

## Norwich Door to Door Committee Chair's Report 2016-2017

*"Providing equality of access for all people with severe mobility problems that need a door to door transport service in Greater Norwich".*

Our 25th year and my second year as chairman. I am pleased to have this opportunity to share with you the achievements and challenges of the year just passed and our plans for the celebrations ahead. Our service has a good reputation for life-enhancing transport and all of our efforts are directed toward a caring quality service that we are proud to extend to our passengers, their carers and other beneficiaries.

**Our passengers travelled on 25,117 journeys over the year  
—16 social events provided to 1,000 attendees**

**14 Drivers and 47 Passenger Assistants trained  
(including those for other organisations)**

**45 volunteers involved in the day to day service as  
drivers/P.A.s/in the office as part of the team**

I am delighted to be working with such a well-motivated and caring team and I confidently look ahead to the future years. Changes are inevitable but the essence will remain. Yes, the ongoing austerity is having an impact on us all; with low interest rates there is less money for grants and more organisations are seeking a share of a shrinking pot. We know our passengers are forced to consider carefully their financial choices, so we have kept the fares at the same level for a further year. Our service provision has been affected by the availability of our resources. Some of our volunteers have stepped up to fulfil family-caring responsibilities and naturally there is less time available for them to commit outside. Our future will be shaped by our success in connecting to our community, using as wide a range of social media and organisations as we can muster.

When the local bus stop is a step too far or the service is curtailed, without an affordable alternative, people of all ages with mobility problems are going to be among the worst affected. This is happening all around us and now. If we have access to a social network of friends and family and feel cared for, we know that we have a better chance of retaining our social skills and confidence. It is widely acknowledged that loneliness affects our physical and mental health. Our passengers tell us how much they appreciate the little acts of kindness they receive from our team and how sad they are by the rationing of kindness that they perceive is all around them. We need to keep campaigning alongside fellow charities who are fighting for social justice in our communities. Transport is acknowledged as a major factor in lessening the impact of social isolation, and by working closely across the city with our friends we can achieve better outcomes.

During the year most of us will appreciate a change of scene. For some of us the challenges of getting there can be insurmountable both economically and logistically. There are lovely places in our county and a little further a field that appeal, and the joy of travel and the pursuit of pleasure are interconnected. Our special outings and trips bring the opportunity for both passenger and volunteer to unite in friendship.

In July 2016, our major social event was courtesy of Graham James, Bishop of Norwich, and his wife Julie who shared an afternoon with us in their beautiful garden. We fielded over 50 industrious volunteers who set up marquees, served on stalls and assisted those of our guests who needed help with teas and willing hands. For the café we collected together over one hundred amazing cakes and fancies, and in the kitchen we benefitted greatly from the generous support of the Waitrose corporate volunteer team. We welcomed over 600 guests and not a crumb was left; the cups of tea flowed and the milk temporarily ran out! The enthusiasm and exhilaration of our many guests was palpable and all this was given with kind and open hearts. We enjoyed splendid performances from the children of the Notre Dame Prep school, the Occasional Garden Singers and the Harmummies choir. The afternoon



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We have built many friendships in our community that endure. Our local Lions Clubs are to the forefront. Taverham Lions helped us create our formal structure in 1992 and many of their members helped structure our first committee. Early in the year Jill our CEO was invited to their base to meet members, re-engage and update. It was my pleasure to meet the group in late Summer at the Costessey Community Hall to accept a donation of £500.

In October the West Norwich Lions organised a "cabaret" afternoon for our passengers. A popular annual event in its fourth year. We welcomed residents from two local care homes to join in. Our guests revelled in the warmth, generosity and exuberance of our entertainers, and the cream teas.

We are indebted for the continuing support & resources granted to us by the Norfolk Community Transport Association. They are our main representative body for C.T. in the area. This user-led group operates a website for sign posting enquiries for services and information. The body has negotiated bulk purchase of Motor Insurance, reducing the cost to individual groups. Through their agreement with Voluntary Norfolk we benefit from a H.R. advice service with the opportunity to additionally commission a payroll and pension service at lower than commercial rates.

The marketing and print costs for our organisation have been kept low for four years through an arrangement with Marsh (Insurance) Ltd based in Norwich. The company kindly print our leaflets, newsletters and other material, greatly reducing our ink cartridge and paper costs. This great service is much appreciated, as is the personal connection that works brilliantly. We are delighted to have their "in kind support" .

Help with discounted rates for vehicle maintenance with the benefit of corporate support comes courtesy of Holden Renault and Truck East Norwich. Our buses need to be reliable for us to fulfil our transport obligations and we have safety checks every 8 to 10 weeks. The smooth operation of our vehicle fleet ensures we keep our passengers, the team and the organisations with whom we hold transport "contracts" content. The assistance that we receive directly from Richard and Tim at Holden Holden and Paul and Carl at Truck East ensures we have minimal down time. The readiness of the teams to our needs with understanding and compassion contributes greatly to keeping our organisation strong.

To date we have been fortunate to hold onto most of the local authority grant support that contributes toward our core costs. Norfolk County Council, Norwich City Council, Broadland District and South Norfolk have been supportive of our service for many years. This year ending March 2017 our Broadland District Council grant ceased.

The NHS and the NCH&C's have their own challenges, and we thank them for supporting us with our base and in a central position with good road access. In return we strive to assist their most mobility restricted patients to keep urgent medical appointments. It is recognised that the barriers disabled and older people face in finding suitable affordable transport to live independently can tip the critical health/life balance. A missed medical appointment can have serious health consequences for the patient and is a wasted cost to the NHS.



To all of our splendid team of trustees, staff and volunteers thank you for embracing so superbly the care of our passengers, for applying yourselves with dedication to all of the very necessary training and for your loyalty and steadfastness.

We have said some sad farewells to key members of our team this year, people who have needed to concentrate on their own medical needs. We are the poorer for their loss. Our services are dependent on unswerving people who make regular commitments. Thank you to each and everyone who cares enough to make that difference.  
My very best regards

Margaret Blanch  
Chair