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Neath Port Talbot Community Transport

Linking Up Project

Neath Port Talbot Community Transport (NPTCT) provides accessible transport for vulnerable people in Neath Port Talbot, ensuring individuals and community groups can get out and about, access essential services, social opportunities and remain independent.

In September 2019, NPTCT were approached by Birchgrove Community Centre and Birchgrove O.A.P's Association, based in the neighbouring county of Swansea, who were very concerned that their community was losing its local public bus service. The loss of this service would have a devastating impact on the people who relied on it for getting to essential services and social opportunities in nearby Skewen and Neath town centre. Older, disabled and vulnerable people in-particular would be disproportionately affected by the loss of the service as they are less likely to own or run a car and would undoubtedly suffer greater levels of loneliness, isolation and a loss of independence.

Following a meeting with all stakeholders in the area, including 85 concerned residents who regularly use the existing bus service, it was decided that NPTCT would extend its 'Neath Town Rider' accessible minibus service to accommodate residents in the affected communities of Birchgrove, Glais and Lon Las and seek funding with the support of CTA's Connecting Communities in Wales Team to cover the costs of running and extending the Town Rider service for the benefit of local people living in these communities.

The Town Rider service would not only fill the gap left by the withdrawal of the public bus route, but also enhance the previous service, as the Town Rider is a 'door to door' accessible service and would negate the need for less mobile people to walk back and fore from the bus stop, which is often a real problem for many people.

In January 2020, following guidance and advice from CTA's Connecting Communities in Wales team to identify an appropriate funder and support to write a funding application to the Big Lottery Fund, NPTCT were delighted to hear they had been successful, with an investment of £10,000, enabling their Town Rider to start delivering journeys.

The Linking up Project has subsequently made a real difference to the lives of service users and enables many people to access essential services e.g. access over the counter banking services to help people to manage their money and access shopping and other facilities. The project also has a hugely positive impact on individual wellbeing, creating and reinforcing friendships made on the minibus which helps to reduce loneliness and isolation while also improving social interaction and connections.

“The Linking Up project is important to NPTCT,” said General Manager Karen Long, “because it fits with the mission of the organisation by ensuring that local people have equality of access to transport and can get to essential services and opportunities. Our ethos has always been, if we can help people in local communities, we will, and we are happy to extend our support to people in Birchgrove, Glais and Lon Las to help them reach services in Neath and remain connected”.

About Connecting Communities in Wales

The Connecting Communities in Wales project is run by the Community Transport Association and funded through the Welsh Government Rural Communities Rural Development Programme 2014-2020, which is funded by the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development and the Welsh Government, and aims to support community transport in Wales through creating new partnerships, bringing funding into the sector and creating new transport networks.

You can find out more about Connecting Communities in Wales at ctauk.org/CCIW.

