

SEEND COMMUNITY BUS

Charity Registration No. 1157309

VAT No. 188 807063

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SEEND COMMUNITY BUS REPORT 1st March 2023 TO 28th February 2024

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, 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 benefits from 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 still recovering from the restrictions of the COVID pandemic. A couple of neighbouring groups fell by the wayside last year but so far this year, those that remain are experiencing an improvement in the uptake of the services they provide.

We have also been able to meet other operators hosted by Community First on a more regular basis. 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 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. This has been a challenge for most operators in the sector as we rely on an aging team of volunteers. From age 70 drivers have to undergo a medical examination and eye test every 3 years in order to maintain their D1. The cost varies but D4 Drivers charge less than local GPs and we cover the cost of this for our volunteers. At the moment we have a good team of drivers but we are always looking ahead.

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 2951 miles catering for 3357 passenger trips. The passenger numbers are a little down on last year, reflecting the fluctuation in pupil numbers attend Seend School.

The Monday local service to the village shop has only operated a few times this year. I understand this is largely because the Post Office part of the shop has become somewhat unreliable. The demand for the bus on Mondays looks likely to end.

The Tuesday shopping run to Melksham carries a loyal group of passengers who greatly value the service. Numbers vary between 6 and 9, which includes a recent addition from Seend Cleeve.

The Thursday Shuttle service to and from Devizes is operating successfully. Our two drivers share the responsibility and passenger numbers are slowly picking up.

Our new volunteer driver, Donna, has enjoyed driving the Section 19 day out to Salisbury on the first Wednesday of each month when work commitments have allowed. This has been a popular service which has operated on ten occasions.

To summarise, it has been a very successful year for our regular service runs. All services other than the school run have covered a total of 4306 miles and catered for 1519 passenger trips.

FUNDING

Wiltshire Council supported the charity with a reduced annual grant of £2744. We are extremely grateful to the Council for continuing to help fund community transport as we understand their ability to do so is at the mercy of a dwindling budget. 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. 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 which takes into account the actual number of passengers using a bus pass on our services.

Other funding is from donations. The Parish Council again showed their support and appreciation with a generous donation of £500 for which we are extremely grateful. Hiring the vehicle to local groups also boosts our income. We are 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. Graham has done his best to keep the electric step functioning but we have paid for a replacement. This will be fitted early in the coming financial year. Graham has negotiated with Stanford Coachworks in Essex and the specification for the new vehicle has been finalised. We had hoped to take delivery before the end of the financial year but we are assured it will be soon.

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.

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 48 bookings. These covered a total of 3741 miles and catered for 781 passengers. Bookings are charged at a fixed rate per mile plus VAT. Hirers pay 85p per mile plus VAT. 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. In accordance with the HMRC "Making Tax Digital" regulations, quarterly returns are made using free bridging software. A spreadsheet template is used. This is read by the accounting service ANNA and figures are submitted to HMRC through

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that system. ANNA intend to start charging for this service at some point so we will be looking to move to a different provider when that happens.

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 £6551.63 compared to £7190.10 for the previous year.

1. Office Expenses were £66.66 for AVAST VPN subscription which increased from last year's £49.90 for the same service.
2. No expenses were claimed by any of our volunteers for the third year running.
3. Insurance/Licences cost £1507.97 compared to the previous year's £1448.50, showing a slight increase in insurance and MOT costs.
4. Maintenance costs were £2222.70, slightly down on last year's £2648.86 but still quite high. Work was needed on the brakes, suspension and shock absorbers. There was also a charge for fitting the new electric step.
5. Fuel costs were £2509.40. Last year was £2987.73.
6. One volunteer driver needed a D1 medical to renew their licence. £52.50
7. We paid £114 for the hire of Melksham bus while ours was off the road.
8. Other costs were £75.30 to cover damage to Melksham bus and a £5.30 charge in Salisbury carpark.
9. Postage costs were £3.10 for the Council Grant application.

It should be mentioned that, apart from operating costs, a deposit of £7100 was made to Stanford Coachworks for the new vehicle which is expected early in the next financial year.

INCOME

Total income for the year was increased from £11146.57 to £11933.88 in spite of a reduction in the Wiltshire Council Grant. Bus pass reimbursement was up and bank interest on the deposit account showed a significant increase.

1. Income from Hirings increased slightly from £2816.95 to £2902.90
2. Bus Fares for the “School” Run were £843.25 compared to the previous year’s £926.95.
3. Fares for the Salisbury trips were £350, similar to last year’s figure of £320.
4. Bus Pass Reclaims were £3761.04 compared to £3028.94 in the previous year. Concessionary Fares repayments are made proportionately according to a complex formula.
5. Donations were made up primarily of a £500 contribution by the Parish Council. The rest is from hirers topping up the amount on their invoice. The total for the year was £502.98.
6. As expected, the Wiltshire Council Grant was reduced from £3430 to £2744.
7. The surplus of income over expenditure for the year was £5382.25. This was an improvement on £3956.47 last year. However, we are hopeful that, with the arrival of the new bus, next year will show a further increase in the surplus.
8. Interest earned on the deposit account was considerably higher than last year. £829.71 compared to £95.70 was a welcome improvement.

SUMMARY

The CT sector continues to pick up after some challenging times. At Seend Community Bus we are confident that we are providing a valuable service. We are also confident that we are fulfilling our obligations and responsibilities in accordance with current financial and legislative guidelines and requirements. We take great care to provide a safe and friendly service for our users and we know that this is greatly appreciated. We are also excitedly anticipating the arrival of a brand new Mercedes Sprinter. We have had a very kind offer of a short-term loan at no cost to cover the period between paying for the vehicle and reclaiming the VAT. We hope to find a buyer for the existing vehicle, which has been well-maintained and has many miles left in it. The charity will then be in a very comfortable position financially and able to continue for years to come.

As always, there are unknowns in the future which may make it difficult, or even impossible, for us to continue to operate. Changes in legislation and changes to how the sector is supported by local government could create problems.

However, we have been operating for over thirty years and we have every reason to be optimistic. As long as we can maintain a dedicated team of volunteers we believe we are fair set for the future.

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

Report dated 11th November 2024

Prepared by P. Wallis (Chair)

Seend Community Bus Accounts 2023 to 2024

Statement of income and expenditure (excl VAT) 1/3/23 to 29/2/24

| 2022-23 | EXPENDITURE | 2023-24 | 2022-23 | INCOME | 2023-24 |
|-----------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| 103.96 | Office expenses | 66.66 | 2816.95 | Private hire | 2902.90 |
| 0.00 | Misc including drivers expenses | 0.00 | 926.95 | School Service | 843.25 |
| 1448.50 | Vehicle insurance and licences | 1507.97 | 320.00 | Other Services | 350.00 |
| 2648.86 | Maintenance and Repairs | 2222.70 | 3028.94 | Bus pass claims | 3761.04 |
| 2987.73 | Fuel | 2509.40 | 95.70 | Bank interest | 829.71 |
| 0.00 | Medical tests | 0.00 | 528.03 | Donations and fundraising | 502.98 |
| 0.00 | Vehicle hire | 114.00 | | | |
| 1.05 | Postage | 3.10 | 3430.00 | Wilts County Grant | 2744.00 |
| 0.00 | Other | 127.80 | | | |
| 7190.10 | | 6551.63 | | | |
| 3956.47 | Surplus carried down to General Fund | 5382.25 | | | |
| <u>11146.57</u> | | <u>11933.88</u> | <u>11146.57</u> | | <u>11933.88</u> |

General Fund movement for the year to 29/2/24

| 2022-23 | | 2023-24 | 2022-23 | | 2023-24 |
|-----------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------------------------|-----------------|
| 76444.20 | General Fund at Year End | 74898.54 | 73072.44 | Balance brought forward | <u>77005.88</u> |
| | | | 3956.47 | Surplus of income over expenditure | 5382.25 |
| | | | 563.39 | Deposit on new bus | -7100.00 |
| | | | <u>-970.17</u> | VAT collected on hirings | 580.58 |
| | | | -584.71 | VAT on purchases | <u>-970.17</u> |
| | | | -584.71 | | -389.59 |
| <u>76444.20</u> | | <u>74898.54</u> | <u>76444.20</u> | | <u>-389.59</u> |
| | | | | | <u>74898.54</u> |

Balance sheet at 29/2/24

| | | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| 163.52 | Cash in hand | 20.52 | 1148.10 | VAT reclaimed | 970.17 |
| 2832.35 | Cash at bank - current account | 3434.18 | -586.42 | VAT to HMRC | <u>-574.29</u> |
| | | | | | 395.88 |
| 74010.01 | Cash at bank - deposit | 71839.72 | 76444.20 | General fund | 74898.54 |
| <u>77005.88</u> | Balance C/F | <u>75294.42</u> | <u>77005.88</u> | | <u>75294.42</u> |

Balance checker>> 0.00

Bank reconciliation 29/2/24

| | |
|------------------------------------|----------------|
| Balance from bank statement | 3443.62 |
| Turnpike account paid 01/03/24 | -295.75 |
| Payment in cleared 06/03 | 290.39 |
| VAT repaid 06/03 | -4.08 |

| | |
|---|----------------|
| Adjusted bank balance (self-calculating) | 3434.18 |
|---|----------------|

| VAT RETURN BALANCE | | |
|--------------------|----------------|--------------|
| SCB to HMRC | HMRC to SCB | |
| | 37.06 | MAY |
| | 310.83 | AUG |
| | 52.07 | NOV |
| 4.08 | | FEB |
| 4.08 | 399.96 | TOTAL |