

SOMERSET SLINKY BUS SERVICE EXPANDS

Somerset Council is set to buy six new minibuses after calling the first 18 months of its Slinky service a major success. Launched in May 2024 with government support, the Digital Slinky lets residents in underserved areas pre-book transport for shopping, medical appointments, and other journeys.

Since its launch, over 10,000 trips have provided a vital lifeline to communities with limited public transport. Using Department for Transport grants the council will add six 16-seat wheelchair-accessible diesel minibuses and one electric minibus, at no cost to taxpayers, expanding the service across Taunton, Wellington, and Sedgemoor.



A NEW LEASE OF LIFE

Twelve community groups received council-owned minibuses in 2025 through Perth and Kinross Council's new Minibus Transfer Scheme. Instead of being sold at auction, council minibuses are now passed directly to local organisations once they reach the end of their service life.

The scheme was championed by Councillor Steven Carr, who championed the approval of a new policy in September 2024 to support the transfer of suitable vehicles to local groups. This scheme is backed by £50,000 from the Antipoverty Measures Fund to cover essential repairs to each vehicle.

NEW MINIBUS FOR LLANDOVERY

Llandovery and surrounding areas in South Wales have welcomed a new 16-seat minibus through the TowylLink initiative by Dolen Teifi. The volunteer-led service will support local schools, groups, and organisations of all ages. Funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund and supported by Carmarthenshire County Council, the project builds on almost 20 years of community transport provision in an area with limited public transport options.



community transport association
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Get in touch today. GM have been building minibuses for community transport groups since 1988.

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TOGETHER **IN TRANSPORT**

UPDATES, INSIGHT AND NEWS FROM COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

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GET A FUNDING BOOST

Multiple grants are open now to support running costs, staff training, and transport needs for community organisations across the UK.

Fund for Wales – Small Grant Scheme

Grants of £500–£2,000/year (up to 3 years) for small, community-run charities/voluntary orgs (with incomes <£100k/year)

Scottish Social Growth Fund

Flexible loans to expand, innovate, and strengthen sustainability for Scottish social enterprises & charities

Masonic Charitable Foundation

Small Grants: £1,000–£5,000/year, up to 3 years (charities with incomes of £25k–£500k)

Large Grants: £10,000–£60,000 over 1–3 years (charities with incomes of £500k–£5M)

National Lottery

Awards for All England: £300–£20,000 for up to 2 years

Reaching Communities England: £20,001–£20M for up to 5 years



LOCALS SECURE £180,000 IN GRANTS

Three community minibuses will soon operate in Clacton, Jaywick Sands, and Holland-on-Sea after local organisations secured more than £180,000 in funding from Tendring District Council. The grants, awarded to Tendring Community Transport, Harwich Connexions, and Clacton youth charity UTurn4Support, will support essential transport for all residents.



EXCITING TIMES AHEAD FOR 2026

Welcome to the very first edition of Together in Transport, GM Coachwork's new newsletter for the Community Transport sector. We've created this newsletter to share news, updates, and useful insights from across the UK. Whether it's changes in regulations, industry developments, or practical tips, our aim is to keep you informed and supported in your day-to-day operations. We hope Together in Transport becomes a helpful and engaging way for you to stay up to date and connected with the wider community transport network.

Emma

Emma Cooper
Editor

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VOLUNTEERS
RECOGNISED IN NEW
YEARS HONOURS LIST

Community Transport Volunteers are among those recognised in years New Years Honours List. They include Caroline Wilson who was awarded an MBE for her work for community transport in North Pembrokeshire with the Green Dragon Buses. She is also the Chair of trustees at Pembrokeshire Association of Community Transport Organisations. Another recipient was Adrian Emery who was awarded the British Empire Medal for his work as a transport volunteer at the Royal Voluntary Service.

PLUSBUS NETWORK COVERS 174 VILLAGES

Dorset Community Transport has relaunched its PlusBus services for 2026 with the widest coverage yet. Following a nine-month review, including community feedback and route trials, the network now links 174 villages to their local towns across 35 weekly or fortnightly routes.

The revamp adds 14 new routes and introduces new destinations such as Poole, Stalbridge, and Wareham, ensuring more communities have reliable access to public transport.



UK COMMUNITY TRANSPORT
FACES MINIBUS DRIVER SHORTAGE

Community Transport across the UK is struggling with a growing shortage of qualified minibus drivers, which is disrupting essential services and threatening the sector's future.

The issue stems from driver licensing: anyone driving a minibus over 3.5 tonnes needs a D1 licence either by test or via "grandfather rights" for those who obtained a car (B) licence before 1997. Only 1% of D1 licence holders are under 46, while 99% are aged 46-69. In the next five years, over 2.9 million licences—21% of the total—will be lost as drivers reach 70, shrinking the pool

of potential drivers and risking service cuts.

The CTA has proposed three solutions in their latest consultation:

- Keep the current system but invest in D1 training.
- Replace the D1 test with a training-based licence upgrade with safety standards.
- Exempt drivers working for operators with Section 19, 22 (GB), or 10B (NI) permits.

CTA members are invited to provide feedback before proposals are submitted to the government.

B1 LICENCE NOW
COVERS ELECTRIC
MINIBUSES

B1 car licence holders can now drive 12-16 seat electric minibuses (ZEVs) under a Section 19 permit. Vehicles can have a gross vehicle weight (GVW) of up to 4,250 kg to account for battery weight, with an extra 750 kg allowance for wheelchair-accessible minibuses, bringing the total GVW to 5,000 kg.

Got a story?
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£21,995



2019 Peugeot Boxer L4 H2
17 seats wheelchair access
16,000 miles
£24,500



NATIONAL LOTTERY FUNDS NEW MINIBUS

Llanwrtyd Wells Community Transport has welcomed a new fully accessible 17-seat Mercedes Sprinter to its twice-weekly "Happy Bus" service. Converted by GM Coachwork, the bus features low-level access steps and braille markings to ensure accessibility for all.

The community-led service supports shopping and social trips across Llanwrtyd, Builth, Llandrindod and surrounding villages. Operating without a fixed timetable, it allows its 50 users to choose destinations each week and provides a vital lifeline that helps residents stay independent and socially connected.



BRAKE CHECK NOW
MANDATORY

Since April 2025, every minibus safety inspection must include a Brake Performance Assessment (BPA) to check braking force, efficiency, and balance. Minibuses require inspections by a qualified engineer every 10 weeks for those under 12 years old, while those older than this must be checked every 6 weeks.

All inspection reports and BPA printouts must be kept for at least 15 months and made available on request, alongside regular maintenance and MOT records.

APPRENTICES FUNDRAISE FOR RURAL HIGHLAND COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

Fourth-year apprentices at Dounreay Nuclear Restoration Service in the Scottish Highlands have raised £2,411 for Caithness Rural Transport through a football tournament, raffles, and tombolas. The Wick-based community transport

service helps residents travel to shops, medical appointments, and social activities. Last year, it carried over 9,000 passengers, travelled more than 93,000 miles, and provided minibuses to community groups nearly 200 times.

