



Newsletter No.62

Edited by John Atkins (Principal Consultant). Published January 2026. Please send us any news items, stories of interest or press releases.

England – DfT Evaluation of Rural Mobility Fund DRT Pilots. DfT has published an evaluation report of the 18 Rural Mobility Fund DRT pilots that were operational by the start of 2024. "This report presents findings from phase 1 of the programme level evaluation commissioned by DfT to the University of the West of England (UWE Bristol). The phase 1 evaluation addressed the two primary objectives of the RMF through two research activities:

-) Collecting monitoring data from LAs for each DRT pilot scheme
-) Conducting a programme-level process evaluation of the RMF to understand the experiences of designing, mobilising and implementing the DRT pilot schemes

Findings based on data collected from these activities up to September 2024 are presented in this report. Phase 2 is being conducted separately and will undertake impact and value for money evaluation to supplement the findings of phase 1 with a more in-depth assessment of the outcomes and impacts of the pilot schemes."

One headline finding is the fact that the average occupancy rate across the 18 pilots was only 2.1 passengers per hour. The report does not consider any performance differentials apparent from whether the service provider is a commercial bus company, CT or local authority operator. The CT links are played down somewhat: "All the pilots wanted the DRT schemes to appeal to a broad cross-section of the public. They wanted to avoid any pre-conception of DRT being a community service intended only for older or disabled people." However, there has been some CT involvement in the pilots e.g. Lydney Dial-a-Ride operates the Robin service in the Forest of Dean, which has



Rural Mobility Fund Phase 1
Evaluation: Final Report

A report prepared for the Department for Transport

outperformed the other Gloucestershire Robin DRT contracted to a commercial bus company. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/rural-mobility-fund-phase-1-evaluation-final-report>. DfT has also published guidance on setting up a DRT service:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/demand-responsive-transport/demand-responsive-transport>

Northumberland – WATBus Manager Reports on Road Traffic

Accident. Barry Armstrong: "Yesterday was one of the most challenging days that I've faced as CEO of WATBus. Not only is the minibus in the images one of ours but I came upon this sight on my way to work while children, and our driver were still trapped inside. Thankfully the amazing emergency services, and parents of some of the children arrived enabling to safely remove most of the children, with the fire service eventually cutting free one teenager and our driver Chris. I'm so happy to report that while 4 people were taken to hospital, all 4 were later discharged without sustaining any major injuries. My praise not only goes to all the emergency services that attended, but also the parents of the children involved, who stayed calm and gave everyone the space they needed to work efficiently and effectively."



https://www.linkedin.com/posts/barry-armstrong-651240112_yesterday-was-one-of-the-most-challenging-activity-7404249800902070272-FbHy?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAAAWkAzYBkhHFgOsIkq3P2COp0XiF8M5YyVQ

North Yorkshire – Ilkley's 'Dog Bus' Service. An unusual CT service was launched in Ilkley in October 2025, with dogs being the main passengers. The Billy's Bus provides a dog collection and walking service with journeys to its own 'Bark Park'. The service was founded by Laura Mohan, and driven by volunteers. Laura said: "It is half dog bus and half community bus which is what I wanted it to be. When the bus drives by you can just see people's faces light up. It is raising smiles and distracting people from what is going on around them which I have seen create massive improvements in people's lives." <https://www.yorkshirepost.co.uk/news/people/britains-first-dog-bus-service-launches-in-yorkshire-market-town-5445793>

North Yorkshire – Scarborough Dial-a-Ride Minibus Legacy. A new minibus has joined the fleet at Scarborough Dial a Ride thanks to a surprise legacy. A Scalby resident Richard Appleton (who passed away in 2023) remembered the CT operator in his will, resulting in the new vehicle. Chair of Trustees Colin Woodhead said: "Richard was aware of Dial a Ride, as his family had used our service. Nonetheless, we were surprised but incredibly grateful that he graciously remembered us in his Will...His legacy has allowed

Essex - New Minibuses in Tendring. Grant support totalling £180,000 has been approved by Tendring District Council enabling three local CT operators to obtain new minibuses. The successful CTs are Tendring Community Transport, Harwich Connexions, and Clacton-based youth support charity UTurn4Support.



<https://www.tendringdc.gov.uk/government-funded-projects/community-transport-mini-buses>

Essex – Colchester CT Celebrates Achievements. Colchester-based charity Community360 (C360) offers a range of support services for communities across Colchester, Maldon, and Chelmsford including a CT operation. The CT initiative has completed over 30,000 social trips and 15,000 essential journeys, helping people reach medical appointments, do their shopping and stay active in the community. Paul Gibbs, who is a volunteer driver commented: "It's genuinely the customers that make it special for me. For some people we are the only people they see to talk to. I am happy to volunteer; it really is worthwhile." A regular user of the service said: "For me it isn't going from A to B, it's about feeling safe to do so. Without Community360, I wouldn't have the life I do." <https://www.gazette-news.co.uk/news/25706018.colchester-charity-community360-celebrates-achievements/>

Essex - Harwich CT Xmas Tea Party. A free Xmas afternoon tea was provided at the 1912 Centre by Harwich Connexions. Over 30 CT passengers enjoyed the day out and the refreshments were accompanied by Gary Evetts on the piano. All staff involved gave their time voluntarily, and a donation from a local charity covered other costs. Debbie Hill, manager at Harwich Connexions Transport, said: "We were delighted to welcome so many people who we know sometimes have difficulty in getting out. Christmas can for some



be a time when they feel isolated so making sure they feel included and happy is really important. Everyone enjoyed the afternoon, including the volunteers without whom this couldn't have happened. It rounded off what has been our busiest-ever year and we were glad to share the Christmas joy with Santa and some wonderful members of our community."

<https://www.clactonandfrintongazette.co.uk/news/25693479.harwich-connexions-host-christmas-tea-residents/>

Wales – New CT Bus for Llanwrtyd Wells. Funding from the National Lottery has enabled Llanwrtyd Wells Community Transport to welcome a new 16-seat minibus to the fleet. General Manager of Llanwrtyd Wells CT, Laura Burns said: “Having the bus gives us the opportunity to help people and make a difference to people’s lives. The bus gives us more flexibility to be able to help more people in the communities we cover. There have been challenges, but seeing the difference in people using the service makes it all worthwhile. This is a fairly unique service as it is community led and we have no set timetable. In the beginning we started by having just 1 or 2 users, but as word got out about the service numbers quickly grew. It has been so uplifting to see it grow and see the difference it makes to the lives of the users. We now have 50 registered users of the service...There have been really



good friendships made on the bus and they all look after each other, if one has a problem, they chat with others on the bus and usually a solution or options are found between them. Services like this can be a lifeline to its users, it really can be lifesaving.” <https://www.brecon-radnor.co.uk/news/national-lottery-funds-new-community-bus-in-llandrindod-wells-863245> and <https://www.countytimes.co.uk/news/25709830.50-users-helped-lifesaving-powys-transport-service/>; <https://ctauk.org/news/happy-bus-launch-llandrindod-wells>

Wales – New Minibus Launched in Llandovery. A new minibus service has been provided by Dolen Teifi as part of a TowyLink initiative. This is a volunteer-based CT service that is part of the network being established in Carmarthenshire and other South West Wales counties. The new addition will serve Llandovery and surrounding rural areas, and is a group travel facility for not-for-profit groups and community organisations.

County Councillor for Llandovery Handel Davies said: “This new 16-seater minibus is a wonderful community asset that will benefit the wide range of groups and organisations of all ages we have in Llandovery. “It will be conveniently available for use by local schools, including Ysgol Gymraeg Rhys Prichard and Llandovery College, as well as the many sporting and community activities in the town. I would like to thank Dolen Teifi for their diligent efforts over a number of years to bring this minibus to Llandovery, alongside the wheelchair-friendly vehicle delivered earlier this year, and Carmarthenshire County Council for their invaluable financial support through the Shared Prosperity Fund...”

<https://www.southwalesguardian.co.uk/news/25726835.new-community-minibus-launched-llandoverly/>

Wales – An MBE for Green Dragon CT Manager. Congratulations

are due to Caroline Wilson who has been awarded the MBE in the New Year's Honours List for "services to the community of Dyfed" over the last 40 years. Manager of Green Dragon Bus and chair of trustees of Pembrokeshire Association of Community Transport Organisations (PACTO), Caroline has also long been involved in the Girlguiding movement. A spokesperson from PACTO said: "This national honour recognises Caroline's many years of dedication, leadership and quiet determination in championing Community Transport and supporting people who rely on accessible, inclusive services to stay connected, independent and engaged in their communities.



Caroline is not only a tremendous asset to PACTO but also a valued and respected member of the wider Community Transport family, including her long-standing work with Green Dragon Community Transport and the Transformation Project."

<https://uk.news.yahoo.com/mbe-guiding-stalwart-community-transport-120000717.html>

Wales – Praise for Manorbier CT Volunteer. PACTO has produced a case study of Joan Stace, founder member of Manorbier Community Transport which has its origins in Joan's efforts to ensure that various events and a local school could have adequate transport facilities and access to a minibus. "From that point on, it has been an integral part of the school, running up to 3 different routes, and ferrying up to 45 children, aged from 3-11 to and from school daily. Since Covid, this service has not been needed, but it is still firmly rooted in the mindset of all the children with pupils, past and present, referring to it as 'their' bus...Another central part of her life is her daughter Sharon, who shares her mother's dedication and works just as tirelessly to deliver this essential lifeline to those who turn to them for support.

The minibus was approaching the end of its working life, and both Sharon and Joan felt they were ready to end this incredible provision. However, following dynamic, supportive and exciting discussions with the PACTO Transformation Team, their enthusiasm was re-ignited.



With the purchase of a replacement accessible minibus and the support of the free-lease arrangement, they were ready to revitalise their operation and continue providing this incredible support to their community. For three decades, Joan has given her time, energy, and dedication to ensure that a minibus was available for schools, clubs, charities, and community groups spanning Manorbier and beyond. Based in Manorbier yet serving a much wider area, Joan's 'behind-the-scenes' work has enabled countless journeys, activities, and opportunities that simply would not have been possible without her tireless commitment...

2025 Finalists for the Pembrokeshire Volunteering Awards - This year, PACTO has nominated Joan Stace for her service to Community Transport over three decades. Joan truly embodies the spirit of volunteering - selfless, committed and dedicated to others. Joan has been the steady heartbeat that has kept opportunities alive for schools, clubs and community groups for over 30 years. Please click on this link: for the video interview featuring Joan and Sharon, in which they share Joan's story covering the last 30 years.

<https://youtu.be/5FDm3d0BWd4>"

Scotland – Dumfries and Galloway Bus Route Saved by Local CT. Due to lack of commercial viability, two Stagecoach bus routes serving Annan have now been saved after SWestrans identified new providers. Annandale Community Transport Services (ACTS) is to now operate the Annan town route from 5 January running the 80 town service and also offering a morning 74 service between Moffat and Beattock to Dumfries. Stephen Thompson Council leader said: "Officers have been working with ACTS on this over the last few weeks, and through a financial contribution from SWestrans they've been able to secure these services."

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cgqz5wxdwyjo>

Scotland – Lothian CT is Seeking Transport Trainer. An exciting opportunity has arisen with Lothian Community Transport Services for the vacancy of a Transport Trainer. Chief Executive Officer Kimberley Ward said: "We have built up a reputation as an outstanding training centre, throughout the UK and we are looking to continue to maintain this reputation and also build on it by expanding our training offer and developing succession planning with our current Training Manager, who is due to retire in 2027.

This role could be perfect for someone who is interested in the delivery of transport training and loves working with people from a variety of different backgrounds. Perhaps you have a background in professional driving, perhaps you are a driver instructor looking for a new challenge. Whilst we can offer a comprehensive and funded training package, through a training agreement, you will already need to be confident in training delivery. For more details on the role, including how to apply, please visit our website

<https://www.lcts.org.uk/work-for-us/>." The closing date for applications is: Wednesday 28th January 2025 at 5pm. Interviews are expected to take place the week commencing 2nd February.



Scotland – Growth of Glenfarg CT. The development of Glenfarg Community Transport in Perth & Kinross is profiled in Scottish Beacon. The origins of the service lie in how a community responded to bus service reductions in 2023: “Within just two years, GCTG had built a full-scale, professionally run bus service operated entirely by the community. It now runs nine buses, employs 26 local drivers, and enables more than 2,100 passenger journeys every week. Their two core routes – the 55 and 23 – provide a reliable, hourly service linking Glenfarg to Kinross, Perth and Tillicoultry. They have become a vital link in the local transport ecosystem, connecting with national services at the Kinross Park & Ride.



Running from 7am to 7pm, six days a week, it gives residents something they hadn't had for years: a reliable service they can depend on. The group also responds directly to community requests and changing needs. Volunteer bus drivers run social trips to museums,

shopping centres and concerts, and provide an affordable school bus service.”

<https://www.scottishbeacon.com/news/community-empowerment/how-glenfarg-rebuilt-its-bus-service-and-its-future/>

Scotland – East Kilbride CT Funding Crisis. East Kilbride Community Transport in South Lanarkshire has announced that its operation is under threat in the face of rising costs. The three minibuses provide group transport, but the organisation is considering reducing its fleet to meet £5,000 per month expenses. June Harpum, secretary, said: “At the moment we find

ourselves with a distinct lack of funds – a lot of repairs have had to be made to buses and prices are all going up for the costs of running the buses. It's the economic climate, fuel has become so expensive and we have driver wages, repairs, servicing which is required for our buses every 10 weeks, and we have to keep them in good order and have them valeted and cleaned...

We want to keep going; we think we'll have to sell one of the buses and if we do that, can probably keep going. We want to let people know the situation and if anyone is willing put in some funding to help us keep serving East Kilbride, we'd ask them to get in touch. We can't put charges up by much as the groups which use the community transport service don't have a lot of money, and we don't want to let people down as they really depend on us so much – we're their lifeline..." <https://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/in-your-area/lanarkshire/funding-plea-east-kilbride-community-36539577>

Worcestershire - Wyre Forest CT Calls for Access

Improvements at Hospital. Major parking problems at Worcestershire Royal Hospital is causing headaches at Wyre Forest Community Transport. Volunteer drivers have either quit or refuse to take patients to the site due to daily gridlocked traffic and the difficulty of finding somewhere suitable to park to drop off and collect passengers. Chief Officer David Muggeridge explained "The situation at the hospital has reached crisis point, causing huge anxiety to both patients and volunteer drivers. Most of our drivers are retired people who give their time freely to help others, but they are finding the situation intolerable. In Wyre Forest we only have one volunteer prepared to make the journey to the hospital now and other schemes have reported similar issues."

Urgent action by the NHS Worcestershire Acute Hospitals Trust has been called for to address the parking and congestion issues and to reinstate free parking for community schemes. A trust spokesperson added: "We are aware of the difficulties with congestion on the Worcestershire Royal Hospital site, particularly at peak times and we apologise to staff, patients and visitors who are affected by this. We are committed to resolving congestion issues and have put in place a number of options to help ease the situation. We have recently opened an additional 354-space staff car park at County Hall to reduce congestion into and out of the hospital site during peak times, and members of our parking teams are stationed at key pinch points around the hospital site at key times to help control the flow of traffic more effectively."

<https://www.expressandstar.com/your-world/2025/12/15/wyre-forest-community-transport-boss-leads-calls-to-solve-hospital-parking-chaos/>

Also Wyre Forest CT recently had a donation from the Rotary Club:

<https://www.expressandstar.com/your-world/2026/01/12/rotary-boost-to-wyre-forest-community-transport/>

Devon – Cash Boost for Ivybridge Ring and Ride. A holiday letting company Classic Cottages has made a £1,000 donation to Ivybridge Ring and Ride, part of Ivybridge and District Community Transport Association. Assistant Co-ordinator Lauren Grindle, commented: “We rely heavily on fundraising and donations, so this generous contribution from Classic Cottages makes a real difference. It helps us meet the day-to-day costs of keeping the service



running and maintaining the vehicles. This is so much more than a transport service – for many of our passengers it’s a real social life-line. People who live alone or in isolated areas really look forward to their trips. They make friends, they look out for each other, and it gives them something to look forward to each week.”

Classic Cottages’ Area Manager Nicola Williams said: “We’re delighted to support the Ivybridge Ring and Ride service. It’s clear how much this means to the local community and how valuable it is for people who would otherwise find it hard to stay connected. Supporting community initiatives like this is a big part of what we do at Classic Cottages, and we’re really pleased to help such a caring local service continue its work.” The CT is also seeking new volunteer drivers. Those interested should contact

www.ringandride.net/communitycarvolunteers.
<https://www.pressreader.com/uk/the-plymouth-herald/20251215/281590951898032>

Leicestershire – £100k Investment in CT Sector Announced.

Leicestershire County Council: £100,000 is being invested in improving life-line community transport services run by charities and volunteer groups in Leicestershire. A number of Community Transport providers in the county have been awarded a share of funds to help improve their vehicles, which include minibuses...

Leicestershire County Council has set aside the government cash which can be used for a range of improvements from the repair and replacement of vehicles, to funding on-board accessible and safety equipment.

Cllr Adam Tilbury, lead member for highways and transport, said: ‘It’s great that we can send grant funding directly into communities. We recognise that community transport is a lifeline for many. It not only enables people to access essential services such as shops and medical appointments, but it helps keep people connected and supports their independence.’

The Commbus Project provides a community minibus service in Blaby District, serving older people, those with mobility issues, or anyone who has difficulty in accessing public transport... Stephen Webb, director of The Commbus Project said: 'Everyone who works for Commbus is a volunteer, and our vehicles are wheelchair accessible. Commbus is supported by Leicestershire County Council, and the Fleet



Investment Grant recently received is very much appreciated and will help us keep our vehicles up to date and safe to use.' The money for improvements has come from the Local Authority Bus grant funding."

<https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/news/cash-unlocked-to-boost-community-transport>

West Midlands - Ring and Ride Changes. The former Ring and Ride door-to-door accessible service in the West Midlands has now been upgraded to form West Midlands Bus On Demand (WMBOD). The change is hoped to improve the ease of use of the service, with the inclusion of smaller vehicles in the fleet. WMBOD allows people to travel up to five miles and book up to 14 trips every week, either via the app or over the phone.

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/c98njd0zr8vo>

Hertfordshire - North Herts & Stevenage CT Appeal for Volunteer Drivers. North Herts & Stevenage Community Transport writes: "Supporting Our Community: Volunteer Drivers Needed. North Herts & Stevenage Community Transport is a local community car service dedicated to helping local people. Our volunteer drivers provide essential transport to health and medical appointments for older people, vulnerable residents, and those with mobility challenges.

Recently, we carried out a survey of our clients and identified a strong demand for transport to social clubs and community activities. Many people told us that getting out to these groups is just as important as attending medical appointments. Social connection plays a vital role in combating loneliness and isolation — something that lies at the heart of our charity's mission.

To help meet this growing need, we are now recruiting volunteers from across North Hertfordshire and Stevenage area to take on regular social bookings for our 'Transport for Connection' campaign. Volunteers are welcome to give as much or as little time as they wish and are paid a mileage rate for their petrol. If you're interested in becoming a volunteer driver and live in or near the North Herts & Stevenage area, please contact Jon Brown, Community Transport Manager at transport@nhcvs.org.uk."



East Sussex – Bexhill Community Bus Volunteers Honoured.

A celebration evening was held by the Bexhill Community Bus to honour its dedicated and hard working volunteers at the Albatross Club. Certificates were presented to volunteers with between 12 to 25 years of service by the Mayor Cllr Paul Henry Wilson. Lynn Langlands, former Mayor, said: "The star of the evening was Brian Lovell who has been with the bus since its inception in 1980. A total of 45 years of driving, and then



conducting, shows an amazing commitment to this very special charity, that provides a very important service for many people in Bexhill. Brian gave a short history of how the bus service began, and a few stories of the passengers that he carried. It was an interesting and enjoyable evening, which included a delicious buffet provided by the Albatross Club. The final advantage of the evening was that everyone went home on the bus."

<https://www.sussexexpress.co.uk/news/people/bexhill-community-bus-volunteers-honoured-5452396>

Cumbria – Fundraising Bid for Ullswater Hopper. The Ullswater Hopper is a community-led bus service commissioned by SITU “which is run by a group of residents from the Ullswater parishes in the Lake District. The group wants to see a sustainable and integrated transport system for the Ullswater valley which will benefit residents, local businesses and visitors in keeping with the World Heritage status of the Lake District.” Following the recent success of the Ullswater Hopper, SITU are hoping to raise funds for a second vehicle. “The £65,000 appeal will help fund the operational costs of introducing a second bus, improving capacity, reliability, and access across the Ullswater Valley.

By increasing capacity it should also help to reduce the cost of operating the service which this year involved a subsidy of nearly £6 per passenger. In 2026, SITU plans to run the Ullswater Hopper Bus service for 139 days, but to do so effectively a second bus is essential.” Local business owner and SITU trustee Daniel Holder said: “The Ullswater Hopper Bus is good for our community, good for local business and good for the environment...The prospect of living and working in one of England’s most beautiful valleys, where the roads become safe to ride cycles on again is very exciting.”

<https://situcumbria.org.uk/fundraising-launch/>



Northern Ireland – New Buses for Easilink CT. In December, Easilink Community Transport added two new Mercedes Sprinter buses to its fleet. CEO Claire Russell said: “The Community Transport Association has highlighted ageing bus fleets as a key challenge for Community Transport operators across the UK. Replacing older buses with newer vehicles is widely recognised as good practice, improving safety, reliability, accessibility, fuel efficiency, and ensuring services remain sustainable and fit for future community needs. As demand for accessible and affordable transport continues



to grow across the Omagh, Strabane and Foyle areas, our current fleet is operating at or near capacity. New vehicles allow Easilink to respond more effectively to local need while maintaining high standards of safety, reliability, and accessibility...Many of our passengers rely on us to attend medical appointments, participate in social activities, access education and training, and remain connected to their communities. Without reliable transport, these individuals face increased isolation, poorer health

outcomes, and reduced independence. Newer vehicles improve service reliability and reduce the downtime caused by maintenance issues associated with an ageing fleet."

<https://www.strabaneweekly.co.uk/news/2026/01/10/gallery/new-buses-joineasilink-community-transport-fleet-61256/>

Gloucestershire – Local MP Praises Lydney Dial-a-Ride. MP Matt Bishop has visited Lydney Dial-a-Ride and paid tribute to the CT operator for its services in the Forest of Dean. Matt Bishop said: "So many of you and your families will rely on Lydney Dial-a-Ride's essential transport service. This week, I was grateful to meet Louise and the team to talk about the incredible work they do across the Forest of Dean, from taking children to school to getting residents to hospital appointments and so much more.

We are incredibly lucky to have services like this that provide accessible, door-to-door transport, filling the gaps in our transport links and keeping our communities connected. Thank you to the whole team for taking the time to meet with me and for discussing how we can work together to ensure this vital service continues for generations to come."



<https://www.theforester.co.uk/news/mp-praises-lydney-dial-a-ride-for-vital-community-service-in-forest-of-dean-868510> and

https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=100087163714748&locale=en_GB

