

Bridge Accessible Transport Limited

Report of the Trustees **for the Year Ended 31 March 2023**

The trustees who are also directors of the charity for the purposes of the Companies Act 2006, present their report with the financial statements of the charity for the year ended 31 March 2023. The trustees have adopted the provisions of Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019).

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Objectives and aims

In furtherance of our aims, our current strategy is to provide the following services:

- An accessible Community Transport Service to individual members of the scheme
- A Shopmobility hire service to members to access the city and further afield.
- Training, advice and access information to local community and voluntary transport groups
- Social events for members as part of our public benefit work which includes a Shopping Night for older people and people with disabilities, Accessible Rambles to local events, venues and places of interest in the city and outlying environment.

The company has a wholly owned trading subsidiary, Bridge AT Enterprises Limited, this enterprise was set up on 08/08/2007 to provide contracted Door to Door transport services, training and related services.

We provide a fully guided service, transporting people from their home; places of work; shopping centres; town centre; visiting friends; respite facilities; local technical colleges; garden centres; and to keep medical and health appointments.

Bridge provides accessible transport for regular social and community activities for our members focusing on taking people from their homes to where they want to go and removing access barriers for people travelling alone.

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OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Significant activities

Bridge Accessible Transport has this year provided services to support people with reduced mobility to stay independent and participate in local community activities; to access vital health care and social appointments; work placements and employment. Our service is often the only means of transport for many people with restricted mobility.

During the reporting period we carried out the following services:

1. Door to Door service (Group transport service)
2. Individual Door to Door service (Disability Action Transport Scheme)
3. Assisted Travel Service (Western Health & Social Services Trust)
4. Shopmobility Foyle equipment hire service, (Meet and Greet, and Sighted guiding service)
5. A zero-emission Electric Minibus Project assessing the longer term financial and environmental benefits of using fully electric vehicle on our services.

Late in the year, in early March 2023, Bridge Transport and the N.I. Community Transport Sector again faced continued uncertainty due to the political instability at Stormont, and that funding from DFI may not be guaranteed for 2023-24. This has been a challenging year in which we continued to provide socially necessary journeys for community benefit with an impending funding decrease of 5%.

The flexibility and dedication of the charity's Manager, Office staff, Shopmobility Coordinator, driving staff, volunteers and dedicated Management Committee contributed to the success this year in providing accessible transport and mobility hire services to members.

Staff have facilitated 27,000 member requests for transport services for the period 2022-23 and completed 21,575 passenger trips. The charity currently has 1,431 registered members and 54 registered groups. 69 new members were enrolled to our Accessible Transport Service during this financial period.

The charity provided 12,045 mobility equipment hires for the period through our Shopmobility Foyle service, which included 2,339 mobility scooter hires, 8,761 wheelchairs hires and 945 rollator assisted hires to our 1,331 registered Shopmobility members. 278 new members were enrolled during this financial period.

The charity introduced our zero emission fully accessible Electric Minibus in October 2022. The charity was successful in our bid to the DFI Blue Green Capital Infrastructure Fund to purchase a 9-seater accessible vehicle to add to our fleet. This vehicle is the charity's first pilot vehicle which will be used to assess the longer term financial and environmental benefits of electric vehicles providing door to door services for members use in the charity's catchment area.

The success of BAT to date is due to the ongoing financial assistance provided under The Disability Action's Transport scheme (DATS) which operates in and around large towns throughout N.I. via funding from the Department for Infrastructure (DFI) ("Transport Programme for People with Disabilities").

This vital accessible transport and mobility hire service, which are run for social purposes, not for profit, would not be available without this support.

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OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

Public benefit

In shaping Bridge Accessible Transport's objectives and planning activities, the management Committee and senior staff have considered the Charity Commission NI guidance on public benefit.

Bridge Accessible Transport provides a door to door affordable and accessible transport service for disabled and older people who have complex high level support requirements who find it unreasonably difficult, or do not have access to mainstream transport modes.

We provide support and pastoral care to people with often high-level complex support requirements and would be significantly marginalised and disadvantaged in accessing key services and equitable participation in the community. People who benefit from the essential services offered by Bridge Accessible Transport are very marginalised individuals living in our community; older people with mobility and health issues who need to travel to attend health and social appointments, people with disabilities using wheelchairs who cannot transfer to a vehicle seat, young people with learning disabilities attending day opportunities and work placements, people on low income, women; men; people who are blind or partially sighted looking to get out and about in the city; people living on their own with no access to a car. The term accessible transport goes beyond physical features and adaptations but also relates to the care and support required to address the travel needs of our passengers.

Our annual customer review where members reported on the benefits of using our services again reinforced how vital our services are to individual members and their families/carers to enable people to stay independent and access key vital services.

The review outlined key essential services which delivered the greatest level of support to our passengers including.

Development of individual person-centred support plans to address passenger requirements which included risk assessments and safeguarding protocols to protect their health safety and wellbeing.

Cultivating strong personal relationships with passengers, personal support networks including families, guardians to ensure that our services are responsive to both passengers and those responsible for their care.

Providing respite for primary carers and family members.

Supervision of passengers who are particularly vulnerable as and when required including people with Alzheimer's, Dementia, severe depression, and mental health issues, learning disabilities, sight loss and hearing impairment as well as people with mobility impairments.

Offering referral services to other agencies where other types of care and interventions are necessary, for example staying with people in their own homes while they are waiting on emergency services or require additional support for a variety of reasons.

Providing mobility aids and equipment to our members as and when the need arises through our sister organisation Shopmobility Foyle.

Working with and engaging with other agencies including Health & Social Care Trusts, social workers and GP's, physiotherapists, and Occupational therapists identifying additional care and support requirements that our passengers may have. This is particularly important for passengers who live on their own and have limited or no personal support networks.

Bridge Accessible Transport Limited

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FINANCIAL REVIEW

Financial position

The statement of financial activities for the year is presented on page 12 of these financial statements. During the year the principal funder of the charity was the Department for Infrastructure (DFI) through the disability Action Transport Scheme (DATS). Separate funding was received from the Western Health and Social Care Trust for the Assisted Travel Scheme. During the year, capital funding was also received under the DFI Blue / Green Capital Infrastructure fund to assist with the purchase of a fully accessible electric vehicle and charger. Funding was also received for Shopmobility Foyle services from the Department for Infrastructure (DfI), through the Transport Programme for People with Disabilities (TPPD). All grants were used solely for the purposes intended and in accordance with the terms and conditions of grant.

Reserves policy

The charity has conducted a review in relation to its reserves policy. The trustees acknowledge the need for a fund to ensure the financial stability of the charity and have identified several key areas for which reserves should be maintained to cover future costs. These costs would arise in the event of there being a break in the receipt of funding or in the event of cessation of activities of the company. There will also be future capital costs relating to the purchase of new vehicles by the company to update the fleet of vehicles. In light of this, the company has allocated reserves to cover the following costs:

- the estimated running costs of the charity for six months in the event of a delay in the receipt of funding
- vehicle running costs including parking and storage of vehicles
- to pay employees in the event of the company having to put its employees on notice and pay statutory redundancy
- to pay office and accommodation costs
- to enable all creditors to be paid in full in the event of the cessation of the company
- future capital investment in new vehicles

The current fleet of vehicles being operated by the company, comprises seven vehicles and three of these are over six years old. These older vehicles are approaching the end of their operational lives and are expensive to maintain and the charity will undertake to update the fleet over the coming years. For this reason, the company has established a capital fund which will be used to replace two older vehicles. The estimated cost of replacing these ageing vehicles is estimated to be £125,000 and the company are allocating reserves towards this fund to facilitate the purchase of new vehicles.

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FUTURE PLANS

To maintain the charity's good governance and quality assurance standards throughout the organisation to provide the socially necessary and essential transport and mobility hire services to the local community.

1. Bridge Transport has been established to provide a quality, efficient and effective transport service for people with reduced mobility. It will continue networking locally and regionally with regular user consultation that feeds back to services
2. Customer care and service is paramount to the success of the project and will be delivered through:
 - Providing refresher Training courses for all staff
 - D1 CPC annual modules completed
 - Introduction of in house trainer to provide training in MiDAS, Car MPV and Passenger Assistants training
 - Maintain our high levels of safety for members using services
3. Continuity of Public funding; income generation and continued staffing levels to preserve independent mobility for members.
 - Maintain current levels of service
 - Raising finance to replace two vehicles to meet current demand
4. Review, update and maintain in-house operating, management and financial systems, matching outcomes with resource inputs.
 - New premises required for organisation
 - Internal audits/External audits to continue

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Governing document

The company was incorporated on 02/12/1988, to provide an on-call service for physically disabled people, who are unable to use public or private transport, in association with other charitable groups, and membership is open to any disabled person who is likely to use the service. Our over-arching aim is to promote and deliver high quality accessible transport services in the Derry/Londonderry area. By special resolution of the Company, the name was changed to Bridge Accessible Transport Limited.

Bridge Accessible Transport is a Limited Company and registered as a charity in N.I. in 28/05/1996. It is governed by its Memorandum and Articles of Association. In the event of the company being wound up liability is limited to £1 per member.

Induction and training of new trustees

New trustees undergo an induction programme to brief them on the range of services provided by Bridge Accessible Transport. They are provided with a copy of the Company's Memorandum and Articles of Association, a profile of current directors/the organisation and copies of all relevant company policies and procedures are also provided.

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Registered Company number

NI022203 (Northern Ireland)

Registered Charity number

103646

Bridge Accessible Transport Limited

Report of the Trustees **for the Year Ended 31 March 2023**

Registered office

Unit 1 (Ground Floor)
Ballinska Road
Springtown Industrial Estate
Derry
Co. Derry
BT48 0NA

Trustees

Mrs Dolores Hanigan
Ms Angelina Cooper
Mr Terry McNamee
Mr Tony O'Reilly

Company Secretary

Mr Terry McNamee

Auditors

Shaun McAteer & Co. Ltd
5 Northland Road, Derry
BT48 7HX

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

The trustees (who are also the directors of Bridge Accessible Transport Limited for the purposes of company law) are responsible for preparing the Report of the Trustees and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

Company law requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, of the charitable company for that period. In preparing those financial statements, the trustees are required to

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- observe the methods and principles in the Charity SORP;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charitable company will continue in business.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charitable company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charitable 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 of which the charitable company's auditors are unaware; and
- the trustees have taken all steps that they ought to have taken to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the auditors are aware of that information.

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for the Year Ended 31 March 2023

AUDITORS

The auditors, Shaun McAteer & Co. Ltd, will be proposed for re-appointment at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting.

This report has been prepared in accordance with the special provisions of Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006 relating to small companies.

Approved by order of the board of trustees on 22 December 2023 and signed on its behalf by:

Ms Angelina Cooper - Trustee