

Since 2014 Trowbridge Sports Forum in partnership with Trowbridge Town Council has provided the community with access to a 17 seater minibus. Its purpose is to facilitate transport for sports clubs, schools and community groups to allow the access to participate in activities, competitions and events, 146 in 2017/18 and to date 52 in 2018/19, this reduced number is in part due to ongoing mechanical issues with the current vehicle. It is becoming uneconomical to continue with the current vehicle which was purchased second hand and is now 11 years old and this application seeks funding to replace it with a brand new minibus which will be more fuel efficient and cleaner than our current model.

Key stakeholders of the minibus are local primary schools and providing funding for replacing this vehicle enables us to continue our work supporting the schools within of our community; such as allowing Newtown, a local primary school, to take part in a county wide dance festival that takes place at the Bath Forum, 12 miles from Trowbridge. Provision of a minibus is a resource beyond many school budgets. Hilperton Primary School, located in an adjacent parish to Trowbridge described 'the mini bus (as) invaluable to Hilperton Primary School when we organised local school trips and sporting events within the local area. A reliable and well needed service'. Provision of the minibus by the Sports Forum ensures transport is not a barrier to participation and serves as a mechanism to allow young people in our community to take part in activities designed to raise their aspirations.

The minibus has according to the Trowbridge Sea Cadets leader 'been instrumental in (The Sea Cadets) achieving a very high number of hours spent out on the river doing what the cadets enjoy most.'

The Cadet Leader confirmed, 'The use of your minibus enabled us to double the number of cadets we could take to the River Avon in Chippenham every week. This meant that every single cadet that wanted to experience the fun of rowing, kayaking and canoeing could do so. Our only other option would have been to limit the number of cadets who could attend on any given evening. But thanks to your support we managed to get each of the cadets over 30 hours each on the water over the summer. This equates to a total 450 hours provided thanks the use of the minibus. I think you'll agree this is an amazing figure. The minibus also gave the cadets time to socialise with each other on the way to and from the river and they even commented on how much they enjoy travelling together as a group.

The minibus has been utilised by community groups and charities including Able and The Shaw Trust to transport users on trips the coast and Longleat and has been provided free of charge to the organisers of Company for Christmas at the Wiltshire Council office in Trowbridge to ensure transport is not an issue for those benefiting from the vital service.

The minibus also supports local sports clubs, including Wiltshire Cricket, Wiltshire & Avon Lacrosse, Avon Valley Runners and Trowbridge Tigers. Several of the clubs describe the provision of the minibus as vital, invaluable and cost efficient. Avon Valley Runners (AVR) also demonstrate, much like the Sea Cadets, how by simply traveling together on a shared journey it can help foster team integration. AVR also describe how the minibus is a great advertisement for the Trowbridge Community and is often a talking point at club meets around the country and helps put the town and its sporting provisions on the map.

We have appreciated the support provided by Trowbridge Town Council in the management of the minibus supporting the Sport Forum by funding insurance, maintenance and administration of vehicle hire which will continue with the replacement. Replacing the minibus financially benefits the Sports Forum and the community, through the town council, as a new vehicle will require less on-going maintenance. A new vehicle also means we can continue the hire costs at their current level which are

affordable to schools, sports clubs and charities and ensures that the minibus remains sustainable. Reduced need for investment of income in maintenance also means a sinking fund can be developed for the future replacement of the minibus with a view to making the Sports Forum less reliant on grant support to continue providing the minibus service.

We have involved the community in the development of this project inviting them to take part in an online survey and by obtaining testimonials to assess, why they use the minibus – demonstrating how it benefits them. Taking this opportunity to assess if the costs for using the minibus are too excessive or about right and finally considering if we replaced the minibus with a smaller model, that had less restrictive licence requirements would groups still book it.

We found that almost all sports clubs would not use a replacement minibus that had less seats than our current vehicle which has 17 seats. To them, the driving licencing restrictions of a larger vehicle were less important than maximising the number of people who could use it. School groups too wanted to maximise the number of individuals who could use the minibus and thus minimise multiple journeys for a single class.

We have submitted several applications to other organisations to secure some of the required funding; the following applications have been submitted.

£1000 – Community Transport Fund from Community First

£3000 – Ford Small Grant Scheme the outcome will not be returned until after January 2019

£8000 – Awards for All from the National Lottery the outcome will not be returned until early January 2019.

£1000 – Donation from Avon Valley Runners – Running Club

We would look to part exchange the minibus or Trowbridge Community Area Future (TCAF) have expressed an interest in purchasing the vehicle and altering it as a means of transporting their equipment to youth club provisions. The estimated value of our current minibus is £2000 - £3000. We anticipate the cost for replacing the minibus with a like for like new model will be £25000.