



CommunityTransportDG

**A new region-wide organisation supporting transport outcomes across
Dumfries & Galloway.**

Business Plan 2026-2030

1. Executive Summary

1.1. What's all this about?

- A step change in our regional transport infrastructure is needed to better support the people of D&G, and to do so more cost effectively.
- Transport underpins many regional outcomes, but current models mean that many services are being delivered at too high a cost to be sustainable.
- There is a lever we can pull to unlock more cost-effective solutions - Community Transport.
- However, the big three Community Transport Operators are maxed out on operations, with very limited development capacity.
- To make the step change that will allow them to contribute fully through effective partnerships that are a win-win for both the CTOs and the regional agencies, **innovation and seed investment is required to create region-wide development capacity.**

1.2. Mission Statement

CommunityTransportDG will support the delivery of regional transport strategic outcomes for the benefit of the citizens of Dumfries and Galloway.

- We will facilitate effective partnership working with regional and national agencies to support their strategic transport aims through Community Transport.
- We will amplify, support and champion D&G Community Transport Operators and their work in their local communities.
- We will work towards consistency of delivery of Community Transport across the whole of Dumfries and Galloway
- We will be a single point of contact for investment in and strategic development of Community Transport across Dumfries & Galloway.



1.3. Vision Statement

- Community Transport plays a key part in ensuring that everyone in Dumfries and Galloway can access sustainable transport options to help attain and maintain a fulfilling life, and our region is flourishing due to cost-effective, locally-based transport solutions.

1.4. We're in!

This Business Case was endorsed by the Community Transport Strategic Development Group at their February 2026 meeting.

- Wigtownshire Community Transport
- Galloway Community Transport
- Annandale Community Transport

Are all signed up to be the inaugural members of CommunityTransportDG.

It was also endorsed by the D&G Community Planning Partners at their 6th March 2026 SLT meeting and subsequently at full CPP Board on 13th March.

The funding model was agreed at a CPP working meeting on the 26th March and it was presented to the SWestrans Board on the 27th March 2026.

1.5. Why not Business as Usual?

- Without a coordinating organisation, the delivery of Community Transport in D&G will continue to be effective, but localised and without the development capacity to fully support regional transport outcomes.
- *With* a coordinating organisation, Community Transport can take up its place as the core underpinning of the D&G Regional Transport Strategy.
 - CommunityTransportDG will be a single point of contact to make CTOs a key delivery partner in innovative school, ASN student, employability and non-emergency healthcare transport solutions.
 - CommunityTransportDG will support CTO operations by identifying economies of scale, sharing good practice, facilitating pooling of resources and supporting resilient delivery.
 - CommunityTransportDG will represent the sector externally as a united voice, bidding for additional funding for CTOs to deliver better transport outcomes for our region.



1.6. Opportunities to be realised.

- Consistent delivery across the region of LOIP, RTS, RES and LPP transport outcomes. Social isolation reduced, rural inequity diminished.
- Local bus networks amplified or optimised by the creation of localised, flexible, coordinated Community Transport delivery models.
- Reduced cash costs to the NHS for non-emergency healthcare transport, and better outcomes for patients.
- Reduced cash costs to D&G Council for statutory school, ASN and service route transport and better outcomes for students and passengers.
- Increased numbers of volunteers taking part in CTO operations, improving their own mental health and wellbeing and providing excellent value solutions to the regional transport challenges.
- Increased employability pathways within the CTOs, based on holistic models that offer work experience and job opportunities as well as training. Increased people in work due to coordinated Transport to Work schemes.

2. Social Impact & Outcomes

2.1. What's in it for us? Key outcomes for partner organisations.

SWestrans

- **Realisation of the RTS Tier 1 delivery framework:** “This tier will take the learning and structures developed through the Community Transport Public Social Partnership (PSP) and expand across the region. *This ‘mainstreaming’ of the PSP learnings will be a critical building block for the delivery of needs-based transport.*”
- Single point of contact for strategic, region-wide planning towards the RTS and emerging SG priorities and funds.
- Better service design through better integration of public and community transport.
- Coordinated regional Community Transport contribution to SG active and sustainable travel goals.
- Coordinated regional Community Transport contribution to RTP projects such as the Workforce Mobility Project.
- Coordinated input into the Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP).
- Enhanced support of the local bus network – adding resilience and delivery through coordination of localised demand responsive transport solutions.

Dumfries and Galloway Council

- **Better value school transport / ASN transport solutions.**
- Better able to meet Place Plan expressions of transport needs - animation / support of new CTOs.
- Single point of contact for **Employability planning and delivery** (LEP, DYW)
- Single point of contact for **Transport to Work** planning and delivery.
- Single point of contact for transport as a lever to mitigate **depopulation** – as per the ‘Best Interventions’ recommendations in the DGC Feb 2026 ‘Addressing Depopulation’ report, section 4.1.¹
- Reduced social isolation, early intervention and better access to local support supports adult health and social care outcomes.
- Delivery of LOIP transport outcomes.
- Tackling child poverty through improving access to health and employment for parents / carers.

¹ [Addressing Depopulation Theme Three - Best Interventions.pdf](#)

Community Transport D&G

NHS

- **Reduced cash costs of non-emergency healthcare transport.**
- Reduced indirect costs of missed appointments.
- Optimisation of Patient Transport, including possible coordination of postcodes to minimise distances travelled.
- Coordination with new Community Hubs and enhanced access to them.
- Enhanced monitoring and evaluation to demonstrate value.
- Single point of contact for innovative projects like the Renal Outpatient Transport service.
- Fulfilment of duties under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 to pay due regard to community benefit in non-emergency patient contracts.

Community Transport Operators (CTOs)

- Single point of contact for regional issues and a tangible demonstration to staff and volunteers that their work is valued regionally.
- More development support for strategic expansion plans and cross-region partnership working.
- More funding available for existing valued services and expansion plans, due to better communication of the value of their work.
- Better driver recruitment due to support for communications and region-wide initiatives.
- More earned income due to better coordination with CPP partners.
- Optimised delivery due to keeping their governance / models / operational funding models but benefiting from shared learning around operations and better service design in partnership.

TSDG

- Better fulfilling its charitable mandate and supporting the region's TS through creation of an investable stand-alone delivery organisation for Community Transport in D&G.
- Demonstration of the power of partnership working under the D&G Collective model.
- Ensuring that Community Transport, as part of our wider community and voluntary sector, can be more easily involved in wider sector and partnership planning, regional and national strategic developments

SOSE / Regional Economic Partnership / REP Transport Strategic Action Group

- Enhanced, coordinated delivery of one of the REP 3 grand challenges (housing, skills and transport).
- **Realisation of the D&G Regional Transport Strategy Tier 1 delivery framework**
- Enhanced use of sustainable transport underpins delivery of a fair and flourishing economy.
- Strategic, D&G-wide input into Transport Strategic Action Group and COSS, allowing for South of Scotland-wide sharing of best practice.



Other Third Sector Organisations (not CTOs)

- Single point of support and connection for specific projects also designed to meet RTS, LOIP or LPP objectives e.g. DGVoice
- Community transport and access better integrated into all new place-based project proposals.

Residents of D&G, particularly those for whom conventional public transport is less accessible (people with limited mobility, ASN students and adults, people living in remote locations at risk of isolation, people living in out-of-town developments with no public transport links)

- More people can access existing opportunities to mitigate loneliness or enhance wellbeing due to enhanced coverage of accessible transport, particularly in rural areas.
- More people can attend non-emergency healthcare appointments and Community Hubs, preventing health conditions from worsening.
- More people can access transport due to regional coordination and support for last mile / first mile journeys and an increasingly accessible fleet (vehicle type and driver training)
- More people can access employment, thereby increasing income and decreasing poverty.
- People feel supported by their own communities by more easily finding solutions to place-based challenges together.

Community Transport D&G

ScotGov

- Enhanced delivery of the National Transport Strategy 2 strategic priorities:
 - **Reduces inequalities** – transport is available to more people in Dumfries & Galloway, particularly those suffering rural inequity and those for whom conventional public transport is a challenge to access.
 - **Takes climate action** – private car miles are reduced by increased take up of community transport due to regional coordination and animation.
 - **Helps deliver inclusive economic growth** – more people can access employment or learning opportunities due to enhanced coverage of accessible transport, particularly in rural areas.
 - **Improves our health and wellbeing** – more people can access existing opportunities to mitigate loneliness or enhance wellbeing due to enhanced coverage of accessible transport, particularly in rural areas. More people can attend non-emergency healthcare appointments and Community Hubs, preventing health conditions from worsening.
- Enhanced delivery of ‘mobility as a service’ across D&G by mitigating the impact of poverty on access to transport, particularly for Transport to Work.



2.2. What's in it for society?

The environment

- Private car miles are reduced by increased take up of community transport due to regional coordination and animation.
- Diesel miles are reduced by regional partnership working around enhanced eV charging infrastructure and sharing of best practice re fleet decarbonisation.
- Total miles are reduced by better coordination of non-emergency healthcare transport through a Patient Transport Hub.

The economy

- More of the investment made in D&G transport stays in local communities.
- Community Wealth Building principles apply when local non-profit organisations are the main deliverer; salaries remain in the region; any surplus is reinvested in charitable outcomes not removed as profit.
- Better access to transport leads to better access to employment, allowing more people to work.

Public health

- Social isolation is reduced through increased Community Transport journeys, reducing mental health issues.
- People can access medical support at an earlier stage if they can access doctors, prescriptions or outpatient appointments independently, reducing crisis intervention.
- CT can more easily play an active part in delivery of the Population Health Framework outcomes, particularly in the priority of prevention



3. The Problem

3.1. The Opportunity

Community transport is not just about bus journeys. It is about fostering a sense of belonging, bridging divides, and empowering individuals to access education, employment, healthcare, and social opportunities that are the bedrock of a thriving community.

Community transport provides flexible and accessible community-led solutions in response to local transport needs. It sometimes represents the only means of transport for many vulnerable and isolated people, often older people or people with disabilities. **It is also enormously cost-efficient,** being based on a non-profit charitable model.

By supporting and amplifying the excellent work of the existing CTOs and by animating new ones, CommunityTransportDG will ensure that this opportunity is available to more people across D&G.

By working in active partnership with regional and national agencies, enhanced delivery of key regional and national transport outcomes will be achieved through values-driven, cost effective and community-led initiatives.

3.2. The Challenge

Transport in Dumfries and Galloway is frequently identified as a barrier to people taking part in daily aspects of life such as education, employment, health care and leisure opportunities.

The backdrop to this includes a cost-of-living crisis which pushed already vulnerable households into hardship. The aftermath of COVID-19 has left deep scars: communities are still grappling with isolation, mental health struggles and fractured local economies.

The public transport sector (D&G Council Transport Dept, SWestrans) faces ever more challenging budget constraints and a hugely dispersed population. The public sector alone does not have the capacity to meet the individualised transport needs of D&G communities.

The geography also presents challenges to the NHS in non-emergency healthcare transport and to the DGC Education Department in statutory school and ASN student transport provision. Community Transport has a long track record of supporting these challenges in various parts of the region. Deepening and extending these partnerships will lead to ever more cost savings and better outcomes for patients and students.



See Appendix 1 for more on the D&G transport challenges and Appendix 2 for a summary of the transport aims in regional and national strategies.

3.3. Why Now

With increasing headwinds facing all public sector delivery models, the need to do things differently has never been clearer. **For this particular set of issues, there is a clear solution at hand - better coordination and partnership working with a Community Transport sector that has a decades-long track record of delivery.** By amplifying the CTOs' capacity to work in strategic alignment with the most pressing concerns of the NHS, Local Authority and residents, we can make a step change in the cost and effectiveness of delivering transport solutions across D&G.



4. The Solution - CommunityTransportDG

A region-wide organisation that **supports the delivery of regional transport strategic outcomes for the benefit of the citizens of D&G.**

- Amplifies, supports and champions D&G Community Transport Operators and their work in their local communities.
- Works in partnership with regional and national agencies to support their transport aims.
- Works to ensure consistency of delivery of Community Transport across the whole of Dumfries and Galloway
- A single point of contact for investment in and strategic development of Community Transport across Dumfries & Galloway.

4.1. Organisational Delivery Priorities

1. Region-wide animation / coordination of community transport, to ensure consistency and expansion of regional delivery in line with LOIP, RES, RTS outcomes / priorities.
2. Active partnership around non-emergency healthcare transport that provides a region-wide solution for the NHS and the Health and Social Care Partnership to improve patient outcomes and reduce cash costs to the NHS.
3. Region-wide animation / coordination of ASN, school transport, Transport to Work and service routes through CTOs, ensuring better outcome for students and lower costs for DGC.
4. Active partnership with SWestrans to deliver Tier 1 of the Regional Transport Strategy – working to create more flexible services, more cost effective local bus services and increased resilience for CTOs.
5. Increased employability pathways within the CTOs, based on holistic models that offer work experience and job opportunities as well as training. Attract, secure and create a pipeline of drivers and resource for CTOs.
6. Increased availability of volunteers taking part in CTO operations, improving their mental health and wellbeing while providing excellent value solutions to regional transport needs.
7. Better understanding of the value of community transport through monitoring and evaluation. Communication of the operational and strategic impact effectively within and outwith D&G.
8. Support CTOs to secure additional diverse income streams on the basis of robust Business Plans that accord with local, regional and national need. Including bidding for additional funding by representing all CTOs collectively and providing specialism in bid writing.



9. Based on this enhanced delivery, evaluation and communication of impact, source ongoing commitments from local, regional and national organisations and private philanthropists to fund CommunityTransportDG. Also generate earned income for CommunityTransportDG to maintain delivery.
10. Active evolution of the sector, horizon scanning, maximising of opportunities.

4.2. Outputs and Barriers for these priorities

1. Region-wide animation / coordination of community transport, to ensure consistency of regional delivery in line with LOIP, RES, RTS.

Outputs by 2029:

- Community Transport provision available across 80% of the region (40% currently).
- Community Transport provision tied in more closely with regional strategic outcomes, not just current operational links between CTOs and DGC Transport dept.

Barriers:

- Can't *make* new CTOs exist or existing ones expand – the will has to come from the communities and secure funding will have to be found. => Budget line item – seed funding for new CTOs.
- Existing CTOs will be risk-averse to expansion unless a delivery and funding model for the new service/s can be found that doesn't risk their base. => Budget line item – under-writing for service expansion pilots.

2. Active partnership around non-emergency healthcare transport that provides a region-wide solution for the NHS and IJB to improve patient outcomes and reduce cash costs.

Outputs by 2029:

- Establishment of a Patient Transport Hub in partnership with NHS.
- £100k saved annually from taxi bill.
- CTO operational systems and NHS booking systems are optimised to work together more efficiently.
- 80% of people in the region have access to non-emergency healthcare transport.
- NHS is fulfilling its duties under Part 10, Section 120 of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 to 'pay due regard to community benefit in non-emergency patient contracts, and the extent to which such contracts will improve economic, social or environmental wellbeing'.
- CTOs have an agreed commitment to fund Patient Transport on a multi-year basis so that they can expand capacity and better meet the needs of their communities.



Barriers

- NHS will need to commit a named coordinator (1 day/week) to be the other end of the partnership.
=> CPP and DGC endorsement of this Business Plan and new way of working. Budget line item for 20% NHS resourcing.

3. Region-wide animation / coordination of ASN, school transport, Transport to Work and service routes through CTOs, ensuring best outcome for students and lower costs for DGC.

Outputs by 2029:

- ASN costs to DGC reduced by £100k a year.
- Students are better supported by being transported by people within their communities who care and who want to help them develop.
- School transport planning systems are tied in more closely with CTOs in order to minimise costs and maximise efficiencies for the Council.
- Residents are better supported through models of public transport that match their needs more closely.
- CTOs have expanded services to offer Transport to Work to mitigate child poverty.

Barriers

- Lack of development capacity within CTOs to engage with region-wide initiatives => increased resources from CommunityTransportDG (Lead Officer and Development Officer) will increase development capacity and ease communications with partners.
- DGC Transport dept will need to be sufficiently resourced to allow them to play an active part in optimising planning. => 40% of a DGC Transport dept person to be allocated to this new way of working.



4. Active partnership with SWestrans to deliver Tier 1 of the Regional Transport Strategy.

Outputs by 2029:

- More flexible services, including enhanced use of localised Demand Responsive Transport solutions.
- More cost effective local bus services
- Increased resilience for CTOs.

Barriers

- SWestrans will have to be resourced to fulfil their end of the partnership => This scope included in the 40% DGC Transport role above.

5. Increased employability pathways within the CTOs, based on holistic models that offer work experience and job opportunities as well as training.

Outputs by 2029:

- 60 people have undertaken employability pathways that have led to an increased ability to start work or volunteering.
- 9 people have undertaken employability pathways that have led to them taking up work.
- CTOs have a secure pipeline of drivers to secure their operations.

Barriers

- CTO capacity to take on trainees as well as deliver operational requirements is sometimes limited.
=> Creating credible employability models with the CTOs is key inclusion in CommunityTransportDG Development Officer's Job description.



6. Increased availability of volunteers taking part in CTO operations, improving their mental health and wellbeing while providing excellent value solutions to regional transport needs.

Outputs by 2029:

- Each CTO has an increased pool of volunteers available to it (number), who understand the commitment required of them and are happy to join the CTOs in their growth journey.
- 2 new CTOs have been created (requires Board volunteers as well as drivers).

Barriers

- Cost of living crisis has reduced the pool of people able to give their time for free. Volunteering models may have to include some element of paid work. => Creating credible volunteering models with the CTOs is key inclusion in CommunityTransportDG Development Officer's Job description.

7. Better understanding of the value of community transport through monitoring and evaluation. Communication of the operational and strategic impact effectively within and outwith D&G.

Outputs by 2029:

- CTOs are supported to measure and communicate impact consistently across the region and to adjust delivery based on evaluation of this impact.
- This impact is communicated effectively such that it secures partner funding / investment from multiple sources on a medium-term basis.

Barriers

- Capacity of CTOs to engage with and implement monitoring plans. => Endorsement of this new way of working by CTOs. Active support from CommunityTransportDG officers to reduce their workload in other ways.
- TSDG will need to support CommunityTransportDG in finding the right targets / investors for communicating the value of Community Transport to. => Budget line item for TSDG FCR.



8. Support CTOs to secure additional diverse income streams on the basis of robust Business Plans that accord with both local, regional and national need.

Outputs by 2029:

- CTOs have sustainable Business Plans that have secured medium-term investment and are supporting local and regional priorities.

Barriers

- Managing the risk of service expansion for CTOs in a way that does not risk their base. => Budget line item – under-writing for service expansion pilots.
- Consistency of delivery such that regional partners feel comfortable changing from one system (e.g. private taxis) to another and moving the funding accordingly. => Endorsement of this new way of working by CTOs. Active support from CommunityTransportDG officers to support them in delivery outputs.

9. Based on this enhanced delivery, evaluation and communication of impact, source ongoing commitments from local, regional and national organisations and private philanthropists to fund CommunityTransportDG. Also generate earned income for CommunityTransportDG to maintain delivery.

Outputs by 2029:

- CommunityTransportDG has a sustainable business model where income is committed on the basis of value delivered.
- Earned income is the main strand of income for CommunityTransportDG, reducing reliance on reducing public sector grants.

Barriers

- Consistency of delivery from CTOs such that regional partners feel comfortable changing from one system (e.g. private taxis) to another and moving the funding accordingly. => Endorsement of this new way of working by CPP partners and CTOs. Active support from CommunityTransportDG officers to support CTOs in delivery outputs.
- Demonstrating and communicating the added value of CommunityTransportDG to the sector, beyond individual CTOs. => Communication of impact is a key inclusion in Lead Officer's Job Description.



10. Active evolution of the sector, horizon scanning, maximising of opportunities.

Outputs by 2029:

- CommunityTransportDG is a core part of the D&G regional infrastructure, actively delivering LOIP, RES and RTS outcomes and working with partners to keep delivering better transport outcomes for the people of D&G through emerging opportunities.
- CTOs are working better in partnership with regional TSOs such as BloodBikes, DGVoice and FoodTrain and the public sector (Health and Social Care and Active Travel Hubs in particular) to ensure that CT adds as much value to D&G residents as possible.
- CTOs are working better in partnership with their local organisational ecosystem to minimise duplication and amplify the work of others. E.g. food bank or local food delivery, prescription delivery, day centre outings.
- CTOs have materially decarbonised, in line with the Climate Emergency goals.
- CTOs are more accessible to a wider range of users due to vehicle accessibility upgrades.

Barriers

- Regional charging infrastructure. => Single point of communication with Community Transport sector for public sector is key inclusion in CommunityTransportDG Lead Officer's Job description.



5. CommunityTransportDG Governance

5.1. Underpinning principles

(based on extensive consultation with D&G Community Transport network)

- **Voluntary membership:** Membership of CommunityTransportDG is voluntary and based on shared interest and aims.
- **Autonomy:** Member groups retain full independence over their services and governance. Member groups will continue funding their community transport operations through earned income, grants and local fundraising.
- **Inclusion:** Membership is open to community organisations of all sizes and models, including organisations where transport is a secondary activity.
- **Community-driven:** Solutions are designed and delivered based on regional outcomes but individual community and place-based need.
- **Collaboration:** We promote learning, sharing and innovation of all forms of community transport across the region.
- **Quality:** Member groups will work to an agreed quality framework e.g. all drivers MiDAS trained, legal compliance with permits etc.

5.2. Legal Structure

- CommunityTransportDG will in time (2-4 years) be independent of TSDG, in order to maximise investment opportunities and clarify governance.
- CommunityTransportDG will be a legal entity that can be invested in and employ staff.
- CommunityTransportDG will not be a community transport operator.
- When independent of TSDG, CommunityTransportDG organisation will be self-funding i.e. will not rely on grant support from CPP partners but will be paid for its services to the region and will attract external investment.
- CommunityTransportDG will need to be able to receive both charitable and earned income.



TSDG has agreed to host CommunityTransportDG for the first 2-4 years (subject to partner agreement, agreed funding and TSDG Board approval of the final model) to give time for the organisation to demonstrate the value it adds, create an external funding model and determine the correct legal structure to facilitate that.

5.3. Governance Model – Transition mode

For the first 2-4 years, CommunityTransportDG will operate as a TSDG project. This means it will be supported by:

- TSDG HR and employment processes. CommunityTransportDG employees will be TSDG employees.
- TSDG IT infrastructure
- TSDG office space
- TSDG line management, to assure delivery against the agreed outcomes.
- TSDG administration and communication of the regular meetings.

During this time, a renewed Community Transport Strategic Development Group (CTSDG) will act as the de facto Board for CommunityTransportDG. They will meet quarterly to assure good governance and development of CommunityTransportDG, and to set the strategic direction for its work. Consideration will also be given to the appointment of an independent chair at an appropriate point.

In order for the CTSDG to act as a Board, Conflicts of Interest must be considered.

Therefore the membership of the renewed CTSDG will consist only of

- Funder representatives
- DGC Transport Dept / SWestrans
- An elected representative of the Community Transport Operators.
- A nominated member of the TSDG SLT – for as long as CommunityTransportDG is a TSDG project.

The relationship between CommunityTransportDG and TSDG during this transition phase will be covered by a Memorandum of Understanding. This will also act as an informal constitution for the group.

The CTSDG will be supported in their work by the Lead Officer of CommunityTransportDG (staff).

In order to maintain the current good communications between the CTOs and the regional organisations whose priorities they contribute to, other more operational networks will be established:

1. Quarterly Community Transport Network meetings, supported by the CTA and functioning as peer support and best practice sharing opportunities for all CTOs of all sizes in D&G. DGC Transport dept and SWestrans will be invited to attend these.



2. Quarterly CTO meetings for those CTOs actively engaging with CommunityTransportDG. These will take place around a week before the CTSDG meetings and will allow the CTO rep to discuss the CTSDG agenda with the CTOs and ensure that they attend with a representative view of the sector. These meetings will also review and reflect on the quarterly CTO performance data that has been collected for use at the CTSDG meetings.

This will be in addition to the ongoing strategic support that the CommunityTransportDG Lead Officer will provide to CTOs and the ongoing operational support that the CommunityTransportDG Development Officer will provide.



6. Financial Model

6.1. Investors

CommunityTransportDG will be funded in Year One (2026/27) by a combination of support from the NHS, Dumfries and Galloway Council Transport dept and SOSE.

In Years 2-4 (2027 – 2030), the NHS has confirmed ongoing (tapered) support, and Dumfries and Galloway Council has indicated likely support, subject to annual budget processes.

This is sufficient assurance for TSDG to assume the risk of hiring CommunityTransportDG staff on 4-year contracts from 2026.

6.2. Assumptions

CommunityTransportDG has a balanced budget for 4 years, based on the following assumptions:

- CPP partner commitments as above.
- Poverty and Inequality funding continues to support non-emergency healthcare transport (Patient Transport). **Without this income, this service provision will have to be cut.** P&I funding has been confirmed for 2026/27, assuring this service provision to March 2027.
- Similarly, if any expansion to this service is planned e.g. Renal Outpatient Transport pilot, this will have to be funded additionally at the standing CTO mileage rates plus CTDG administration costs.
- By Year 2, the value that CommunityTransportDG staff are bringing to CTOs in terms of increased earned income due to regional coordination is such that they are prepared to contribute £3k each to CommunityTransportDG overheads. Rising to £5k each in Years 3 and 4.
- By Year 2, regional infrastructure such as a D&G Transport Hub has been created by CommunityTransportDG that has led to cost savings across the region that in turn convince CPP partners to continue to 'buy' the service delivery, as earned income.
- By Year 2, the impact of Community Transport has been demonstrated so effectively that it is attracting increasing levels of private philanthropy from people excited to be part of a new way of working.



7. Risk Management

The key risks to achieving the outcomes as set out above even if CommunityTransportDG is endorsed and resourced as suggested remain:

Recruitment: Finding the right people for the Lead Officer and Development Officer will be crucial.

Detailed Job Descriptions and 4-year contracts will support this, as will the excitement TSDG can generate around the opportunity to join a new organisation committed to doing things a bit differently while adding real value to the region.

CTO Capacity: There is a risk that the CTOs will not have the development or operational capacity to deliver the opportunities that CommunityTransportDG creates for them.

The creation of the new CommunityTransportDG roles themselves will add capacity into the CTOs; the Lead Officer will give them a region-wide perspective, while the Development Officer will actively support them in optimising their operations.

In addition, the CTOs are outward-looking and supportive of region-wide collaboration in their approach, which not always a given and is a testament to the community-minded nature of all three CTOs.

However, it must be noted that the finance model for CommunityTransportDG given in Section 6 is only for the operation of CommunityTransportDG – any required expansion of CTO delivery will have to be financed separately on a case-by-case basis.

Partnership working capacity: CommunityTransportDG will need time and attention from regional partners who are typically under-resourced and under pressure. **Buy-in for this model at CPP Board and SLT level will have to be communicated effectively through the partner organisations** in order to free up time and capacity for Officers to engage effectively in this new way of working.



8. Conclusion

If Community Transport is to take its place in fully supporting the regional and national transport, health, social and inequality priorities, then we need region-wide coordination and representation.

This proposal is for a new organisation which will immediately start to confer tangible operational and cost savings on our regional partners, as well as better supporting our valued CTOs and residents.

The model will require some modest initial investment from CPP partners, on an Invest to Save model, but will then transition to earning its operating costs through the services it provides to the region.

Now is the time to unlock the potential of community transport for our region, create a step change in outcomes for D&G residents and minimise regional agency expenses. This will be a model that others in Scotland and beyond will look to.

Appendix 1: Summary of Place-based factors

- Dumfries and Galloway is Scotland's third largest council area, spanning over 6,400 km², yet is home to only around 148,000 residents—an average of fewer than 24 people per square kilometre. **Its rural geography magnifies disadvantage, with long travel times and poor digital connectivity.**

(SWestrans Regional Transport Strategy 2023-42, Stantec, November 2023)

- 1/3 of the total D&G population lives in dispersed rural areas.

(SWestrans Regional Transport Strategy 2023-42, Stantec, November 2023)

- Dumfries and Galloway's deprivation is dispersed rather than concentrated. Only 9.5% of the region's 201 data zones fall within Scotland's 20% most deprived areas under the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD 2020), yet 78% of income-deprived and 77% of employment-deprived residents live outside those zones. **This means poverty is scattered across rural and small-town communities rather than contained in urban pockets.** Areas such as Lochside and Lincluden, Stranraer and The Rhins, and Mid and Upper Nithsdale show the highest concentrations of multiple deprivation.

(Source: Local SIMD analysis for Dumfries & Galloway (SIMD2020 local report / SIMD20-V4 for D&G)

- Between 2001 and 2024, the population of Dumfries and Galloway decreased by 1.3%. Over the same period, Scotland's population rose by 9.5%. The 25 to 44 age group saw the largest percentage decrease (-24.5%). The 75 and over age group saw the largest percentage increase (+57.2%).

(Source: Population Estimates Council area profile: Dumfries and Galloway, National Records of Scotland, August 2025)

- A decreasing population and increasing older population puts Scotland's rural areas at the heart of this crisis. **The impacts of these demographic crises will strain public services and infrastructure throughout Scotland, but particularly in vulnerable rural communities.**

(Source: Scotland's Rural Voice, Diffley Report, December 2025, <https://diffleypartnership.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/12/Scotlands-Rural-Voice-2025-VFINAL.pdf>)

- **18% of households in the region have no access to a car** for private use (that's nearly 1 in 5). This figure appears to be representative of rural areas, not just towns.

(Source: Transport and Travel in Scotland: Results from the Scottish Household Survey 2022, Transport Scotland, 2024)



Appendix 2: Regional and National Policy Context for Community Transport

1. [Research Into the Social and Economic Benefits of Community Transport in Scotland | Transport Scotland \(2015\)](#):

1.1 Main Findings:

- CT is a critically important service providing cross-cutting benefits across a range of policy areas, including transport, health, social services and leisure, amongst others. It also plays an important role in tackling different types of inequality.
- CT offers significant cost savings to local authorities, the NHS and other public bodies.
- CT offers a range of health benefits, including improved access to health services, fewer missed appointments and the continued ability to live at home.

1.2 Chapter 5 Economic Benefits of CT:

5.44 However, while the wider social and health benefits of CT were recognised, on the whole there did not appear to be high levels of integration between the transport and social work/healthcare departments. **Dumfries and Galloway Council provided one exception to this.** It has recently set up a Rural Transport Solutions Project which encourages CT organisations to provide school and social work transport on behalf of the Council. The CT organisations are paid commercial rates for the services and are also provided with access to Council vehicles outside of the contracted hours (approximately between 9:00-15:00). The Council identified reduced cost as a key benefit of this approach.

5.45 Overall, however, the general absence of such a joined-up approach means that **CT funding (both in terms of the absolute level and means of distribution) can often 'slip through the cracks'.**



2. SWestrans Regional Transport Strategy 2023-42, Stantec, November 2022

Vision:

The South-West of Scotland will be an inclusive, prosperous, and attractive place to live, work and visit, supported by an integrated and sustainable transport system that:

- reflects the needs of communities and expectations of people living, working and consuming in the region
- is safe, affordable and accessible to all
- allows healthier lifestyles
- is resilient to climate change, supporting a contribution to net zero emission targets reflecting the regional circumstance

Actions:

29. SWestrans and its partners will work to deliver a new public transport model based around a needs-based approach applying a three-tier framework as follows:

- Tier 1 – Community Level Provision
- Tier 2 – Supported Local Bus and Community Transport Services
- Tier 3 – Commercial Local Bus and Rail Services

More detail on Tier 1:

Community Level Provision: made up of a number of tailored and flexible services providing travel opportunities at community level linking directly to amenities / services or to a more structured / timetabled public transport option. This tier will take the learning and structures developed through the Community Transport Public Social Partnership (PSP) and expand across the region. **This 'mainstreaming' of the PSP learnings will be a critical building block for the delivery of needs-based transport.**



3. National Transport Strategy 2 (2020)

Vision:

We will have a sustainable, inclusive, safe and accessible transport system, helping deliver a healthier, fairer and more prosperous Scotland for communities, businesses and visitors.

4 Priorities and 12 Outcomes:

Reduces inequalities: Everyone in Scotland will share in the benefits of a modern and accessible transport system.

- Fair access to services we need
- Easy to use for all
- Affordable for all

Takes climate action: People will be able to make travel choices that minimise the long-term impacts on our climate and the wellbeing of future generations.

- Help deliver our net-zero target
- Adapt to the effects of climate change
- Enable greener, cleaner choices

Helps deliver inclusive economic growth

- Get people and goods where they need to get to
- Reliable, efficient and high quality
- Use beneficial innovation.

Improves our health and wellbeing Allow people to make active travel choices to improve their health and physical and mental wellbeing and seek to reduce health inequalities.

- Safe and secure for all
- Enable us to make healthy travel choices: active modes will be a preferred method of travel.
- Help make our communities great places to live: cleaner, greener and sustainable places and networks will encourage walking, wheeling and cycling. This will deliver more social interaction, support local businesses and services and create vibrant communities.



4. South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy, 2021

Vision:

We will be a region of opportunity and innovation – where natural capital drives green growth, ambition and quality of life rivals the best in the UK, communities are empowered and cultural identity is cherished, enabling those already here to thrive and attracting a new generation to live, work, visit, learn and invest in the South of Scotland.

Key principle: Thinking differently

Our approach to developing our economy will be motivated by thinking and doing differently, to ensure the best outcomes are achieved for the South of Scotland. **We will use our collective strength to promote innovation, creativity, challenge convention, harness community capacity and spirit, localise responsibility and take bold decisions, to tackle challenges, unlock opportunity and encourage all to think bigger.**

THEME 6: THRIVING & DISTINCT COMMUNITIES

Enhancing Digital & Transport Connections

The region needs to rapidly enhance sustainable transport connectivity within key locations, establish new and innovative models of public transport delivery and build on road, rail and active travel investments, to improve connections within and outwith the South of Scotland

5. 'Addressing Depopulation: Best Interventions' – Report commissioned by Dumfries and Galloway Council, Feb 2026.

Recommendations:

(1) View investment in rural transport as a repopulation strategy. This will direct greater attention to:

- the mobility needs of young people, families and workers, as much as the elderly
- linking different communities within an area, not just via central node points like Dumfries or the largest town which can lead to depopulation within the surrounding rural areas.

(2) It is very unlikely that mainstream public transport can be extended more deeply into rural D&G except along major transport arteries like the A75. **Investing in community transport operators [] therefore becomes a critical intervention**, including extending the network across D&G, and integrating their services.



Appendix 3: Community Transport in D&G – the Story So Far

1. What is community transport?

The key aspect of community transport is the *community*. The need is identified, and a solution is developed and delivered, by the community, for the community. By definition – a bottom-up approach. In this model, transport is not the end in itself. It is the mechanism for other outcomes such as social inclusion, poverty reduction, earlier detection or treatment of ill health. It is an enabler.

Community transport is always run for a social purpose and never for a profit. That's not to say it is always free at the point of use – normally the user is charged, but the service is often subsidised and always aims to be affordable.

It's also not just about minibuses; cars (including electric), Multi-Purpose Vehicles (MPV), mobility scooters and electric bikes are all used for community transport in Dumfries and Galloway.

Our established D&G Community Transport Operators offer:

- Minibus and driver hire for community groups and other members.
- School transport
- Scheduled bus services
- Non-emergency healthcare transport
- Weekly shopper trips from rural areas into towns
- Social day trips and excursions
- Long-term ebike loans.

With a backdrop of decreasing public transport services and the inability of remaining services to meet the needs of an ageing population, **it is agreed at RTS level that community transport is crucial to future-proofing rural life in D&G.**

2. The main operators

Annandale Community Transport - ACTS

ACTS began in 1999 and is now based in Lockerbie, with vehicles located across Moffat, Lockerbie, Annan and Langholm, serving Annandale and parts of Eskdale. Its core aim is to provide accessible, affordable transport for people who cannot use standard public transport - especially older adults, disabled individuals, and rurally isolated residents.

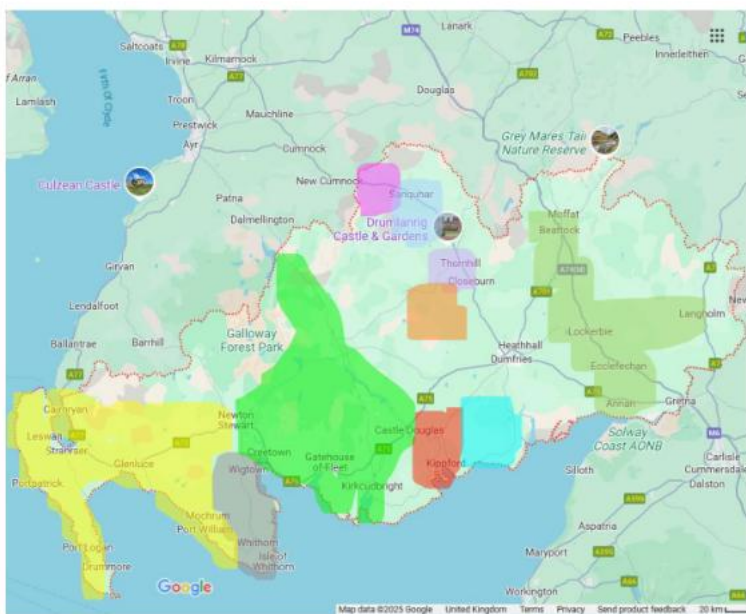
Galloway Community Transport - GCT

GCT began in 2001 as the Glenkens Community Transport Initiative and is based in the Glenkens but now serves people across Galloway and the Stewartry. Developing relationships with partner organisations has taken it into school transport and NHS patient transport, but the core aim remains mitigating rural disadvantage through better public transport.

Wigtownshire Community Transport – WCT

WCT began in 2000 and is based in Wigtown to serves the Machars and the Rhins. It exists to enhance transport services in Wigtownshire through improved utilisation of existing vehicles and the removal of any duplication of transport activity.

Community Transport Dumfries and Galloway – summary of provision





3. Strategic work on Community Transport in D&G.

Whilst Community Transport has had a presence in Dumfries and Galloway for more than 25 years, by nature it operates at a hyper-local level and therefore has not historically had a high regional presence.

Since 2017, however, there has been an effort to work more strategically. This was initially in the form of a Public Social Partnership made up of NHS Dumfries and Galloway, Dumfries and Galloway Council (DGC), SWestrans and two Community Transport Operators (CTO), chaired by TSDG. The partnership fulfilled its primary aim to plan and deliver Patient Transport more strategically, with over 1,000 non-emergency hospital transport journeys carried out in 2024/2025 alone, both within (87%) and outwith (13%) the region. As well as being very financially efficient (funded at an average of £50 per journey), community non-emergency hospital transport provides door-to-door support for the user, reducing anxiety around travel and reducing social isolation.

The PSP Steering Group commissioned the production of a D&G Community Transport Strategy. This was published in April 2022 and endorsed by all PSP members at the time. Two key recommendations of the strategy were:

- Public sector funding for the existing non-emergency healthcare transport services should come from a broader range of organisations rather than depending on DGC alone.
- A regional Community Transport Social Enterprise should be established to provide a sustainable delivery model for better meeting regional transport needs in the long term.

As a result of this Strategy, in late 2022 the PSP evolved into the D&G Community Transport Strategic Development Group (CTSDG), with the aim of applying this approach to community transport more widely. Membership of the group grew to the three largest CTOs, SWestrans, DGC, NHS D&G, South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE), Community Transport Association (CTA) and TSDG, who chair the group.

It became clear the current model of providing community transport was unsustainable and a longer-term solution was needed to not only support the current provision, but also to grow the capacity and capability of the sector. The need was increasing in the context of a shrinking budget for public transport contracts and fewer public transport providers able or willing to bid for the contracts.

Community transport is best placed to respond in the needs-driven and flexible way required by D&G communities. To optimise this, however, there is a need for a region-wide approach to help inform service design, which can then be operationalised across a dispersed rural and urban region, through genuine partnership and lived-experience involvement.

Community Transport D&G

We are determined to stop the trajectory of depopulation and deepening inequality, by mobilising people within the third sector, amplifying community voices, and driving collaboration that can rebuild resilience, create opportunities for young people, and support an ageing population with dignity. The D&G Community Transport sector has been doing this for decades and now is the time to capitalise on their huge experience and support Community Transport to contribute materially to our regional transport priorities.



Appendix 4: Glossary

ACTS – Annandale Community Transport Service

ASN – Additional Support Needs

COSS – Convention of the South of Scotland

CPP – Community Planning Partnership, D&G

CTO – Community Transport Operator (e.g. ACTS, WCT, GCT)

CTSDG – Community Transport Strategic Development Group

DGC – Dumfries and Galloway Council

DYW – Developing the Young Workforce

GCT – Galloway Community Transport

LEP – Local Employability Partnership

LOIP – Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (DGC plan)

LPP – Local Place Plans

PSP – Public Social Partnership – in this context, CTOs, DGC and SWestrans. Now replaced by CTSDG.

RES – South of Scotland Regional Economic Strategy

RTP – Regional Transport Plan

RTS – Regional Transport Strategy

SG – Scottish Government

SOSE – South of Scotland Enterprise

TSDG – Third Sector Dumfries and Galloway

WCT – Wigtonshire Community Transport



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Community TransportDG

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