

# SEEND COMMUNITY BUS

Charity Registration No. 1157309

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## SEEND COMMUNITY BUS REPORT 1<sup>st</sup> March 2024 TO 28<sup>th</sup> February 2025

### 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 for their financial support.

The Community Transport sector as a whole has recovered well after the restrictions of the COVID pandemic, although, as I mentioned last year, a couple of neighbouring groups fell by the wayside. We have been able to meet other operators face to face rather than on ZOOM. Meetings are hosted by Community First on a 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 enthusiasm and morale.

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. We have lost one of our drivers because of health. Robin has been a Trustee for several years and we wish him well. Another of our drivers is awaiting cataract replacements and possible approval from DVLA. Another of our drivers was required to take a treadmill test and extra eye test when he applied to renew his D1 licence. Fortunately, all was deemed in order and he was approved by DVLA. We have been lucky enough to recruit some new drivers and the outlook is good for the time being.

The arrival of our new Mercedes Sprinter minibus in March was an exciting start to the year. It has numerous technical features which our drivers had to familiarise themselves with but the consensus is that it's a fine vehicle which will serve us well for years to come. A temporary loan from a patron covered the short period between paying for the bus and reclaiming the VAT. The old bus was still serviceable and it was eventually sold to a couple who wanted to convert it into a camper van. They brought the vehicle to the village fete in August, when we were able to view their handiwork. The last we heard, they were touring Spain in it.

## **SERVICES**

The Seend School morning term-time service has been operating successfully all year collecting pupils from Seend, Bulkington and Bowerhill. The team of drivers operate on a rota basis and have covered 2910 miles catering for 3338 passenger trips. The passenger numbers are a little down on last year, reflecting the fluctuation in pupil numbers attending Seend School.

The Monday local service to the village shop has become defunct after a couple of years carrying occasionally one but usually no passengers. The one regular client no longer uses the village shop so has no need for the Shuttle.

The Tuesday shopping run to Melksham and the Thursday market day Devizes Shuttle continue successfully. The Thursday Shuttle has been even more popular than last year with over 20 passenger trips every week and a high of 29.

The first Wednesday of the month Section 19 outings to Salisbury have again been popular, running on 8 occasions. The pre-Christmas outing was fully booked weeks in advance.

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 4297 miles and catered for 1702 passenger trips; 183 more than the previous year.

## **FUNDING**

Wiltshire Council supported the charity with an 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 £550 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 our in-house mechanic. His skill and knowledge are invaluable. Ensuring that the vehicle is maintained in a safe condition and with all levels topped up has to be a priority.

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. Annual servicing of the on-board fire extinguishers is carried out by Devizes Fire.

A teething problem with the new bus meant the garage were called out on two occasions to restart a flat battery. The cause was a faulty door closing mechanism which meant the door appeared closed but wasn't, leading to battery drain overnight. After several visits to RYGOR in Westbury, the issue was rectified under warranty with no cost to us.

## **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. Co-ordinating 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 63 bookings. These covered a total of 4737 miles and catered for 872 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. We believe we are getting it right but will continue to monitor costs.

## **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 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 £6502.54 compared to £6551.63 for the previous year.

1. Office Expenses were £71.66: £66.66 for AVAST VPN subscription and £5.00 to replace the corrupted backup flash drive.
2. The only expense claimed by any of our volunteers was £6.40 for use of a volunteer driver's own car to help collect the bus from RYGOR at Westbury.
3. Insurance/Licences cost £2141.14 compared to the previous year's £1507.97. This was made up of £220 registration and Road Tax for the new bus plus £245 adjustment on the Zurich insurance policy. The insurance renewal later in the year was £1720.01. We also had to renew the Section 19 Permit (£11) and the Section 22 Permit (£55). There was a slight offset of £110 refund of Road Tax on the old vehicle.

4. Maintenance costs were £415.00, considerably less than last year's £2222.70. Most of this was for regular safety inspections but there were two call-outs for a flat battery and a puncture repair. We also purchased a fuel can to put diesel in the old (off-road) vehicle so that it could be demonstrated to potential buyers.

5. Fuel costs were £2437.73. Last year was £2509.40

6. One volunteer driver needed a D1 medical and separate D1 eye test at a cost of £156.47

7. No hire of other vehicles was needed this year.

8. Other costs totalled £52: £25 CHAPS payment re new bus / £2.50 Dartford Crossing re delivery of new bus from Essex / £14.50 for a mop & bucket to keep in the bus and £10 for membership of W&SCTA.

9. Postage was £7.85: £3.45 re the Grant application and £4.60 re Section 22 Permit.

Separate expenditure was £64,175.85 to Stanford Coachworks prior to delivery of the new vehicle. A deposit of £7,100 was paid in the previous 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 covered more miles and income increased significantly from £2902.90 to £4,184.80 as a result.

2. Bus Fares for the "School" Run were £904.00 compared to the previous year's £843.25.

3. Fares for the Salisbury trips were £400 compared to last year's figure of £350.

4. Bus Pass Reclaims were down from £3761.04 last year to £2352.23. This reflects Wiltshire Council's decision to reimburse bus fares based on actual passenger numbers whereas since COVID they had been supporting operators at pre-COVID rates.

5. Donations Total £633.06: Seend Parish Council kindly increased their annual gift from £500 to £550. Seend Theatre Club donated £50 and a hirer rounded up their invoice by £3.68. We also received a Paypal Giving Fund cheque for £29.38

6. The Wiltshire Council Grant remained at £2744.

7. The surplus of income over expenditure for the year was £6502.54. This was a considerable improvement on £5382.25 last year.

8. Interest earned on the deposit account, at £572.70 was down from £829.71 last year. Having drained the funds to purchase the new bus, we expect to see a further decrease in the year ahead. Interest rate decreases are also on the horizon.

The sale of the old vehicle brought in a welcome £7000 supplementary income. The new owner has converted the bus into a camper and has already taken it to Spain.

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## **VAT**

VAT is accounted for separately. All above figures are excluding VAT. During the year we reclaimed a total of £14853.32 (mostly on the cost of the new bus) and collected £2203.47 on income. The balance of VAT over the year was £12649.85 in the charity's favour.

## **SUMMARY**

Seend Community Bus is in a sound place in all ways. After some difficult times in recent years, which were tough for the CT sector generally, life has returned to normal. Passenger numbers are good and our services are all running smoothly. The arrival of the new vehicle has given everyone involved in the charity a boost. Bookings have been frequent and income overall has been good. With over £24,000 in the reserve we are in a good position to move into another successful year. Those who use our services really appreciate what we do and Seend Shuttle is firmly established as part of the community. We are grateful to all the people who help to keep things running smoothly and who give up their time voluntarily. Without volunteers there would be no service but we are fair set to continue the work we do, serving the communities of Seend, Bromham and elsewhere.

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

Report dated 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2025

Prepared by P. Wallis (Chair of Trustees)

Seend Community Bus Accounts 2024 to 2025

Statement of income and expenditure (excl VAT ) 1/3/24 to 28/2/25

2023-24	EXPENDITURE	2024-25	2023-24	INCOME	2024-25
66.66	Office expenses	71.66	2902.90	Private hire	4184.80
0.00	Misc including drivers expenses	6.40	843.25	School Service	904.00
1507.97	Vehicle insurance and licences	2141.14	350.00	Other Services	400.00
2222.70	Maintenance and Repairs	415.00	3761.04	Bus pass claims	2352.23
2509.40	Fuel	2437.73	829.71	Bank interest	572.70
0.00	Medical tests	156.47	502.98	Donations and fundraising	633.06
114.00	Vehicle hire	0.00			
3.10	Postage	7.85	2744.00	Wilts County Grant	2744.00
127.80	Other	52.00			
6551.63		5288.25			
5382.25	Surplus carried down to General Fund	6502.54			
<u>11933.88</u>		<u>11790.79</u>	<u>11933.88</u>		<u>11790.79</u>

General Fund movement for the year to 28/2/25

2023-24		2024-25	2023-24		2024-25
74898.54	General Fund at Year End	5004.75	77005.88	Balance brought forward	75294.42
			5382.25	Surplus of income over expenditure	6502.54
			-7100.00	(<< Deposit) NEW BUS (Balance)>>	-64175.85
			580.58	VAT collected	2236.96
			-1148.10	VAT on purchases	-14853.32
			-389.59		-12616.36
74898.54		5004.75	74898.54		5004.75

Balance sheet at 28/2/25

20.52	Cash in hand	29.78	970.17	VAT reclaimed	14853.32
3434.18	Cash at bank - current account	2512.40	-574.29	VAT to HMRC	-2203.47
					12649.85
71839.72	Cash at bank - deposit	22112.42	74898.54	General fund	5004.75
				Sale of WX64 GYN	7000.00
75294.42	Balance C/F	24654.60	75294.42		24654.60

Balance checker>>	0.00
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Bank reconciliation 28/2/25

Balance from bank statement	2743.99
Turnpike Account paid 1/3/25	-239.17
VAT REPAY 06/03/25	7.58
VAT running balance	0.00

Adjusted bank balance (self-calculating)	2512.40
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VAT RETURN BALANCE		
SCB to HMRC	HMRC to SCB	
	14173.77	MAY
1437.40		AUG
94.10		NOV
	7.58	FEB
1531.50	14181.35	TOTAL