackburn-dial-a-ride-tribunal-win/> Also reported here:

<https://employeebenefits.co.uk/dial-a-ride-to-pay-12500-in-unfair-dismissal-and-holiday-pay-compensation/>

Warwickshire – Volunteer Driver is Celebrated as Part of Big Help Out. Promoting the Big Help Out volunteering initiative, Warwickshire County Council has highlighted the work of Kathryn Seren who drives regularly for



VASA, which provides CT services for residents in Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwick, Leamington Spa, Kenilworth, Southam, Alcester, Studley, Wellesbourne, Shipston-on-Stour, Rugby District. Kathryn became involved when she heard that VASA "needed female drivers to take women to medical appointments... Giving our time for free provides the clients with a friendly driver to take them to appointments, and at a much cheaper rate than if they used taxis. We can often also be the only person that someone has met and spoken to in several days, and so this interaction time is important to provide a chance to connect with others and in turn improve their overall wellbeing."

<https://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/news/article/4131/the-big-help-out-in-warwickshire-meet-kathryn-seren-volunteer-driver-at-vasa>

Worcestershire – Wellbeing Dog Boo is Community Transport Wyre Forest’s Latest Passenger. After her owner Sue Beeson was forced to give up driving, Community Transport Wyre Forest stepped in to ensure that Boo and Sue could continue to visit St Catherine’s CE Primary School in Kidderminster. Sue also plays the harp for the pupils. Sue commented that “the community transport service is absolutely fabulous and the drivers have all been delightful and very helpful.”

<https://www.kidderminstershuttle.co.uk/news/23525582.dog-can-continue-kidderminster-school-visits-thanks-charity/>

Gloucestershire – New Community Bus to Serve Slimbridge Wetland Centre. The World Wildlife Trust nature reserve at Slimbridge is to benefit from the launch of the Slimbridge Shuttle, a “new local minibus service that will connect the communities of Cam, Dursley and Slimbridge with the railway station at Cam & Dursley and WWT Slimbridge on Saturdays and Sundays over summer 2023”. The service has been commissioned by Gloucester Community Rail Partnership and is operated by Community Connexions in partnership with Cross Country trains and GWR. WWT Head of Sustainability Lucy Smith said:



“WWT Slimbridge Wetland Centre is really pleased to be part of this service which will enable our existing and new visitors to come to the site without needing to bring a car. We hope it gets good levels of uptake during the trial to make the case to retain and expand the service in the future. I’ll be using it to visit the site and go to the station at the weekends!”

<https://www.wwt.org.uk/wetland-centres/slimbridge/news/community-rail-partnership-and-community-connexions-launch-new-slimbridge-shuttle-bus>

Cornwall – Tamar Valley Community Bus is Commended. At its annual ‘Citizen of the Year’ awards, Calstock Parish Council praised the work of Tamar Valley Community Bus Association committee, and made a donation of £10,000 to the operation. This will be put towards a new minibus.

<https://www.cornish-times.co.uk/news/council-commends-community-stars-613146>

Northern Ireland – South Antrim CT Seeks Interim Funding. As the CT funding crisis continues in NI, South Antrim Community Transport has approached Antrim and Newtownabbey Council to assist with financial support. The operator has requested £36,000 to enable continuity of service for three months from the end of June (when the support from Department for Infrastructure is set to finish). South Antrim CT said “we are engaging with a range of other potential funders to ensure that our lifeline service continues. It is vital for our service users’ mental and physical health and their independence. It also allows many people to stay living in their own homes for

longer.” DfI has yet to decide whether funding support will continue for the CT operators across NI.

<https://www.northernirelandworld.com/news/people/south-antrim-community-transport-seeks-council-funding-to-keep-service-on-the-road-4155135>

Northern Ireland – Fermanagh Community Transport Seeks Community Support. In Fermanagh, the local CT is urging service users and others to lobby the Department for Infrastructure to indicate how much of a negative impact the funding cuts will have. Jason Donaghy, manager of Fermanagh CT, emphasised how grave the situation might be: “If the cuts go ahead, we would be facing a massive ‘transport poverty desert’. This would impact on those who are most hidden across Fermanagh. We have the lowest population density outside of the Highlands and Islands in Scotland. So the options in terms of taxis and buses are just not there for these people...” Any testimony on the service can be emailed to Jason who will pass messages onto DfI: [jason@fermanaghcommunitytransport.com](mailto:jason@fermanaghcommunitytransport.com).

<https://fermanaghherald.com/2023/06/public-urged-to-help-save-fermanagh-community-transport/>

Derbyshire – Accessible Car Club Launched by Derbyshire CT. A new service has been launched in Belper by Derbyshire Community Transport which enables drivers to become members of The Car Club, and then hire one of two vehicles with a minimum booking of one hour. The two vehicles available are:

- ) Ford Tourneo – wheelchair accessible with four other passenger seats, and
- ) Nissan Leaf (electric) – with transfer plate and grab handles on the passenger front seat to enable transfer from a wheelchair.



Derbyshire CT said: “It is ideal for people who want to fit more people in a car for a family day out perhaps, or take a relative shopping when they cannot usually fit their wheelchair in their own vehicle. Drivers will need to prove their identity and are subject to regular driving licence checks.” Derbyshire CT also offers a vounteer car scheme that is linked to the Car Club.

<https://www.derbytelegraph.co.uk/news/motoring/new-hourly-car-share-scheme-8450294>



Derbyshire – Volunteers Needed for High Peak CT service. Volunteers are being sought to drive for the Volunteer Transport Service that is operated by Connex Community Support based in Buxton. Head of Transport Operations Howard Gunn commented that “over the last 12 months the volunteers have all tirelessly given their time and vehicles to ensure people can get to their medical appointments or social outings, like trips to groups activities or day care centres...You can use your own car and claim expenses and we also have two of our own vehicles – a wheelchair accessible people carrier and a minibus. If you don’t have your own car but a valid driving licence and still wish to volunteer for us, you may be eligible to drive one of our vehicles...Without the support of local volunteers this service could not operate and it would not be able to help the local communities in the High Peak.” Prospective drivers should contact Howard on 01298 23970 or email [transport@connex.org.uk](mailto:transport@connex.org.uk).

<https://www.buxtonadvertiser.co.uk/news/people/desperate-plea-for-volunteer-drivers-to-help-high-peak-charity-which-helped-8500-people-last-year-4142768>

Shropshire - St Martins Car Scheme is Recruiting Volunteers. Based in St Martins, north of Oswestry, this new car scheme is needing volunteers. Speaking for the scheme, Viv Fisher said that “the proposed St Martins volunteer car scheme has had very few driver applicants, although the need has been established...These car schemes are a lifeline to those without access to their own transport and are a safe, friendly and personal way of getting where you need to go...Please support this scheme.” Volunteer drivers should contact Viv on 01691 770049.

<https://www.bordercountiesadvertiser.co.uk/news/23522843.shropshire-volunteer-drivers-needed-st-martins-car-scheme/>

Hertfordshire - Dacorum Community Action Profile Value of Volunteer Drivers. An article by Matt Hatton of Community Action Dacorum has highlighted the role played by volunteers in the local CT scheme and the need for more drivers to come forward. Matt writes: “Unfortunately, for many vulnerable members of our community, finding reliable transportation can be a significant challenge. This is where local charities step in, providing vital transportation services to those who need it most. However, these charities can’t do it alone, and they rely heavily on the support of volunteer drivers to help transport their clients. By volunteering as a driver for a local charity, you can help ensure that no one in your community is left behind due to a lack of transportation.” Potential volunteers should call the Volunteer Centre on 01442

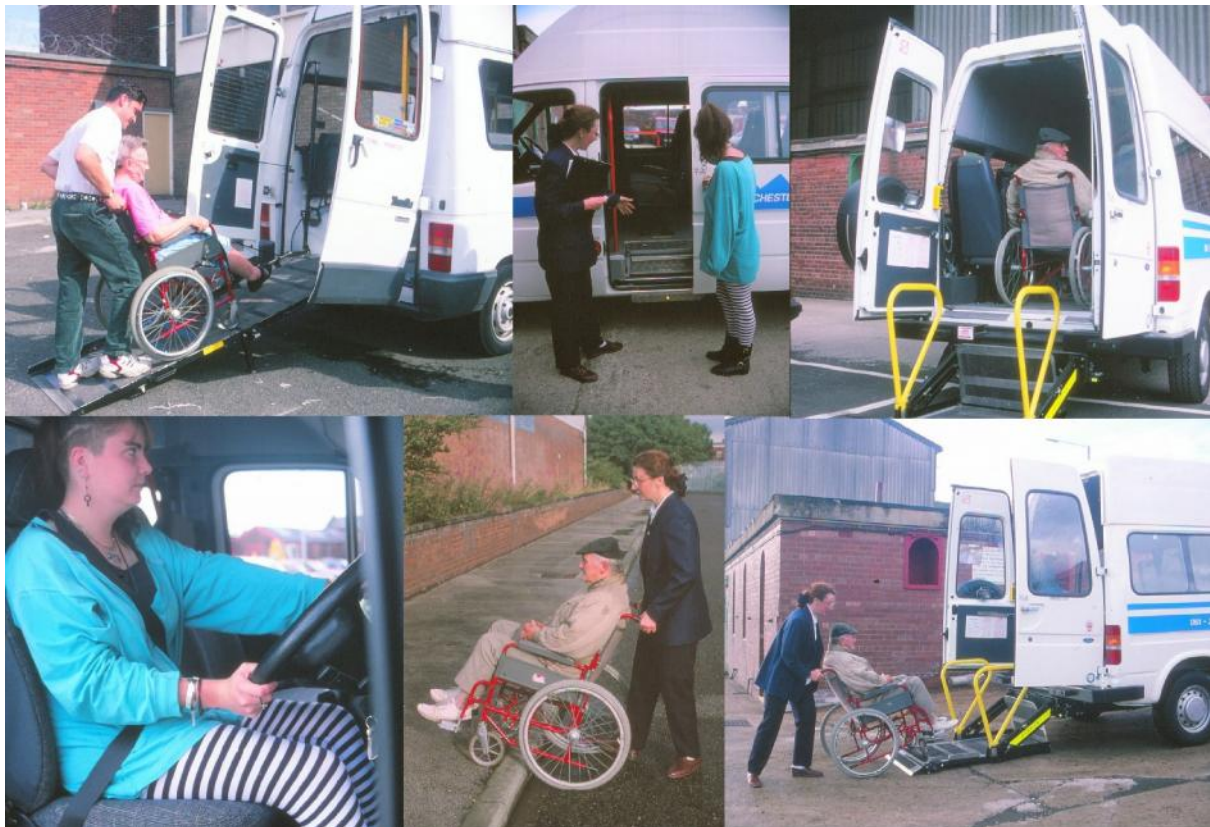


247209 or email [ctadmin@communityactiondacorum.org.uk](mailto:ctadmin@communityactiondacorum.org.uk).  
<https://www.hemeltoday.co.uk/news/opinion/columnists/kind-hearted-volunteer-drivers-help-get-dacorum-charities-into-gear-4134806>

UK – Flashback to the origins of MiDAS 32 years ago...



While CTA prepares to re-launch the transformed MiDAS, TAS director John Taylor has unearthed a box of slides from his involvement with the original development of the training scheme 32 years ago, with CTA and Hampshire County Council. The photomontage below dates from 1991 and was taken at the Manchester Minibus Agency to potentially illustrate the printed training materials, under the supervision of Karen Gibson MBE.





## Only the Lonely...and Community Transport (by John Atkins)

The recent CTA conference Inclusive Transport & the Role of Community-led Solutions (16 May) included a presentation from DfT's Tom McCaskill-Baxter (Head of Tackling Loneliness, Accessible and Inclusive Travel) who provided a useful update on DfT's Tackling Loneliness through Transport project. The conference also included reports from a number of CT services that had been funded through CTA's focussed programme under the DfT banner. It is important to note that the full project evaluation has yet to be concluded, and that the report on the project's overall findings is still forthcoming. Tom also reminded us that DfT had not offered the funding packages to launch or support CT services per se; the pilot projects were intended purely as a means of gleaning meaningful data around how far transport interventions could reduce feelings of loneliness in service users.

That DfT is making linkages between transport and effective ways of reducing loneliness is positive. There have been many general reports on loneliness over the past decade or so and various high-profile campaigns, and the message that the necessary social engagement – for some individuals – cannot happen without an appropriate kind of transport service has been recognised. But it seems a pity that the primary work of much of the CT sector had for many decades fallen beneath the official radar of the Government. It should not be news that CT services are able to reduce loneliness. And there has even existed a means of measuring the impact of CT services through the Ealing CT Social Impact Tool if evidence were needed. It feels that DfT, in only funding 'new' projects under this programme, has tried to re-invent a wheel that has already been in motion for decades.

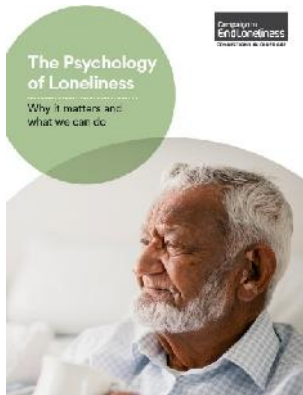


If DfT really wanted to gain insight into the ways in which CT can reduce loneliness, it might have profitably reached out to the many hundreds of Dial-a-Rides and car schemes which for many years have been doing exactly what the department wants to understand better: tackling loneliness through transport. This is the core work of much of the CT sector and always has been. It is a pity, then, that DfT has not shown any interest in investing in a larger scale social impact evaluation exercise to which all CTs could contribute. As it is, the data samples that will inform DfT's evaluation are in many cases drawn from unrepresentative delivery models, designed to meet the department's stated preference for supporting services that "demonstrate how new transport

pilot schemes or a different approach using the existing transport network can trial new and innovative ways of tackling loneliness." (DfT's Guidance for Applicants).

The mantra of 'new', 'different' and 'innovative' serves to alienate and devalue a great many door-to-door and accessible services that have been making a substantial and much-valued contribution for years (not sexy enough? Unlikely to grab publicity?)

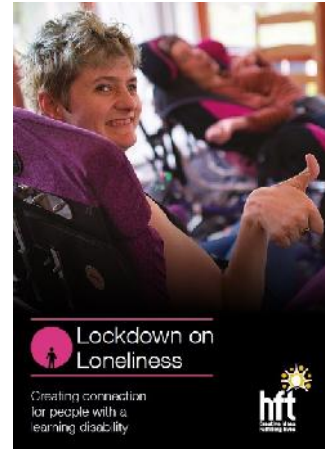
Of course, CT is not the only kind of transport intervention that impacts upon loneliness, and DfT rightly needs to capture data from a diversity of approaches – and it shouldn't overlook the value of local bus services, which for many people are also a vital lifeline to social interaction. But the projects that have been awarded grants largely had to contrive to fit the 'innovative' concept, whilst the bread-and-butter CT services remain at risk of being under-recognised and underfunded. Admittedly, the evaluation measure being



proposed by DfT involves a 'before' and 'after' survey which might be difficult to pitch towards an existing service user. This is probably why the pilots needed to conjure up new users (i.e. people not currently accessing CT services). Certainly, the funding earmarked by DfT was never going to prop up any pre-existing service. This no doubt gave rise to the expression of more than a few wry comments that if DfT really meant business about reducing loneliness then it would simply ensure that 'regular' CT services are given proper financial support and that decent operators were not unduly harassed by legislative barriers!

CTA's subsequent workshop Tackling a Loneliness Project - Tips and Hints From the Lessons We've Learnt (16 May) made available some valuable material on how CT operators can more effectively tailor services to those most at risk of loneliness. (See [https://ctauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Workshop-2-TL-Conference-Presentation-SR\\_NN-Combined-1.pdf](https://ctauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Workshop-2-TL-Conference-Presentation-SR_NN-Combined-1.pdf)). Within this debate there is an ongoing challenge: those most at risk of the negative consequences of being lonely are most likely to be those individuals who are not currently CT users. And attracting and absorbing new users into established services is not always a great strength of some operators. CTA certainly touches on this issue when it suggests to operators that "you may want to extend your reach to groups or communities not currently supported... could you provide a bigger impact by collaborating with other CT providers and/or stakeholders?" How to best market services to those most in need has been a perpetual issue for CT for many years and there is no single easy solution. The most positive observation is that some CT operators

do this better than others but few are outstanding. It will be interesting to learn how the various DfT-funded projects have attracted new users, and whether there are any longer-term strategies to keep marketing and engagement effective, especially with those known to be 'hard-to-reach'. The reality check for many Dial-a-Rides and car schemes is to accept that more always needs to be done to attract and accommodate new users. An equitable service usually involves providing a smaller number of trips for a larger number of users – the logic of this approach is a move towards rationing of journeys in the interest of widening membership, not always a palatable measure. As indicated above, the real impact on loneliness is to be made when new users are engaged with and absorbed into a service, and where CT operators are proactive in seeking out isolated individuals. But how to do this can be difficult. As CTA has suggested, a collaborative approach drawing upon the wider networks of community development & support organisations, along with health and care agencies is usually a good start.



**TAS**

If you require any advice or support please contact us on 01772-204988 or email [john.atkins@taspartnership.com](mailto:john.atkins@taspartnership.com)