

Report to	Scrutiny Committee for Economy, Transport and Environment
Date	6 June 2011
Report By	Director of Economy, Transport and Environment
Title of Report	Community Transport Project
Purpose of Report	To Update Scrutiny on the range of Community Transport Pilot Schemes that have been funded by ESCC.

RECOMMENDATION: For Scrutiny Committee to note the significant progress that has been made on a number of community transport projects; lessons learnt and the proposed funding for future Community Transport projects.

1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 In February 2009 the County Council approved £200,000 of financial support to be provided by way of a one-off allocation to 'kick start' new community transport (CT) schemes, or improve existing CT provision. In addition to these funds, a grant of £50,000 from the Department of Transport (DfT) has also been used to kick start CT schemes through the 'Down Your Way' project.

1.2 A total of £132,000 has been invested in 19 CT projects since April 2009, bringing the total number of CT projects across the county to over 50 schemes. This additional funding has resulted in some 26,000 new passenger journeys in those areas of the county that do not enjoy regular public transport services.

1.3 We have recently received a grant of £172,000 from the DfT for additional CT projects and we are currently preparing a plan to continue the work that has been completed to date.

2. Supporting Information

2.1 The CT project used both accessibility mapping to key services for communities and worked in conjunction with Action in rural Sussex (AirS) to identify those communities which had the potential to develop community led schemes.

2.2 An integral part of the project has been engagement with communities through parish councils and local councillors. This engagement has highlighted local concerns that conventional bus services still have a vital role and that CT should be a complementary solution, rather than a replacement for them. We commissioned AirS to specifically talk to communities identified about their particular community transport needs.

2.3 The remainder of the funding has been used in the promotion of CT through the creation of a CT directory, interactive website and a promotional DVD. We have also invested in the third sector as detailed in 4.3 to further develop the CT sector.

2.4 The DfT Down Your Way grant enabled over 11,000 individual passenger journeys and the ESCC funding provided an additional 15,500 individual passenger journeys to date. A detailed project report summarising all the CT projects is contained in Appendix 1.

3. Lessons Learned

3.1 There are a number of different forms of CT ranging from individual car sharing schemes serving a handful of local residents to more formal and structured services such as the Cuckmere Valley Community Bus.

3.2 CT is quite different from conventional public transport in that often each situation is unique and the needs of each particular community are very different. We have recognised that each CT scheme operates in a distinct and different manner. This ranges from a small voluntary car scheme requiring only a one grant to sustain it for many years to the larger operator with much larger overheads and therefore sustained funding.

3.2 The project has shown that often new CT schemes emerge naturally in response to identified need by communities themselves. This can be best assisted through community development work and this has shown to offer the support communities need to better organise themselves and ascertain their true needs. Partnership

working with neighbouring communities and between CT providers is vital, so as to share good practice and maximise the potential for sustainable schemes.

3.3 But the key to successful community transport is in identifying the most appropriate solution and through careful planning and prudent investment ensure its sustainability. A hefty upfront investment does not always work, what is important is to identify the needs of a community and match those with an appropriate solution. In other areas a heavily subsidised service may be the only solution.

3.4 Often CT schemes are only viable because the operators hold other contracts with the County Council for home to school or adult social care client transport arrangements, thereby allowing the vehicles and drivers to be used for CT provision at other times. The off-peak CT provision (such as to provide dial a ride) will often require on-going funding and therefore still not completely self-sustainable.

3.5 CT arrangements should not be viewed as low cost solutions. Apart from voluntary car schemes, the cost of provision per passenger carried can be very significant, being as much as £10 per passenger journey. This can compare unfavourably with the cost of conventional daytime bus services, where the subsidy per passenger is rarely greater than £1.50 per passenger journey. In reality, patronage of the service may be found to be significantly less than expected once the scheme is in place, despite the attention given by the local community in planning a scheme to meet identified needs.

3.6 Working with the voluntary sector, aided through the partnerships with community sectors, has increased the likelihood of the schemes being sustainable in the longer term. In particular, the value of the voluntary sector is reflected in their contribution to widening community participation in managing and operating CT schemes.

3.7 The development of the CT Kickstart schemes has been managed by a temporary full time officer. A programme of further development work over the next 12 months will be managed within the existing resources of the team, channelled through the projects commissioned with Voluntary Services Partnership, Rother Voluntary Action and Action in rural Sussex.

4. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

4.1 The project grants were made available to all community groups and operators to apply for funding sustainable CT schemes. The kick-start project was not as well subscribed by communities as may have been expected and this reflects that successful schemes need to be generated over time and importantly from the bottom up to ensure they are sustainable and ultimately self-funding. However, East Sussex is fortunate in having a range of CT operators and voluntary car schemes dedicated to serving their local community access needs.

4.2 It is important that any new CT local authority investments are planned in the knowledge that whilst CT is important, especially in a county with an ageing population with significant pockets of rural and urban deprivation, that CT is not necessarily appropriate for all access issues, and certainly one-size does not fit all. Emphasis must be put on the operating costs and sustainability of such schemes, along with the considerable time that needs to be invested in developing and implementing schemes that meet local needs successfully. Equally where the ingredients for a sustainable scheme are clearly missing, then a CT solution cannot be forced from the top down. Organic growth remains the most important aspect of CT development and success.

4.3 We have therefore learnt that successful schemes are born out of communities themselves, so we are implementing a 12-month development work across three key areas in order to maintain the CT momentum gained through the project and grow the sector on this basis. This approach will ensure that the momentum of support is maintained with our CT sector partners through a tightening economic environment. We have therefore commissioned the Voluntary Services Partnership to support and assist key CT operators and their trustees, as well as Action in Rural Sussex to undertake further voluntary car scheme development in the Lewes area. Finally we have commissioned Rother Voluntary Action (RVA) development trust to work with those communities in Rother and Bexhill who have identified CT in their local action plans. This will signpost schemes that can benefit from the new government monies for CT development, whilst learning from the lessons of our previous work in the sector.

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Appendix 1

Community Transport - Project Final Report



April 2011

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1. Introduction

The Economy, Transport & Environment Department's Community Transport Final Report is an account of the both the "Down your way rural bus challenge project" and the "Community Transport Kick Start Project". The report will also set out proposals for the recent £172k Department for Transport grant for community transport schemes. A total of £250,000 has been invested in East Sussex Community Transport since 2009 through both of these projects, with £151,000 directly to transport schemes. Our primary goal has been to strengthen and support the East Sussex Community Transport sector to grow sustainably through the development of new community transport schemes and where needed, enhance existing successful schemes. This project has significantly improved East Sussex residents' ability to access community transport services, acquire information and advice through our website and through organisations within the community and voluntary sector. The project has improved both community transport awareness and provision resulting in better and enhanced access to services.

This report highlights the key stages of the Community Transport project and examines each stage of the journey undertaken. The report highlights how the project has afforded our further understanding of the community transport sector and whilst we acknowledge the substantial benefit that the CT sector brings to communities, the report also recognises the diversity of the East Sussex CT sector and addresses the many challenges that the sector confronts in relation to service sustainability and pricing through concessionary fare usage on dial a ride services. The report details the project legacy and examines the development work initiative which is designed to support the CT sector over the next 12 months and ensure that the sector gets the support it needs to modernise through a tightening economic environment.

Finally, the report concludes that whilst CT is integral to the transport landscape and provides vital accessibility functions, the development of CT must remain bottom up in its design and clearly evidenced at the local level. This is essential to any future scheme sustainability and CT success relies predominantly on this foundation.

2. ESCC Down Your Way Project

The Down Your Way (DYW) project originated through funding from the Department for Transport (DfT) The DYW Project focussed on four key areas.

Firstly, it invested in much needed community transport local authority advice and information provision. This included the development of a new interactive website and content management system, which allowed the user to geographically identify local schemes across the county.

Secondly, a community transport directory was developed which is available in hardcopy format and accessible through the ESCC website. The CT directory is centrally monitored to ensure updates are recorded regularly and this ensures that any new scheme arriving on the CT landscape can be registered and promoted accordingly. Tied into the CT directory development was a CT publicity drive which ensured 5000 hardcopy directories were disseminated throughout East Sussex.

Thirdly, the project commissioned Action in rural Sussex (AirS) to undertake a specific CT provision research project. The report provided by AirS raised an array of issues facing both the ESCC and the CT sector in East Sussex. The report has assisted us in strategic planning and in implementing elements of the CT project. Branding was an area highlight by the report and we have developed a CT scheme marketing toolkit. The marketing toolkit is designed to assist operators and communities grow their schemes locally with consistent branding.

The fourth and major measure of the project centred on further developing existing CT provision and developing new community transport services and enhancing existing schemes. In addition, ESCC assisted CT some operators with infrastructure grants. The infrastructure grants assisted operators address issues such as, vehicle branding, vehicle routing software and tracking and messaging systems allied to existing or new ICT equipment.

2.1 ESSC Down Your Way Investment – New Schemes

Service	ESSC Grant	Operator	Service	
CTLA – The 3 Towns Dial a Ride	£10,200.	(CTLA) Community Transport for the Lewes Area Ltd	Demand Responsive Dial a Ride Five day per week service operating between 09:30 and 14:30 with a shopping trip on Saturdays covering Telescombe, Peacehaven & Newhaven Area	13 passengers per day.
CTLA – The Eastbourne Dial a Ride	£22,500.	(CTLA) Community Transport for the Lewes Area Ltd	Three days per week operating between 09:30 and 14:30 covering all of Eastbourne Borough	14.5 Passengers per day
Wealdlink Demand Responsive Shopping Service	£4,000	(NWCTP) North Wealden Community Transport Partnership	Demand Responsive Service covering Buxted, Rotherfield, Hadlow Down Uckfield Area	12 passengers per day
<u>Rye Community Transport Evening and Weekend Services</u>	£3,000.	Rye and District Community Transport Ltd	Community Bus Service undertaking evening services covering Rye and surrounding rural parishes.	10 trips per month with 10 passengers per trip
Uckfield Age Concern Voluntary Car Scheme	£500.	Uckfield Age Concern	Voluntary Car Scheme service for shopping and medical appointments covering Uckfield, Isfield, Fletching, Maresfield, Framfield and Blackboys	3-5 journeys per week and has undertaken more than 130 journeys during the period April 2010 -April 2011
<u>Heathfield Youth Express</u>	£10,000	The Heathfield Transport Partnership Trust Ltd	Term Time Mini bus service for young people allowing evening access to the Heathfield Youth Centre. Weekly swimming trips and regular Duke of Edinburgh trips	481 children have been passengers on the express service through April 2010 to April 2011

<u>Heathfield Community Flexible Transport Project</u>	£5,000.	The Heathfield Transport Partnership Trust Ltd	Mini Bus excursion service for older people and community groups covering Heathfield and Waldron	Between May 2010 and April 2011, 175 passengers have been carried
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2.2 ESCC Down Your Way Investment - Infrastructure

No	Grant	Operator	Provision
1	£5,000.	ESDA (East Sussex Disability Association)	Website Development
2	£8.875.	CTLA (Community Transport for the Lewes Area)	Contribution to Satellite Tracking & Messaging System

2.3 ESCC Down Your Way Review

The DYW project provided over 25 communities significantly improved capacity to access services. The kick starting of new services subsequently made positive contributions to the local economies to each of the locations benefiting from the schemes. All new schemes benefited from investment in publicity materials and service specific branding to ensure that operators were able to promote services effectively. The new interactive website and new community transport directory has allowed all residents with online capability to access community transport information quickly and clearly. Both the online and hardcopy versions of the CT directory brought together 40-community transport schemes in one central location and these have been widely distributed throughout the county.

The CT directory includes existing schemes and will be updated to include new kick-started schemes and any new schemes that emerge from communities without any preliminary financial or advisory support. Two organisations benefited from infrastructure support and this has allowed both organisations to better monitor and promote their services.

Overall a 12-month period of provision, the ESCC DYW grants contributed to over 11.000 (eleven thousand) individual passenger journeys. These journey's were for both essential shopping and health services whilst also including many journeys for social and well-being purposes, such as the "trips service offered by Rye CT and the important youth CT service which ferries young people to both the youth club in Heathfield and to various attractions and events in surrounding market and major towns.

3. Community Transport Kick Start Project

The Cabinet approved £200,000 of financial support to be provided by way of one-off grant funding to 'kick start' new community transport schemes, or improve existing community transport provision. The criteria for this funding covered three key areas. Firstly, each application for funding should include a proven / identified need. Secondly, each scheme or extension should have some impact on reducing social exclusion, and thirdly, each scheme should have given thought to the ongoing sustainability of the scheme.

We encouraged a variety of community transport schemes; they could be small, simple and local such as a small voluntary car scheme transporting people for specific purposes. Equally, they could be much larger operations with 10 or more vehicles operating Dial-a-ride and other demand responsive schemes, and where often a larger number of people will be registered scheme members, e.g. elderly people across a wider rural area needing to access towns for food shopping. The kick-start project set benchmark indicators to measure the potential success of the project. These indicators included receiving applications from at least 20 communities or a combination of communities and current community transport providers. As well as the development of a framework for further community transport scheme development in the future and a toolkit to enable communities to bid for CT 'start up' funding.

3.1 Project Planning and Steering

The CT kick-start project used two central indicators to focus the project to the areas where deemed to be most needed. This was done through accessibility mapping to key services for communities, this allowed clear evidence in determining needs, based on access to key services through ESCC accessibility auditing. In addition

to identifying specific areas we also worked in conjunction with AirS (Action in rural Sussex) and their (RASP) Rural Access to Service Programme, which had identified nine East Sussex rural locations that had evidenced a lack of access to key services. An integral part of the planning process for the project has been talking to partners directly. ESCC officers addressed all identified parishes and their parish councils on the CT kick-start project, and encouraged parish councillors to view the project where possible and feasible in a clustering arrangement with other parishes. We commissioned AirS to specifically talk to communities identified through their rural access to services programme about their particular community transport needs.

A multi agency CT Kick Start steering group was instigated to review and monitor the pilot schemes. This comprised ESCC officers' from Economy, Transport and Environment, Adult Social Care, Children's Services and by representatives from the Lewes and Wealden Primary Care Trust and (AirS) Action in Rural Sussex. This ensured that young people, adult social care service users and health services were represented and steering group members were able to make contributions and offer advice on the development of the project. The CT steering group met quarterly and played an important role in assessing new CT kick Start applications.

3.2 Project Partnership Working & Community Consultation

In order to understand and evidence community need at the local level, the CT project commissioned Action in rural Sussex to consult with communities about their local communities. AirS undertook this work through their SEEDA funded RASP (rural access to services programme) and in other East Sussex Parishes identified through ESCC accessibility mapping. AirS consulted with communities through a variety of different means. These included holding public meetings, talking directly to community groups and through the use of community transport specific surveys. This allowed the group to further identify community transport need.

In Forest Row a new voluntary car scheme was launched and this came as result of the partnership working between AirS and ESCC. The Forest Row Parish Council administers the car scheme in partnership with community volunteers and it provides vital access to medical services for many people in the area unable to access existing public transport.

In Ewhurst and Staplecross parish, BACT (Battle Area Community Transport) has been working in partnership with the Ewhurst Parish Council to commence flexible shopping and excursion transport services to Rye and Tenderten. This scheme was kick started by the ESCC, whilst also being financially supported by the Ewhurst parish council. In addition, a director of BACT also joined the AirS rural access to services steering group in Westfield and has been actively working with the parish to improve community transport provision.

In Camber, Rye and District community Transport have been able to kick start evening services, which have been extremely innovative and successful, and these services have been extended to include surrounding rural areas including Iden.

In Chailey, both AirS and the ESCC staff have attended a local transport action group, which invited representatives from Newick and Chailey parish councils to further address transport needs. Through these discussions ESCC has been able to assist parents get to and from the local sure start children's centre by instigating a bus token system in partnership with the commercial bus company Countryliner. In addition, ESCC have liaised with CTLA (Community Transport for the Lewes Area) and they are prepared to extend their Lewes dial service to the Chailey parish should the parish council want to work in partnership with them on promoting the service.

3.3 Project Grant Funded Schemes

Service	ESCC Grant	Operator	Provision	Patronage
<u>Plumpton voluntary car scheme</u>	£725	Plumpton Village Community - Volunteer Action Group	Car trips to medical, dental and shopping appointments.	162 passenger journey's since September 2009
<u>Landport community bus service</u>	£500	The Landport Travel Group & CTLA (Community Transport)	Excursion service –d door to Door - taking up to 16 passengers (wheelchair accessible)	Average 144 passengers over a 12 month period

		Lewes Area)		
<u>East Dean community bus service</u>	£1,520	Cuckmere Community Bus Ltd	East Dean and Friston to Eastbourne weekly service.	Since October 2010, 10 passengers per week
<u>Uckfield Rover Community Bus Service</u>	£17,500	(CTLA) Community Transport for the Lewes Area	Uckfield demand responsive dial a ride service (door to door)	12 passengers per week
<u>Battle Area to Rye and Tenderten – Community Bus Service</u>	£2,000	(BACT) Battle Area Community Transport	Demand responsive bi monthly flexible service from the Battle area to Rye and Tenderten.	Commenced April 2011
<u>Ticehurst – Rye community bus service</u>	£2,000	(BACT) Battle Area Community Transport	Demand responsive bi monthly flexible service from Ticehurst to Rye	Average 10 passengers per journey
<u>Wealdlink community bus service</u>	£17,500	(NWCTP) North Wealden Community Transport Partnership	Rural community group flexible excursion and trip service	Commenced March 2011- Average 12 Passengers per journey
<u>Forest Row voluntary car scheme</u>	£1,210	Forest Row Parish Council	Health appointment specific voluntary car scheme	Commenced April 2011
<u>Hollington Rover community bus service</u>	£10,000	Hasting Area Community Transport	Service to Hollington Tesco, Sedlescombe Road Sainsbury's Conquest Hospital, Pinehill Day Centre and the Isabel Blackman Centre.	Average 5 passengers per day
<u>Rye community bus service</u>	£10,000	Rye Area and District Community Transport	Extension of local and surrounding are demand responsive door to door service	Average 10 passengers per day

3.4 ESCC Community Transport Kick Start Scheme Review

The ESCC Kick-start project benefited many people substantially improved peoples ability to access services that otherwise couldn't through being unable to access public transport. As schemes started at different times and some have only recently just commenced. The 15,500 (fifteen thousand and five hundred) individual passenger journeys accrued to date from the ESCC CT kick-start investment and this will be added to throughout the next 12 months. Furthermore, this figure will be further enhanced by the ongoing kick started schemes that continue to provide ongoing CT services to regular and new users.

Below is a table that shows the schemes that started as a result of the project, bring community transport to communities.

Ashburnham and Penhurst	Battle Area Community Transport
Beckley	Rye and District Dial a Ride
Brede	Rye and District Dial a Ride
Burwash	Battle Area Community Transport
Buxted	Wealdlink
Camber	Rye and District Dial a Ride

Crowhurst	Hastings Dial a Ride
East Chilington	Plumpton Voluntary Driving Scheme
East Dean and Friston	Cuckmere Community Bus
East Guldeford	Rye and District Dial a Ride
Etchingham	Battle Area Community Transport
Fairlight	Hastings Dial a Ride
Fletching	Uckfield Village Rider
Forest Row	Wealdlink / Voluntary car scheme
Guestling	Hastings Dial a Ride
Hadlow Down	Wealdlink
Heathfield and Waldron	Youth Express and Age concern
Hurst Green	Battle Area Community Transport
Icklesham/Winchelsea	Rye and District Dial a Ride
Iden	Rye and District Dial a Ride
Isfield	Uckfield Village Rider
Little Horsted	Uckfield Village Rider
Maresfield	Wealdlink
Mountfield	Battle Area Community Transport
Newhaven T. C.	3 Towns
Northiam	Rye and District Dial a Ride
Peacehaven T. C.	Peacehaven Rover/3 Towns
Peasmarsh	Rye and District Dial a Ride
Playden	Rye and District Dial a Ride
Plumpton	Plumpton Voluntary Driving Scheme
Rye Foreign	Rye and District Dial a Ride
Salehurst and Robertsbridge	Battle Area Community Transport
South Heighton	3 Towns
Tarring Neville	3 Towns
Telscombe T. C.	Peacehaven Rover/3 Towns
Ticehurst	Battle Area Community Transport
Uckfield T. C.	Wealdlink & Uckfield Rover (CTLA) / Car Scheme
Udimore	Rye and District Dial a Ride
Westfield	Hastings Dial a Ride
Eastbourne Borough	Eastbourne Rover
Hastings Borough	Hollington Rover / Hastings Dial a Ride

Only the Hollington Rover scheme is not in operation and this demise is entwined with the collapse of Hastings Area Community Transport's entire operation that now sees it in liquidation. In regards to the Uckfield Rover dial a rides and Eastbourne dial a ride services, these both will be modified in the 2011/12 financial year due to sustainability concerns based on their previous formats.

In regards to overall sustainability, it appears the kick started voluntary car schemes offer excellent value for money for service users and any body seeking to fund and develop them. They are relatively inexpensive to kick-start and the success of these schemes is greatly reliant on an active organized and committed community group, willing to implement and deliver upon the schemes in order for them to remain vibrant and beneficial. In both Plumpton and the Uckfield voluntary car schemes there are contrasting predicaments. One is going from strength to strength and another entering a phase of uncertainty due to community members attached to the scheme moving on. The kick started smaller funded flexible trip services such as those operated by BACT appear to be targeted in such a manner that allows maximum take up and ensures that they are priced accordingly, in order to achieve financial sustainability and ensure service longevity.

The most immediate issue to arise out of the kick-start schemes is the question of "value for money" of demand responsive dial a ride services traditionally funded through local authorities. The many benefits that they bring service users are unquestionably important and dial a ride services have become integral to many service users lives. The enormous positive impact they have on people's ability to access services cannot be underestimated and in addition, too many users they are also act as social outings in themselves and significantly reduce social exclusion.

However there appears to be inconsistency and confusion over the pricing elements of East Sussex dial ride services. This is the feedback we have received from both operators and service users. e.g., on some dial a ride services, concessionary fares are accepted and on some they are not. This inconsistency does not allow a true picture to emerge of the sustainability of demand responsive dial a ride services across the county. It appears

that in nearly all cases they rely and will continue to rely upon some form of subsidization. They currently do not appear to have the necessary patronage or pricing levels to pay for themselves and break even.

However the provider of several dial a ride services. CTLA note *“In our experience it takes at least 3 years, if starting from scratch, to build up new a Dial a Ride service to a level of usage that would be sustainable (with a reasonable fare level).”*

The issue of fare levels and pricing is one that if settled upon would allow an accurate picture to emerge of demand responsive dial a ride services true take up by those unable to access public transport. It will also allow more accurateness to emerge of overall sustainability and true value for money for both service users and any funding contributors. Whilst building sustainability across the dial a ride services is an ideal goal for both local authorities and operators, pricing appears to need revising as it may well reduce the cost of these services to local authorities in the medium term, and ensure service sustainability for those who have come to value them so much in their daily lives.

The Rye CT manager noted on the grant received from ESCC, *“Taken overall I am delighted with the way that the ESCC grant has enabled us to develop our services. I believe that the success is due to us identifying existing real demand and being able to do something about it, thus a fairly modest input has achieved a substantial result”.*

The ESCC kick-start schemes also supported large operators like CTLA further their valued services and also afforded new operators like North Wealden Community Transport Partnership an opportunity to become more prominent and relevant to their communities. The project has supported NWCTP to further develop and become relevant in a predominantly rural part of the county. It is through this support that an emerging CT operator is operational and capable of offering and delivering services independently to the benefit of their local communities.

4. ESCC Kick Start Project Legacy and Development Initiatives

During the course of the project it became clear that East Sussex has a community transport landscape which sees every main CT operator operating in a distinct and different manner. Some operate with only paid drivers and some with only volunteer drivers. Others have a mixture of paid and unpaid drivers. The kick-start scheme involving main key CT operators has allowed the ESCC to learn more of each operator and further understand their approaches to business and sustainability planning. The project has also seen operators in liaison with the us; express where they thought their operations were going forward positively and where they thought they needed further support and development. Furthermore, the project allowed us to further understand what the CT operator’s expected of us in relation to supporting community transport services.

We decided after consulting with CT operators and the voluntary sector, to implement a 12-month development work across three key areas in order to maintain the CT momentum gained through the kick-start project, and also to ensure support for the CT sector through a tightening economic environment.

Firstly, we commissioned the East Sussex Council of Voluntary Services Partnership to support and assist key Community Transport operators and their trustee’s. The CVS partnership is made up of Hastings Voluntary Action, 3 Voluntary Action and Rother Voluntary Action.

The partnerships are to host specific workshops to be attended by key CT operators and their trustees. The workshops are designed to further assist the CT sector develop business positively in difficult economic times. The workshops will cover business planning and collaborative working, funding information –where and how, market development, marketing, pricing and promotion. The CVS partnership will also visit CT operator’s onsite and assess how possible assistance may be implemented where relevant.

The partnership will also host a specific CT and Health Forum – “Access to Medical Services and Appointments”. This event will invite representatives from the CT sector, AirS, ESCC Transport, Economy and Environment, Adult Social Care and representatives from the East Sussex Hospitals Trust and South coast Ambulance service. In addition the CVS Partnership will work in partnership with the ESCC volunteering centre to further assist operators in the recruitment and brokerage of volunteers to their organisations where appropriate, and market CT services to its member organisations.

The second part of the development pilot is to ensure that momentum sustained through the CT Kick-start project in relation voluntary car scheme development is continued in those rural areas of need. (AirS) Action in rural Sussex has been commissioned to undertake further voluntary car scheme development in the Lewes i.e. and Lower Wealden districts. AirS are also to set up a local voluntary car forum based on the successful Mid Weald

Voluntary Car forum, in order for existing and new voluntary car schemes to share best practice and learn about possible funding opportunities. In addition AirS will talk to further rural communities and assist them find local solutions to local transport needs.

Thirdly, we have commissioned (RVA) Rother voluntary action development trust to work with those communities in the Rother district and Bexhill who have identified community transport in their local action plans. RVA completed phases 2 of the local action planning process and this work allows them to carry on the elements of this work in relation to community transport. RVA will also work closely with operators to link their services to interested communities and groups, whilst supporting all operators in Rother, Hastings and Bexhill. RVA have also been commissioned to undertake a specific piece of research on young people and community transport, and this research will suggest possible transport solutions to the many transport issues experience by young people in the district. We are committed to supporting the voluntary sector to work more closely with the CT sector through this pilot. ESCC will assess the impact of this pilot during the course the next 12 months and produce a short analysis the impact.

5. The Community Transport Future for East Sussex

Both the Down your way and ESCC kick start projects have provided us with considerable learning and a clearer picture of both the nature and composition of the CT sector, which has highlighted the strengths and weaknesses of the main operators and their subsequent CT schemes. Three specific points appear the most relevant in the context of utilising the knowledge gained from the grant funding project to better.

Firstly, the diversity of community transport models of operation make assessing the true cost of community transport a difficult task and one which cannot be applied to each operator. Some operators rely on other core local authority business (i.e. home to school and adult social care contracts) in order to be able to run their dial a ride services. These core services effectively cross subsidise dial a ride services and cover economic shortfalls in the operation of such services.

However in an open tendering environment, CT operators can lose as well as win these underpinning contracts and this technically puts other services at risk. It became clear to us that the CT sector as a whole could benefit through further support in business and sustainability planning. It is important that CT operators and the whole CT sector seek ways and means of diversifying their income streams as much as possible. This includes looking at development work within heir organisations to progress fundraising and undertaking other business apart from local authority business.

Secondly, the CT sector could improve overall sustainability by developing further supporting relationships with district, borough, and town and particularly with clusters of local parish councils. There are already many examples of key main operators developing supporting relationships with Town councils, which contribute and support specific services. However, where there are developed clustered approaches to community transport at the parish level, there is a further increase in the potential for local precepts to contribute toward sustaining a local CT operator and their local services. CT operators need to be working with communities to assist them find local solution into local needs. Furthermore the future of sustainability of effective CT provision also rests with all council levels. County, District, Borough and Parish councils should all acknowledge that access to services for people who cannot easily access public transport relies on each ability to work in partnership, whereby each contributes in correlation to it means to do so. Whilst there are many examples of council support for CT, there is much more to be achieved and many types of council need to address this for the very first time. Without a partnership approach to community transport its costs can on the whole be absorbed more easily and its sustainability further improved to the benefit of service users and all concerned.

Thirdly, the overwhelming reason for people utilising community transport revolves around key areas or purposes. Medical appointments are the number one reason amongst voluntary car schemes and these are also important to many users of dial a ride services. How this important factor is addressed by health services in the context of mooted changes to health services is yet to be seen, but both the strategy for community transport in East Sussex and the development work initiatives through the Council of voluntary Services partnership component, seek to address this issue in the very near future. It is clear that health providers have a role to play in community transport; as it is a major beneficiary, and in working in partnership with health providers the challenge remains to ascertain what that role might be.

This is an important aspect to the development of community transport and one that we are supporting further through the voluntary sector development work pilot. We also acknowledge that community transport operations are dependent on astute business planning decisions and the collapse of the key operator Hasting Area Community Transport in late 2010, is evidence of what can happen if business and operations planning is not

undertaken satisfactorily. There remains fragility in the CT sector, which can manifest itself quickly, and operators have a responsibility to communicate their status transparently. By providing business planning and advice through the CVS partnership we are ensuring that this issue remains at the forefront of all operators' agendas.

6. Final Report Conclusion

Whilst the "down your way" funding was open to key operators, the kick-start grant-funding project was open to all community groups, operators and councils to apply and seek funding for sustainable community transport schemes. The kick-start project was not as well received by communities as first expected and this reflects that successful schemes need to be generated over time and importantly from the bottom up. Often these schemes do not require the lure of potential funding to emerge. They appear to emerge naturally in response to identified need by communities themselves. This can be best assisted through community development work and this has shown to offer the support communities need to better organise themselves and ascertain their true needs. The project and report has found that CT progression occurs locally and often through local action plans or through excellent partnership working between local, town or district councils and CT operators seeking to assist those who are socially excluded and unable to access public transport. East Sussex is fortunate in having main CT operators and numerous voluntary car schemes who really are dedicated and clearly community minded.

The grant funding kick-start project experience also encourages decision makers and planners who may see CT as ideally linking all those areas and people without public transport to wider public transport services and to vital services. This ideal should be measured in line with the true cost of ferrying relatively small numbers of people across significant distances and be fully appreciated and configured in the planning of any new services.

There is no doubt the main CT operators will continue to offer bespoke demand responsive services for as long as authority funding is available to do so, and there is no doubting the benefit this delivers to recipients. However, in tightening economic environment new approaches to both how authorities contribute funds to these types of services and new approaches to how these services are planned by CT operators would be in everyone's interests to ensure better value for money and the more efficient use of public money. The concessionary fare issue needs to find consistency across all dial a ride services and this will not only offer service users a clear direction but also assist operators in the pricing and business planning which would lead to further sustainability for the CT sector.

Overall it is vitally important that any new CT local authority investments are planned in the knowledge that whilst CT is important, especially in a county with an ageing population with significant pockets of rural and urban deprivation, that CT is not necessarily the answer to all access issues.

However, if the circumstances are right and there is a clear need and a willing community or partnership approach to planning a sustainable funding CT solution, then this is well worth pursuing and investing in. Emphasis must be put on the sustainability of such schemes and considerable time should be invested in robustly stress testing any future schemes. Equally where the ingredients for a sustainable scheme are clearly missing, then CT is not the right answer and should not be forced from the top down. Organic growth remains the most important aspect of CT development and success.

7. ESCC Down Your Way Individual Scheme Summary

CTLA (Community Transport Lewes Area) – The 3 Towns Dial a Ride

ESCC granted CTLA funds to continue and further assist in the development of this service that was established in 2009 with funding from the 3 Towns. i.e. Peacehaven, Telscombe and Newhaven town councils. Service statistics show a steady improvement in passenger numbers and there are currently 264-registered service users. During the 6-month period, September 2009 to March 2010 an average of 11 people per day utilised the service on a return journey basis. For the year 2010/11 this average had increased to 13 passengers per day. Passenger satisfaction levels are high with many positive comments received.

One of the main reasons for introducing the 3 Towns service was to provide additional capacity over and above the existing Peacehaven Taxi rider service, which on certain days was fully booked. The CTLA 3 Towns service now allows most requests to be catered for. CTLA are confident that the passenger numbers and support from the 3 Councils will enable it to sustain the service in the medium to long term. There will be a fare increase and further marketing with an emphasis on doctor's surgeries in an effort to obtain their individual support in promoting and supporting the service. CTLA anticipate that with the opening of a new health/medical centre in Peacehaven, that this will most likely signal an increase in service demand. Apart from core business, the service has been used to help service users attend Kempton House Day Centre and the Monday Club at Peacehaven Meridian Centre. The service has also been used to provide transport for children, examples being pupils from the Hillcrest Nursery to Newhaven Community Garden and pupils from Telscombe Primary School travelling on day visits to Peacehaven Community School. At no additional cost to the Community CTLA are proposing to increase the hours of service operation, although CTLA report any expansion of the service relies on there co jointly running either ESCC home to school contracts or alternative private business, which allows any surplus funds to cross subsidise demand responsive services of this type.

CTLA (Community Transport Lewes Area) – The Eastbourne Dial a Ride

CTLA were granted funds for the continuation of this service in 2010/11 after it was established in November 2009. The new service commenced in order to re-instate an Eastbourne Dial a Ride service that stopped over 5 years ago, when Eastbourne Community transport folded and ceased trading. There are currently 419 registered users although as is common with this type of service, the number of regular users is about 25% of this number. Patronage has steadily increased. In 2009/10 passenger numbers were at 12.25 per day travelling on a return journey basis and this has now increased to 14.5 per day on average in 2011, representing an increase of 18.9% on the 2009/2010 figures. Passenger satisfaction levels are high with the quality and reliability of the service being much appreciated. Operationally the size of the area covered has led to some delays in pick up times, but for the vast majority of users this service is the only one that enables them to improve their quality of life and maintain independence, as other public transport is not a viable option and taxis are generally too expensive and do not provide a comparable service. Most journeys are for the purpose of attending medical appointments or shopping trips. The CTLA regular driver has won the "Achiever of the Year - in support of those with Disabilities" award at Eastbourne Achievers Awards 2011 ceremony. This reflects the level of service and commitment provided. CTLA was unsuccessful in gaining Eastbourne Borough Council financial support for this service and are currently revising the service frequency and fare structures in order to keep the service in operation through 2011/12. The board of trustees will monitor this and CTLA have informed all users that if this service incurs financial losses then CTLA trustees may have to cease the service.

Wealdlink Demand Responsive Shopping Service

The NWCTP (North Wealden Community Transport Partnership Limited) invested half the ESCC grant into the branding and advertising of the Wealdlink shopping demand responsive service, and have considerably improved

their ability to market services to communities. Further monies have allowed NWCTP to consult with the nominated parishes on extending Wealdlink services. The NWCTP reports mixed results in regards to take up and support of the service. There have been 12 users from Buxted parish, which impressively has led to the Buxted parish council now joining the Wealdlink community transport forum on a trial basis for one year. Buxted is the seventh parish to join the forum. All passengers that have utilised the service have commented on how beneficial it has become to their ability to access key and vital services. Although there has been little success in Rotherfield or Hadlow Down to date, more specific marketing and promotion is to take place during the summer of 2011. NWCTP have also noted that both of these areas are well serviced by established voluntary car schemes that cater for many people without significant mobility difficulties. NWCTP continue to promote the demand responsive dial a ride service across north Wealden and are carrying out additional community transport consultations and further promoting their services to the listed communities. The ESCC grant funding work is ongoing for the NWCTP and they are working on the basis that if they can further match service provision to community need in new areas, then they believe those parish councils might well agree to support it financially.

RACT (Rye and District Area Community Transport) - Evening and weekend services

This scheme originated from concerns of the Rye Age Concern Day Center that members were isolated from events taking place in the evening and at weekends. This was because of their worries about being out at night and feeling vulnerable in addition to the difficulties of accessing suitable and cost effective transport. A pilot scheme was set up with a small grant from the Police Lost Property Fund to see what was possible and to assess the viability of a community transport evening and weekend scheme. The target was to provide transport for 2 community groups per week with a minimum group size of 8. In its first year the scheme handled 127 individual trips with an average of just over 10 passengers per trip, while in the first 6 months of its second year it has undertaken 62 trips with an average 10 passengers per trip. Passenger satisfaction is extremely high and people appreciate that their Community Transport provider has made tangible progress tackling isolation and social exclusion in rural areas. Evening bus services have produced a solution that is simple, effective and one that uses resources efficiently. The scheme is completely sustainable due to the providers per head scale of charging which is distance or zone banded. Paid drivers are used as volunteer drivers are not always available and this gives excellent value for money, and justifies the slight price adjustment needed to cover the additional costs when a paid driver is used. The scheme has been extremely successful and accepts most elected group destinations. These include concerts, meetings, exhibitions, shows, parties, gigs, lectures, films, church services, quizzes and sporting activities. There are 5 teams who regularly use the scheme to get to and from, darts, and pool, crib and boules fixtures. The scheme demonstrates Rye & District Community Transport's belief that community transport is for everyone in the community, not just for the elderly and people with a disability. The scheme has very strong support from the community and the provider spends considerable time on fundraising activities and recruiting further volunteer support to ensure it remains a key part of the community in the long term.

Uckfield Age Concern Voluntary Car Scheme

The Uckfield Age concern voluntary car scheme has been well established for several years time and applied for grant funding in order to offer additional journeys and expand recruitment, community awareness and knowledge of the service. The overall service costs a total of £120 per week to maintain and this has been subsidised by the Age concern organisation historically, as service users have not traditionally been asked to cover all costs. The service averages between 3-5 journeys per week and has undertaken more than 130 journeys during the period April 2010 -April 2011. Most of these journeys are for medical appointments. The scheme currently has 7 volunteer drivers. Due to the key organisational volunteers moving away from the area, the service over the past three months has been lacking in administration continuity and this has been addressed by both the Uckfield volunteering centre and the ESCC. ESCC discussed the status of the scheme with the current community organisers and suggested that the scheme may want to discuss their future with the Uckfield volunteering centre. ESCC then met with the Uckfield volunteering centre and it was decided that the Uckfield Volunteering centre will meet with the scheme and investigate what it might do to ensure that new volunteers are recruited to the service as a priority, whilst further assessing what sustainable options may be available to the car scheme. Although the scheme and drivers remain committed, the future of the schemes relies on more community volunteers being recruited to ensure the scheme retains its prominence and becomes further utilised.

Heathfield Transport Partnership – The Heathfield Youth Express

The Heathfield Transport Partnership bid for funding after conducting a substantial piece of research into Community Transport needs. This was carried out in 2007 by Action in rural Sussex (AirS) as part of their rural access to services programme. It revealed many isolated citizens especially in the rural hinterland surrounding Heathfield and this included both older and younger people. Teenagers were assessed as being the most disadvantaged by limited transport options, and if parents were not available to drive them to events, then they simply did not go. Bored teenagers were becoming increasingly restless and this contributed to increasing anti-social incidents around the town. The town does not have a swimming pool, cinema, dance club or bowling alley so leisure pursuits are more limited in Heathfield than in other towns. In November 2009 the partnership received Down Your Way funding. The scheme currently provides weekly transport (from Burwash, Broad Oak and Horam) to a Thursday night club at the Heathfield Youth Centre and a weekly trip to the Uckfield Leisure Centre. New Trips now include the Hailsham Leisure Centre for swimming and one off trips have now been organised for Youth Centre members over the last 2.5 years. Since the project started the Heathfield transport partnership have frequently reviewed the transport requirements and adapted accordingly to the current needs of the young people involved. This has been undertaken through close liaison with the Youth Centre Manager. Young people are very happy with the service and a video of the project with interviews with the young people and Youth Centre Manager was produced by ESCC Children's Services to highlight the success of the transport initiative. Young people also appeared on the ESCC "Introduction to community transport" DVD. The service is free for young people and therefore sustainability is an area that needs further investigation. The partnership have looked at advertising opportunities incorporating sponsorship from local firms, however this has not progressed, as the partnership would have liked due to the current state of the economy. Also, the partnership does not own the vehicles and therefore cannot carry any branding imagery.

The partnership continues to look at further sustainability options including independent funding streams; however it is highly likely the service will need assistance from local authorities and local councils in the medium term. The extraordinary value of the scheme has been getting youths from quite a wide age spectrum involved in positive projects of interest to them. It provides access to important facilities that would otherwise be inaccessible by public transport. This is especially true of students who live in the rural hinterland of Heathfield. Importantly since the schemes inception, crime rates in Heathfield have reduced as a direct result and the vitality of the youth community has been substantially increased. 481 children have been passengers on the express service through April 2010 to April 2011 at a cost of £3316.00. This equates to £6.98 per passenger for a return journey. It should be noted that these journeys not only include trips from surrounding areas to the Heathfield youth club but also to towns such as Hailsham, Uckfield, Eastbourne and locations such as Thorpe Park.

Heathfield Community Flexible Transport Project

Although there is an excellent Age Concern service for the elderly in the Heathfield and Waldron communities, this is wholly dependant on a structure of 3 dedicated volunteers and they are not able to continue in the long term. Therefore, it was clear to the Heathfield Transport Partnership that there needed to be more opportunities for older people to enjoy social events from within and outside both communities. Importantly it was recognised that demand was there for collective community expeditions, trips and to events both inside and outside of Heathfield. The Partnership applied to the ESCC and received £5,000.00 from the Down Your Way fund in November 2009. Feedback on the scheme has been positive although take up has been slower than expected. There have been 9-booked trips and the partnership has received 2 repeat bookings. Service user's customers do pay a contribution for this scheme but this is a reduction on market prices. The scheme is therefore more naturally sustainable and the partnership is seeking to look at alternatives funding streams to cover any financial shortfalls. The scheme has undoubtedly taken time to take off, unlike the runaway success of the "Heathfield Youth Express." The partnership reports that ideally a dial-a-ride service would have been much more valuable to the community but this was beyond their resources and they are aware that more evidence of need would be required. The current service is only offered to groups who can organize their own "trip." Service users include Heffle Court residents who have now used the service three times. The two subsequent bookings resulted in offering the residents a free trip into Heathfield to attend the Le Marche event in August 2010. Because of this they then felt happy to book the further journeys independently. Between May 2010 and April 2011, 175 passengers have undertaken return journeys and a cost of £500 pounds to the partnership equating to a cost of £2.75 per passenger.

8. ESCC CT Kick Start Individual Scheme Summary

Plumpton Voluntary Car Scheme

The Plumpton voluntary car scheme is a door-to-door transport service run by local volunteers. It takes local people to Doctors, Hospitals/Dental and other Health Care provider appointments. Service users pay a small charge of 40p per mile to cover fuel costs and the service is available to all local people who cannot easily access public transport. The ESCC funding assisted the scheme getting started, as they were able to cover costs for mobile phone advertising, CRB checks and basic first aid training. The funding also allowed for a contribution toward the schemes insurance cost.

The car scheme relies on community fundraising to ensure its sustainability and the community do this via the promotion of volunteers within the village and also by holding coffee mornings and jumble sales. The scheme has benefited both passengers and drivers as the predominately elderly passengers keep their independence, and don't feel so isolated and are comforted to know that there is accessible transport a phone call away. Drivers are also impressed with the scheme, as it has allowed them to contribute to their communities whilst the scheme has allowed new friendships to be formed between other drivers and service users. The service since September 2009 has recorded 162 passenger journeys with the top three destinations being the Princess Royal Hospital, Haywards Heath (36 Journeys), Ditchling doctor's surgery (55 journeys) and River Lodge Doctors Surgery, Lewes. (17). The scheme reports a sharp increase in phone bookings during the first quarter of 2011.

Landport Travel Club and CTLA (Community Transport Lewes Area

The Landport travel club was awarded a grant by ESCC in order to extend the range of the service provided, and to assist subsidising the first year of operation while regular passengers adjusted to the new routes and higher £4.00 charges for longer distance excursions. The scheme originally started as a circular route around Lewes only. It now offers monthly trips to garden centres and shopping places surrounding Lewes. The service was started in response to there being no Sunday service on the Landport estate. The passengers are all people who predominately do not have vehicles of their own. The service tangibly reduces social exclusion and offers a chance for all passengers to socialise. The service regularly has full busses (16 passengers). Passenger numbers average 144 over a 12-month period. Regular and new passengers feedback to the organisers on the value of the trips and there have been no negative responses.

Some of the responses include: "I couldn't get out on a Sunday otherwise", "It's so lovely to see my friends and go to a nice place for a cup of tea" "Because it's door to door I can buy a plant in a pot that would be too heavy otherwise." The scheme appears to need some external source funding to ensure all service costs are covered. This is due to the longer trip passenger charge of £4.00 covering 40% of the total cost of the service. The shorter trips when charges at £2.00 cover 30% of running costs. Therefore the balance in finance needs to be generated through other means. Currently the service relies on donations and the organisers' ability to win funding grants. The service has been running since 2005 and although funding is getting more difficult to acquire, the organiser's are clearly resourceful and remain optimistic that they will find funds to ensure ongoing service provision.

CCB (Cuckmere Community Bus Limited) - East Dean and Friston Community Bus Link

This service originated in order to establish a community bus service for those residents in parts of the village distant from the A259 bus stops. This weekly service provided valuable access to Eastbourne. The service has been running for five months starting in October 2011 and has been well received and utilised carrying on average 10 passengers per journey. It is expected the service will become even more popular during the summer

of 2012. Cuckmere Community Bus has discussed the service with the East Dean and Friston Parish Council and the Parish Council will support the service in the immediate future.

CTLA (Community Transport Lewes Area)-The Uckfield Rover

The Uckfield Rover operates four days per week and allows access to medical and shopping services for those people unable to access public transport. The service operates in and around Uckfield, Ridgewood, West Park, Manor Park and Ringles Cross. Predominately used for access to medical centres and shopping facilities, the service has 50 registered users and on average carries between 8 and 15 passengers per week on return journeys. Although Uckfield has a population of over fifteen thousand the patronage is surprisingly low compared to other dial a ride services, and more advertising was embarked upon in October 2010 in an effort to increase take up. Whilst there was a slight increase in patronage it was not immediately substantial and the service is highly unlikely to be self-funding and is unsustainable in its current format. The costs of running the service to the operator is reported to be £90 per day based on the service utilising a paid driver, and including all transport costs i.e. fuel and operational costs. As this is a three days per week service this totals £270 per week. Fares generated are £30 - £40 per week and this leaves a shortfall of £230.00 -£ 240 per week. The operator is prepared to design a modified service along a semi timetabled model, to ensure that those service users who have come to rely on the service still are able access it.

BACT (Battle Area Community Transport) Ticehurst to Rye - Community Bus Service

This service originated after the Ticehurst Parish Council worked in partnership with BACT, and supporting a funding grant bid by BACT in order to start a flexible Ticehurst to Rye bus service, operating on specific dates on a bi monthly basis. This would give an opportunity to Parishioners to travel to a destination that was currently unavailable to them. This service started in June 2010 and the response whilst not being to capacity has been satisfactory. BACT has amended the times of the service to suit the bulk of service users needs. The service is still in its infancy and to date the service has undertaken 102 passenger journeys over a 4-month period. Passengers mainly originate from sheltered housing establishments, which are located off the major bus routes and this service directly reduces social exclusion and isolation, which has been greatly appreciated by service users. BACT report that flexible services tend to have peaks and troughs, which can mean that in fine weather the services can be oversubscribed and in winter months at times under subscribed.

BACT (Battle Area Community Transport) Battle Area to Rye and Tenderten – Community Bus Service

After BACT received numerous requests from residents of Battle and surrounding rural villages to travel to destinations like Rye and Tenterden. BACT had received feedback mainly from elderly passengers who utilise their services who want to travel to other destinations but who do not want to have to change buses, and having to wait in the cold, for fear of missing their connection. Ewhurst Parish Council has contributed £500 pounds to BACT to help start up the new flexible service. BACT bid to the ESCC for the financial resources to adequately publicise and administer these new flexible services. BACT are currently implementing the promotion and advertising for these services. The Department for Transport, Traffic Commissioners have registered these services and authorised them to commence on the 28th April 2011. The service will cover Battle, Mountfield, Robertsbridge, Ewhurst, and Staplecross. People will be able to go to Rye on a Thursday, Tenterden on a Wednesday. The service will run on a bi-monthly basis for a period of 6-12months initially. BACT report that it takes a minimum of six months for a new flexible service to fully develop and further time for it become well established. The service publicity will be ongoing utilising local Parish and district media and promotion through community groups, associations and through the (RALC) Rother Association of Local Councils.

NWCTP (North Wealden Community Transport) North Wealden Flexible Excursion and Trip Service

The (NWCTP) North Wealden Community Transport Partnership currently delivers the Wealdlink demand responsive (door to door) shopping service and this service has been undertaken through sub contracting arrangement with CTLA (Community Transport for the Lewes Area), who provide the service under the Wealdlink service brand name. The ESCC grant funding has assisted NWCTP across three areas. It has allowed the partnership to further develop through contributing to its overheads and revenue costs. This has culminated in

NWCTP opening its own office in Upper Hartfield for the first time. Importantly, it has allowed funding for specific excursion and a trips service for rural and market town residents across the north weald. In order to acquire business and address capacity for this new service, the partnership firstly carried out a postal survey of community groups in these locations and identified a number of potential customers.

To date 25 community groups have expressed an interest in taking up the new service. The service was delayed in commencing due to the partnership wanting to invest in its own transport infrastructure rather than continue to sub contract services, which could reduce overall sustainability in the long term. NWCTP were recently able to purchase their own 16 seat bus after been nationally recognised and successfully selected by the (CTA) Community Transport Associations CTA "UK Rural Social Enterprise Programme". NWCTP received a grant from the CTA that has allowed the purchase of a suitable 16-seat bus with wheelchair accessibility. It was also granted finance to employ a business development manager for a 12-month period in order to kick-start the organisation further. Although the CTA grant was several months late in arriving, the NWCTP have been able to now commence their trips service with their own vehicle. The first trip service was from North Wealden to Bexhill and this was delivered at a discounted rate due to the ESCC kick-start funding. This discounted rate for the trips service will not only allow the emerging operator to offer excellent value for money services, but also afford them a solid foundation for establishing their trip/excursion service to more communities, organisations and groups, which will contribute to the organisations sustainability in the immediate future.

Forest Row Voluntary Car Scheme – Medical/Health specific service

The Forest Row voluntary car scheme commenced on the 4th April 2011 and will be joining the "mid weald voluntary car forum" as a new member. The scheme had its origin in the partnership working between the ESCC and Action in rural Sussex who were delivering their rural access to service programme in the village. Transport emerged as an issue, which needed addressing and the Forest Row Parish Council decided that it would provide the infrastructure support and coordination needed to get the scheme up and running. The Forest Row Parish Council in conjunction with community volunteers have allowed this new service to provide vital access to medical services for many people in the area unable to access existing public transport. The scheme had a registration charge of £1 and has a minimum spend of £3 per journey to ensure sustainability in the short and medium term.

HACT (Hastings Area Community Transport) – The Hastings Greater Hollington Rover

This service is no longer in operation due to the collapse of the (HACT) Hastings Area Community Transport organisation in late 2010. HACT is currently in liquidation. The service was originally designed as a demand responsive dial a ride service that operated over five days a week, and was open to anyone living in and around Greater Hollington, Battle Road and Beauport Park. Journeys included services to Hollington Tesco, Sedlescombe Road Sainsbury's Conquest Hospital, Pinehill Day Centre and the Isabel Blackman Centre.

RACT (Rye and District Area Community Transport) Rye Dial a Ride Service Extension

Rye CT bid for a grant from ESCC as they were experiencing further demand for Dial-a-Ride demand responsive transport for before 9 am and for mid morning periods. This was related to medical appointments for blood and other laboratory tests (for which appointments before 11 am are generally required). Dial-a-Ride service core hours (9 am - 5 pm Monday to Friday) have always been staffed by paid/employed drivers, partly to ensure their availability and also because of the specific skills in passenger and wheelchair handling required. Rye CT wanted to offer the community and drivers an additional 10 hours a week of service so that the start of the core hours could come forward to 8 am, and they would have additional driver availability to 'double up' when demand dictated. Over the first year passenger numbers have increased by 11% and significantly because the Dial-a-Ride has been to some degree 'freed up'. The proportion of journeys for medical purposes has dropped from two-thirds to approximately 50% and the service is being used increasingly for other social purposes. Passenger satisfaction is impressive because the Dial-a-Ride can transport users when and where they need to go. This small increase in availability has had a much bigger effect than Rye CT had even hoped for. The service is sustainable and the Dial-a-Ride service is considered to be very good value for money by passengers. It is a bespoke service for passengers and they have no issue with paying for such a service. The ESCC grant has meant that Rye CT have not had to increase fares to fund the additional driver hours at this stage, but they will be able to cover future costs by putting in small incremental fare increases over the quarter. Rye CT has consulted with regular service users on potential fare increase and reports that this has been predominantly received with understanding.

