



**Community
Transport at**



Community Transport Newsletter No.1 September 2020

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 of interest to the wider CT sector.

New Transport Minister

Robert Courts MP has now replaced **Kelly Tolhurst** at **DfT**. Courts has a specific interest in community transport and has expressed ideas for its future. **Transport Network** reports: "He founded the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Community Transport and has written before about his hopes that new on-demand Mobility as a Service will strengthen local community networks not diminish them. 'Key to sharing the benefits of modernisation to all forms of transport is ensuring that community transport services are fully integrated within the network. The growth of multi-modal journey planner initiatives such as Mobility as a Service, which give passengers greater knowledge and control over their journeys, illustrates that we need to ensure that community transport forms part of an integrated transport network. This would open community transport services up to a new set of passengers who might have never considered it, making the entire sector sustainable and broadening horizons.'"

<https://www.transport-network.co.uk/Tolhurst-replaced-by-Courts-at-DfT/16816>



NHS Social Prescribing & Voluntary Sector Report

Rolling Out Social Prescribing

(September 2020) has been published by **National Voices** for **NHS England** and explores "the perspectives and experiences of the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector in relation to the NHS rollout of social prescribing." Transport is not mentioned apart from the following conclusion: "For social prescribing to work best, it needs to involve all those who can influence health and wellbeing...However, in many places, key local partners - in housing, the economy, transport, welfare and more - have yet to be involved."

<https://www.nationalvoices.org.uk/publications/our-publications/rolling-out-social-prescribing>

Rolling Out Social Prescribing

Understanding the experience of the voluntary,
community and social enterprise sector



Chancellor Announces New Job Support Scheme & VAT Concessions

As the original furlough scheme comes to an end on 31 October, **Rishi Sunak** has introduced a new **Job Support Scheme**. **BBC News** reports: "The government and firms will top up workers' wages covering

up to two-thirds of their hours for the next six months, the chancellor has said. He set out his "winter economy plan" after the government introduced new measures to stop the spread of the coronavirus. There are fears firms will make mass job cuts when the furlough scheme ends. Nearly 3 million workers - or 12% of the UK's workforce - are on partial or full furlough leave, according to the **Office for National Statistics**. The chancellor said that employees will have to work for at least a third of their normal hours to qualify for the new scheme, which begins on 1 November. Businesses that have borrowed money through the government's loan scheme will also be given more time to repay the money. And a VAT cut for hospitality and tourism companies will also be extended until March. The cut from 20% to 5% VAT - which came into force on 15 July - had been due to expire on 12 January next year."

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/business-54280966>



CT Innovation in Scotland

Third Force News reports:

"A grant package of over £5 million will be shared among 257 community projects in Scotland. The cash, from the **National Lottery Community Fund**, is being awarded with a focus on projects which support isolated and vulnerable people through local transport initiatives. One such charity is Glasgow-based **Fares4Free**, which works with taxi firms to offer free journeys to veterans and their families. The organisation will receive £70,000, enough to fund its activities for another two to three years. Founder **David Gibson** said: 'Fares4Free is much more than just a journey for the people we work with - it's a

potential lifeline for them.' Fellow recipients **Tay Valley Timebank** will use their award of £59,430 to run a community transport project connecting people living across Highland Perthshire. Over the next three years they will work with over 2,500 people offering them a range of transport options using volunteer drivers, bike rental scheme and a lift share scheme. **Emma Birtles**, the charity's development officer, said: 'It's a massive boost for our **Better Transport for Community and Environment Project** which will create more transport options in our rural community. This means people who currently cannot travel to where they need to go can do so and people who travel regularly have more choices so they can make more sustainable journeys.' Announcing the funding, which totals £5,568,354, **National Lottery Community Fund Scotland** chair **Kate Still** said: 'These awards, made possible by National Lottery players, are making an amazing contribution to the nationwide response to combat the impact of Covid-19 on local communities across Scotland. I am delighted that some of this funding will provide a range of community transport options which will help thousands of people across the country retain their independence, be able to be an active part of their communities and help them access vital public services.'

Further information on **Fares4Free** here:

<https://www.glasgowsouthandeastwoodextra.co.uk/life-style/lottery-cash-gives-veterans-freedom-travel-2967488>

Tay Valley Timebank has produced a video about its food and prescription deliveries and launch of its transport service here:

<https://www.facebook.com/tayvalleytimebank/videos/vb.234629153891572/778978005963737/?type=2&th eater> &

<https://www.facebook.com/tayvalleytimebank/videos/vb.234629153891572/521076025457825/?type=2&th eater>)

<https://thirdforcenews.org.uk/tfn-news/community-transport-projects-share-5m-lottery-boost>



Relaxation of PMI intervals ended on 1 September

The **Traffic Commissioners** issued revised advice *Response to Covid 19 – Operator*

Licensing, Local Bus Service Registration and Vocational Driver Conduct: Advice for Operators – 1 September 2020.

Regarding Preventative Maintenance Inspections (PMI) it states that “the relaxations below will cease to have effect from 1 September 2020. From that point on, all vehicles and trailers must return to the inspection frequency stated on their licence. Where an extended frequency has been adopted, that can still be used until the first inspection occurs after 1 September. For example - if a vehicle with a PMI inspection period extended to 6 weeks is inspected on 10 August (ISO week 33), can still be inspected 6 weeks later, during the week commencing 21 September (ISO week 39). After that, the inspection interval must revert to that stated on the vehicle’s licence. If that interval were set at 4 weeks that would mean the next inspection would need to happen in the week commencing 19 October (ISO 43). If this is not possible, you must notify the Office of the Traffic Commissioner in advance with an explanation and a risk assessment of your alternative arrangements.”

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/advice-heavy-goods-and-public-service-vehicle-operators-covid-19>

The main revision to the above guidance has been the inclusion of advice for operators on the importance of drivers being properly qualified in certain circumstances for the carriage of schoolchildren. The new guidance issued by Govt. on 22 September has not resulted in any changes to MOT, **DVSA** vocational theory and practical testing.



Traffic Commissioners for Great Britain

Ealing CT & the 1,000 Lost COVID Shielders

Ealing CT (ECT) has posted a news item on its website recounting how it was able to assist in making contact with over 1,000 vulnerable people that **Ealing Council** had struggled to reach. **Adam Whalley** of

Ealing Council explained “We looked at the options but quite quickly came to the position that ECT were the best organisation for us to partner with. They had already been doing a really good job with the food deliveries around the borough and, as ever, they were keen to support us. We had a really great relationship with **Anna Whitty**, the CEO, and her team and they were pretty much immediately appointed as our delivery partner for the operation.’ The council agreed a short script that the ECT team would use, along with a checklist to establish residents’ needs and a letter to hand-deliver, asking residents to get in touch with the council for a more detailed chat on the phone... **Daniel Stringer**, who normally works as a Dial-a-Ride driver for ECT, was a member of one of the two-person teams going out on the regular welfare visits. He says he really valued the experience and the responsibility that he was entrusted with. ‘We were doing about 30 names on a list about three times a week, for several weeks, covering a wide range of properties, from big houses in north Ealing to tower blocks and much poorer areas in places like Southall’...”
<http://ectcharity.co.uk/news/story/gone-missing-how-ect-helped-track-and-support-1000-lost-covid-shielders>



Keep Mobile Accessible Transport Introduces COVID-Safe Bus

Keep Mobile has been providing transport for the elderly and disabled in Wokingham and Bracknell Forest since 1992. Its September newsletter includes details of its newly converted COVID-safe minibus.
<http://www.keep-mobile.org.uk/>

Breaking News

Scorpio one of our buses has now fitted with her full PPE for passengers and drivers.
 This is our first Covid-19 safe bus

The bus was taken to Courtside Conversions in Tiverton where it was fitted out with protective screens and seating rearranged to comply with social distancing. We achieved the standard of safety to keep the driver and passengers safe and prevent the spread of Covid-19. The cost was high but with help from

The National Lottery, Wokingham Lions, Tesco Stores and Berkshire Community Foundation.

This is our first super bus in service and more will follow as we receive funding.
 Lets keep everyone safe.



Zoono Fog Sanitiser

The effective lifespan of **Zoono** sanitiser has been called into question. The Zoono product, widely used by the UK transport sector including many CTs, had been marketed with a 30 days effectiveness assurance. This claim has not, however, met with UK Trading Standards approval. Zoono's website now states: "On 13th August, Zoono voluntarily withdrew all statements that our products can 'help to protect surfaces for up to 30 days' following a consultation with the **UK Trading Standards Authority**. While we have internal global laboratory test data and evidence to support this statement, we have been advised that we cannot communicate this until we have the authority from the regulator. The safety of the public remains our priority and we are confident in the capabilities of our products. We are now working with UK Trading Standards to supply full evidence of our efficacy and longevity." In any case, Zoono is currently out of stock...

<https://zoono.co.uk/pages/faqs>



CTA Launches Online Events

Community Transport Association has announced that it will be "holding a series of free online events looking at important topics for the community transport sector, and what life might look like for our

members over the next few months and into 2021. **Good to Go** are smaller events, looking at practical issues such as what to consider when running socially distanced services, how to organise trips safely, and how schools can feel secure in using their vehicles. In these sessions, participants will all be visible and able to talk to each other and our team during the discussions. Our **Big Questions, Big Ideas** events are going to look at some of the key questions facing the community transport sector, and our expert speakers will explore some answers to these questions. These are webinar style events where you can come along, bring your lunch, listen to interesting discussions as well as submit questions and talk to other community transport providers in Zoom's chat function. We'll be running a series of **Country Forums**, where our teams will be going through some of the specific issues that members are facing in the devolved nations. We're also going to be running a number of funding application workshops, where organisations can join in and get help in putting together their funding applications. The events are free to attend and you can book onto as many as you like. For some of the smaller events such as our Good to Go series, there may be a limit on attendance, so the places will be allocated on a first come first served basis and CTA members will be given priority."

<https://ctauk.org/online-events/>



cta Online Events
 community transport association

Join us for an exciting series of free online events taking place from October to December.

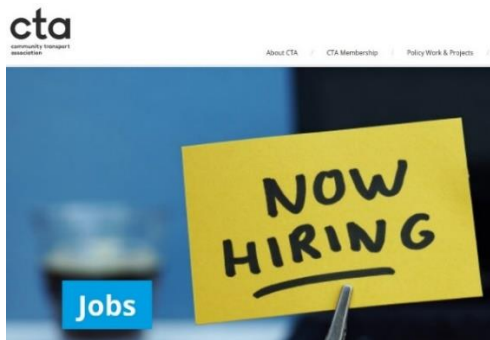
We'll be looking at **important practical issues** facing community transport, as well as **asking the big questions and discussing the big ideas** about what the future looks like for our sector.

Find our full programme of events at ctauk.org/online-events

CTA Recruitment

CTA has also announced two new vacancies: Chair of board of Trustees and Director of CTA Wales. **Susan Evans** has stepped down as chair, and **Christine Boston** has announced her intention to move on, saying: "It has been an honour to work with CTA staff & members in Wales but time to hand over to a new Director who can continue to push this agenda forward. This is an opportunity to work with some amazing people doing inspirational

things for people & communities across Wales". <https://twitter.com/CTAUK1>



EV Charging Infrastructure & Scottish CT Operators

EV website **Current** reports: "**Swarco eVolt** and **Schneider Electric** have been chosen as suppliers for **SP Energy Networks' (SPEN) Project Pace**. The former is to deliver the 40 electric vehicle (EV) chargers located in Lanarkshire, whilst Schneider Electric is to provide the electrical equipment needed to connect the chargers to the electricity network. The first charger was installed last month, with SPEN working with North and South Lanarkshire Councils on site selection and specifications for the remaining hubs, which are to be hosted by the local authorities in council-owned car parks. The community hub sites are being chosen to help fill gaps in the current provision for future EV users, SPEN said, as well as being locations where commercial chargers are unlikely to be installed in the short to medium term. The locations are to take the existing electricity infrastructure location and capacity into consideration, alongside land availability and the need for public access...It is hoped the project will help support community transport organisations across the area electrify, therefore helping to achieve the Scottish government's plans to phase-out the sale of new internal combustion engine vehicles by 2032.

<https://www.current-news.co.uk/news/swarco-evolt-to-deliver-40-ev-chargers-for-spens-project-pace>



Weardale CT & EV Car Club

The Northern Echo reports: "**Durham County Council** has secured funding from **OLEV (Office of Low Emission Vehicles)** to run a trial to encourage the take up of electric vehicles (EVs) in rural communities. The project will seek to solve the conundrum of how to encourage people to switch to EVs if they have no charge points near their home and no off-street parking to install their own CP...To help people to seriously consider switching to an EV, the project will provide information sessions on EV ownership and use; as well as an EV car club to be based at the **Weardale Hub** and operated by **Weardale Community Transport Ltd.**"

<https://www.thenorthernecho.co.uk/news/18694641.co-durham-powers-ahead-evs/>



Growing Demand for Red Cross Community Transport Support in Clare

CT services in County Clare, Ireland have been provided by the **Irish Red Cross**. **The Clare Champion** has highlighted their need for an additional vehicle: "COVID-19 may have resulted in lock-down and the cancellation of events throughout the county, however the Clare branch of the Irish Red Cross has continued its vital support of the community. Even with the pandemic, the branch's community transport service, which brings people from all over the county to medical appointments, has helped more people than it did in 2018. In order to support the organisation's work, the need for a second community support vehicle has been identified with the numbers currently being turned away greater than those being helped. **James Lafferty**, Treasurer and Community Support Officer explains, 'The amount of people we have been helping has been unreal, we've been a lot busier since COVID...We have seen a huge need for a second vehicle.' The Irish Red Cross in Clare plan to recruit community teams to cover all parts of the county who will be trained in handcare and first aid.

Donations to the work of the Irish Red Cross in Clare and the community support vehicle can be made at <https://www.qofundme.com/f/irish-red-cross-clare-area-community-services> alongside supporting the Tour of Clare counter top boxes and to 11 Tracklands Business Park, Tobartaoscaín, Ennis, County Clare." <https://clarechampion.ie/growing-demand-for-red-cross-community-support-in-clare/>



NEED Ltd & Alnwick District Food Bank

Food distribution in Northumberland has been featured in a 4m video by **Alnwick District Food Bank** whose partnership with local CT **NEED Ltd** has seen around 100 food parcels per week being distributed during lockdown.

<https://www.facebook.com/alnwickdistrictfoodbank/videos/765714210910909/UzpfSTEyNzI5MjAxNjYxMjI5MzE6MzIxNzQ1Nzk1NTAwMjQ2Ng/>



Ability Community Bus Service

Ability CIC, which provides services to users across Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire to Northampton-Towcester-Brackley-Dauntrey-Banbury has taken delivery of a new Mercedes minibus with its rear section adapted to accommodate shopping and baggage. Ability has tweeted: "Thanks to the @EVMUKLTD team, to produce a bus to meet our needs. For our passengers' mobility problems, the low entry is fantastic. The rear [is] modified to take trays of shopping and space for shopping trolleys, rollators and wheelchairs."



Bristol CT & MiDAS Training

Many CTs have had to grapple with the dilemma of how to offer **MiDAS** training during the pandemic. In many areas new drivers have been forthcoming but the ability to offer safe training approaches has been a challenge. Last month **Bristol CT** re-launched its MiDAS training programme: "With safety in mind, we've made some changes to how we deliver the course:

- Keeping the classroom safe – we're limiting the number of people on an individual course to four. This means we may have to run more courses to keep to demand. If advice changes due to changes in transmission rates we may need to revise this number up or down. If you've already made a booking, we will get in touch if it affects you.
- The practical assessment – to keep you and our trainer safe, the practical assessment will look a little different. Our trainer won't necessarily sit on the front seat, but they will always be positioned where they can safely observe you and the road ahead."

http://www.hctgroup.org/1723/Minibus+driver+trainin+is+back+at+BCT%21/the_hct_group/bristol_community_transport/bristol_community_transport_news



Loch Ness Hub Bid

Plans for a **Loch Ness Hub** which will include community transport are making progress. **Press & Journal** reports: "The launch of the share scheme at the

weekend, attended by local MSP **Kate Forbes**, raised more than £32,000 – 64% of the initial target of £50,000. It is proposed the Loch Ness Hub will be a community transport, tourism information and travel centre and the base for baggage transfers...A transport feasibility study by **Gurca** partner **Soirbheas** highlighted some key challenges locally, including commuting to and from Drumadrochit and taking children to school without using fossil fuel cars. Solutions included establishing a transport hub, improving public transport, expanding the charging network for electric vehicles, a care share scheme and introducing e-bike hire and a community transport scheme in the area."

<https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/highlands/2507089/overwhelming-response-to-share-offer-to-help-fund-loch-ness-hub/>



Worcester Wheels launches the Norton Connector

The **Worcester Observer** has reported on how a **Wychavon District Council Community Legacy Grant** of £30,000 has enabled a new bus service to be launched: "A NEW community minibus service which will make regular trips to Worcestershire Parkway Railway Station is set to launch next week...the **Norton Connector** will initially run every two hours between 8.30am and 4.30pm from Monday to Friday. Led by **Norton-juxta-Kempsey Parish Council** in partnership with **Worcester Wheels**, the service will run for a trial period of six to 12 months with the aim of sustaining the service in the long-term. The project, which fits with Wychavon's promise to support community-led rural transport schemes, aims to give residents reliable, regular and reasonably priced access to transport links and basic amenities."

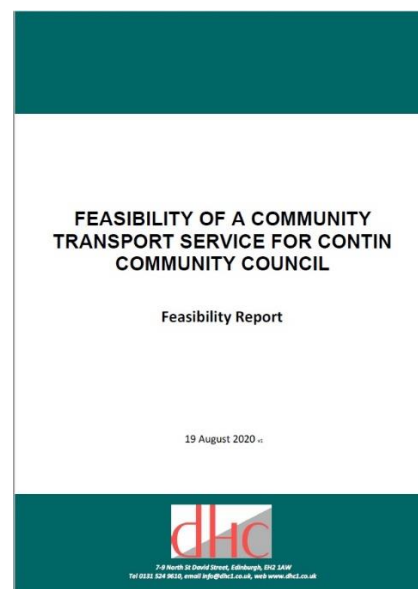
<https://worcesteroobserver.co.uk/news/minibus-service-ready-to-launch/>



Community Transport Study Update for Ross-shire Village

Ross-shire Journal has reported: "**Contin Community Council** is set to update residents on its community transport study at an online video conference" which includes the "latest update on the transport study, as well as its own community council action plan...The transport study has been carried out in response to cuts to bus services in and around Contin in recent months, with many residents worried that those reliant on public transport will struggle to make vital health appointments, or commute for work."

<https://www.ross-shirejournal.co.uk/news/video-meeting-to-update-community-on-transport-issues-212485/>



Lincoln Dial-a-Ride Travel Advisors

Lincoln Dial-a-Ride's part in the national volunteer scheme to provide safety advice for travellers has caused some negative reactions at **Lincoln Rail Station**. **Lincoln**

Live has reported that: "Volunteers have been verbally abused and apparently lied to while advising passengers to wear face coverings at Lincoln train station. Members of Lincoln Dial-a-Ride have been told to **** off and called a Nazi stormtrooper for merely reminding people they need to cover their face within the station and on the train during their six-week tour of duty. And several people said they had medical conditions exempting them when this did not appear to be the case. **Penny Hardman**, deputy manager of the accessible and affordable community transport service, said during six weeks of volunteer marshalling there that ends later this month, staff had been sworn and shouted at.

<https://www.lincolnshirelive.co.uk/news/local-news/nazi-covid-19-lincoln-coronavirus-4519671>

Social Distancing Updates

On 22 September the Govt. revised its guidance on social distancing. This includes the following advice that might affect CT passengers and their activities: "When seeing friends and family you do not live with you should:

- meet in groups of 6 or less
- follow social distancing rules when you meet up
- limit how many different people you see socially over a short period of time
- meet people outdoors where practical: meeting people outdoors is safer than meeting people indoors because fresh air provides better ventilation.

There are exceptions where groups can be larger than 6 people. These include:

- for work, or the provision of voluntary or charitable services
- registered childcare, education or training
- supervised activities provided for children, including wraparound care, youth groups and activities, and children's playgroups
- providing support to a vulnerable person
- providing emergency assistance, and to avoid injury or illness or to escape risk of harm
- for arrangements where children do not live in the same household as both their parents
- fulfilling a legal obligation, such as attending court or jury service
- elite sporting competition and training

- wedding and civil partnership ceremonies and receptions – up to 15 people
- funerals – up to 30 people. This does not include wakes, other than for religious ceremonial purposes
- exercise classes, organised outdoor sport or licensed outdoor physical activity and supervised sporting activity (indoors or outdoors) for under-18s
- indoor organised team sports for disabled people
- support groups of up to 15 participants – formally organised groups to provide mutual aid, therapy or any other form of support. This includes support to victims of crime, recovering addicts, new parents, people with long-term illnesses, those facing issues relating to their sexuality or gender, and those who have suffered bereavement.
- protests – if organised in compliance with COVID-19 Secure guidance. All individuals must be socially distanced

Where a group includes someone covered by such an exception (for example, someone who is working), they are not counted as part of the gatherings limit. This means, for example, a tradesperson can go into a household of six without breaching the limit, if they are there for work."

For many CT passengers, it may limit collective activities, although the legislation does not apply to passenger transport itself. **Confederation of Passenger Transport** is seeking clarification from the Govt. on this matter and anticipates that a statement from **DfT** will follow shortly.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing/coronavirus-covid-19-meeting-with-others-safely-social-distancing>



Great Yarmouth Project Benefits from £40,000 Donation

Centre 81 which provides support services and transport for disabled and

disadvantaged people in Great Yarmouth has received a welcome boost in the form of a £40,000 donation from local firm **Ovamill**. The **Great Yarmouth Mercury** said: "A charity has received the largest private donation in its history – a cheque for a "staggering" £40,000. Beccles-based building contractors Ovamill said the donation to Great Yarmouth's Centre 81 was in recognition of the charity's work for disabled and disadvantaged people during the pandemic and throughout its 39-year history... **Mark Everard**, company director, said successful companies should feel a moral duty to support charities like Centre 81 and other organisations that played roles in their communities. He said: 'A great many people would be lost without the work of Centre 81 and its amazing staff, and we are delighted to support them...Covid-19 has been a life-changing experience for people but for most of us it hasn't been life-threatening. This is not the case for many of the vulnerable people who use Centre 81's skills and activities centre and community transport service, lots of whom have suffered from terrible isolation and anxiety while they've been shielding. This is our chance to do something that we know will make a real difference. This is a time for successful companies to show their support for charities, sports clubs, youth groups and other local organisations, many of them run by volunteers. And I would urge them to do it, as a donation of any size is not just a source of financial help but an important show of support and appreciation.'"

<https://www.greatyarmouthmercury.co.uk/news/moral-duty-donation-from-ovamill-to-charity-1-6836678>



New CT Service in Cirencester
The Wilts & Gloucester Standard
 reports: "Cotswold Friends is putting out

a plea for volunteer drivers as they expand to Cirencester. The charity's community transport service has been very successfully running in the North Cotswolds for over 40 years. Where people are unable to drive themselves, or find public transport difficult to use, Cotswold Friends can help. Last year over 100 volunteer drivers for the charity undertook 13,500 journeys for medical, social and practical need helping over 1,000 members of the community. For the Cirencester service to work, they need 50 drivers, spread across the town and nearby villages, and they currently have just five. The service is Covid-19 secure and is greatly appreciated by all who use it, for many it is quite literally a lifeline.

Amanda Howard, CEO of Cotswold Friends said, 'There is so much to be gained from volunteering. Our drivers tell us that they feel more connected to their community and enjoy meeting new people, often making friends for life. Drivers are paid 50p for every mile driven which significantly helps with the running costs of their vehicle. Community Transport really is a vital service and we hope to help the residents of Cirencester as much as we help those people living in the North Cotswolds.' A driving role at Cotswold Friends provides complete volunteering flexibility. Drivers can let the bookings office know when they want to drive and what types of journey they are happy to do. Some drivers like local drives, others prefer longer journeys. If you think this might be for you, please do get in touch with volunteer manager George on 01608 697007 or email: volunteering@cotswoldfriends.org."

<https://www.wiltsglosstandard.co.uk/news/18730308.cotswold-friends-expand-community-transport-service-cirencester/>



Badenoch and Strathspey Community Transport has Food & Goods on Offer

According to the **Strathspey Herald**, people are not coming forward to benefit from food and goods donations collected by **Badenoch and Strathspey Community Transport**: "Aviemore has plenty of food, books and clothing to go around – but what it does not seem to have is a supply of people and families who need its help.

Maggie Lawson, development manager for the Badenoch and Strathspey Community Transport Company, has told the Strathy that there are now so few takers for the public's donations, that the **Food Share Project** is working just one day a week dispersing provisions from its base at St Andrews Church Hall on Grampian Road. She said: 'We know there is a need out there, but people aren't turning up and we don't know why.' Organiser **Beth Hay** recruits all the volunteers and organises the community project. She said: 'We used to run the food share on three days a week, Monday, Wednesday and Friday from 11am to 1pm, but the numbers have dropped so much now that we just run it on a Friday, 11am-1pm and 6pm-7pm. Even then, last week only a couple of people turned up. We're baffled, because we know there are people who do need our books, fresh vegetables, soups, school uniforms, cat food, toiletries, etc. The idea here is that no food goes to landfill, but so few people turn up that they're outnumbered by the volunteers. We have excellent school uniforms for youngsters – but no one has come to pick them up.' She explained that people do not have to book appointments, fill in any forms or be referred, they just need to turn up and take what they need.' We have boxes and crates full of useful things but they are just sitting here. Hopefully when they see the situation people will realise we are here to help.' Anyone needing more details can call the BSCTC on 01479 810004 or email info@ct4u.co.uk."

<https://www.strathspey-herald.co.uk/news/badenoch-and-strathspey-helpers-cant-even-give-it-away-212760/>



Barnsley Village Bus Service Launched

Yorkshire Live reports: "A new bus service launched as a result of 'people power' in Barnsley villages will operate for at least six months to test its popularity. The service is a triumph after almost three years of work for Thurgoland's public transport working group, set up by frustrated residents after a shake-up of public transport saw reduced services for the area. Not for profit company **South Pennine Community Transport** has now stepped in to run a service at its own risk on Saturdays, linking Thurgoland and Wortley with Penistone and the Fox Valley shopping centre at Stocksbridge. **Kevin Carr**, a director at South Pennine, said he believed that timescale was needed to establish levels of demand and the long-term viability of the scheme, though it is hoped it could be extended to include weekday services at some point in future. He said: 'I have been involved with the working group for almost two years and saw straight away they had done their homework and asked the community what they wanted. I believe this community has the scope for a viable bus service. We have tried all sorts for funding and will continue to try. We had some spare resources for Saturdays and believe this is viable so have put our money where our mouth is,' he said."

<https://www.examinerlive.co.uk/news/local-news/people-power-triumphs-after-three-18889835>



To conclude this newsletter, **TAS** Director **John Taylor** has contributed this 'Think Piece'. We would welcome any comments or feedback. John has been one of the pre-eminent practitioners of accessible, flexible and community-based transport in UK since 1977, with early experience encompassing the design, operational, legal and technical aspects of CT. His consultancy career stretches back to 1986; before joining **TAS** in 1994, John was a freelance consultant specialising in community, rural and accessible transport.



Community Transport is Social Transport by John Taylor

The way in which government and society in the UK is responding to the Covid-19 pandemic is altering a great many of our day to day practices. Much of our focus has been on the technical ways through which service providers can offer a modified, often

reduced, level of service whilst complying with the safety guidance, reinforced by regulations, from governments and central institutions. The ever-changing nature of the guidance and rules, combined with clear difficulties in teasing out meaning from the mass of data published, has created a strong sense of uncertainty and vulnerability which is clearly impacting on individual behaviour, on mental health, and our perception of personal risk.

All this creates a particular challenge to CT operators. When I started in the CT sector, the primary function of our minibus operations was to provide access to low-cost group transport for a full range of groups in the wider voluntary sector. As an urban CT operator based in Ancoats in Manchester in the '70s, our clear focus was combatting deprivation in all its forms by supporting the activities of self-help organisations acting collectively to meet local needs – for play, for sport, for education, for mutual therapy and to enable local community action by facilitating people coming together to recognise and exercise their collective strength. To me, this is the epitome of 'resilience' in the face of adversity – the ability of people in local communities to meet to share ideas, resources and most importantly their time, to mitigate the difficulties they are facing. The number of active formal and informal groups is the glue that underpins the real sense of 'community' – how the social scientists measure what they call 'community capacity'.

The vital nature of this 'group transport' has always been difficult for the authorities to recognise. The classification, enshrined in transport legislation, of what is deserving of public financial support has always focused on individual trips rather than the collective. For years CT was excluded from public transport funds because of the rules on 'separate fares' and even now services provided under s19 Permits only count as 'public passenger transport' where they are "provided wholly or mainly to meet the needs of members of the public who are elderly or disabled"¹. Even this concession took a hard battle to extract from the total exclusion as previously defined².

¹ S63(10)(a) Transport Act 1985

² S1(2)(a) Transport Act 1978 specifically excluded services provided under permits

Over the years, the growth in private car ownership has reduced the demand for minibus group transport but this has added to the relative disadvantage experienced by those without access to cars. In 2019 there were still an estimated 17 million households without a car, including two thirds of households in the lowest income decile as well as a majority of households occupying socially rented accommodation. The need for community provided group transport remains strong.



We are now faced with all the difficulties of providing this in a safe way. The government's advice to the populace to avoid using public transport has reinforced the message that collective transport is dangerous. So despite our efforts with screens, mask wearing, sanitisation and distancing protocols the demand for and our ability to deliver group transport is severely compromised.

Whilst this may create financial sustainability problems for some CT groups my main concern is what this means for society. Whilst we have become increasingly hyper-mobile we have also become increasingly individualised in the way we interact. Personalisation and choice have never been easier to obtain in western society – those of us with the required purchasing power can travel in our own bubbles, can carefully control whom we engage with, can filter the information we receive and we can obtain bespoke goods from all over the globe. Meanwhile,

³ <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/britons-neighbours-strangers-uk-community-a8373761.html>

depending upon which polling company you follow, three quarters of the population don't know their neighbours' names³⁴ and half feel no sense of neighbourly community.

This isn't a plea to return to the mythical days of "we were poor but we were happy". It is more a concern that the CT sector should continue to struggle against poverty and disadvantage by supporting community action at a time when it is only too easy for people to follow government guidance and further organise their life along individual lines which cut themselves off from their locality. We need community resilience and mutual support and not simply in the food parcels and shopping that many CTs have been providing but also through direct care and assistance and by ensuring that previously physical support networks are replicated on a virtual basis.

Of course, the pandemic will run its course and I expect the sector to revive its services to support real face to face encounters, rather than the shadows on the cave wall represented by Zoom and its ilk. Despite the government and many local authorities heading down the cul-de-sac of trying to replicate, through DRT, the personal choice inherent in car use, I hope that CTs will never forget the reasons why group transport is so important to maintaining our sense of community. As climate change bites further, it may be that our love of the car will decline and our current levels of mobility choice and use will be constrained⁵. We will all benefit from that capacity for local collective travel.

TAS

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

⁴ <https://www.studyfinds.org/sign-of-the-times-75-of-adults-arent-friends-with-any-of-their-neighbors/>

⁵ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/ideas/videos/viewpoint-its-time-to-end-our-love-affair-with-car/p08s48hr>