

**Down District Accessible Transport**  
(A company limited by guarantee, not having a share capital)  
**TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT**  
for the financial year ended 31 March 2025

The trustees present their Trustees' Annual Report, combining the Directors' Report and Trustees' Report, and the audited financial statements for the financial year ended 31 March 2025.

The financial statements are prepared in accordance with the Companies Act 2006, FRS 102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland" and Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their financial statements in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

The Trustees' Report contains the information required to be provided in the Trustees' Annual Report under the Statement of Recommended Practice (SORP) guidelines. The trustees of the company are also charity trustees for the purpose of charity law and under the company's constitution are known as members of the board of trustees.

In this report the trustees of Down District Accessible Transport present a summary of its purpose, governance, activities, achievements and finances for the financial year 31 March 2025.

The company is a registered charity and hence the report and results are presented in a form which complies with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006 and, although not obliged to comply with the Statement of Recommended Practice applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland FRS 102, the organisation has implemented its recommendations where relevant in these financial statements.

**Principal Activity**

Down District Accessible Transport (Trading as Down Community Transport) works across County Down and provides a range of services to individuals and groups affected by a lack of access to transport and rural isolation.

**Mission, Objectives and Strategy**

**Mission Statement**

Down District Accessible Transport (Trading as Down Community Transport) works across County Down and is one of a number of rural community transport partnerships which are all charitable organisations that provide a range of services across Northern Ireland to individuals and groups affected by a lack of access to transport and rural isolation, on a not for profit basis. Community transport services are provided to those living in rural areas with the specific aim of reducing social exclusion and isolation and improving the independence and quality of life for members. Specifically Down Community Transport (DCT) benefits the rural population by improving access to essential services such as health care, education, employment and recreation. Working collaboratively with other agencies and community organisations DCT improves local communities by providing groups with transport and training. A significant pool of volunteers has been developed to compliment and add value to the partnerships range of services.

**Structure, Governance and Management**

**Structure**

The organisation is a company limited by guarantee with a Company Number of NI038399 and is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association. The company is also a registered charity with the Charity Commission for Northern Ireland under the reference 103843. The company is under the control of the directors who are also acting trustees for the charity. The day to day management of the organisation is undertaken by the full time manager. Regular board meetings are held on a monthly basis.

**Review of Activities, Achievements and Performance**

In 2024/25 Down District Accessible Transport (DDAT), trading as Down Community Transport (DCT) delivered the following DFI supported activities:

- Dial-a-lift, door-to-door transport service for individuals living in rural areas.
- The Assisted Rural Travel Scheme.

Dial-a-lift is a door-to-door transport service for individuals living in rural areas who are unable to or find it difficult to use public transport. Dial a lift can be used to access local services such as: GP / clinic appointments/ Dentist or Opticians, Shopping, Visiting family and friends and many other recreational activities.

DDAT are passionately aware of the need for a service for rural communities which fits between Public Services by Translink and the Private sector (taxis and Coaches). For over 25 years, Community Transport has offered a variety of transport solutions in the South East of NI including Dial a Lift, Group Hire and a social car scheme (staffed by volunteers in their own vehicles). This effort is ongoing and the demand is as high as it ever was and DDAT cannot meet all the demand on its resources.

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In 2024/25, we had to pause new individual membership applications partway through the year to ensure that every existing member could receive at least one funded trip. Our total individual membership stood at 519. Of the trips delivered, 56% were made by people with a disability. Despite a challenging financial position, DDAT (DCT) successfully completed 15,069 Dial-a-Lift journeys—highlighting the ongoing need for and value of our service.

#### Group Hire/Self Drive:

DDAT also provides affordable and accessible transport for our 69 member groups. In 2024/25, we completed 1,009 group hire bookings, resulting in 10,068 group hire trips. Notably, 41% of these journeys were delivered by our dedicated volunteer drivers.



#### Volunteer Social Car Scheme:



We operate a Social Car Scheme (SCS) whereby suitably recruited and trained volunteers use their own cars under the control of our staff, providing a safe, efficient, and affordable door-to-door service as an alternative for individuals that do not have access to their own transport or that of friends and family, and who have difficulty accessing public transport facilities. This form of transport provides a more flexible and accessible one-to-one alternative to the minibus in circumstances where time and specific destination are critical, as in such cases as Social Welfare and Health related journeys when the driver may be required to wait and provide a return journey.

In 2024/25 we provided a total of 1,305 trips through the social car scheme. 1,123 of these were Dial-a-lift trips and 182 were Out of Area trips.

#### The Management of the Charity:

The DDAT Trustees and Management Committee are responsible for overseeing the business of the Charity. There are currently 8 Trustees who meet on a monthly basis.

There is a full time Manager who is responsible for the day-to-day operational management of the charity. The 2 office staff are bookings officers who work 30 hours and 24.5 hours per week.



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There are 9 contract drivers on a mixture of paid contract of 30 hours, 37.5 hours & 15 hours. All drivers have full D1 or full D PCV category driver license and CPC. They also have Minibus Driver Awareness Scheme (MiDAS) training.

#### Partnership Working:

DDAT is represented on the following voluntary sector networks: NMD Community and Voluntary Stakeholders Forum, Good Morning Down Management Committee, Safe & Well Caring Communities, Age Friendly Strategic Forum & Age Friendly Alliance.

Throughout the year, DDAT assisted Lagan Valley Rural Transport in delivering their DATS service and continued to work closely with other Community Transport partners across Northern Ireland. As part of our ongoing partnership with the Community Transport Association (CTA), we helped collate vital data for the CAT Mapping NI event, which showcased the State of the Sector Report 2025. Held at Stormont, this event highlighted the crucial role Community Transport plays across the region. The information we provided contributed to a more accurate picture of the sector's challenges, achievements, and impact—strengthening our collective voice when advocating for support and recognition.

In addition, DDAT actively participated in several key local events: we joined the Good Morning Down members' gatherings, took part in the annual Downpatrick Community Collective Santa Run, assisted Homestart with their Christmas parcel and toy deliveries, and met with local MLAs to discuss the ongoing transport needs of our community. We also hosted a stand at the Positive Ageing Expo in Downpatrick Leisure Centre, organised by the Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

We collaborated with Newry, Mourne and Down District Council to secure funding for a new bus and worked closely with the supplier (TBC) to ensure it was delivered on time before the end of the financial year.

Partners such as County Down Rural Community Network report an increased demand for hardship funds, foodbanks, social supermarket and other poverty related supports in 2024/25. Transport is among the most important support the community sector can offer people living isolated and disadvantaged lives and highlighted factors include :

Access To hospital appointments, collection/delivery of prescriptions, transport to other community groups facilities, lack of shuttle buses to local halls/leisure centres, transport for day trips, shopping: compromised motability issues: older people would like more outings with groups with accessible transport; better access for adults with ADHD and Autism: social prescribing and MDTs at primary care centres setting up activities with no transport provided: community groups would like to access other community sector services but again transport is a limiting factor.



#### The financial position at the end of the year.

The 2024/25 financial year was a particularly difficult one for everyone, marked by uncertainty around funding for all



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voluntary organisations. While the charity is currently able to continue operating on the assumption of ongoing funding, it is our hope that serious consideration will be given to increasing the grant to reflect rising costs. Additionally, we urge that future budget periods extend beyond one year to allow for more effective planning and sustainability. In response to these challenges, the committee held a Strategic Planning Day, attended by Kellie Armstrong MLA, Frances Campbell (Director, CTA NI), and Kathy Graham from KG Strategies.

The most serious financial pressures we currently face are:

- The need to replace an ageing fleet of minibuses while operating on a shrinking year-to-year grant;
- Rising operational costs, particularly fuel and wages.

At the same time, we are experiencing sustained high demand for journeys. The cost-of-living crisis has only increased the need for our services, yet we cannot maintain the same level of delivery without additional support.

Budget constraints in recent years have negatively impacted the number of trips DDAT can offer to each member. However, our volunteer drivers, through the Social Car Scheme, continue to go above and beyond to support isolated members of our community.

The positive outcomes of our work are significant. Our drivers, staff, and board members regularly hear heartfelt testimonials from passengers who describe how their lives have been enriched—and in many cases made bearable—through our service. Breaking down social isolation and loneliness is difficult to quantify, but it's written clearly on the faces of the people we serve each day.



#### Financial Review

The trustees continue to monitor and update their reserves policy in order to establish the level of reserves that are required to continue to provide support and investment into all the projects for the next year. The charity aims to hold a separate designated reserve fund of £216,000, equivalent to six months running costs.

The trustees feel that these levels of reserves are essential to enable the Charity to continue to provide its activities for the foreseeable future. The Reserves Policy is an integral part of the charity's planning, budget and forecasts.

#### Financial Results

At the end of the financial year the company has assets of £264,594 (2024 - £189,675) and liabilities of £10,474 (2024 - £40,704). The net assets of the company have increased by £105,149.

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**Trustees**

The current trustees are as set out on page 3

Wesley David Burnside  
Francis Eugene Casement  
David Lawrence Cole-Baker  
Helen Coulter  
Nicholas John McCrickard  
William Samuel Alexander Megraw  
Richard Clive Wallington  
David Patterson

In accordance with the Constitution, the trustees retire by rotation and, being eligible, offer themselves for re-election.

The secretary who served during the financial year was:

Mrs. Helen Coulter

**Compliance with Sector-Wide Legislation and Standards**

The company engages pro-actively with legislation, standards and codes which are developed for the sector. Down District Accessible Transport subscribes to and is compliant with the following:

- The Companies Act 2006
- The Charities SORP (FRS 102)

**Public Benefit**

In setting our objectives and planning our activities for the year the trustees have given careful consideration to, the Charity Commission of Northern Ireland's guidance on public benefit to ensure that the activities have helped achieve the charity purposes and provide a benefit to the beneficiaries. Down District Accessible Transport exists to develop, deliver, and maintain non- for- profit accessible community transport options for the public benefit of our members. Our public benefit provided through our transport services reduces social isolation and social exclusion by reaching the hard to reach and providing access to essential services and connections to the wider community. Our services improve the quality of life, health and well- being for our users by enabling access to health and medical facilities. Down District Accessible Transport's services also target social need by facilitating access to training and employment opportunities for our members.

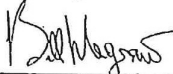
**Certification Statement**

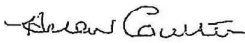
We confirm that the RTF grant has been used solely for the purposes intended and in accordance with the terms and conditions of the grant.

**The Auditors**

The auditors, Daly Park & Company Ltd, (Chartered Accountants) have indicated their willingness to continue in office in accordance with the provisions of Section 485 of the Companies Act 2006.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 02/06/25 and signed on its behalf by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
William Megraw  
Trustee

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Helen Coulter  
Trustee

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### STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

for the financial year ended 31 March 2025

The trustees, who are also directors of Down District Accessible Transport for the purposes of company law, are responsible for preparing the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company law requires the trustees as the directors to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under that law the trustees have elected to prepare the financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards and applicable law) including FRS102 "The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland". Under company law the trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company and of the net income or expenditure of the company for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

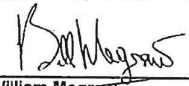
- select suitable accounting policies and apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charities SORP
- make judgements and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- state whether the financial statements have been prepared in accordance with applicable accounting standards, identify those standards, and note the effect and the reasons for any material departure from those standards; and
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in operation.

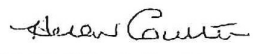
The trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006 and. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

In so far as the trustees are aware:

- there is no relevant audit information (information needed by the company's auditor in connection with preparing the auditor's report) of which the company's auditor is unaware, and
- the trustees have taken all the steps that they ought to have taken as trustees in order to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the company's auditor is aware of that information.

Approved by the Board of Trustees on 02/06/25 and signed on its behalf by:

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
William Megraw  
Trustee

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Helen Coulter  
Trustee