

CT NEWS

WINTER 2008

WILTSHIRE & SWINDON COMMUNITY TRANSPORT NEWS

DEVIZES TRAVEL INFORMATION STATION FEASIBILITY STUDY GIVEN GREEN LIGHT

The Association of Kennet Passengers is to investigate the potential of a fully integrated travel information centre in Devizes.

The feasibility study has been funded by the Wiltshire and Swindon Delivering Accessibility and Rural Transport (DART) Partnership.

Following research with the Devizes Visitor Centre, the passenger group decided to throw its weight behind a specialist facility for travel information in Devizes.

The vision is for a transport hub as near to Devizes Bus Island as possible, dubbed by the group, the "Devizes Travel Information Station".

The project is part of a wider travel information programme. Last summer Kennet Passengers launched its one stop travel information website www.kennetandbeyond.co.uk which is already proving to providing a useful resource for the travelling public.

"If we are really serious about overcoming the problems of traffic and congestion in Devizes, and we should be, we need to be really serious about growing the market for all the alternatives.

Sometimes the solution could be a bus or a combined bus rail ticket, sometimes the solution could be a shared taxi, and sometimes it could be hiring a bike or car, or finding out about community transport schemes.

The group is inviting all transport providers in Devizes and district, to explore this opportunity with them.

If you would like to get in touch, please do so as soon as possible by visiting

www.kennetandbeyond.co.uk/aboutus.shtml or by calling (01380) 860180.

If developed, a transport hub for Devizes would be the second to be established in Wiltshire following the creation of a hub in Malmesbury. Work is also being undertaken with a community group in Warminster to set up a hub there.



There are a lot of possibilities but if we don't know what the options are, then how can people know what would suit their journey?" said the Association's Chair, Kate Freeman. "Whatever the needs of the traveller our role is to help people find the best way."

The feasibility study will investigate premises, costs and sources of income. The project started at the beginning of January and will be completed by the end of March.

Kennet Passengers wish to encourage all individuals, local groups and businesses in Devizes and district who share their vision for better transport to help develop this unique project.

Inside this issue:

2 & 3

CT CONFERENCE

4

**CTA ROADSHOW
CT SMALL GRANTS**

WILTSHIRE & SWINDON COMMUNITY TRANSPORT CONFERENCE 2007

Last November, the Wiltshire and Swindon Community Transport Conference 2007 was held at Lackham Countryside Centre – a fantastic venue near Chippenham which is part of Wiltshire College.

Just over forty delegates attended along with exhibitors from Brecon Coachworks, GM Coachworks, Charity Bank, Seansoft, Help the Aged, and Unwins.

Presentations from Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE), Cotswolds Community Transport and Wigglybus Social Enterprise Partnership formed the main part of the morning session and seminars were run in the afternoon on minibus safety, disability awareness, CRB checks, strengthening committees, loan finance and establishing social enterprise services.

The focus of the Conference was about social enterprise and the enterprising theme was set for the day by delegates and exhibitors being charged a small amount for their attendance!

Disability
Awareness Training



Feedback about the day was very positive, and to give readers a flavour of what was discussed, below and overleaf is an extract from the opening presentation on the day given by Sylvia Brown, Chief Executive of ACRE:

“Social enterprises are businesses with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally reinvested, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profits for shareholders or owners.

Social enterprises operate by earning income through trading which can either be:

- Income direct from their customers and users
- Income from contracts with service providers (e.g. hospitals, schools, local authorities)

In general, social enterprises should be earning at least 50% of their overall income.

It is recognised that because of their social objectives, social enterprises can provide ‘added value’ by delivering services better and by being more user-focused.

So how does this relate to Community Transport in Wiltshire and Swindon?

For small community groups, the words in the definition of social enterprise are often off-putting – there isn’t a culture of thinking of community transport for instance as ‘a business’. But this is largely a matter of culture, not practice.

For many community groups, being enterprising simply means earning more of their income to sustain their activities, rather than being wholly dependent on grants.

Some typical rural social enterprises include village halls. National research shows that village halls generally earn most of

the income through lettings, so they are, in fact, legitimate and strong social enterprises, though they perhaps wouldn’t class themselves as such.

The term should not be a barrier to community groups being more enterprising and looking at their sources of income to grow and benefit the services they deliver.

Earned income could be both what customers are charged and what CT groups earn in terms of contracts with bodies that you can provide services for (e.g. hospitals, schools, local authorities)

So can rural community transport schemes make successful social enterprises that can generate significant growth? Yes – there are examples (e.g. Cotswolds Community Transport).

In general though, rural community transport schemes operate in quite restricted markets in terms of numbers of customers per mile travelled, so significant fare income can be a problem.

Continued.....

Sylvia Brown
Chief Executive
ACRE



SOCIAL ENTERPRISE - WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR CT IN WILTSHIRE AND SWINDON?

However, it doesn't matter how small scale they are, they make a huge contribution to social outcomes. Access to services is such a crucial factor in rural communities that many service providers (hospitals, schools, local authorities) are willing to contract with community transport schemes to make sure that they can deliver their services in rural areas.

It's also true that in rural areas, we should never treat any initiative in isolation from other needs. Rural communities are faced with increasing loss of viability in many services – retail, post offices, schools, health and social provision.

There are real opportunities to look at 'piggy-backing' services on community transport schemes – the original post bus concept might be making a comeback in a new guise, but we might also think of additional services in terms of prescription collections, collecting bulk purchase deliveries for communities etc. – think laterally, think rural.

There are other routes for expanding or widening services, many which will be made easier by the Local Transport Bill. Setting up a transport scheme under the right section of the Act (22) can open up possibilities for:

- carrying and charging fares from the general public,
- employing paid drivers,
- entering into profit-related fields such as working in conjunction with private retailers to provide shopping buses.

Transport schemes could also benefit from servicing new housing developments and new retail or employment sites as part of the green transport plans that are developer contributions that accompany planning permission under 'Section 106' agreements.

Once we think in terms of paying drivers, there are other options for tapping into the employment, training and skills market.

If all this sounds a little ambitious, then there are two crucial aspects to growth in sustainability:

1 grow at your own pace so you're able to sustain the growth in terms of custom and volunteer support

2 get the professional support you need to operate effectively

In recent years, ACRE worked with partners on an action research programme called Enterprise for Inclusion. What the research demonstrated is that the growth for most rural community services was fairly slow and steady, rather than rapid expansion of their enterprise activity.

However, it also showed that such organisations produced a huge range of social benefits which went wider than their formal purpose e.g. building skills and giving access to employment and training which was otherwise difficult to obtain.

So, the message is look at where you stand on the spectrum of enterprise activity now and where your sources of earned income are and how can these be grown.

Be inspired, think laterally, and above all, get the advice you need on the options that can put you on the road to providing a self-sustaining service that is so crucial to the health and well-being of rural communities."



Wheelchair accessible vehicle available to help people with mobility difficulties.

**For further information, contact:
Liam Tatton-Bennett on
(01380) 722475 ext. 243**

CTA ENGLISH ROADSHOWS

CT SMALL GRANTS FUND

The national Community Transport support organisation, the Community Transport Association (CTA) are holding a series of FREE one-day networking events delivering information, consultation and debate about Community Transport.

The events will provide the ideal opportunity for people to come together and examine a wide range of topical CT issues.

The Roadshows are being hosted with sponsorship from the Department of Transport (DfT) and DfT staff hope to be in attendance at each of them to talk about their priorities for community transport and to listen to your views and suggestions.

The events are being held through February, March and April in each of the English regions, and will feature informative and participative sessions on:

- ✦ The implications of the Local Transport Bill for community transport
- ✦ Influencing policy and legislation
- ✦ Department for Transport priorities for community transport
- ✦ Developing social enterprise in rural England
- ✦ Your chance to voice your opinions
- ✦ CTA representation and membership
- ✦ On-site advice surgery
- ✦ CTA consultation on members needs

The most local event is being held on Friday 7th March in Exeter (at the The Isca Centre, Summer Lane, Whipton, Exeter EX4 8NT)

Registration, refreshments, advice, consultation and networking starts from 09:30 hrs with presentation and consultations sessions running from 10:30 hrs. The events will conclude by 16:00 hrs.

To register for the event, please visit www.ctauk.org and see the 'CTA Event Listings' section.

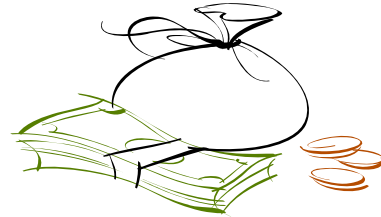


Community
Transport
Association

Alternatively please call (08707) 743586 or contact Liam on (01380) 722475 who can send you a booking form.

The small grants fund for Community Transport is looking for more community groups to submit applications to fund services which will make it easier for people without transport in Wiltshire and Swindon to get around.

Projects which improve the service provided by existing community transport schemes or which develop new initiatives to enable people to access local services and facilities are invited to apply to the fund.



Grants of up to £1,000 are available, and the maximum grant awarded by the fund will represent 75% of project costs.

Examples of projects include:

- Minibus equipment
- Community bus schemes that offer new/improved services
- Training of minibus drivers through accredited schemes eg Midas.
- Publicity to advertise community transport services
- Development of transport services which can become self-sustaining
- Information leaflets advertising local transport services
- Costs towards mobile services and/or facilities
- Schemes which bring services closer to people (e.g. internet)
- Research for local transport needs
- Contributory costs of recruiting volunteers/staff
- Voluntary driver schemes

For an application form please contact Alison Crawford at Community First on (01380) 722475 or e-mail acrawford@communityfirst.org.uk

Liam Tatton-Bennett: Community Transport Manager
Tel: 01380 722475
Information, contact details and news for operators and users of community transport in Wiltshire and Swindon visit www.wiltshirecommunitytransport.org.uk

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