



Annual Report April 2020 to March 2021

Prepared by Office Manager, Pru Burton

We have had a difficult year dealing with the changes brought about by the pandemic, but we have continued to provide our service without interruption supporting the elderly, vulnerable and disabled in Royston, the surrounding villages of North Hertfordshire, South Cambridgeshire and just over the border into Essex.

Business Levels and Dealing with the Pandemic

As we went into lockdown on 23rd March 2020, our level of business reduced drastically and at the same time we lost over 80% of our drivers as they were aged over 70 and had to isolate. By using Facebook, we recruited some new, younger drivers to help, as we adjusted to Lockdown.

We introduced protocols and measures, which we are still adhering to, to ensure our drivers and clients remained as safe as possible. We are very grateful to those volunteer drivers who were prepared to put themselves in harm's way and drive for us.

One good result from the pandemic was the increase in interest in volunteering. Over the year we signed up 48 new volunteer drivers, some did not work out, some only lasted a short while, but at the end of the year 34 new ones were still with us. Some of our 2019 volunteers have returned to driving over the last year, giving us an end of year total of 55 active drivers.

	Apr 2019 -Mar 2020		Apr 2020-Mar2021		Change
	Trips	Miles	Trips	Miles	Trips
Car trips commencing in Hertfordshire	4,630	92,981	1,462	38,780	-68%
Car trips commencing in Cambridgeshire	4,385	72,436	1,451	25,727	-67%
Other car trips	76	1,938	27	487	-64%
Total RDCT vehicle trips	2,315	33,602	218	4,368	-91%
Total	11,406	200,957	3,158	69,362	-72%
Number of Drivers @ (end of year)	82		55		-33%

In 2020/21 90% of journeys were for medical reasons

In 2019/20 this figure was 63%

Funding and Fundraising

Our yearly funding applications to South Cambridgeshire District Council, Hertfordshire County Council, Cambridge & Peterborough CCG were again met, and payments received in April 2020. Cambridgeshire County Council continued to support us with a monthly payment linked to mileages driven, as our number of trips fell, this funding was critically affected and fell by 64%. Income from our rebate system fell by 54% as the number of trips reduced.

Our 300 club continues to be well supported, bringing in approximately £5000 in 2020/21. Our thanks in particular to trustee, Pat Johnson who manages the administration of this fundraiser. Our fundraising team put in many applications to cover the shortfall and had successes with coronavirus funds from Hertfordshire and Cambridgeshire councils and most notably £10,000 from The National Lottery. These extra funds as well as cost-saving measures ensured our financial stability for the year.

Staff & Board

In our previous financial year, the scheme manager, David Wherrell, retired and the board decided not to replace him as a cost-saving measure. Pru Burton was promoted to Office Manager, a new full-time coordinator, Maryon Hathaway, started in April 2020. The trustees stepped up and became more involved in the running of the scheme to support Pru Burton.

There were changes on the Board of Trustees, Dr John Hedges becoming our new chairman in May as F John Smith retired, two new Trustees were recruited, in October Jim Rawles (operations trustee), in November Kaylee Bonja (for IT & Data). Helen Melville-Smith was formally appointed as Company Secretary.

Our staff were furloughed as necessary during the year, our co-ordinators when unable to work from home and our paid part-time bus drivers throughout the pandemic, as bus work fell to zero. Two of our three part-time paid drivers retired in September 2020.

Unfortunately, we have lost 2 of our valuable experienced office volunteers. Though we have recruited more, they are not as regularly available so we are still short for day to day for full cover.

Office Changes

We have made a significant number of changes and updates to office systems and procedures this year, which were all required. This, together with new people needing training, has taken up a considerable amount of time and energy, but, as a consequence, the governance of the scheme has been vastly improved, making it a more robust organisation.

Vehicles

Our fleet of 5 vehicles were infrequently used during 2020/21 whilst the annual costs of insurance and maintenance remained. In September we put 3 vehicles on SORN. At the beginning of March 2021, we lost our most useful vehicle, a Peugeot Boxer minibus, as the engine failed and it had to be sold as unroadworthy.

A decision has been made to sell our largest bus, a Mellor conversion as it is not suitable for our requirements, however that is not proving easy, due to the current market situation. The Master minibus continues to operate although its age means it needs replacing. The vehicle fleet has been a drain on our resources this year, we will have to wait to see how the volume of trips recover before we are able to make some decisions.

Future

We have adapted our service as we have come out of lockdown and the number of car trips is gradually increasing monthly. There are a couple of day centres open, but most of our regular minibus business has still not returned. Pru Burton will be retiring at the end of August 2021 and the board are currently assessing the office requirement and recruiting. We will continue to assess and adapt as the country recovers from the pandemic.