



CTA Manifesto 2024

Discussion Paper #1

Modernising for Growth

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Modernising for Growth

National Challenges

Community Transport is an essential and evolving sector with a proven track record of success and significant growth potential. However, our sector faces a permanent roadblock of outdated regulations, and an over-reliance on small-scale, short-term funding, which stifles growth, at a time when it is needed more than ever.

Our dynamic and diverse sector needs a new regulatory framework which is fit for purpose and fit for the future to fully integrate Community Transport into our transport system and bring local, non-profit operators onto a level playing field with all other transport providers.

The laws and regulations governing Community Transport originate in various exemptions to the [Transport Act of 1985](#). They have been adapted and modified over the decades to try to overcome inherent shortcomings in the original thinking and subsequent technological developments.

However, **the original legislation is outdated** and the myriad of adapted regulations regularly confuses decision-makers, funders and stakeholders as to what our sector can and cannot do. It creates inequity, because such confusion generates different approaches and interpretations in different areas.

Our bus network is [shrinking](#). But when commercial, municipal or supported bus services fail or withdraw, not-for-profit services can often be prevented or dissuaded from developing a long-term community-owned alternative or replacement. Access to funding and the support on offer to both existing operators and new groups is a postcode lottery which varies widely across the UK.

The long-term growth and financial sustainability of our sector depends on modernisation of the operator licensing regime and reform of the driver licensing regime.

The current requirement for minibus drivers to have a minibus category D1 licence severely constrains the pool of potential staff and volunteers for our sector. Individuals who passed their B licence test prior to 1997 have an automatic entitlement to a D1 licence. However, otherwise **securing a D1 licence is costly and time-consuming and for small, non-profit operators as well as for younger drivers.**

[Granting D1 licence entitlements to B licence holders](#) subject to an accessibility and safety training requirement, like the [Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme \(MiDAS\)](#) as a recognised and mandatory standard, would massively expand the number of drivers available, address the challenges of an ageing workforce and raise standards. At present, many drivers have an automatic entitlement to D1 without the requirement for any additional advice, training or support before they get on the road with a minibus.

Since 1985, our sector has grown massively despite these barriers and challenges due to the clear needs, and thanks to the sheer determination, of communities. The status quo does not meet the needs of people and communities given the level of unmet passenger transport needs across the

UK, which Community Transport could address. Our sector is capable of so much more given the chance.

We need a new and more ambitious approach, which utilises flexible assets and models, such as demand responsive transport, and fully recognises the value of community ownership in transport solutions, such as [community-owned buses](#).

While many commercial, municipal and supported bus services have suffered from a slow decline in passenger numbers, the demand for Community Transport continues to increase. Community Transport can be highly cost-effective, impactful and sustainable, because it is endlessly flexible, embedded into its local community and operated on a non-profit basis.

Nearly 40 years on from the [1985 Transport Act](#), there is now a need to simplify, strengthen and modernise the legal and regulatory framework for Community Transport to remove unnecessary red tape, tackle driver shortages, upskill staff and raise standards of accessibility and safety – all to empower our sector to continue to evolve and expand in the communities we serve.

Technology is changing transport. From Google Maps and contactless payments to mobile ticketing and ride hailing apps, the way many of us move around has been transformed by new digital and personalised products and services over the last decade.

Our sector has long been an innovative one. **Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) is not new in Community Transport.** Local, non-profit operators across the UK have a proven track record of delivering DRT for many decades in the form of traditional dial-a-ride and dial-a-bus services.

DRT provides shared transport to passengers between their desired location and destinations at pick-up and drop-off times of their choosing. There is no fixed timetable and routes may be dynamic and flexible too within the designated area of operation. Vehicles are shared with other passengers going to the same destination or in a similar direction.

DRT can often be complemented with door-to-door or door-through-door support for passengers with mobility needs – **the kind of person-centred, tailored approach to accessible transport for which Community Transport is renowned.**

Historically, journeys have typically been organised in a rather manual fashion by administrators and booked by passengers by phone or even in-person. **But now, services are increasingly being digitised and going online**, with websites and apps expanding access for users and algorithmic routing of vehicles and scheduling of drivers improving efficiency and forward planning.

Moreover, [Mobility as a Service \(MaaS\)](#) offers the opportunity to integrate diverse modes of transport, including Community Transport, along with information and payment functions into a single mobility service, as has been [successfully achieved in Denmark](#).

However, for many small, local and non-profit operators, Digital Demand Responsive Transport (DDRT) and MaaS, with their use of sophisticated and expensive digital platforms and tools, are **out of reach due to a lack of capacity, expertise and, crucially, funding**. Community Transport can

often be ignored by these exciting new opportunities despite the essential contribution they can make.

Community Transport should be integrated into MaaS apps and platforms as far as possible to expand geographical coverage, ensure accessibility and increase multi-modal integration and journeys.

Meanwhile, other **emerging technologies like [Connected and Autonomous Vehicles \(CAVs\)](#) also create new opportunities, as well as risks**, across our transport system. There is significant uncertainty at present about the future direction and use of CAVs. Concerns have been raised about accessibility, inclusion and safety, not least in relation to the rights of disabled people and others with protected characteristics.

Our sector wants to be part of this debate. **It cannot be a conversation only about technology; it must also be about people and communities.** Community Transport, our passengers and the communities we serve must all be part of a national conversation about the best way forward to ensure new and emerging technologies expand access to transport, rather than exclude.

Community Solutions

We're calling on the next UK Government to:

- ✓ **[Grant D1 licence entitlements to B licence holders](#) to tackle minibus driver shortages** with the [Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme \(MiDAS\)](#) as the recognised and mandatory standard.
- ✓ **Create a new requirement for all drivers across public transport, Community Transport and the wider voluntary sector to complete high-quality and recognised accessibility training** to raise standards of equity, inclusion and safety.
- ✓ **Clarify operator licensing guidance for Community Transport to improve the governance and regulation of our sector**, including a review of Section 19 small vehicle permits, to meet the needs of our sector and the communities we serve.
- ✓ **Invest in Community Transport's data and digital capacity and infrastructure to improve efficiency, integration and the passenger experience** through Digital Demand Responsive Transport (DDRT), [Mobility as a Service \(MaaS\)](#) and, potentially, Connected and Autonomous Vehicles.

Join the Campaign for Change

Make Your Voice Heard

Visit www.ctauk.org/manifesto2024 to learn more about how you can be part of our campaign for change.

Show Your Support

Spread the word and show your support for our Manifesto by sharing it on social media. Remember to tag us [@CTAUK1](https://twitter.com/CTAUK1) on X (formerly Twitter) and use the hashtag [#CommunitySolutions](https://twitter.com/CommunitySolutions).

Get In Touch

If you'd like to talk or collaborate, email us at policy@ctauk.org to arrange a conversation with one of our team about how we can work together.

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