



Community & Voluntary Transport at



The TAS Partnership Limited
Passenger Transport Specialists

Newsletter No.40

Edited by John Atkins (Principal Consultant). Published December 2023

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/>

GB – CTA Award Winners 2023. The winners of this year's CT awards were announced at the CTA Event in Birmingham on Nov 23.

-)] Provider of the Year (for small fleet size CT with about 1-5 vehicles): South Denbighshire Community Partnership;
-)] Provider of the Year (for large fleet size CT with above 5 vehicles): Badenoch & Strathspey Community ConnXions;
-)] Innovation in Volunteering: SWAN Transport;
-)] Partnership of the Year: ECT Charity (with NHS North West London);
-)] Making a Difference: Merton Community Transport;
-)] Commitment to Sustainability: Awel Aman Tawe – Taith Co-op;
-)] CT Champion of the Year: Jim Grose & Rosemarie Darlington – Mid Devon Mobility.



Mid-Devon Mobility also scooped the award for the best CT photograph.

<https://twitter.com/CTAUK1>

<https://www.strathspey-herald.co.uk/news/badenoch-and-strathspey-community-transport-team-are-the-bes-334010/>

GB – DVLA adds Driver CPC and Tachograph Information to its Driver and Vehicles Account.

“Commercial drivers have been able to view this information since 16 October. These are the first of several additions planned for the account. You will need a UK passport to sign up for this. The service is available to GB licence holders but not Northern Ireland licence holders.”



<https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/UKDVSA/bulletins/3788f4f>

UK – CTA Updates:

- J Aneurin Bevan University Health Board Invests £50k in Gwent's Transport to Health Initiative <https://ctauk.org/abuhb-invests-50k-in-gwents-transport-to-health-initiative/>
- J 'A Feeling of Freedom': The Unmet Transport Needs of Refugees and People Seeking Asylum <https://ctauk.org/a-feeling-of-freedom-the-unmet-transport-needs-of-refugees-and-people-seeking-asylum/>
- J Have Your Say: Contribute to the CTA's Manifesto for Community Transport Survey here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CTmanifesto24>
- J CTA Responds to the Consultation on Northern Ireland's Concessionary Fares Scheme <https://ctauk.org/cta-responds-to-the-consultation-on-northern-irelands-concessionary-fares-scheme/>
- J Join next Community Building Session at 11am on Friday, 8th December. <https://member.ctauk.org/civicrm/event/info?reset=1&id=26>
- J Ever Outward, Ever Open: Reflections on Scottish Rural and Islands Parliament 2023 <https://ctauk.org/srip2023/>
- J CT Spotlight: Ledbury Community Action <https://www.caledbury.org.uk/>
- J Reflecting on CT23 Conference and Awards Sessions and summaries here: <https://ctauk.org/ct23-conference-sessions/>



England – CTA's State of the Sector Survey, Mapping

England, is Now Live. CTA: “Our State of the Sector work is crucial to show what Community Transport looks in England and encourage greater integration and investment in our sector. To begin, we are running an online survey, which we would like all Community Transport organisations in England to complete. The questionnaire will ask for details of your organisation, including your fleet, operations, and funding. It will provide a vital source of evidence, detailing the size and diversity of our sector. Further research will follow, to analyse specific issues in more detail. It should take around 35 minutes to complete. As a thank you for completing the survey, there will be a prize draw for 4 prizes of £250, to be given directly to the winning organisations. All non-profit organisations who complete the survey and

provide contact details will be entered into the draw. If you would like to discuss this project, please contact Nick Mills, Research and Insight Manager at nick@ctauk.org." The survey is here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/YDTJMMY>

Wales – Plans for Community Bus in Cellan Area. Plans were launched at a public meeting on 16 Nov for a new community bus operated by Llanfair Clydogau and Cellan Community Council, which would provide a Saturday 'loop' service between Llanfair and Lampeter. Potential volunteers were invited to the meeting and learned how they would be trained by Dolen Teifi, which would also supply the bus and cover insurance costs. <https://www.cambrian-news.co.uk/news/find-out-more-about-proposed-community-bus-at-open-day-649558>. It was subsequently announced that the service would be launched on Lampeter's Christmas Shopping Night. <https://www.cambrian-news.co.uk/news/community-bus-makes-its-first-journey-for-lampeter-christmas-shopping-night-653509>

Surrey – Woking CT is Supported by Local MP. As the operator faces a withdrawal of funding from Woking Borough Council, Jonathan Lord (Conservative Member for Woking) spoke at Woking Community Transport's AGM in support of the valuable service that is provided. He said: "Ever since I was first elected as Woking's MP in 2010, I have supported this terrific organisation and its work to help and support residents. Last week I attended Woking Community Transport's 32nd annual general meeting, where I spoke to many clients, volunteers and employees of this amazing local social enterprise and where we discussed at some length the proposal from Woking Borough Council to remove all its funding for the Dial-a-Ride service. I have liaised with Woking Community Transport (WCT) and Woking Council to try to ensure WCT gets its voice heard at a senior level at the council, and I was disappointed to hear at the AGM that the council had not followed up on its recent meeting with WCT as it had promised to do."



<https://www.wokingnewsandmail.co.uk/opinion/we-cant-let-the-bustler-service-die-the-role-it-plays-is-just-too-important-646572>.

Passengers are also contributing to the lobby to save the service, such as 87 year old Barbara, as featured below:

<https://www.wokingnewsandmail.co.uk/news/carers-plea-on-behalf-of-mum-87-over-lifeline-bus-647303>. Woking Council, in the meantime, has been criticised for providing 'free' electricity for some of its public EV charging points due to its IT system being unable to levy the usual charge. Surrey Live says: "Bankrupt Woking Borough Council is spending up to £148,000 a year on free charging for electric vehicles - about the same it would cost to save the Bustler

community bus service." <https://www.getsurrey.co.uk/news/surrey-news/bankrupt-woking-council-giving-away-28146226>

Yorkshire – Former Chair of Skipton CT Makes Final Journey.
The funeral has recently taken place of Richard Clarke, with a farewell boat journey along the Leeds-Liverpool canal. As chair of Skipton and Craven Action for Disability (SCAD), Richard was instrumental in managing the five vehicle Dial-a-Ride service that SCAD offered in the Craven district. The funeral journey was taken onboard the accessible canal boat Endeavour, operated by the charity that Richard set up called Spirit of Endeavour which provides canal journeys for disabled people. SCAD has since ceased operations. <https://www.cravenherald.co.uk/news/23891416.last-canal-trip-scad-chair-endeavour-founder-richard-clarke/>

Yorkshire - Scarborough Dial a Ride has New Man at the Wheel. After nearly 30 years with the same management team in the driving seat, Scarborough Dial A Ride has a new man at the wheel. Tim Lawson, who was Deputy Manager for 23 years before taking-up the top role in 2022, is retiring at the end of the year. Stepping in to take over is Steve Marsh, who was previously the Executive Director of YMCA Scarborough. Dial A Ride, which celebrated its 40th anniversary this year, is a local charity that provides fully accessible, safe, reliable and affordable, door to door transport in and around the Scarborough and Filey areas for anyone aged 60+ or for people of any age with a disability.

"Over 85% of our customers tell us that without us, they would have difficulty getting out, and 99% said that our service was responsible for improving their quality of life" said Tim. "It has been such a pleasure to help lead Scarborough Dial A Ride for such a long time and I am so pleased to be handing over the keys to Steve". Dial A Ride's distinctive and eye-catching fleet of seven wheelchair accessible minibuses are a regular sight on Scarborough's streets, as the team of drivers and passenger assistants – most of whom are volunteers, take people to health appointments, to respite and day care, to visit friends and relatives, to go shopping or for any reason people require transport.



In addition to the minibuses, four accessible cars are used for longer journeys of any purpose - mainly to take passengers to hospital appointments in Bridlington, Malton, York, Hull, Middlesbrough and further afield. "Having really enjoyed some time volunteering at Dial A Ride a few years ago, I already knew what a fantastic, much-needed and valuable service it provided" said Steve. "The opportunity to join a team who spend every day making a real and positive difference to so many people's lives, is one I couldn't resist".



In the past 12 months, over 20,000 passenger journeys, totalling around 92,000 miles have been undertaken, with some people relying on the service to travel every day. Colin Woodhead, Chair of the charity, said "Having started in 1983 with just one second hand minibus, demand for our services has grown to the point where we now help over 600 people each year to maintain their independence. We are absolutely delighted that Steve has joined us to help steer a successful future for Dial A Ride in the Scarborough area."

<http://www.scarboroughdialaride.org/>

Nottinghamshire – Bassetlaw Action Centre Awards Season. The Retford-based CT operator Bassetlaw Action Centre (BAC) is hoping to pull off a hat trick of awards this year. It has already bagged the Get Out Get Active Embedding Inclusion Award and the value for money award at the Health and Care Awards for the Promoting Independence project, which supports patients on discharge from hospital. The success or otherwise of its nomination for Community Transport Provider of the Year at the CTA awards was announced at the NEC event on 23 November. Lynn Tupling, BAC Chief Executive said "I am so incredibly proud of my staff and volunteers for being recognised for their hard work, commitment and determination at both system and national level. These awards mean so much to us and demonstrate clearly the quality services provided by Bassetlaw Action Centre".



<https://www.bassetlawactioncentre.org.uk/latest-news/> and

<https://www.worksopguardian.co.uk/whats-on/things-to-do/bassetlaw-charity-aims-for-the-hat-trick-4390697>

BAC's services are profiled in these Youtube videos: Car Scheme (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACAWC7gVwx4&t=2s>) and Community Minibus (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LH2_BrWDIXY&t=1s).

Dorset – Dorset CT Launches New Dorchester Service. Dorset Community Transport has launched a new Dorchester 'E' PlusBus service which connects villages in the local area with Dorchester every other Wednesday. Chris Loder, MP for West Dorset, said: "This new service offers a lifeline for residents of all ages. It is just one of many that Dorset Community Transport operates in West Dorset. I fully support this new service and I look

forward to ensuring it is a success for local residents." Dorset CT said "The new service came about through the efforts of local Parish Councils, who identified an unmet transport need and came together to work with Dorset Community Transport. The service itself is part-funded by Dorset Council's Community Transport start-up grant fund." CT manager Tim Christian said "These



communities have been without a bus service for over five years, so there was a real unmet need. The combined efforts of Parish Councils, Dorset Council and the team here at Dorset Community Transport is a brilliant example of a local community coming together to make a change for the better."

<https://ectcharity.co.uk/news/story/chris-loder-mp-joins-dorset-community-transport-for-service-launch>

Dorset – Axe Valley Ring and Ride Uncertainty Continues.

With its future still in doubt, Axe Valley Ring and Ride has announced its intention of deferring a decision on continuation of its Dorset operations until December. Meanwhile, Dorset Community Transport has offered to accommodate any passengers who were previously served by Ring and Ride. Dorset CT manager Tim Christian said: "We know that an uninterrupted change of provider is vital to ensure continuity for those who rely on the service...we hope to reach out to the affected users and are confident our existing services in the region can adapt to incorporate those communities." <https://www.bridportnews.co.uk/news/23892776.axe-valley-ring-ride-dorset-community-trust-offer-service/>

Dorset – CB3 Community Bus Needs a New Vehicle. The CB3 bus service – which operates in the Bridport, Beaminster and Crewkerne areas with volunteer drivers – is needing to replace its five year old bus, and is hoping to raise £40,000 to keep on the road. Beaminster Town Council chair Craig Monks said: "The CB3 community bus project began when First Wessex cut the number 6 Saturday service. Dorset County Council donated the bus that was surplus to its own fleet which was a great help in setting up the CB3. But after five years of successful service, we need to start thinking about a newer bus to ensure the future of the service and to help control the costs of running the bus. The CB3 is really popular. I would say it is vital for a lot of people out in rural areas. Not only is it essential in terms of getting people from A to B but it has a social aspect too, without it some people would be quite isolated in these rural areas." Support has already been pledged from Mayfair Town and Country estate agents.

<https://www.bridportnews.co.uk/news/23941838.help-cb3-bus-bridport-beaminster-crewkerne/>

Greater London – MP Pops in to Ealing CT During CT Week.

Celebrating CT week, Ealing Community Transport welcomed Ealing North MP James Murray to its Greenford base. He commented: "I am very glad to support Community Transport and the important



role they play in helping to tackle loneliness and social isolation. I am proud that ECT Charity has been at the forefront of this vital work in Ealing." ECT Chief Executive John Chesters said: "We're delighted to welcome James Murray MP to our Ealing Depot as we celebrate Community Transport Week. Mr Murray has been a longstanding supporter of our work, which is vital as we see our services increasingly in demand. We were pleased to be able to explore our current aims and aspirations – and where we can help – we want to be a part of the solution wherever transport is an issue. We were also able to explore some of the barriers we face as we try to increase our services and to discuss with James the ways we may be able to overcome them."

<https://ectcharity.co.uk/news/story/ect-charity-welcomes-james-murray-mp-for-community-transport-week-visit>

Cheshire – Ealing CT's Cheshire PlusBus Augments Services for Christmas. Ealing Community Transport reports: "We'll be running day trips for our PlusBus members to both the Trafford Centre and to Bury Christmas market every weekday between Monday November 20th and Friday 1 December. The trips are designed to help you get ahead on your Christmas shopping – or just enjoy a day out, getting into the festive spirit....Our day trips aren't the only festive cheer from ECT in Cheshire. Because we know that our PlusBus members like to be out and about more at Christmas – going shopping, visiting friends and family and so on – we're putting on extra vehicles for the whole run up to Christmas. That means our PlusBus members can make plans with more confidence – although we still advise you to book as early as possible." <https://ectcharity.co.uk/news/story/get-ready-for-christmas-with-ect-in-cheshires-new-day-trips>

Cheshire – Halton Community Transport Celebrates its Diverse Workforce!



OUR TEAM ARE:

Our Team are Staff, our Team are Volunteers.

Our Team are Men, our Team are Women, our Team are Trans.

Our Team are Old, our Team are Young.

Our Team are Fat, our Team are Thin.

Our Team are White, our Team are Black.

Our Team are from Widnes, our Team are from Runcorn, our Team are from St. Helens, our Team are from Liverpool.

Our Team are Straight, our Team are Gay.

Our Team are Blue's, our Team are Red's, our Team are Saints, our Team are Vikings.

Our Team are Healthy, our Team are Disabled, our Team are Autistic, our Team are Mental Health users.

Our Team are Catholic, our Team are C of E, our Team are Jewish, our Team are Atheist.

Our Team are Kind, our Team are Brave, our Team are Bold.

Our Team are Better as a Team and for all our differences together we are **STRONGER!**

HALTON
COMMUNITY TRANSPORT
& EXTRA MILE GARAGE

<https://haltoncommunitytransport.co.uk/>

Kent – £500k Fund to Boost Community-led Transport Solutions.

Residents' groups, charities and parish councils are eligible to bid for a one-off grant from a collective fund of £500,000 to "introduce or enhance" local transport schemes. £450,000 has come from the Department for Transport and £50,000 from Kent County Council's Community Transport Grant. Neil Baker, who is KCC cabinet member for Highways and Transport said: "We are delighted to again offer the chance for community groups and local councils to bid for funding to support their communities and are grateful for UK Government's support in enabling us to do this. Since the pandemic, these sorts of schemes can be increasingly valuable while the bus network continues to recover in the face of continued challenges..."

<https://www.kentlive.news/news/kent-news/kent-community-groups-can-apply-8897564>. Also here:

<https://www.kentonline.co.uk/maidstone/news/500k-of-grants-to-support-transport-services-296592/>

Cambridgeshire - Fenland Association of Community Transport Garden Project. A community garden run by Fenland Association of Community Transport (FACT) has hosted a session in which 93 year-old gardener Don Bradshaw has passed on his growing tips to a number of children from All Saints Interchurch Academy. The garden in March complements FACT's community fridge project.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cambridgeshire-67371984>

Northern Ireland – Down CT Favoured by Cash Donation. A £1,000 donation has been made to Down Community Transport by SuperValu and Centra (part of Musgrave Northern Ireland) as part of their £40K Big Community Giveaway fund. Chair of Down CT, Francis Casement, commented: "We are thankful to Centra & SuperValu NI for this generous donation through the Big Community Giveaway. It will be a lifeline for us to continue to provide our Dial-a-Lift service for those who live in rural areas and who need to travel to local medical and hospital appointments, as well as shopping and social groups. Thank you to those who nominated us as well." <https://downnews.co.uk/supervalu-and-centra-back-down-community-transport/>

Suffolk – New Hybrid Vehicle is Added to Bungay Area CT fleet. A hybrid plug-in Ford Kuga car has been put into service on the BACT



car scheme in the Waveney district of Suffolk. It was funded by Suffolk County Council's Innovation Fund. Debbie Blowers, manager of BACT, said: "we are so excited to receive the new car as it opens new opportunities for volunteers to drive for us. BACT is struggling to meet the demand for its transport requests, and we compete for volunteers with many other organisations these days. We are hopeful that having a lovely new car will attract new volunteers. In addition, the car is cheaper to run than our traditional vehicles and better for the environment." The first volunteer to drive the new Kuga was Judy Cloke. The passenger was Christine McHugh who said: "my daughter and I were driven to James Paget Hospital in

BACT's new car by their volunteer driver, Judy Cloke. It was a real treat to be taken in a brand-new car. It was beautiful, lovely, and comfortable. It was so smooth and quiet, almost as if it wasn't moving - but it was, as we got there in good time."

<https://www.lowestoftjournal.co.uk/news/23925912.bact-transport-gets-new-hybrid-plug-in-ford-kuga-car/> and

<https://www.motormoutharabia.com/uncategorized/a-real-treat-community-transport-passengers-express-love-of-new-vehicle/96917/>

Scotland – Highland Council Announces CT Funding Package. The Highland Council reports: "Twenty eight community transport initiatives

across the Highlands have been awarded a share of £358,850 by The Highland Council to support them with the important role they play in delivering lifeline services to their local communities. Chair of the Economy and Infrastructure Committee, Councillor Ken Gowans highlights the valuable work undertaken by providers. He said: 'The role of Community Transport providers is vital, and we welcome the diversity of projects and activities spread across the Highlands which address local unique circumstances and opportunities. Although all projects have their individual characteristics, they all bring important social benefits to communities where any option of public transport either does not exist or is very limited. It's about proactively finding solutions which most closely address and meet local transport needs, with the added benefit of empowering individuals and the broader community.'

Four new initiatives are included in the successful applications. Stratherrick and Foyers Community Trust has been awarded £7,500, Applecross Community Company will receive £7,500, Garve Development Trust has been awarded £15,000 and Creich Croick and Kincardine District Day Care Association will receive £15,000 . An additional new applicant, Ferintosh Community Council, is not eligible to receive a community transport grant based on existing criteria, but alternative funding is being sought to support its valuable work. As well as confirming annual funding for the community transport groups, the committee approved that the £7,000 annual budget to support driver training and emergency repairs for Community Transport organisations continues and that a proportion of the funding made available by Transport Scotland's Community Bus Fund (CBF) is used to ensure vehicle provision to a number of groups, as capital funding is not accommodated by the Community Transport grant budget."

https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/15699/grant_funding_for_highland_community_transport_providers_confirmed. Also <https://www.northern-times.co.uk/news/grant-aid-for-sutherland-community-transport-schemes-334306/>

Scotland – South West Ross Community Car Scheme Receives The King's Award for Voluntary Service. This car scheme, which is a group of volunteers based in the communities of Kinlochewe, Torridon, Shieldaig, Applecross, Lochcarron, Strathcarron and Achnasheen, has been awarded The King's Award for Voluntary Service. This is the highest award a local voluntary group can receive in the UK and is equivalent to an MBE. South West Ross Community Car Scheme (SWRCCS) volunteers provide a vital service for those without access to public or private transport, taking telephone requests and enabling them to get to medical appointments, attend community events, have prescriptions delivered and generally get about. SWRCCS drivers support people to attend hospital appointments which can be a return journey of over 130 miles.



Representatives of SWRCCS will receive the award crystal and certificate from Mrs Joanie Whiteford, Lord-Lieutenant of Ross and Cromarty later next summer. In addition, two volunteers from SWRCCS will be invited to a garden party at Holyrood House in July 2024, along with other recipients of this year's Award. Richard Munday, chair of SWRCCS, said: "This award is recognition of the dedication and huge effort that our wonderful volunteers put in getting people to where they need to be. Their efforts consistently

support people in our communities to access the services they need. All the more fitting in our 20th anniversary year." <https://www.swrc-carscheme.co.uk/april-update>

Scotland – G15 Buses Saved by Funding Boost. After being threatened with closure, Clydebank and Drumchapel area community bus G15 has received a £2,000 funding boost from the Wee Grants Team at the Robertson Trust. Will Thomson from G15 Buses said "there's been great excitement and pleasure, here at the charity. I'm sure you can imagine the difference this will make to continuing the delivery of our essential services to those in G15 and G81 and beyond. Just weeks ago, we were really preparing to give in. We had exhausted our reserves and watched every penny spent. This is the only major funding we receive for the Connector Services, which with our fare income is what we operate with. Donations have really changed recently and at present can't be relied on, however, now we feel safe to say hello to 2024." <https://www.clydebankpost.co.uk/news/23908306.g15-buses-saved-closure-unexpected-cash-boost/>

Scotland – Recruitment Drive for Volunteers in East Lothian. The Royal Voluntary Service in East Lothian has seen an increase in demand of late and is recruiting new volunteers for its car scheme. The scheme comprises a free GP transport service for appointments and a community transport service for East Lothian residents over the age of 65 who have difficulty getting to any other type of medical appointment. Manager Tom Pearson reported that "We have a real challenge to meet demand in Musselburgh, Haddington and Dunbar at the moment because of volunteer numbers...The role is completely flexible in terms of how much time volunteers want to give us and which areas they want to cover. The volunteers get huge satisfaction out of helping people and often build real bonds with the people they help. They all find it hugely rewarding, and really appreciate the complete flexibility of the role." Potential volunteers can find more information here: <https://my.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk/opportunities/68f238b3-d6b9-ed11-b597-000d3a86f259>. <https://www.eastlothiancourier.com/news/23962453.volunteer-drivers-needed-take-people-medical-appointments/>

Worcestershire – Wyre Forest CT in Innovative Sponsorship Deal. A new sponsorship arrangement has been secured by Community Transport Wyre Forest in partnership with The Wash House. For every Bosch, Neff and Siemens product sold, Wyre Forest CT are to receive a £2 donation, with an expected benefit of £6,000 per year. Founder of The Wash House Philip Bowden said: “I was a special constable and a community first responder for the ambulance service for many years and I’m passionate about giving back to the community. This charity provides an amazing door-to-door service for hundreds of people across the district and neighbouring areas and we are delighted to be able to support them.”

<https://www.expressandstar.com/news/local-hubs/wyre-forest/2023/11/24/lifeline-charity-secures-major-funding-windfall-from-wyre-forest-company/>

Manager of Wyre Forest CT, Beverley Coldrick, has also been announced as one of the winners of Wyre Forest District Council’s No Barriers Awards, which “recognises local businesses, organisations and individuals that have provided significant access, service or employment possibilities for people with disabilities. They also celebrate those who have given particular consideration for the wider needs of people within the community, for example nursing mothers.”



<https://www.wyreforestdc.gov.uk/news/posts/2023/december/celebrating-those-who-go-the-extra-mile/>

Berkshire – West Berkshire Proposes Cuts to CT Budget. Another local authority facing financial pressure is West Berkshire Council and proposals have been published for consultation aimed at raising £1.75m savings, including a reduction in the level of support for community transport of £10,000. This is part of its spending control measures which involve “reviewing all spending and approving only that which relates to statutory services or which are otherwise unavoidable...”

<https://www.westberks.gov.uk/article/42473/Council-begins-consultation-on-spending-proposals-for-2024-25>

Somerset – Age UK Calls for Vital Bus Services to be Restored. In a collective letter to the West of England Metro Mayor Dan Norris, local Age UK groups have expressed their concerns, warning that the “current system is at risk of further isolating vulnerable groups...The birthday bus pass scheme by the West of England Combined Authority, alongside the recent introduction of the WESTlink service, represents innovative steps

toward boosting passenger numbers and enhancing connectivity in rural and remote areas. However, the initial challenges faced by the WESTlink service, particularly the reported unavailability of minibuses and accessibility of the app, highlight the essential role that supported bus routes and community transport play in our public transportation ecosystem. The birthday bus scheme, while catchy, may not adequately address the core transportation needs of many of our residents, especially when compared to the benefits derived from supported bus routes and community transport initiatives. The essence of public transportation is to provide reliable, accessible, and inclusive services to all, particularly those facing the greatest barriers. We urge the West of England Combined Authority to prioritise and re-allocate adequate funding to supported bus routes and community transport, alongside further exploration and refinement of innovative schemes like the WESTlink service.”

<https://www.somersetlive.co.uk/news/somerset-news/cutting-indispensable-buses-leaving-somerset-8925318>

Cumbria – Plea for Drivers for Community Bus services. Two Cumbrian Community Bus operators are urgently seeking volunteer drivers to keep the services running. The Border Rambler serves the Carlisle and Brampton area and has reported that driver numbers have more than halved since the pandemic. Trustee and driver Stephen Higgs said: "We had about 30 [drivers] on our rota before the pandemic and we are down to 12 or 13. I think there's unfortunately been a bit of a loss of confidence among some people who used to volunteer. After the lockdown and the gruesome experiences that we all remember during that time, they were reluctant to come out again and pick things up. Elsewhere in Cumbria, similar problems are being faced by Muncaster Microbus in West Cumbria.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-cumbria-67425304> Border Rambler, meanwhile, has been awarded Best Regional Rural Bus Service 2023 - North West in the fifth annual Northern Enterprise Awards.

<https://www.newsandstar.co.uk/news/23934617.cumbrian-community-bus-service-named-best-north-west/>

Tyne & Wear – Community Bus Launched by Houghton Publicans. Aware of the transport difficulties that some members of the community were facing during bus strikes by Go North East, Kate and Gary Bell, who manage The White Lion pub in Houghton, have launched a new local service. Covering the Houghton, Hetton, East Rainton and Fence Houses areas, the 16-seater bus will operate to cover the service as the strike is set to run until December 22. Kate said: "We have been given approval to run the bus collection service and Go North East have said they will not object. It will be a real lifeline for people. Anyone without a car can use the service but we are really targeting elderly and vulnerable people who need to get their shopping, medication or may need to visit the Primary Care Centre."

<https://www.sunderlandecho.com/news/people/publicans-run-bus-collection-service-to-help-elderly-and-vulnerable-during-strikes-4399168>

Sussex – Cuckmere Buses Tribute from Mayor. With over 45 years in service, Berwick-based Cuckmere Buses has proved to be one of the UK's most durable community bus services in the UK. Its volunteers have been thanked by Polegate Town Mayor Cllr Dan Dunbar. He commented that "the annual social gathering of Cuckmere Buses is always an enjoyable evening and I was pleased to be able to attend. It's a great opportunity to thank all the volunteers involved in providing the community bus service for our community."



<https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/news/mayors-gather-to-pay-thanks-for-voluntary-bus-service-4390513>

Northamptonshire – Council Launches £950k Grants Scheme to Support Community Transport Services in West

Northants. This grant covers the financial years 2024/25 and 2025/26 and comprises £547,181 from Central Government via the Rural England Prosperity Fund (REPF) and £60,337 from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF), in addition to £342,000 of Council monies. Voluntary sector providers need to demonstrate that services will meet one of more of the following criteria:

-) Increasing accessibility and inclusion;
-) Reducing social isolation;
-) Providing access to healthcare;
-) Enabling safer transport by prioritising safety and the training of drivers;
-) Supporting economic opportunities;
-) Assisting in the maintenance of sustainable communities by connecting rural communities to the services they need;
-) Providing environmental benefits;
-) Relieving traffic congestion;
-) Providing a cost-efficient alternative to existing transport services;
-) Building communities by promoting a sense of community.

<https://www.aboutmyarea.co.uk/Northamptonshire/Northampton/NN1/News/Local-News/338424-Council-launch-%C3%82%C2%A3950k-grants-scheme-to-support-community-transport-services-in-West-Northants>

