



Scotland's Skills Delivery Landscape – Call for Evidence

A Response from CTA

December 2022

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Summary

The Community Transport Association (CTA) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the call for evidence as part of the independent review of Scotland's skills delivery landscape being conducted by James Withers, advisor to the Scottish Government.

The Community Transport sector is an essential partner for the Scottish Government in upskilling the transport, care and community sector's workforces, advancing the community wealth building agenda and delivering a just transition to net zero. It is vital that the sector is able to recruit, train and retain people with the skills it needs to deliver lifeline transport services and sustainable transport for all.

Our submission to the independent review makes the following key points:

- The Community Transport sector is a significant actor in Scotland's transport system – over 170 operators delivered more than 890,000 journeys over 5.18 million miles in 2021– and in the Scottish economy – creating over 1,130 jobs and more than 2,000 volunteering opportunities
- Community Transport plays a vital role in facilitating skills delivery by supporting workers and learners to access education and employment, especially in rural areas. More than 1 in 10 operators also deliver school transport services
- Community Transport operators play an important role in delivering training, developing people and upskilling paid staff and unpaid volunteers. CTA delivers the Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme (MiDAS), a nationally recognised standard for the assessment and training of minibus drivers, which enhances accessibility, raises driving standards and promotes safety
- Scottish Government, Skills Development Scotland and employers should strengthen recognition of the role and value of volunteering in building confidence and developing new skills to enable people to thrive in the world of work. 71% of volunteers gain new skills and experiences through volunteering
- Colleges, universities and training providers should develop and deliver more short-term, 'bitesize' learning opportunities which help people to reskill or upskill in response to change and disruption or to change careers and transition into new sectors more quickly
- Scottish Government should work with CTA and other stakeholders to develop a Just Transition Plan for Transport which will meet the sector's future labour and skills needs, tackle driver shortages in Community Transport and develop a workforce fit for purpose for net zero

Context

Who is the CTA?

CTA is a UK charity which works with over 170 operators in urban, rural and island communities across Scotland to champion, connect, support and grow our Community Transport sector. Our members are local charities, community groups and social enterprises which deliver community-led, community-owned solutions and share our mission of accessible, inclusive and sustainable transport for all.

CTA delivers the Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme (MiDAS), a nationally recognised standard for the assessment and training of minibus drivers and designed to enhance minibus driving standards and promote the safer operation of minibuses. MiDAS is available to any organisation operating or using minibuses. Organisations that train their drivers in MiDAS range from small voluntary organisations with one vehicle, to local authorities operating large fleets of minibuses as well as schools, colleges and universities.¹ A transformation project is currently in progress to modernise and improve MiDAS.

What is Community Transport?

Community Transport is always for a social purpose and never for a profit. CTA members deliver a diverse range of adaptable, cost-effective and innovative services. Our members are practical and passionate problem solvers who deliver services which fight poverty and inequality; tackle isolation, exclusion and loneliness; and reduce carbon emissions, air pollution and congestion. Paid staff and unpaid volunteer roles within the sector include transport coordinators or managers, project managers, drivers, passenger assistants, befrienders and maintenance.

Community Transport facilitates modal shift away from private cars to more sustainable modes such as buses, minibuses, bicycles, e-bikes and car share. The sector delivers shared transport services – such as dial-a-ride, electric car clubs, non-emergency patient transport, school transport, ‘wheels-to-work’, minibus hire and bicycle or e-bike hire – as well as scheduled community bus services on routes which are socially necessary or may have been deemed commercially unviable. Many operators also deliver non-transport services, such as befriending, counselling or community pantries.² Community Transport is an essential partner for the Scottish Government in delivering on the ambitions of its community wealth building agenda and the just transition to net zero.

Many older and disabled people – as well as those in deprived households or marginalised neighbourhoods, who are most likely to be underserved or excluded by public transport or least likely to be able to afford or own a private car – rely on Community Transport to access amenities, education, employment, family and friends, health & social care and other public services. 68% of Community Transport vehicles in Scotland are wheelchair accessible.³ Drivers are professionally trained to assist with mobility issues and often deliver door-to-door or door-through-door support to passengers.

1. If there was one thing you would like to see change in how our skills landscape is structured and delivering, what would it be?

Recognition of role and value of volunteering

Scotland’s skills landscape should better recognise the role and value of volunteering in skills delivery and development. It is important that the role and value of volunteering in developing confidence,

¹ www.ctauk.org/training/midas

² www.ctauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/More-Than-a-Minibus-CTA-2022.pdf

³ www.ctauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/More-Than-a-Minibus-CTA-2022.pdf

knowledge and skills which enable people to thrive in the world of work is recognised by the Scottish Government and Skills Development Scotland, as well as by employers, in national strategy, policy and practice. Volunteering must be accessible, affordable and attractive to all.

Across the UK, 34% of volunteers aged 16-19, 22% of those aged 20-29 and 10% of those aged 30-39 report that volunteering helped them to get their first job.⁴ Around half of volunteers receive training and 28% of volunteers decide to volunteer to give them 'a chance to use my existing skills', while 17% say it is because they want to 'learn new skills'. 71% of volunteers gain 'new skills and experiences'.⁵

However, volunteering is neither a priority nor a consideration for Scotland's skills agencies. For example, Skills Development Scotland's new *Strategic Plan 2022-2027* (2022) does not contain a single mention of volunteering.⁶ Volunteering should be a strategic priority in Scotland's national approach to skills. Scotland's skills agencies should have a remit to support all skills delivery and development, whether through education, employment or volunteering.

Employers can also play a positive role in facilitating, as well as benefiting, from the confidence, knowledge and skills developed by volunteers by engaging with Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV).⁷ The new *Volunteering Action Plan* (2022) contains a welcome 'idea for change' around a national approach to ESV, including accreditation routes and signposting to existing services.⁸ The Scottish Government should commit to develop and implement this national approach to encourage and support more employers to engage with ESV.

4. Thinking about how our economy and society is changing and the Scottish Government's ambitions for a skilled workforce as set out in NSET, do you have any evidence on where the current skills and education landscape needs to adapt or change and how it could be improved?

'Bitesize' learning provision

The accelerating pace of change in our economy and our society is challenging for employers, learners and workers. Scotland's skills delivery landscape will have to change and become more flexible with services and support tailored or personalised to the needs of individuals, organisations and sectors. Colleges, universities and training providers should continue to develop 'bitesize' courses and content

⁴ www.ncvo.org.uk/news-and-insights/news-index/levelling-up-the-role-of-charities-and-volunteering/the-role-of-charities-and-volunteers-in-levelling-up/#/1-improving-opportunity

⁵ <https://ncvo-app-wagtail-mediaa721a567-uwkfinin077j.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/time-well-spent-a-national-survey-on-the-volunteer-experience.pdf>

⁶ www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/49796/sds-strategic-plan-2022-27.pdf

⁷ www.ncvo.org.uk/news-and-insights/news-index/time-well-spent-employer-supported-volunteering

⁸ www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-volunteering-action-plan

which empower people at all stages of careers and lives to keep pace with social or economic change and upskill or reskill in response to technological or climate disruption.⁹

It should be easier and quicker to develop future skills like carbon literacy, to change careers or to transition into growth or strategically important sectors.¹⁰ Skills Development Scotland and the Scottish Funding Council should accelerate and incentivise this progress across further and higher education.

Tackling labour shortages

In common with other key sectors of the Scottish economy from the haulage industry to the bus sector, the Community Transport sector is currently struggling with shortages of drivers and an ageing workforce. Community Transport drivers can be paid staff or unpaid volunteers depending on the kind of vehicle, the nature of the service and the finances of the organisation. Over 1,130 people were employed by Scotland's Community Transport sector in 2021, an average of 6.8 employees per operator. Most operators with staff are small employers. Around half of the sector (49.4%) is composed of organisations with between only 1 and 5 employees, often in part-time co-ordinator or driver roles. A smaller proportion of those organisations involved in the sector (12.7%) deliver services with staff only and have no volunteers, which also tend to be larger employers, with 10 staff or more (7.8%). There are over 2,000 volunteers in Scotland's Community Transport sector.¹¹

The sector's driver shortages are likely to become more acute in the coming years as demand rises but the number of volunteers declines due to Scotland's ageing demographics and transition to net zero. There is a clear and urgent need to encourage more people to work in and pursue a career in the Community Transport sector, as well as the wider community sector and the wider transport sector. CTA is part of the new Bus Taskforce which seeks to address some of these issues.¹²

Community Transport is, however, well positioned to support the desire to recruit more young people into transport. Young people are making more ethical and social decisions within their employment and wider lifestyle choices. Community Transport is a viable option for young people who are looking for a job that contributes to their communities and develops a diversity of knowledge and skills in care, sustainability and transport. The current D1 licensing requirements for the sector are a significant barrier to young people working and volunteering in Community Transport.

Community Transport often finds itself having to cross over between transport and care. Drivers and other team members need to have a combination of skills outside of the more narrow or conventional skills required by people working in other parts of the transport sector to ensure that they can meet

⁹ www.scdi.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/Upskilling-Scotland-The-Future-of-Skills-and-the-Fourth-Industrial-Revolution.pdf

¹⁰ www.scdi.org.uk/policy/clean-growth-download-our-manifesto

¹¹ www.ctauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/More-Than-a-Minibus-CTA-2022.pdf

¹² www.ctauk.org/cta-scottish-bus-taskforce

the personal, mobility or other specific needs of their passengers. Given our ageing demographics, these are important skills for the future.¹³

Volunteer recruitment and retention

The recruitment and retention of volunteers is a significant challenge in the present socio-economic climate for organisations across the third and voluntary sectors, putting their ability to deliver essential services, create jobs and provide volunteering opportunities at potential risk. 43% of Community Transport operators in Scotland report worsening levels of volunteer recruitment and 92% have been unable to recruit young volunteers in 2021. Meanwhile, 45% report rising demand and 69% want to expand.¹⁴

The recruitment and retention challenges faced by our members are compounded by the ability of the private sector to offer more competitive salaries, as well as the massive increase in food and parcel delivery services in recent years.

In addition, the legislation which governs the Community Transport sector is a barrier. Those who hold the B category on their licence are only allowed to drive a permit minibus if they meet specific criteria otherwise costly and lengthy training is required. CTA is currently engaging with the Department for Transport and its ongoing licensing review to pursue reform on a UK basis, which utilise a transformed MiDAS to reduce burdens and costs, but also enhance accessibility and raise standards.¹⁵ We would welcome the Scottish Government's support for change.

6. Do you have any evidence relating to the outcomes of the current funding and delivery of apprenticeship programmes in terms of either outcomes for learners and/or the needs of employers?

Building a talent pipeline

Some Community Transport schemes have developed successful apprenticeship programmes to provide new pathways and opportunities for local people, especially young people. There is a need for further apprenticeship and employability programmes in the sector with funding and support from Skills Development Scotland and local authorities to create a pipeline of new talent in a key sector. The design and delivery of apprenticeship programmes can be challenging for smaller community organisations with limited capacity, experience or resources.

19. One of the major challenges and opportunities facing the economy is the just transition to net zero.

¹³ www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/49796/sds-strategic-plan-2022-27.pdf

¹⁴ www.ctauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/More-Than-a-Minibus-CTA-2022.pdf

¹⁵ www.ctauk.org/driving-licensing-review-call-for-evidence

Thinking about the current delivery landscape, how well is it structured to deliver this ambition?

Skills for the future

As Scotland's largest and most stubborn source of carbon emissions, transport is a major sector for delivering a just transition to net zero. At present, the skills delivery landscape remains too focused on the skills of today, rather than skills for tomorrow. Education and training for drivers, mechanics, transport managers and so on needs to shift from skills related to the internal combustion engine and fossil fuel vehicles towards those more relevant for electric and hydrogen vehicles.

Just Transition Plan for Transport

The *Skills Action Plan for Rural Scotland* (2019) highlighted the transport challenges faced by rural communities in accessing education and employment. It noted that a report into the 'Development of Action Plan to Address Shortage of Drivers in Scotland's Transport Network' was prepared for Skills Development Scotland by EKOS but remained 'unpublished' as shortages increased.¹⁶ Skills Investment Plans for sectors like construction, digital and energy have been developed, but not for transport.

Aligned with the work of the Just Transition Commission and the commitments of the Minister for Just Transition, Employment and Fair Work, a Just Transition Plan should be developed for Scotland's transport sector, as the public and community transport network expands in the years ahead to achieve net zero. The Just Transition Plan for Transport must be developed in a collaborative and transparent way. It should be focused around key objectives to meet the network's future labour and skills needs, reduce driver shortages in the bus and Community Transport sectors and develop a workforce fit for purpose for net zero. It must include the distinct needs and interests of the Community Transport sector, recognising community-led, non-profit operators' role and potential in facilitating modal shift, reducing car use and lowering carbon emissions. It must be aligned with the Scottish Government's emissions targets and place an emphasis on implementation at pace.

Further information

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The Community Transport Association (CTA) is the UK charity that champions, connects and supports the Community Transport sector. We have over 170 members in Scotland, which are local charities and community groups providing transport services always for a social purpose and never for profit. We believe in accessible, inclusive and sustainable transport for all.

¹⁶ www.skillsdevelopmentscotland.co.uk/media/45684/skills-action-plan-for-rural-scotland-full-report.pdf