

## 1.0 BACKGROUND TO THE GO-BETWEEN PROJECT PHASE 2

Calne Area Transport (CAT) was set up by a small group of local volunteers to address the many transport concerns arising from Calne's regeneration initiatives in 1998. The group was formally constituted in 2001 as a membership organisation (currently free of charge). CAT is now the transport wing of Calne Community Area Partnership and aims to have a network of liaison members to ensure that each community organisation has a transport voice.



**Fig 1: CAT's transport stall**

CAT pursues three principle aims of sustainable development:

*Social:* To improve the quality of live for all who live, work and visit the Calne area

*Economic:* To support the local economy by improving access to work, training, goods and services

*Environmental:* To promote sustainable transport solutions and reduce the negative environmental impacts of local traffic

CAT's support was crucial to bringing about Wigglybus to Calne and its surrounding villages and to ensuring that its successor flexible transport services had a sustainable future. CAT produces regular newsletters, holds annual public meetings, stalls and events. CAT has managed several initiatives under the umbrella of The Go-between Project which included a transport seminar in January 2007 to identify the priorities on CAT's agenda. Top of the list was public transport with 'cycling', 'walking' and 'wheel chair access' following closely behind.

From the outset CAT was keen to foster 'demand responsiveness' for all transport services. Their first opportunity to achieve this concept came with the expansion of Wiltshire's Wigglybus in March 2002, shortly after the group's formation. The seminal flexible service had started off in the nearby Pewsey Vale in 1998 needed to be tested under different operating conditions. Thus the group became Wiltshire County Council's community partner and one of its earliest funders.

Whilst Wigglybus afforded CAT the opportunity to engage with a flexible bus service the group was aware that this was only one of many solutions and that the two hourly bus services could not respond to the variety of travel demands across the Calne area in the twenty first century. Nor, they believed, could Wigglybus become truly 'demand responsive' without a mechanism to help the community make its travel demands known.

CAT's Public Transport Consultant, Peter Warman, explained the factors influencing the provision of public transport in rural areas at their AGM in September 2002 and that any response to a rural community's travel demands needed to address the ever more diverse pattern of journeys that had been made by the private car over the last 40 years. Thus the key to financial sustainability of flexible services is contingent on more efficient use of public subsidy and an affordable means of responding to individuals rather than appealing to a mass market that had long gone.

For instance, a bus every two hours during the day will not on its own respond to the variety of travel demands across the Calne area. But a service supplemented by a shared taxi or taxi-bus every half hour might be more attractive. The question was where to target the supply.

With funding from the Countryside Agency's Rural Transport Grant via Calne Town Council, and seed corn funding from Friends of the Earth and North Wiltshire District Council, Peter Warman was commissioned to develop that 'affordable means' of responding to the rural individuals' travel requirements.

### 1.1 The 12 Steps Strategy

A general difficulty is that a remote organisation, Wiltshire County Council in Trowbridge, is planning for detailed transport requirements which change every day of the week and every week of the year in the Calne area. The local authority has a duty to find travel need but does not have the funds to do so, but CAT volunteers are interested in acting as 'go-betweens'. This makes maximum use of the community relationship and transport network by using managed volunteer activity as a specialist community intermediary, or 'go-betweens'.

The Go-between approach consists of two aspects. The first aspect recognises that the public is often unaware of what transport is available to meet their travel requirements. It also recognises that travel need surveys cannot reflect changing travel needs, an important consideration in rural areas that needs to be sensitive to a dispersed market. Thus the first half of the activity involves awareness raising, market research and personal travel planning.

The second aspect recognises the need for users to work more closely with transport providers and operators through an impartial community travel broker that is sufficiently conversant with the range of local services so that resources can better match local travel needs, or find the gaps in the network.

Taken together these two aspects 'need' and 'provision' were considered the foundation of a long term sustainable transport policy for Calne facilitated by a community agent or broker. The strategy was mapped out with members of CAT and the outcome was the "12 Step Strategy", better known by its adopted name "the Go-between Project". The strategy has been designed to be progressed at its own pace according to availability of volunteers and funds. This is described in more detail in Appendix A.

### 1.2 Go-between Project Part 1

A pilot was set up to test the first aspect of the 12 Steps Strategy part funded by North Wiltshire District Council and the Wigglybus Project. The first step was to design a local transport information website to overcome the shortcomings of keeping paper based travel information up to date. The site [www.gocalne.org.uk](http://www.gocalne.org.uk), was designed by local members and launched in 2005 and has become



Fig 2: GoCalne.org.uk is launched

well used.

A pilot was organised to test the next 4 steps (funded by North Wiltshire District Council). Four sample neighbourhoods and villages were selected and a small team of trained CAT volunteers distributed travel information packs to householders in exchange for a short travel survey. A simple means of analysis and reporting were used and it was found that participants found the experience enjoyable, stimulating and rewarding.

Go-between 1 (described in full in Appendix B) showed that if trained volunteers visit, or 'looking after' no more than 50 households with relevant information, residents are prepared to engage in conversation to reveal unmet transport needs and consider using public transport. It was concluded that impartial and reliable information from a community travel adviser could build into an ongoing dialogue for personal travel planning but would first require the remaining steps to be piloted before being rolled out across the community area.

### **1.3 Funding Go-between Project Part 2**

The second pilot involved interviewing operators and would need considerable professional assistance. Funding for this phase suffered severe delays. CAT prepared bids to complete their research but this coincided with the demise of the Countryside Agency and their Rural Transport Partnership funds and grants in 2005. The South West Regional Development Agency which inherited the funds and functions undertook a brief for access to rural services. Although the Go-between project had been assessed by Wiltshire County Council's consultants in their county wide research into community involvement in transport planning<sup>1</sup> the concept was too experimental, and the value of rural travel plans had yet to be established. In the event new bureaucratic structures were formed in each local authority area as agents of funding for a variety of rural projects, not just transport, and the ease with which communities could access funding from a regional body for experimental transport projects of this type was lost, despite the support of the Government Office for the South West.

Eventually in August 2007 CAT successfully obtained funding from DEFRA's COMMA fund (Community Aggregates Fund), now known as the 'Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund'. Some match funding was also found from Calne Town Council and CAT.

Surviving a two year interregnum is daunting and could have discouraged a voluntary transport group. It is, therefore, a credit to the volunteers' commitment to its aims and vision that the project was thus able to proceed.

---

<sup>1</sup> TAS, CAG Consultants and RATC (September 2006) *Community Engagement in Rural Transport Services*, WCC