



community transport
association

**For, and about, accessible
and inclusive transport**

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@CTAUK1

5 April 2023

**Kevin Stewart MSP
Minister for Transport
Scottish Government
St Andrew's House
Regent Road
Edinburgh
EH1 3DG**

Dear Mr. Stewart,

On behalf of the Community Transport Association (CTA) and our members across Scotland, I would like to warmly congratulate you on your appointment by the First Minister and the Scottish Parliament as Minister for Transport.

We look forward to working with you in the months and years ahead to achieve sustainable transport for all. We hope you will share our belief that Community Transport should be an integrated and integral part of an accessible, affordable and attractive public transport system which serves every urban, rural and island community in Scotland.

Community Transport exists to address transport needs which are not yet met by the public transport system through community-owned and -led solutions. Over 170 local charities, community groups and social enterprises are delivering essential and innovative transport services and projects – from community bus services and demand responsive transport to community car clubs and e-bike hire schemes – across Scotland on a non-profit basis. They are practical and passionate problem solvers delivering essential services which fight poverty and inequality; tackle isolation, exclusion and loneliness; and promote active travel, reduce private car use and reduce carbon emissions.

Recent research by CTA in partnership with Transport Scotland found that Community Transport operators transported more than 802,000 passengers and completed more than 5.18 million miles in 2021. Community Transport is often the only means to access amenities, education, employment or healthcare for older people or disabled people. 68% of Community Transport vehicles are wheelchair accessible with professionally trained drivers and assistants.

Like much of Scotland's bus sector, our sector is in a challenging period. Community Transport operators are struggling with rising equipment, fuel, labour and vehicle costs; threats to long-standing sources of funding such as local government grants; and shortages of drivers and volunteers as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic. Half of our members are facing rising demand and two-thirds are seeking to expand, yet many are confronted with stagnant funding and 1 in 2 report lower levels of volunteer recruitment.¹

¹ www.ctauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/More-Than-a-Minibus-CTA-2022.pdf



It is vital that the Scottish Government works with local authorities, the NHS and other funders to deliver fair, adequate and multi-year funding for Community Transport, as well as the wider community and voluntary sector, which keeps pace with inflation, contributes to core operating costs and sets flexible conditions. We therefore welcome the First Minister's commitment to 'a new deal for local government'.

We also note, as you will be keenly aware from your previous Ministerial role, that the First Minister has indicated his intention to review the National Care Service Bill alongside further engagement on the proposals with key stakeholders. Whatever form a new or revised Bill takes, it is essential that there is engagement with the Community Transport sector and that reform delivers accessible transport services in the local community as an integral part of holistic, person-centred care.

Community Transport plays an essential role in not only helping many older people and disabled people to access GP surgeries, hospital appointments, vaccination centres and care homes, but also in supporting them to live happier, healthier and more independent lives for longer in their own homes and communities. However, there is currently a lack of stable public funding and genuine partnership working between the NHS, Health & Social Care Partnerships and the Community Transport sector on a consistent basis across Scotland.²

In February, I wrote to your predecessor, Jenny Gilruth MSP, about the future of the Plugged-In Communities Grant Fund, which is delivering much needed investment into the Community Transport sector's transition to zero-emissions fleets.³ We have been pleased to work closely with Energy Saving Trust to support the Fund and are delighted that 18 local operators will benefit from £1.6 million of funding to purchase Electric Vehicles in its second round.

We hope that you will repeat and expand the Fund in 2023/24 to close the net zero funding gap of nearly £90 million faced by our sector, empowering more local people and communities to take climate action. The second round strongly demonstrated the level of need and the scale of demand in the Community Transport sector, with the Fund significantly over-subscribed. A total of 52 applications worth over £7 million were received, more than 4 times the total value of the Fund.

I look forward to working closely with you in the months and years ahead to strengthen and deepen the long-standing partnership between CTA, our members and Transport Scotland.

Yours sincerely,

David Kelly
Director for Scotland
Community Transport Association

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² www.ctauk.org/national-care-service-scotland-response

³ www.ctauk.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/CTA-Letter-to-Jenny-Gilruth-MSP-Future-of-Plugged-In-Communities-Grant-Fund-14-Feb-23.pdf

