



BATTLE AREA COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

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BACT FACT SHEET 1 – PROVISION OF TRANSPORT

BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON BACT

Battle Area Community Transport's [BACT] main clients at present, are the elderly, unabled and those in sheltered housing. We use trained [MiDAS] volunteer drivers to keep our costs down. Those people who are willing to put time into their community to help those in greater need than themselves provide skills for driving, administration and management of our "not-for-profit" charity. Our office is staffed part-time with one paid worker and three other main volunteers in the Office and Financial Team. We have a Board of Directors who direct policies and strategies for BACT, and we have monthly drivers meetings for discussion of ongoing bus issues.

A. WHAT WE ALREADY PROVIDE

1. Timetabled bus services in Rural Rother

Villages we have established timetabled services in:

- Ashburnham
- Battle [Claverham Way, St Martins, Marley Lane]
- Burwash
- Etchingham
- Flimwell [Downash]
- Hurst Green
- Mountfield
- Robertsbridge
- Sedlescombe [East View Terrace] [Pestalotzzi]
- Stonegate [Shovers Green, Cottenden, Battenhurst]
- Ticehurst [Three Legg Cross, Cross Lane Gardens, Newington Court, Woodroffe Lodge]
- Westfield

These services go to the following destination in addition to around rural villages:

- Eastbourne
- Hastings [Sainsbury's Supermarket]
- Rye
- Tunbridge Wells

B. FUTURE PLANS

We are aiming to provide more services to Primary Schools and Youth Groups in the future. We have done this in the past, but funding issues limit the various organisation. We are considering extending our timetabled services to more Parishes, provided sufficient passenger numbers can justify their introduction. Sustainability of services is always an issue. We have in the past provided services to Conquest Hospital, Bodiam and other destinations. But we have found that although a Parish Council receives requests from their Parishioners, they are not always supported if they are provided. A proved need is needed.

WHAT WE DO PROVIDE CURRENTLY [2010]

INTRODUCTION

OUR EXISTING FLEET OF VEHICLES

At present we have three vehicles, two are wheelchair accessible and one larger one for use on the timetabled services for shopping trips.

These vehicles need constant upgrading to avoid excessive maintenance cost in older vehicles. We get not funding whatsoever to upgrade the buses except what we can obtain through fundraising.

1. Timetabled Bus Services

We have contracted to ESCC, to provide services to Battle and surrounding villages a number of services which other bus companies cannot provide. These services are acceptable for use with elderly concessionary bus passes, for which we claim back the fares.

2. Hires

We provide any organisation who would like one of our buses with a driver. Our three 16 seater vehicles are all available to hire. We have two that come with wheelchair accessible.

Destinations and the kind of trips we can accommodate are:

Elderly Day Care Centres. Lunch clubs.

Shopping trips: Bluewater. Ashford Retail Park.
Educational outings: Museums and Galleries. Outdoors events for children.
Conferences: Women's Institutes. WRNS.

We offer really competitive rates.
Tender for local authority contracts is also to be considered.

3. Wheelchair Accessibility

BACT has two buses that are wheelchair accessible. They are hired by groups that need this facility and we provide a trained driver.

All wheelchairs are not of an equal standard as at present, there are many shapes and sizes. They are certainly not standardised. This is already problematic with the anchoring of these various wheelchairs, and getting them on/off the bus.

WHAT WE DO NOT CURRENTLY PROVIDE

1. Dial-A-Ride Bus Service

We do not provide a bus for dial-a-ride as it is not economically viable at present. In rural Rother the distances are themselves prohibitive.

It is not supported by any council, so it would have to be sustainable. Also it would have to be run with paid drivers.

2. Low Floor Buses

Although these have been requested at times when conducting surveys, we are aware of the move towards low floor buses by most bus companies. Whilst there is pressure to take up these options; do we only work in areas with pavements? No! In the future, as in many areas in the rural community/villages and lanes there is no curbage or foot paths.

In the past we have loaned a vehicle from Hailsham social services where this bus nearly lost its exhaust at Eatenden Lane level crossing and Station Road level crossing in Robertsbridge. They don't work with the road cambers on some of the country lanes we use. This view is also borne out by the experiences of Cuckmere Community Transport.

Our Main Concerns about Low Floor Buses Are:

- As a community transport, we are aware that by 2017 all commercial vehicles should be low floor but BACT understands that this does not apply to Community Transport Operators.
- If we have to have a low-floor vehicle we would not be able to drive on the smaller roads, which will result in isolating parts of the rural community.
- The wheelchair access plate on these buses, would simply not be accessible where there are no curbs or just difficult to work with.
- As with all of the new improvements on buses, there is more that goes wrong with costly repairs to us.

3. Voluntary Car Schemes

BACT responded to the Battle Health Check and provided a Voluntary Car Scheme, based in Battle. This was conducted as a "Pilot Scheme" for estimating the viability of a VCS centred on Battle. It was shown after 16 months that a proven need is definitely there, especially to Conquest Hospital and doctors and dentists locally.

However, there was no on-going funding and we regard this as an issue at Council level. We can offer our guidance and experience from the Pilot Scheme to anyone wishing to set up one in their Parish. One scheme covering the whole of Rother needs more financial commitment than BACT found was available, and so would not be recommended at this time.

We have concluded that a social car scheme is best organised by each Parish /village or interested community group in any one area. An example of this is the Ticehurst Travel Club. We are aware that there are various small schemes available, and we would be open to anyone who would like more details on our scheme, how it was run, and what it entails. Any new scheme to be set up can also come to us for guidance.

[BACT can provide a "Fact Sheet" – some will be available at the meeting on various types of Social Car Schemes]
