

TROWBRIDGE AREA COMMUNITY LINK SCHEME

Registered Charity Number 1075506

CHAIR'S AND TRUSTEES' ANNUAL REPORT 2022/2023

The AGM is the one opportunity I get to thank each of you face-to-face for your positive approach in providing the service for the benefit of those that rely on what is the only transport facility available in the Trowbridge area.

This has been an eventful year for TACLS. It's no surprise that Covid hasn't gone away and, like a hairy wart on the end of a nose, it's still managed to raise its ugly head amongst some of us. Some of our drivers have needed to step back to maintain their own safety and that of the clients too.

The minibus has been the biggest and resounding success thanks to the Team Minibus. Although a few of our drivers have been diverted from the core Link driving tasks, its impact has been minimal. Nicola will give us more details on the project. Financial support for the minibus has been discussed at the Management Committee meeting and agreed that the core TACLS Account will provide a sum of money towards its eventual purchase. It will be confirmed at a future Management Committee meeting and the members will be formally informed in the minutes to that meeting.

We've had an influx of new volunteers which has taken away much of the pressure. A few clients now take advantage of telephone consultations with their GPs which have seen some reduction in local trips to their GPs. Flu and covid vaccination programmes have seen an increase in requests to a bewildering variety of venues and, with the impact of the cost-of-living pressures, we see the occasional request for food bank deliveries.

We shall be saying cheerio and thanks to John Freeman who has been our Treasurer for some years. His, what for me are the perplexing array of spreadsheets, have ensured the financial stability of TACLS. I can't thank you enough, John, for everything you have done.

A feasibility study has been carried out by Sandra and Brett into transferring the transferring the TACLS database onto the web-based Wiltshire County Link database. This will allow not only the coordinators to log onto this centralized database from their own laptop, along with a dedicated mobile phone, without the need to take the current laptop and mobile phone from one house to the next.

It will also enable the drivers to access and complete their Expenses and submit them to the Treasurer at the end of the month. You'll also be able to log on at any time to check your own trip list and to check your own absences. Although at present, this is still a work-in-process, we are almost there. I had a

cruise around this new system today. Good!

Our overall financial situation in the year 2022 to 2023 has been satisfactory and stable. We have just about broken even, I believe, thanks in part to the annual core funding provided by the town council.

Some of our clients, including the estate of Gordon Schwarz and a personal donation from the lovely Brenda Dixon, have been generous. Most clients are known to be generous with their envelope donations, despite these being anonymous at the time they're handed to the driver, on opening the envelopes the money given sometimes significantly exceed the expenses relative to the miles the trip had taken.

John will give further details of our financial status for 2022 to 23 shortly.

Our Clients. Our objective is simply to help people in need, mostly the elderly and those with disabilities, for whom using public transport and taxis is not a feasible option. Our clients remain our priority, after all it's the reason we are providing this service after all, and it is primarily their door-to-door transport needs at a cost that is affordable for them, and with a much-reduced time because their driver is ready to take them home straight away.

Many of our clients live alone, as you are aware, and the Link coordinator and the driver may be the only person they've spoken with or seen for a while. This is probably why the driver must give the clients a thorough listening-to during their journey.

We don't just provide volunteer drivers to take the client to doctor's, dentist's and hospital appointments, we also offer shopping trips, minibus drop-offs to clubs, picking up food packs from the food bank and even a befriending service for people who suffer from loneliness.

Clients going to hospital appointments can be stressed enough with their impending appointment without having to worry about transport there and back again, so I think the biggest impact we provide is to take away their transport worries.

Now for the subject of donations. We inform our clients of the approximate cost of the trip for our drivers and that if they can cover that cost it would help us to continue our service. We do stress that if they can't afford this then simply put what they can afford into the envelope. We do understand how some suffer from financial hardship, particularly during this time of financial hardship. So it is still important we continue to provide that service no matter their financial situation – we shouldn't judge their situation. We are a charity and the money placed in the envelope is a donation, not a charge. Contrary to the Good Practice Guide,

which states that Link **may** operate a tariff system for long distance drives out of Wiltshire County, we rarely actually do so.

Our Coordinators. The process is that a client phones the coordinator on the Link mobile number and requests the help of a volunteer driver with a car to take them to their appointment. The call is answered by the coordinator, who at that point is the hub of the Link Scheme. At times, I've answered the phone to people asking, "I want a Link Taxi this afternoon" or "tomorrow morning". I then give 'em them the news update!

Generally, we request at least 48 hours' notice for local trip requests, even more for RUH and Bristol if we're lucky. Short notice requests aren't unusual even at the very last minute at the end of the day when We're about to close down. Food bank requests are virtually all made on the morning they are needed – the food bank closes at 12.30pm. Thank goodness for the patience of our drivers.

We don't quite have enough coordinators to cover each day of the week, and things can turn a bit pear-shaped when holidays and illnesses require individual coordinators to work two or even three days a week. In short, we are constantly looking for new coordinators and despite encouraging noises from interested people, we are not very successful. However, the good news is Kim Young has recently said she will return to cording after a lay-off for a while which helps tremendously.

I would like to give my thanks to all the coordinators for the often-long days sitting at the laptop and trying to keep cheerful when the phone rings.

Our Drivers. Our stalwart and dedicated, front-line volunteers deliver our service direct to our clients. Thanks purely to their dedication and flexibility, our scheme continues to provide an efficient and effective service. Our clients regularly state their appreciation of the charm and friendliness of our drivers, along with gratitude for the quality service that our drivers provide.

I know that a couple of our volunteers also provide befriending and support services in addition to the trips they carry out, many of which are not recorded as separate tasks, nor even added to the overall number of hours recorded by our volunteers.

Drivers have occasionally commented on the challenge a client may face in caring for themselves in their own home. For times such as this we have a Safeguarding policy, thanks to Jane, that the drivers should all have a copy of. Drivers also run foul of parking and clean-air zone wombles, resulting in the imposition of fines. Therefore, as our volunteer drivers are pivotal in delivering high-quality services to the clients, as such, it is the Committee's responsibility to provide all the support that the drivers require, including trying to overcome these

random challenges that changes to hospital parking gives us.

All the coordinators and members of the Committee will join me, I'm sure, in thanking our Drivers for their sterling efforts in covering the tasks that we pass on to them. Despite the pressure, they make our work as coordinators a pleasure.

Introducing you to the members of the Management Committee:

Our Management Committee is a cohesive team that, before the pandemic, met for a meeting every second month. They conduct a vast number of hours in the management of the scheme, including advising me of the problems and successes. Presently the committee is comprised of: -

The Chairperson: I took over the position 6 years ago and have been privileged to chair the 2- or 3-monthly committee meetings – and I still strive to get it right! I started off as a driver in 2012, had to stop due to health constraints so became a coordinator in 2015. I have been fortunate to experience most of the aspects of the Link scheme.

I would like to personally thank the Committee and Coordinators for being patient with me in these 5 years, and all the volunteers for making my post pleasurable. Both supporting me and, more importantly, supporting all of you, are:

Our Vice-Chair, Nicola Blackmore continues to demonstrate her valuable knowledge and experience. She doggedly pursues the new hospital parking requirements despite receiving conflicting messages from the parking rottweilers at the hospitals. She efficiently manages the responsibilities of Recruitment Volunteer Support Officer including the DBS aspects. However, her crowning glory is the challenge she took on when she had the idea of taking over the community minibus. Aply assisted by Sandra, the gamble paid off. She accessed a plethora of funding sources and she now fronts the minibus project. She has an extremely busy appointment on the Committee.

Our Secretary, Maureen Brent, often works tirelessly redirecting emails from me, taking the minutes at our AGM and bi-monthly committee meetings, when covid allows us to hold them, and writing out the excellent minutes of our meetings. Together with Sandra, they provide us with the vittles at our coffee mornings. Maureen also fits in coordinating once or twice a week, loading poor Chris, her husband, with driving tasks.

Our Chief Coordinator, Margaret Goodall, continues in the post as our Chief Coordinator while driving as a volunteer too. Her many years with the scheme make her the most ideal person to hold the post where she leads from the front with her innovative ideas that keep the business of coordinating ticking over.

She is also in the enviable position of being able to load her husband, Peter, with driving tasks.

Our Treasurer, John Freeman, has carried out the job most efficiently and effectively for quite a few years, and despite being there in the background, he has ensured that all expense payments are made promptly, client donations are banked regularly, and proper records are maintained; his demanding post has been pivotal in ensuring finances are managed and claims are paid promptly. From all outward appearances, he has made the job look easy especially when producing the mind-boggling annual spreadsheets.

I'd like to give John our warmest thanks and appreciation for a job well done and wish him all the very best for the future.

After several years in post, John now hands over the post to Ken Foster. On behalf of the committee, I wish Ken the best of success for the future as Treasurer for TACLS.

Our Deputy Treasurer, Mike Mortimer, has ably supported, John particularly on the cash counting and banking, and on payment of expenses. Although he spends much of his time caring for his dear wife, Angela, he still fits in the bank transfer payments to our drivers and other committee members on behalf of the Treasurer.

Safeguarding Representative, Jane Boyce. She was co-opted in 2020 as the H&S committee member primarily as a direct result of the covid pandemic but she developed the post of Safeguarding Officer since then. Before her retirement, her degree qualifications and appointment as the Health and Safety Services Manager at the RUH gave her immense knowledge and experience that she could use to our benefit. She stepped back from the H&S role on the committee but will continue providing valuable safeguarding advice to the committee until such time a nomination for the Safeguarding Officer is received. She produced the written safeguarding policy and has provided training documentation.

Our System Support & Events Officer, Sandra Fry arranges the big events that occur during the year, including the New Year lunch, our monthly coffee mornings (with Maureen) and the occasional Sunday lunches. Together with Brett, they have investigated the migration of the TACLS database onto the secure Wiltshire Council web-based Wiltshire Link website. She combines this demanding post with that of coordinator, occasionally stepping in when one or more other coordinators, including yours truly, are away on holiday.

Communications Officer, Brett Davies soon settled into the task of coordinator but promptly showed his quality when the feasibility of upgrading the Link

database and migrating it onto the County website was first proposed. The plan is moving forwards step by step.

Our Other Committee Members:

Lynn Hitchcock is very busy as a driver, taking on local trips with a few a little further afield from time to time. She willingly helps with TACLS events as well as providing ideas and support at our committee meetings.

Press and Publicity Officer, Sue Holt. Although she's not actually a committee member because of her many other commitments, she continues to promote TACLS through letters and articles in the Wiltshire Times and has been instrumental over recent years in having leaflets and posters produced. So effective have they been that our coordinators often hear from new clients and, on occasion, from prospective volunteers that discovered us thanks to these leaflets and newspaper articles. Her efforts have greatly assisted Nicola in recruiting more volunteers. Her work to have the database developed for TACLS has given us wider publicity.

We shall shortly be discussing the establishment of the post of Minibus Manager.

Open Forum:

I shall hold a *brief* Open Forum in a moment (I stress 'brief'). We shall do our best to answer any questions or concerns you may have.

Aside from the Link volunteers, I would like to mention the external organization that give us advice and support should we request it:

The Link Project Team –It is based with Community First in Devizes.
Its website is www.wiltshirelink.org.uk.

Finally:

I would like to thank all members of TACLS who make my post as Chairman enjoyable and fulfilling.

THANK YOU, EVERYONE.

Trowbridge Area Community Link Scheme

Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2023

	As at 31/03/2023		As at 31/03/2022	
	£	£	£	£
FIXED ASSETS				
Computer: Cost	2261		2261	
Computer: Cumulative depreciation	2260		2260	
		1		1
Equipment: Cost	545		545	
Equipment: Cumulative depreciation	544		544	
		1		1
NET FIXED ASSETS		2		2
CURRENT ASSETS				
Cash at Bank: COIF Deposit Account	16867		16568	
Cash at Bank: CAF Current Account	12218		12144	
Cash at Bank: Minibus Account	4578		0	
NET CURRENT ASSETS		33663		28712
TOTAL ASSETS		33665		28714
Surplus/(Deficit) for Year (Link)		373		2059
Surplus/(Deficit) for Year (Minibus)		4578		0
BALANCES CARRIED FORWARD				
Link		29087		28714
Minibus		4578		0
TOTAL		33665		28714



Section A Independent Examiner's Report

Report to the trustees/ members of **TRONBRIDGE AREA COMMUNITY LINK SCHEME**

On accounts for the year ended **MARCH 2023** Charity no (if any) **1075506**

Set out on pages

I report to the trustees on my examination of the accounts of the above charity ("the Trust") for the year ended

Responsibilities and basis of report As the charity trustees of the Trust, you are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the requirements of the Charities Act 2011 ("the Act").

I report in respect of my examination of the Trust's accounts carried out under section 145 of the 2011 Act and in carrying out my examination, I have followed the applicable Directions given by the Charity Commission under section 145(5)(b) of the Act.

Independent examiner's statement I have completed my examination. I confirm that no material matters have come to my attention (~~other than that disclosed below~~*) in connection with the examination which gives me cause to believe that in, any material respect:

- accounting records were not kept in accordance with section 130 of the Act or
- the accounts do not accord with the accounting records

I have no concerns and have come across no other matters in connection with the examination to which attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached.

* Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply.

Signed: **M R Houghton** Date: **4/08/2023**

Name: **MARTIN RICHARD HOUGHTON**

Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any): **MCM I CHARTERED MANAGEMENT INSTITUTE**

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