

Woking Community Transport



Bustler is working for Woking



Managing Director
Guy Padfield-Wilkins

Founded in 1991, Woking Community Transport, or Bustler as it's better known, operates as a not-for-profit organisation for the benefit of the local community. Registered as a society in 2014, it provides accessible door-to-door transport to those who would otherwise be socially excluded because of poverty, disability or age. Managing Director Guy Padfield-Wilkins tells *The Parliamentary Review* that WCT operates a number of services on behalf of Woking Borough Council, Surrey County Council and its own members.

Completing over 100,000 journeys every year, our core services enable social inclusion, and include dial-a-ride, centres for community transport, home-to-school and special needs centre transport. We also work with the NHS and ambulance trusts to provide hospital support.

Investing in our services

Our dial-a-ride service, transporting residents of Woking Borough with reduced mobility from door to door, has been, and always will be, a core part of what we do. Investment in recent years has included new on-board vehicle technology, which contributes to passenger safety, and multiple new vehicle purchases, which have included low-floor variants, providing easier access for our customers.

Both dial-a-ride membership and journey numbers have grown year on year. Membership is on target to surpass 3,000 by the end of 2019, and is expected to continue to increase as a result of local need and an aging population. Unlike some other borough dial-a-ride schemes, we continue to offer membership to

FACTS ABOUT WOKING COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

- » Managing Director: Guy Padfield-Wilkins
- » Established in 1991
- » Based in Woking
- » Services: Community transport
- » No. of employees: Around 100
- » www.wokingbustler.org.uk

our customers free of charge. Our minibuses are specially adapted to cater for people with disabilities, including wheelchair and assistance dog users. Importantly, customers do not have to be disabled in order to use the service, which is available to all, regardless of their age or mobility difficulty. If extra assistance is needed, an escort may also travel for free.

Core services at the heart of the community

In addition to dial-a-ride, our core work includes two other services:

- » Group transport: Our minibuses are available for use by all community groups on an hourly, daily or weekly basis. Groups can use their own driver – subject to checks and a driving assessment – or WCT can provide a driver. This service is used by many local organisations and community groups including schools, sports teams and residential care homes.
- » Town centre buggy: The Woking town centre buggy transports people who have difficulty in walking anywhere within the pedestrianised area of Woking town centre for free. Operating for over 20 years, the buggy transports around 3,000 passengers per year and has operated throughout numerous changes to the town centre.

We provide a reliable, personal and friendly service designed to help customers enjoy greater freedom and independence. All our drivers are fully trained to ensure that every journey is as comfortable and straightforward as possible.

Operating local contracts has enabled us to increase our fleet size, which in turn has increased overall passenger numbers. Contracted vehicles are typically only used for a couple of hours in the morning and a couple of hours in the afternoon. They are, therefore, available with or without a driver for community use during the middle part of the day. Many local groups have benefited from this arrangement.

Contracted work with Surrey County Council includes SEND home-to-school, adult and children centre transport and adult social services.

Being diverse in the face of challenges

Section 19 permits may be granted to organisations that operate vehicles without a view to profit when transporting their members. The recent controversy surrounding operating contracts on such permits, and conflicting messages from the Department for Transport, has resulted in a ban on WCT and other Section 19 permit holders from operating new SCC contracts via the tender process.

All contracts operated by WCT on behalf of SCC deliver much-needed transport for passengers with special educational needs and disabilities. Contracts are operated at below commercial rates, on a full cost recovery basis.

Our diversity has included community NHS hub services, which has allowed us to continually increase the work we undertake on behalf of the NHS in respect of hospital-related non-emergency patient transport, by transporting people who are 75 years old or over to community hospital hubs.

“We provide a reliable, personal and friendly service”

Dial-a-ride enabling social inclusion



As a community transport provider, we go beyond the requirements of operating on a Section 19 permit. We hold, for example, the management Certificate of Professional Competence in passenger transport and our vehicles are inspected daily by our drivers and every ten weeks at our maintenance facility. Vehicle servicing is carried out in accordance with the manufacturer's recommendations, and passenger lifts are inspected and tested in accordance with the Lifting Operations Lifting Equipment Regulations 1998. Although our drivers do not hold Certificate of Professional Competence cards, they do undergo minibus driver awareness scheme training, which we feel is more appropriate for the work they undertake.

Our staff are our most valuable asset

With almost 100 staff, the majority of whom have retired from a previous career, we are providing opportunities for younger and older people alike. Drivers and passenger assistants go through an extensive recruitment process, which at times has resulted in us losing potential volunteers as a result of the time taken. Our stringent approach, however, ensures that those who do join us are right for the job.

Our staff are, of course, our most valuable asset and we do our utmost to reflect this through training and recruitment. Following a formal interview, for example, drivers must provide two references, complete a security vetting interview and undergo a DBS check. Additionally, they partake in a full LGV medical and safeguarding training, and complete first aid, MiDAS and manual handling training. Following this, up to a week is spent shadowing an experienced driver.

Staff are provided with a full summer and winter uniform, which ensures they are easily recognisable to our customers, while at the same time displaying a professional image and a sense of belonging.



Providing the Woking community with garage services for over 30 years

The environment and our future

We operate a large number of vehicles and are, as such, conscious of our environmental impact. As a standard we only purchase new vehicles with the latest Euro 6 engines – the latest environmental directive set by the EU to reduce levels of harmful pollutants – but plan to take further steps this financial year by purchasing fully electric vehicles.

This process has been challenging so far. Electric minibuses, for example, have limited choice and cost more than double the diesel equivalent. Our plan to move to fully electric vehicles has only become a possibility due to the support of Woking Borough Council.

“Drivers and passenger escorts go through an extensive recruitment process”



Our town centre buggy in action

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Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss's Foreword For The Parliamentary Review

By Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss

Even by the standards of the day –this has been one of the most exciting and unpredictable years in British politics.

The leadership election we've just seen marks a huge moment in our country's history. This government is taking a decisive new direction, embracing the opportunities of Brexit and preparing our country to flourish outside the EU.

As international trade secretary, I'll be driving forward work on the free trade agreements that are going to be a priority for the government. Free trade isn't just an abstract concept bandied around by technocrats. It is crucial for a strong economy and for the ability of families to make ends meet. Free trade benefits people in every part of our country, as British firms export to new markets and people doing the weekly shop have access to a wider choice of goods at lower prices.

The essence of free trade is in the title: freedom. It's about giving people the power to exchange their goods without heavy government taxation or interference. Commerce and free exchange are the engine room of prosperity and social mobility. I'm determined to tackle the forces who want to hold that back.

One of my priorities is agreeing an exciting new free trade deal with the US, building on the great relationship between our two countries and the Prime Minister and US President. But I'll also be talking to other partners including New Zealand, Australia and fast-growing Asian markets.

And with the EU too, we want a friendly and constructive relationship, as constitutional equals, and as friends and partners in facing the challenges that lie ahead – a relationship based on a deep free trade agreement. Our country produces some of the world's most successful exports, and the opportunity to bring these to the rest of the world should make us all excited about the future. It is this excitement, optimism and ambition which I believe will come to define this government.

For too long now, we have been told Britain isn't big or important enough to survive outside the EU – that we have to accept a deal that reflects our reduced circumstances. I say that's rubbish. With the right policies in place, we can be the most competitive, free-thinking, prosperous nation on Earth exporting to the world and leading in new developments like AI. To do that, we'll give the brilliant next generation of entrepreneurs the tools they need to succeed. Since 2015, there has been a staggering 85 per cent rise in the number of businesses set up by 18 to 24 year olds – twice the level set up by the same age group in France and Germany. We'll help them flourish by championing enterprise, cutting taxes and making regulation flexible and responsive to their needs.

As we do that, we'll level up and unite all parts of the UK with great transport links, fibre broadband in every home and proper school funding, so everyone shares in our country's success.

2019 has been the year of brewing economic and political revolution. 2020 will be the year when a revitalised Conservative government turbo charges the economy, boosts prospects for people across the country, and catapults Britain back to the forefront of the world stage.