

What Happens to Our Most Vulnerable Citizens Now?

Welsh Government officials have recently confirmed to CTA Wales that the Community Transport Concessionary Fares Initiative (CTCFI) will come to an end on 31 March 2012. The scheme, which CTA has been managing on behalf of the WG since 2005, will have seen participating operators deliver nearly 1.3 million passenger journeys during that time for elderly and severely disabled people who would otherwise not be able to access a range of everyday services.

CTCFI was set up on the basis of ensuring equality for all, when it was realised that many

people were not able to use their 60+ bus pass on conventional public transport due to age or disability. However, it was set up on a competitive basis, with 15 schemes being picked to pilot different forms of the initiative in 2005-2008. Although this extension of concessionary fares to CT was, and continues to be, a first for the UK, and despite the external evaluation of the scheme recommending its roll out across Wales, the pilot has simply been extended for a further 3 years with the existing operators. CTA Wales had hoped that the WG would accept the recommendations, and extend CTCFI on a

separate fares basis, to bring it into line with the all-Wales concessionary fares, but this is not the case.

CTCFI was set up initially to ensure equality of access to elderly and disabled people. Since Wales' population is increasingly ageing, and since we have a slightly higher rate of disability and disadvantage than other parts of the UK, it is certain that the need for this service will continue to grow. Cutting CTCFI will not solve the issue of overcoming inequality, to which the Welsh Government is committed, and will have a disproportionate effect on our most vulnerable citizens.

May the Force Be with You!

As part of their Customer Charter, the NatWest is committed to help the communities in which they live and work. The result is Community Force – a small grant scheme that helps local projects and charities to raise awareness of their work, and hopefully make their plans a reality.

VEST CT was one of the lucky recipients this year, thanks to the support and persistence of their users and supporters. VEST serves the residents of Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan. It operates three services - Community Transport (CT) which is run 24/7, Dial-a-Bus and Ring & Ride (DR). CT currently owns 6 large minibuses providing transport to Day Centres, clubs and charities such as the Stroke Association, Age Concern, the Parkinson's Disease Society & CIB. It also provides transport to groups and individuals wishing to

travel further afield within the UK. Since May 2006, VEST has provided its services free of charge within Wales due to the CTCFI pilot scheme. When this ends in March 2012, VEST will need to revert to charging. Since CT's fares were last revised in 2003, the effects of inflation in fuel costs in particular and of the sterling/euro exchange rate on the cost of vehicles will mean a fare increase. VEST will use the cash to limit their fare increase next April and reduce their vehicle reserve deficit.

In West Wales, a new community minibus for the Fishguard, Newport and Letterston area has been awarded £6,000 by the same grant through the voting system. Pembrokeshire Voluntary Transport (PVT) provides affordable accessible transport for communities and voluntary groups in this rural area. PVT encourage the use of local volunteer

drivers, whom they train to the national MiDAS standard. Their five minibuses are all fully accessible with wheelchair access and low steps. Over the past few years, they have sought to base their buses throughout the county rather than centrally in Haverfordwest. This project helps to further this aim in the Fishguard area, with the arrival of a new fully accessible minibus in 2012 which will replace an aged minibus which has successfully been based in the area since August 2010 in order to prove demand.

The Community Force scheme makes 3 awards annually of £6k to groups in England and Wales. Groups apply, and if accepted, the projects are published on the NatWest website, where supporters register and vote for their favourite schemes during the voting month. For further information, visit communityforce.natwest.com

Community Transport Hall of Fame 2011!



Christian Schmidt—Sewta



The Dolen Teifi Crew



Dean Cawsey Dansa & Cllr Alun Thomas



Sarah Leyland-Jones PAVO, Phill Taylor Aberfan & Merthyr Vale and Ceri Rees Pembrokeshire CC



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