

West Norfolk Community Transport

25th anniversary year

What do we do, and for whom?

West Norfolk Community Transport

- Established June 1992
- A registered charity (registration 1069180)
- Aims and objectives: “to provide a range of safe, affordable, door to door transport services for people who are unable to access public transport services due to location, age, or mobility issues. The aim of WNCT is to provide services for people which contribute to increased levels of social inclusion.” *from website*

How do we deliver our aims and objectives?

- We provide a range of tailored services to customers:

- Dial-a-Bus
- Pick me up
- Shopmobility
- Go to Town
- Home to school bus contracts for NCC
- Voluntary car schemes
- Flexibus

To deliver these 'products' we have 57 vehicles, drivers, maintenance staff and admin staff working under a management team of four. We operate as if a business although we are a not-for-profit charitable organisation

Profit v Not-for-profit

- A profit is an excess of income over expenditure which is then used for a variety of purposes, including the distribution of dividends to shareholders
- A not-for-profit business does the same but does not distribute dividends. Instead, its surpluses are put back into the business to fund:
 - Research and development
 - Asset purchase (especially in our case, vehicles)
 - Providing socially inclusive services which might otherwise be withdrawn
 - Employment and associated benefits to the local economy

Dial a Bus and Pick me Up

- These are services we provide that are funded by a mix of authorities including Norfolk County Council, Breckland District Council and West Norfolk Borough Council.
- **Pick me Up** is a brand for the King's Lynn dial a bus service, which carries about 12,000 single passenger journeys a year. 90%+ are aged 65 or over. 70% are female. About 33% is to attend medical appointments.
- **Dial a Bus** runs in rural West Norfolk, with 25 routes, mainly once a week, carrying about 15,000 single passenger journeys a year. 90% are aged over 65. 85% are female. Above 95% are for shopping trips

Dial a Bus and Pick me Up

- **Pick Me Up** is funded by combination of
 - Grant aid from Borough Council = £30k pa (*allocated*)
 - Fares from passengers = £21k pa
 - Grant aid from Norfolk County Council = £28k
 - Use of surpluses generated elsewhere = £19k
- **Dial a Bus** is funded by combination of
 - Grant aid from Borough Council = £35k (*allocated*)
 - Fares from passengers = £34k
 - Grant aid from Norfolk County Council = £65k
 - Use of surpluses generated elsewhere = £49k
- **If fares increased by, say 10%, would increase revenue by just £5.5k but bring political and social implications**

Shopmobility

- A facility for people with disabilities, arriving by car or bus, to access the town centre pedestrian area by mobility scooters and other devices
- Based in an office at St James Car Park
- Typically used by 10 people a day
- But essential to living independently in later years
- Contributes to town centre retail economy
- Borough Council funding = £25k pa
- Use of surpluses generated elsewhere = £21k

“Go to Town”

- The latest addition to the WNCT group of products
- Started following a campaign by Village Link Action Group, formed in Great Massingham and then spread to the Docking area
- Has replaced Dial a Bus on certain routes and developed new facilities
- Gradually all registered local bus services, including in the Downham area, receiving this branding in conjunction with Norfolk County Council
- Most of routes are funded, or part funded, by NCC with no financial input from Borough Council
- Long term aim is to generate surpluses to help us maintain loss making but socially inclusive facilities such as Pick me Up and Dial a Bus

Home to school contracts for NCC

- Mix of special needs and mainstream contracts
- Total of 13 buses used for these routes at school journey times in West Norfolk (more in other Districts)
- We are judging the market and pricing accordingly
- Will not put in at a loss even if we judge we will not win
- Makes significant surplus to fund other activities such as Pick me Up, Dial a Bus and Shopmobility

Community car schemes

- There are six community car schemes in the Borough
- Total funding cost to Borough is approx. £9.6k
- WNCT manages the Castle Acre scheme
- Total annual funding for this scheme is approx. £0.2k
- WNCT is currently considering future options under this scheme

Flexibus

- A Norfolk County Council brand which is used (mostly) for dial a bus routes in the Breckland and South Norfolk areas.
- Provided by WNCT under a contract issued by County Council. Last tendered, for 8 years, in 2016.
- Includes the town route in Swaffham and the Pentney Shuttle bus
- Total of eight buses used.
- This adds considerable value to business as it adds income but with marginal central and overhead costs.
- Is a source of surpluses which are used in West Norfolk core business

Threats and opportunities

- **Threats:**
 - Possible Borough Council funding cut for Pick me Up, Dial a Bus or Shopmobility
 - Government announced (July) plans to end special status of Community Transport – consultation awaited – but could increase costs by about £150k
 - Fuel and minimum living wage cost increases
 - Loss of County Council contracts
- **Opportunities:**
 - Expansion of Go to Town if early start routes are successful
 - Able to compete for routes with big bus operators if legislation changes
 - Greater cost control if we can bring maintenance all in-house

Conclusion

- WNCT is well managed and in good shape
- It is ambitious to be part of the local transport scene in W Norfolk
- It adds value to lives that otherwise potentially excluded from society
- It is facing major external threat from July announcement by Government but will face it and react accordingly
- It will work constructively with Borough officers to react to any cut in grant funding by West Norfolk Borough Council but believes that now is not the right time to consider it