

Calne Area Transport – Review and evaluation of its engagement with the community and its partners

Summary of findings and recommendations

Introduction

This review is an external assessment with advice for future directions. Interviews were carried out comprehensively with members, associates and Wigglybus partners during November and December 2005. A workshop with CAT's committee took place on 23 November. Systematic evaluations such as this are important for the long-lasting development of community groups and projects that wish to achieve real change.

Overall conclusions

CAT has come far since its inception in 2001. Despite slim resources of funds and labour it has kept belief and enthusiasm.

CAT's notable achievements are:

- Influenced attaining the Wigglybus for the Calne area.
- Influenced the refinement of Wigglybus routes, times and services.
- Progressed the Go-between project towards viability.
- Helped local authorities carry out their duties e.g. finding transport need, disseminate bus information, local decision making.
- Developed into a representational group on transport for the community.
- Developed a dialogue with local people on transport and accessibility.
- Maintained capacity and a range of core skills.
- Developed a system of effective internal communication

To fulfil its potential CAT needs to address some key issues:

- The lack of sustainable funding, limited capacity and multiple demands on its time.
- Membership needs to include and appeal to all sectors of the community.
- A higher profile will achieve greater influence.
- Current skills need to be retained and enhanced.

It is in CAT's interests for their partners to address some key issues as well:

- Strengthen their recognition of CAT's contribution and potential.
- Clarify their engagement in rural transport and accessibility.

Comment on key components

1. CAT's main skills and characteristics

CAT's achievements and its potential are based on its key skills and characteristics. These can be summarised as:

- *Brokerage*
- *Advice*
- *Independence*
- *Information gathering*
- *Influencing*
- *Partnership building*
- *Representation*
- *Project management*
- *Facilitating debate*
- *Finding solutions*
- *Attracting funders*

Such skills take time to evolve and take effect. They don't happen overnight.

2. CAT's participation and partnership work

CAT is a sound model of a local transport partnership. It is open, accountable and seeks to broaden its membership, partnership working and influence.

3. Partnerships with County, District and Town Councils

- CAT's input to local authority partnerships, especially the Local Strategic Partnerships, should be reviewed to ensure the most effective contribution from CAT.
- The WCC study of community engagement in rural transport issues, coupled with the 'Wiltshire Compact', and this review of CAT, gives WCC critical opportunities to refine its approach to structures for effective working with voluntary and community bodies like CAT.

4. Developing initiatives

- *Calne Wigglybus*

Keeping Wigglybus developing towards viability is important to CAT. This core work, its changing resources and possible social enterprise dimension need to be assessed and reviewed within a prioritisation process.

- *Go-between strategy*

Progress on Go-between is of fundamental relevance to CAT's aims and ambitions. The project harnesses CAT's core skills in advice, partnership and brokerage. The Go-between steps and the prospect of an 'advice desk' should feature in a prioritisation process.

- ***Advice on planning applications***

CAT should position itself as adviser to local authorities and local councils on how transport provision and accessibility measures could be included and funded in planning applications for new development in the Calne area. This would entail an agreed system of referring applications to CAT.

Organisation: Summary of recommended steps

1. Setting priorities

Review of all current and potential activities. Prioritise these by setting out for each activity:

- *Timescales* • *Resource needs* • *Skills required* • *Potential partners*

Any social enterprise measures should be addressed within this exercise, not separately.

2. Influencing and involving more bodies

- Identify, brief, and try to involve organisations which could benefit from or fund CAT's distinct local role in providing travel advice and brokerage.
- Devise a system of briefing and influencing relevant bodies and opinion formers. Include effective use of the web site and the media to raise CAT's profile about its work, give lessons from CAT's experience, and explain CAT's aspirations.

3. Review CAT's publicity

- Review and if necessary refine CAT's branding to match its objectives more closely.
- Test whether CAT's branding and publicity engages the desired audiences.

These actions will entail a review of its name, strap lines, logo, ways of attracting people to stalls, and membership leaflet.

4. Recruiting members

Identify key sectors of the community with a mutual interest. Review incentives and benefits of membership.

5. Building members' capacity

Clarify roles and responsibilities, review and identify skills, resources, and training needs for current and future activities.

CAT will need to distinguish between:

- Operational work (*resources needed for internal functioning such as, coordination, group development and planning, administration, internal communication, web site maintenance and promotion*) from
- External services (*project management, recruitment, brokerage, travel advice, and influencing*).

6. Monitoring progress

Once priorities are clarified, CAT needs to set targets for its influence and achievements, and review these in an annual workshop.

Conclusions

CAT is an asset to Calne, the Wigglybus and Wiltshire. CAT's members and partner bodies should recognise its role and value.

- CAT has considerable potential to achieve more in Calne and Wiltshire.
- CAT provides a valuable example of a community partnership providing advice and brokerage on transport and accessibility.
- CAT is at a pivotal stage and must not lose its focus.
- CAT needs help to appreciate and not depreciate.

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