

# SEEND COMMUNITY BUS

Charity Registration No. 1157309

VAT No. 188 807063

34 Seend Cleeve  
Seend  
Melksham  
Wiltshire  
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## SEEND COMMUNITY BUS REPORT 1<sup>st</sup> March 2022 TO 28<sup>th</sup> February 2023

### OVERVIEW OF THE YEAR

The mission of the charity is to provide transport in the rural areas of Seend and Bromham for those who have limited or no access to public transport. This service relies entirely on volunteers, not only to drive the vehicle but to keep it clean, monitor maintenance, keep proper records of usage, income and expenditure and liaise with service users and hirers. Three of our volunteers are registered as Trustees with the Charity Commission. We also benefit from a good relationship with The MOT Centre at Bowerhill where Class 5 MOTs, regular safety inspections and general maintenance are carried out, sometimes at short notice.

The charity also has a good relationship with Wiltshire Council and Community First who support all Wiltshire Community Transport Groups. As a member of the Wiltshire & Swindon Community Transport Association we are part of a broad, supportive group of organisations. We are also grateful to Seend Parish Council, not only for their financial support but also for keeping us informed of roadworks in the parish which may affect service routes.

The Community Transport sector is gradually recovering from the restrictions of the pandemic. While this has been a much better year for the Shuttle we have seen two local CT operators fold. After lengthy consideration Holt Community Transport merged with nearby Melksham. This meant that their vehicle continues to be available to the local community. Sadly, Trowbridge Guild, who had several vehicles collapsed and no longer offers any services.

As last year, we have benefitted from regular Zoom meetings attended by other CT groups and hosted by Community First. A representative from Wiltshire Council has occasionally been in attendance and we continue to be kept informed about regulations and guidance for transport operators. Equally important has been the opportunity to compare

experiences with other groups and to keep up the enthusiasm and morale in challenging times. We have even had the opportunity to meet in person on two occasions at the CF offices in Devizes.

We are a Charitable Incorporated Organisation registered with the Charity Commission. Our services are run entirely by volunteers and we are always looking to strengthen our base of drivers with D1 eligibility on their licence. Without drivers there would be no service at all. As I reported last year our long-standing driver of the Thursday Shuttle service to Devizes on market day decided to retire. Having relied on his dedication for many years we had no immediate replacement for him. Fortunately, two new drivers eventually volunteered to share the run and the Thursday Shuttle is now back on the road. A third new driver has taken on the Section 19 Salisbury day trips on one of her days off from her job as a paramedic and ambulance driver. The future for the whole CT sector relies on drivers with D1 eligibility. Since newly-qualified drivers do not have this on their licence there will eventually come a point where CT groups will have to cover the cost of training willing volunteers. This will inevitably become a problem. In the meantime we are fortunate to have an excellent group of drivers. The only expense comes when those over 70 years must renew their licence every 3 years and we cover the cost of their D1 medical.

## **SERVICES**

The morning term-time service has been operating successfully all year collecting pupils from Seend, Bulkington and Bowerhill who attend Seend School. The team of drivers operate on a rota basis and have covered 2871 miles catering for 3876 passenger trips. We are currently looking for a replacement for one of the drivers who has a medical condition and is awaiting confirmation from the DVLA that his D1 eligibility will be renewed. The other drivers in the team, with the occasional assistance of another driver, have so far been able to cover all journeys.

The Monday local service to the village shop continues but is used, on average, by only two passengers. There have been numerous occasions during the year when there have been no passengers. We will continue to monitor the viability of this service, although neither of the regular passengers drive and they find the ride up to the village shop useful.

The Tuesday shopping run to Melksham carries a loyal group of passengers who greatly value the service. Numbers vary between 6 and 9, most of whom are from Bromham.

We are delighted that we now have two new volunteer drivers who have taken on the Thursday Shuttle service to and from Devizes. They arrange between themselves who will drive on each occasion and passengers who used the service regularly before the pandemic are gradually coming back on board. The service has been operating every week since May 19th.

We are also pleased to have welcomed another new volunteer driver who has enjoyed driving the Section 19 day out to Salisbury on the first Wednesday of each month. This has been enjoyed by many passengers throughout the year. In all this service operated on 8 occasions.

To summarise, it has been a very successful year for our regular service runs and life has begun to return to normal. All services other than the school run have covered a total of 3724 miles and catered for 1491 passenger trips. This is a vast improvement on 2021 to 2022 when services covered 1364 miles and carried 608 passengers.

## **FUNDING**

Wiltshire Council again supported the charity with an annual grant of £3430, for which we are extremely grateful. To qualify for the Wiltshire Council grant The Trustees have to provide annual accounts and demonstrate that the service provided meets their criteria. To this end, a record is kept of the mileage for every trip made by the bus and the number of passengers it carries. CT groups have been assured by Council that they are determined to support the sector and we hope that they are able to continue to do so, although the grant for the coming year is projected to decrease by 20%. Wiltshire Council also support us through the Concessionary Fares scheme. Monthly figures are provided by us and we are reimbursed accordingly based on a complex formula. They initially continued to support us this year at pre-pandemic rates rather than actual figures. This has now changed and reimbursement is now made based on actual passenger numbers. It is fortunate that we are now carrying more passengers and the numbers will hopefully continue to rise to reach pre-pandemic levels.

Other funding is from donations. The Parish Council again showed their support and appreciation with a generous donation of £400 for which we are extremely grateful. Hiring the vehicle to local groups also boosts our income. After two years with no hires, we are now getting frequent enquiries from a wide range of not-for-profit groups. Schools, clubs, scouts, guides and youth groups are among those who find the vehicle an asset. All hirings are on a self-drive basis and the driver is required to have D1 eligibility, complete a declaration form and be familiarised with the vehicle.

## **MAINTENANCE**

Weekly inspections of the bus are made by Graham, our in-house mechanic. His skill and knowledge are invaluable. On numerous occasions this year he has had to give particular attention to the electric step, which is exposed to considerable ingress of road dirt. It has become less reliable over time, sometimes failing to emerge without manual assistance. This is a nuisance for both drivers and passengers. Graham has done his best to keep the step functioning properly but just before the end of the financial year it stopped working completely. BAElectrical in Westbury assessed it and a replacement has been ordered at considerable cost. While waiting for this to arrive we have had to deploy a portable low step. Our passengers have been very understanding, although one lady who needed assistance to board the bus will not be travelling with us until the step is replaced.

The MOT centre at Bowerhill carries out regular ten-weekly full safety inspections of the vehicle in compliance with the Section 19 and 22 Permit requirements and undertakes any repairs and servicing needed.

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Established June 4<sup>th</sup> 2014 Charity Commission No. 1157309 VAT No. 188 807063

## **CLEANING**

Our area of operation is predominantly rural. Some of the roads are often muddy. Anita organises a rota of local groups to keep the vehicle looking presentable as possible. Coordinating the cleaning with the regular services and private hires is a little tricky. Sometimes people need prompting when it is their turn.

## **HIRINGS**

During the year there were 55 bookings. These covered a total of 3742 miles and catered for 781 passengers. Bookings are charged at a fixed rate per mile plus VAT. Having kept the charge at 75p for some time we had no option but to increase it in light of the rising cost of diesel. In August we raised the mileage to 85p plus VAT, although we honoured the lower rate for those few groups who had booked the vehicle prior to the increase. The charge for hire is based on the principal of Full Cost Recovery rather than profit. This helps to cover all the expenses inherent in keeping the vehicle in top condition and fit for service. If the price of diesel reduces significantly we will look at our rates again but at the moment we believe we are getting it right.

## **ACCOUNTING**

A meticulous record of accounts is kept using a system of spreadsheets. This system was examined and approved by HMRC shortly after we voluntarily registered for VAT. All the following figures are given excluding VAT. The accounting system automatically totals VAT on hirings and VAT relating to expenditure and these are recorded separately on the balance sheet. Until recently quarterly VAT returns have been submitted online via the HMRC website. However, new regulations introduced by HMRC for making tax digital have meant that these are now submitted using bridging software through a third party. After one or two abortive attempts to set this up this is now up and running through a free accounting service called ANNA, which provided a template to add as an extra page in the spreadsheet. On balance the new method is slightly more convenient, although it can take up to three attempts to upload the relevant file. It is also a little uncomfortable passing data through a third party but HMRC gave no other option.

Full accounts are prepared annually and submitted to Wiltshire Council to support the Annual Grant Application and to the Charity Commission along with this annual report. Accounts are also forwarded to Seend Parish Council as a courtesy in return for their annual donation.

## **EXPENDITURE**

Total expenditure for the year was £7190.10 compared to £3606.13 for the previous year. £1200 was the payment for the new electric step. Increased activity, coupled with the rising cost of diesel, resulted in much higher fuel expenditure.

1. Office Expenses were £103.96. up from £21.65. Renewed VPN subscription to protect internet activity was £49.80. The Shuttle printer failed and had to be replaced at a cost of 54.16.

2. No expenses were claimed by any of our volunteers for the second year running.

3. Insurance/Licences cost £1448.50, similar to last year's £1410.14

4. Maintenance costs were £2648.86, up from £817.17 last year. This figure included a new battery, two new tyres and the new step.

5. Fuel costs were £2987.73. The vehicle covered 2000 more miles than last year and the price of diesel increased dramatically. Last year's cost was £1204.13.

6 None of our volunteer drivers needed D1 medicals to renew their licence whereas we paid for two such medicals last year.

7. For the third year running there was no need to hire another vehicle at any time.

8. There were no other costs this year, whereas last year we spent £43 on cleaning and PPE. W&SCTA again waived the annual £10 membership fee.

9. The only postage cost was £1.05 for the Council Grant.

## **INCOME**

Total income for the year was £11146.57, up from last year's £8964.80, reflecting increased activity.

1. Income from Hirings increased considerably from £667.25 to £2816.95

2. Bus Fares for the "School" Run were £926.95, a more realistic figure compared to the previous £801.25, when fares paid before another lockdown were carried over to 2021/22.

3. The only Service run fares were on the December Salisbury trip last year, which carried 15 passengers, who paid a total of £75. The Salisbury runs are now occurring more regularly and accrued a total of £320 in fares.

4. Bus Pass Reclaims were £3028.94 compared to £3507.40 in the previous year. Concessionary Fares repayments are made proportionately according to a complex formula. Wiltshire Council made changes to the calculations in the second half of the year, reflecting the financial strictures on local authorities. It was clear they would be unable to maintain reimbursements at pre-pandemic rates.

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5. Donations are made up primarily of a £400 annual contribution by the Parish Council. The rest is from hirers topping up the amount on their invoice. The total for the year was £400 from the Parish Council and £128.03 top-up donations.
6. The Wiltshire Council Grant was £3430 as it was last year.
7. The surplus of income over expenditure for the year was down considerably on last year's £5358.67 at £3596.47. This is largely attributable to the replacement of several tyres and the failure of the electric step, which needs replacing. We have paid for the new step and await its arrival. The cost of fitting will appear in the accounts for 2023/24.
8. With a small increase in bank rates toward the end of the year interest on the deposit account was £95.70. This is a slight improvement on last year's £20.40.

## **SUMMARY**

The CT sector has seen a positive move forward after two very difficult years. Our group has survived in a very healthy state and we are confident of being able to provide a valuable service to the community for several years to come. There will always be unforeseen factors emerging which will influence our viability. Changes in Government legislation and financial constraints on local authorities are the things we watch out for most of all. However, as things stand at present, we are optimistic and, thanks to Graham's consultation with Stanford Coachworks, we have finalised the specification for a new vehicle. We looked at the possible options for electric and hybrid vehicles but as yet there is nothing on the market which could reliably provide the service we offer. However, we have been assured that the latest diesel vehicles will be even greener than the one we have now. The new bus will again be a long wheelbase Mercedes Sprinter with 16 passenger seats. One feature of the present vehicle which we have decided against is the Eberspacher rear cabin heater. This has rarely been used and on several occasions has been left running overnight, resulting in wasted fuel and a flat battery. The built in cabin heater on the Sprinter is very effective and the cost of the Eberspacher, weighed against its usefulness, meant it would be prudent to leave it out of the specification for the new vehicle. We are in a good financial position and able to comfortably pay for the new vehicle when it arrives in about 12 months. We predict that we may need to take out a temporary loan to cover some of the VAT. Depending on when we take possession of the vehicle it may be up to 3 months before the VAT can be reclaimed from HMRC. We have already had 2 kind offers to cover that period and we have plenty of time to establish exactly how much we will need to borrow. We are also confident that the present vehicle will fetch a reasonable price when we sell it on. Subsequently our finances will be in a healthy state.

We are extremely grateful to all our volunteers, without whom it would be impossible to provide such a highly valued service to the community. Having said that, we will continue to do what we can to recruit new drivers and to promote the service to ensure that as many passengers as possible take advantage of it. With an eye on concerns about climate change it is important to encourage more people to travel by public transport when they can rather than using private cars.

This concludes the annual report of the Trustees of Seend Community Bus.

Report dated 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2023

Prepared by P. Wallis (Chair)

# Seend Community Bus Accounts 2022 to 2023

## Statement of income and expenditure (excl VAT ) 1/3/22 to 28/2/23

| <i>2021-22</i> | Expenditure                                 | 2022-23         | <i>2021-22</i> | Income                    | 2022-23         |
|----------------|---|-----------------|----------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| <i>21.65</i>   | Office expenses                             | 103.96          | <i>667.25</i>  | Private hire              | 2816.95         |
| <i>0.00</i>    | Misc including drivers expenses             | 0.00            | <i>801.25</i>  | School Service            | 926.95          |
| <i>1410.14</i> | Vehicle insurance and licences              | 1448.50         | <i>75.00</i>   | Other Services            | 320.00          |
| <i>817.17</i>  | Maintenance and Repairs                     | 2648.86         | <i>3507.40</i> | Bus pass claims           | 3028.94         |
| <i>1204.13</i> | Fuel  | 2987.73         | <i>20.40</i>   | Bank interest             | 95.70           |
| <i>110.00</i>  | Medical tests                               | 0.00            | <i>463.50</i>  | Donations and fundraising | 528.03          |
| <i>0.00</i>    | Vehicle hire                                | 0.00            |                |                           |                 |
| <i>0.00</i>    | Postage                                     | 1.05            | <i>3430.00</i> | Wilts County Grant        | 3430.00         |
| <i>43.04</i>   | Other                                       | 0.00            |                |                           |                 |
| <i>3606.13</i> |   | 7190.10         |                |                           |                 |
| <i>5358.67</i> | <b>Surplus carried down to General Fund</b> | <b>3956.47</b>  |                |                           |                 |
| <i>8964.80</i> |   | <b>11146.57</b> | <i>8964.80</i> |                           | <b>11146.57</b> |



**General Fund movement for the year to 28/2/23**

| <b>2021-22</b>  |                          | <b>2022-23</b>  | <b>2021-22</b>  |                                    | <b>2022-23</b>  |
|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| <b>72812.33</b> | General Fund at Year End | 76444.20        | <b>67730.52</b> | Balance brought forward            | <b>73072.44</b> |
|                 |                          |                 | <b>5358.67</b>  | Surplus of income over expenditure | 3956.47         |
|                 |                          |                 | <b>133.45</b>   | VAT collected on hirings           | 563.39          |
|                 |                          |                 | <b>-410.31</b>  | VAT on purchases                   | <b>-1148.10</b> |
|                 |                          |                 | <b>-276.86</b>  |                                    | -584.71         |
| <b>72812.33</b> |                          | <b>76444.20</b> | <b>72812.33</b> |                                    | <b>76444.20</b> |

**Balance sheet at 28/2/23**

|                 |                                |                 |                 |                       |                 |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------------|-----------------|
| <b>102.69</b>   | Cash in hand                   | 163.52          | <b>410.31</b>   | VAT reclaimed         | 1148.10         |
| <b>3555.44</b>  | Cash at bank - current account | 2832.35         | <b>-150.2</b>   | VAT to HMRC           | <b>-586.42</b>  |
|                 |                                |                 |                 |                       | 561.68          |
| <b>69414.31</b> | Cash at bank - deposit         | 74010.01        | <b>72812.33</b> | General fund 28/02/22 | 76444.20        |
| <b>73072.44</b> | Balance C/F                    | <b>77005.88</b> | <b>73074.44</b> |                       | <b>77005.88</b> |

|                   |      |
|-------------------|------|
| Balance checker>> | 0.00 |
|-------------------|------|

**Bank reconciliation 28/2/22**

|                                    |                |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>Balance from bank statement</b> | <b>2797.48</b> |
| Turnpike Account paid 01/03        | -260.68        |
| HMRC VAT repay 07/3                | 295.55         |

|   |                |
|---|----------------|
| <b>Adjusted bank balance (self-calculating)</b> | <b>2832.35</b> |
|---|----------------|

| <b>VAT RETURN BALANCE</b> |                |              |
|---------------------------|----------------|--------------|
| SCB to<br>HMRC            | HMRC<br>to SCB |              |
|                           | 123.87         | MAY          |
|                           | 117.41         | AUG          |
|                           | 24.85          | NOV          |
|                           | 295.55         | FEB          |
| <b>0.00</b>               | <b>561.68</b>  | <b>TOTAL</b> |