

Feasibility study of expanding the rural community car scheme into a wider geographic area in south Denbighshire

Margaret Sutherland M.B.E.
South Denbighshire Community Partnership

Contents

Executive Summary	2
Background.....	2
Key findings.....	2
Recommendations.....	2
Conclusion	3
About South Denbighshire Community Partnership (SDCP).....	4
Background to the research	4
Existing community transport provision in Denbighshire	4
Target area	4
Research aims.....	5
Method.....	5
Exploring study area population demographics, travel behaviour and accessibility	6
Mapping exercise.....	6
Travel behaviour and needs survey	6
Focus Groups.....	7
Most Significant Change interviews.....	7
Findings	9
Literature review	9
Exploration of the proposed study area: demographics, travel behaviour and transport services	10
Existing transport options.....	11
Community transport.....	11
Demographics of survey respondents	14
Travel behaviour.....	15
Travel demand	16
Accessibility of current transport provision.....	19

Impact of limited accessibility and provision of public transport.....	22
Impact on wellbeing from improved access to transport.....	26
Conclusion	27
Acknowledgements.....	30

Executive Summary

Background

The South Denbighshire Community Partnership (SDCP) conducted research to assess the need for expanding its Rural Community Car Scheme (RCCS) to underserved rural areas in Denbighshire. The study aimed to understand the demographics, travel behaviours, and transport needs of residents, particularly those without access to private vehicles, and to evaluate alternative transport solutions.

Key findings

1. **Car dependency:**
 - 80% of respondents rely on their own private vehicles and 7% on others for lifts in a car, highlighting significant car dependency in this rural area although lower than local average household car ownership.
2. **Public transport gaps:**
 - Public transport accessibility is limited, with infrequent services, sometimes no evening or weekend options, and poor connectivity to essential services.
 - 65% of respondents found trains "impossible or very difficult" to access, and 51% reported similar challenges with buses.
3. **Impact on well-being:**
 - Lack of transport options contributes to social isolation, reduced independence, and emotional stress, including when older adults are considering relocation of their home to access services when they are no longer able to drive.
4. **Volunteer shortage:**
 - No interest was expressed in becoming a volunteer driver in response to a survey question, limiting the feasibility of expanding the Rural Community Car Scheme.
 - The long journey and waiting times involved in providing health related trips (e.g. to hospitals) are particularly of inconvenience to volunteers and is an issue that arises when serving isolated rural communities with transport and as healthcare has been redistributed and concentrated to fewer locations and alternative locations further away.
5. **Policy alignment:**
 - Current transport issues conflict with the Well-being of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015, which aims to create cohesive, healthier, and more equal communities and the Llwybr Newydd that promotes sustainable transport, and aims to reduce private car use and dependency.

Recommendations

1. **Short-Term Solutions:**
 - Expand the county's Fflecsi bus service to cover underserved areas and to operate during evenings and weekends.
 - Improve public transport reliability, frequency, and accessibility, including better signage and pedestrian infrastructure.
 - Consider incentives and support for volunteers.
2. **Long-Term Strategies:**
 - Integrate transport planning with health and care services to address the "last mile" challenges.
 - Develop age-friendly transport policies, including support for older drivers transitioning away from car use.
 - Invest in sustainable, inclusive transport systems to reduce car dependency and meet the Welsh Government's target of 45% of journeys by public transport, walking, or cycling by 2040.
3. **Community Engagement:**
 - Involve residents, inclusively, in transport planning to ensure solutions meet local needs.
 - Consider consultation about future travel, service, and housing needs among those aged 55 and over.

4. Policy Advocacy:

- Advocate for equitable rural transport investment under the Bus Reform Bill and Regional Transport Plan.
- Ensure funding models prioritize service availability and equitable minimum provision to address rural accessibility.

Conclusion

While there is clear evidence to demonstrate lack of public transport accessibility for those living within the proposed study area, and that limited investment in rural infrastructure has left rural communities feeling excluded from essential services, expanding the Rural Community Car Scheme is not recommended. Reasons cited are owner/driver volunteer shortages, limited operational feasibility, and the current insecurity around the national bus policy reform and the North Wales Community Transport Revenue Grant (NWCTG). Instead, a coordinated approach involving public transport improvements, alternative solutions, and policy advocacy is essential to address rural transport challenges and enhance community wellbeing.

Feasibility study of expanding the rural community car scheme into a wider geographic area in south Denbighshire

About South Denbighshire Community Partnership (SDCP)

South Denbighshire Community Partnership (SDCP) - based in Corwen - is a community organisation operating in the South of Denbighshire – Lower Dee Valley area (Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation Lower Super Output Area (WIMD LSO) – W0100192, W01000193, W000208). SDCP provides services and activities, either directly or in co-production, which address core values to improve the wellbeing of our deeply rural communities by reducing isolation, improving access to services, and reducing rural poverty in all its forms. An integral part of achieving this is our Community Transport Service.

Background to the research

The South Denbighshire Community Partnership (SDCP) is concerned by issues of isolation and access to essential services for residents in outlying rural communities that fall outside of its current community transport provision.

SDCP received anecdotal information from Denbighshire County Council Community Navigators and other networks that there is a need for improved transport connections and that this need is adversely impacting the health and wellbeing of those communities. Rural communities have issues with accessibility particularly among those who do not drive, and it is more acute in the target area due to its lower population density, longer trip distances, and limited last mile transport provision than available in the areas we already serve.

In October 2024, we began research to consider if there is sufficient need to expand SDCP's Rural Community Car Scheme (RCCS), to gain an understanding of the demographics and needs of the communities, and if alternative transport options, such as Dial a Ride, a car scheme, or expansion to existing public transport would be either more accessible or more feasible.

Existing community transport provision in Denbighshire

Since 2015, under Section 19 permits (Section 19 and section 22 of the [Transport Act 1985](#)), Welsh Government funding is allocated to local authorities to enable them to subsidise otherwise unprofitable but locally important bus routes. This has been supplemented by funding from North Wales Community Transport Revenue Grant (NWCTG) also known as the Bus Service Support Grant (BSSG). Since 2017, SDCP have utilised this funding for our Community Transport Service to include a Dial-A-Ride service, transport for individuals to access social inclusion groups and, our Meals on Wheels service. The Meals on Wheels service will cease in 2025/2026 as it is no longer eligible for funding.

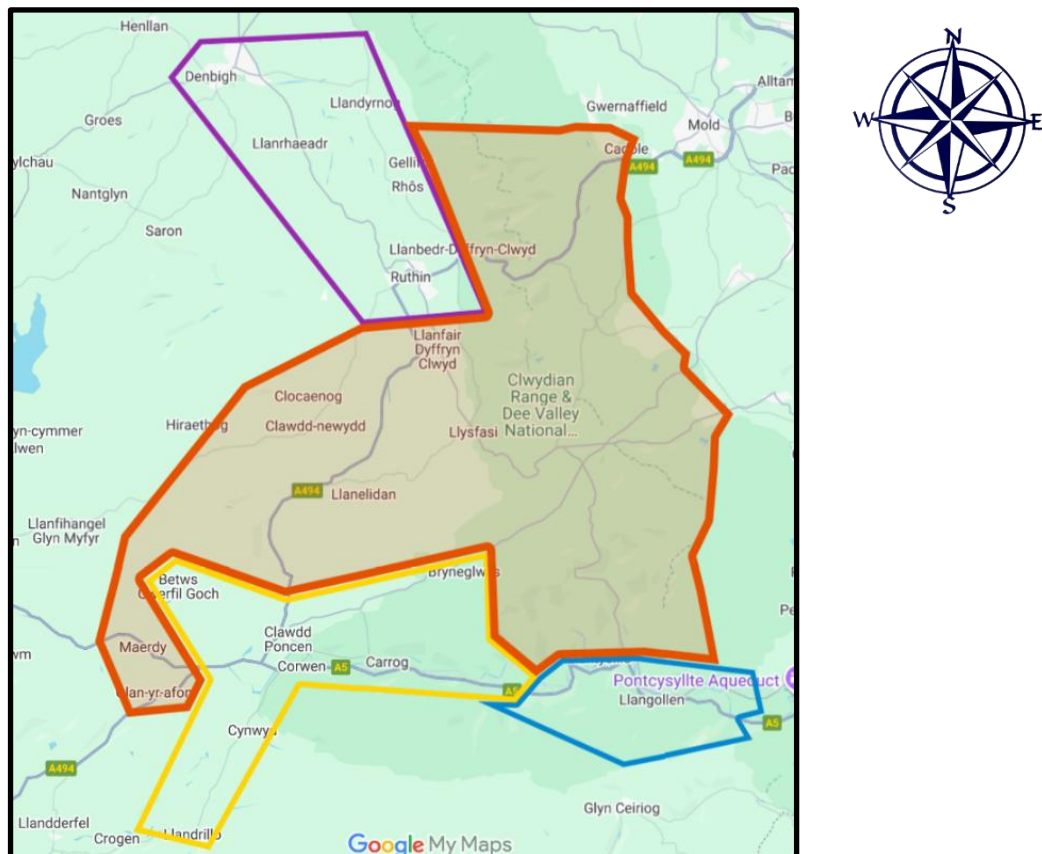
The Rural Community Car Scheme (RCCS) has been operated by SDCP since 2022. From 2015 it was previously operated by Denbighshire County Council (DCC) funded by the NWCTG. At the time of the transfer DCC advised that the scheme had been in decline over recent years, due in the main to lack of volunteer drivers, rather than demand for the service. In addition, a need to expand it to a wider geographic area was suggested.

Target area

The target area of the proposed Rural Community Car Scheme extension borders 3 county councils outside of Denbighshire: Gwynedd to the southwest, Conwy to the West and Wrexham to the East. As outlined on the map below (Figure 1), it includes the Hiraethog villages of Pentrefoelas, Cerrigydrudion, Llanfihangel Glyn Myr and Llanrhaeadr, the Vale of Clwyd (also known as the Denbighshire Moors) and the Clwydian Range (a series of hills in the north-east of Wales that runs from Llandegla in the south to Prestatyn in the north).

On the below map, areas outlined in yellow, blue and purple outlines the existing areas covered by SDCP Community Transport. The area outlined in red is the target area for research project.

Figure 1 Target area for research



Research aims

1. Understand the demographics, travel patterns and behaviours of the population eligible for concessionary bus passes and consider if there is a group of people who are particularly isolated due to poor transport connections.
2. Consider the impact of poor transport connections to communities within the proposed area.
3. Consider what transport options are already available in the study area (both public and private).
4. Consider need for an extended Rural Community Car Scheme to inform strategic decisions to be made by the SDCP board of trustees.
5. If this service expansion is not within the capacity of the organisation, evidence gathered will be shared with key stakeholders to inform their policy, proposing alternative appropriate measures.

Method

An implementation meeting took place on 24th January with Jessie Buchanan and Amy Nicholass from Together for Change (T4C), Dr. Lucy Baker, Aberystwyth University (providing mentoring), Margaret Sutherland and

Sian Dixons (SDCP) to discuss and agree an action plan including roles and responsibilities and timescales for the project (See Appendix A). We agreed that the following methods would be used.

Exploring study area population demographics, travel behaviour and accessibility

To understand population demographics and car ownership, we used the Office for National Statistics custom area build profile tool (ONS, 2021¹) to extract data relevant only to the selected target area for sampling. We used the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation (2019)² data to consider the accessibility to key services and compared travel times to a range of services by private car and public transport for those living within the Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) of the target area.

Mapping exercise

A mapping of existing public transport and community transport provision within the target area was undertaken. The exercise collected data on all bus services available, the location of service origins and destinations, and service frequency, and train services. Resources used in this exercise included:

- Community Transport Association's 'Mapping Tool' to ascertain existing provision, if any, within the target area. [Community Transport Provision North Wales](#)
- Traveling Cymru (www.travelincymru.org) lists all bus services available and data was collated from their website.

Travel behaviour and needs survey

A survey was developed that would enable us to understand:

1. The type and frequency of travel needs.
2. The demographics of those in most need.
3. Reasons for not using public transport.
4. The impact of poor transport links on the wellbeing of the community.

The survey was reviewed and piloted with 8 people at the beginning of April 2025, with an end date for return of 30th April 2025. A total 2,373 bilingual surveys were distributed by post in the target areas. The paper-based survey could be completed and returned to one of 6 points: Ruthin Library, Llangollen Library, Corwen Library, Plas Meddyg Surgery, Llangollen Doctors Surgery, Corwen Doctors Surgery. Alternatively, completed surveys could be posted to Canolfan Ni.

In order for us to reach our target sample we included eligibility criterion for completing the survey, which enabled us to reach our target sample.

Table 1 Eligibility criteria and number of survey responses within each criteria

Eligibility Criteria	No. of Respondents
Over 18-year-olds who consider themselves to be disabled and are eligible for a concessionary bus pass	11
Over 55-year-olds to consider future needs given that they will be eligible for a concessionary bus pass (and community transport) when they reach the age of 60.	60
Over 55 or over 18 and responding on behalf of someone who consider themselves and are eligible for a concessionary bus pass	2

¹ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/customprofiles> [Accessed: 29/10/2025]

² <https://wimd.gov.wales/> [Accessed: 05/03/2025]

In order to encourage participation, we offered a prize draw for the paper-based survey with 3 prizes of £50, £35, £25.

The survey included an introduction about the Rural Community Car Scheme, the times the service would be available, and the costs involved.

It also provided the opportunity for people interested in becoming Rural Community Car Scheme drivers to contact us for more information.

Where there was more than one occupant in the household, we asked that all eligible members of the household complete the survey.

In the survey we asked people if they would be willing to take part in further consultation (either 1-2-1 interviews or Focus Group discussions. This would then inform a thematic analysis. In total 45 who responded consented to taking part in further consultation. Of these, 35 people had provided contact information and were invited to attend Focus Groups.

Focus Groups

Focus Group questions were semi-structured using a predetermined set of open-ended questions with the flexibility to explore emerging themes and follow-up on responses.

Focus Group questions included:

1. Have you thought about the impact on your life if you were unable to use your own transport?
2. What transport provision would give you more confidence in maintaining your independence?
3. What should the next Welsh Government do to enable you to have even more impact on your life and your confidence in maintaining your independence?

The questions were designed after the travel survey, which highlighted the significance of car use and ownership for most participants (80%). The questions enabled further exploration into future later life travel behaviour and the plans made by individuals and families to accommodate their changing or future needs. Thirty-five of the 73 respondents were invited to attend one of three Focus Group sessions. To encourage participation, an incentive in the form of a shopping voucher, to the value of £25, was given to everyone taking part in the Focus Group and individual interviews. Six of the participants attended one of three Focus Group sessions and two participants had a one-to-one interview because they could not attend the Focus Groups.

A research ethics checklist was compiled with resources from Aberystwyth University, UK Data Service, Scottish Community Development Centre, and Scotland's Third Sector Research Forum to support the work of LPIP Rural Wales community-led researchers. It was approved by the School of Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at Cardiff University.

Most Significant Change interviews

We held individual interviews with 3 people who had used our existing community transport service over the last 12 months. The interviews were undertaken to capture lived experiences of their mobility and to measure the impact that community transport has on their daily lives.

A set of structured open questions explored the participant's background, what had changed since using the service, what they considered was the '*most significant change*', what life had been like before using the community transport service, what it is like now and what had happened to bring those changes about.

Initially, the plan was to recruit community volunteers to carry out 1-2-1 interviews with some of the respondents to gain a better understanding of their experiences of transport and accessibility, and their everyday mobility

and transport needs. However, during the recruitment and induction process, it became clear that the volunteers did not want to commit to the level of input required and had concerns about visiting people in their own homes to undertake the 1-2-1 interviews and the distances required to travel. These 1-2-1 interviews were then conducted by SDCP staff who undertook training in this area with Together for Change.

Findings

Literature review

There is a high reliance on private transport in rural areas of the UK because of poor transportation provision (Metz, 2003). The possibility of isolation for those having to stop driving or unable to drive in rural areas is of particular concern (ibid). Regarding concern over access to health services for older people in rural communities, Metz (2003, p. 383) states,

“There is a clear need for planners, transport operators and health providers to work closely together to ensure that older people—who comprise two-thirds of hospital patients—can readily get access to the services they need. The position of older people living in rural areas is a particular concern, especially when there is no access to a car.”

Giving up driving among older people is related to a decrease in wellbeing and an increase in depression and related health problems, including feelings of stress, isolation and increased mortality (Musselwhite and Scott, 2019³). Musselwhite et al., (2015⁴) suggest that bus use facilitates physical activity and keeps people connected, both of which contribute positively to the health of older populations. However, because buses are not necessarily viable in future, and especially in rural contexts, transport may become more community led and involve more shared transport (ibid).

Bus service delivery and its policy is being reformed in Wales, which is an opportunity to improve access to buses for rural communities of Denbighshire and for community transport to take on more services if feasible and supported. The need for community transport in North Wales is outlined in the Regional Transport Plan North Wales (2025⁵) particularly given the regions higher than national average demographic of over 65 years olds who rely more heavily than others on public transport.

The proposed outline to the bus reform and approach to franchised services for Wales produced by the Welsh Government and Transport for Wales (TfW) (2025⁶) refers to a shift in how bus services are managed and delivered, moving decision-making power from private operators to the Welsh Government and TfW. This means that the Welsh Government and TfW will now be responsible for decisions about routes, timetables, fares, operating hours, and service quality standards. The aim is for a more equitable and efficient public transport network that will feature improved service integration, including with the rail network.

In the document's forward (p.2) Ken Skates MS, Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales, acknowledges that,

“The existing system for delivering local bus services is not effective or efficient. It does not always deliver the public transport opportunities communities need. The bus network has been contracting for many years, which started long before the pandemic, but, consequently, got much worse. [...]

Bus reform will make a significant difference to people across Wales, particularly those who are struggling with the cost of living, are isolated, are older or are disabled. Alleviating transport poverty is key to creating a fairer and more equal Wales.”

³ Musselwhite, C. and Scott, T., 2019. Developing a model of mobility capital for an ageing population. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 16(18), p.3327.

⁴ Musselwhite, C., Holland, C. and Walker, I., 2015. The role of transport and mobility in the health of older people. *Journal of Transport & Health*, 2(1), pp.1-4.

⁵ North Wales Corporate Joint Committee (2025) North Wales Regional Transport Plan July 2025. Available at: <https://democracy.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/documents/s45414/Appendix%2001%20-%20Regional%20Transport%20Plan.pdf> [Accessed: 29/10/2025]

⁶ Welsh Government and Transport for Wales (2025). Our Roadmap to Bus Reform Towards One Network, One Timetable, One Ticket March 2025. Available at: <https://www.gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2025-03/our-roadmap-to-bus-reform-march-2025.pdf> [Accessed: 29/10/2025]

The document notes the key role on-demand franchised services such as Fflecsi will have to rural areas with limited or no services. It comments on the dependency of deep rural isolated homes and communities on using cars, and this is set to continue (p. 11). However, (p.11) recognise the need to reduce car dependency and provide alternatives for those without access to car. It proposes that ‘most’ rural populations live near to or on a transport corridor, and for those populations, “*we can sustainably provide good ways to get to local towns and villages without relying on a car*”. Options will include buses, Fflecsi on-demand services, car clubs and e-bikes (ibid). TfW and the Welsh Government (2025, p.12) also note the role of community transport sector in providing rural servicers:

“The community transport sector plays an important role in providing this sort of service, and we will work with them to learn from their experience and provide the most extensive coverage we can in rural areas.”

Community transport services will be able to continue operating without a franchise contract and they will be able to bid for franchised contracts (ibid, p.36; Welsh Parliament, 2025). The bus reform in Wales has, however, created uncertainty over, whether or not, the current bus service provision will remain the same, decline or increase, how it will be funded, and how it will integrate with the wider network of franchised services including requirements for data-sharing given that community operators do not have the same resources as private companies bidding for franchises⁷.

CEO of the Community Transport Association CTA) Dr Victoria Armstrong highlighted the need for support to continue delivering vital services in the UK and Wales when she launched the CTA’s 5-year strategy in July 2025,

“Across the UK, communities face growing challenges around accessibility, connectivity, and sustainability, while continuing to show incredible innovation and resilience. It is vital that Community Transport is supported to step into our potential as a key part of an integrated, sustainable, and inclusive transport network that allows all of us to access transport that meets our needs. We look forward to working with colleagues in the Senedd and the Welsh Government as we take the next steps into a new legislative system for bus and community transport in Wales.”

Exploration of the proposed study area: demographics, travel behaviour and transport services

Table 1 shows the population of the Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) that make up the target area of an extended Rural Community Car Scheme. Efenechtyd, Llanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd and Llangynhafal are the most rural areas of the proposed car scheme. The whole proposed area comprises of sparsely populated communities that are served largely by amenities available in Ruthin.

Table 2 Population by LSOA of the proposed scheme area (Census, Office for National Statistics, 2021).

LSOA Ref	Area covered		Population 2021
W01000207	Llanfair Clwyd/Gwyddelwern	Dyffryn	2348
W01000203	Llanarmon-yn-Ial/Llandegla		2487
W01000202	Efenechtyd		1635
W01000204	Llanbedr Clwyd/Llangynhafal	Dyffryn	1466

Census data was extracted using the Office for National Statistics custom area profile tool (ONS, 2021). Figure 2 demonstrates that the age of residents living in the target area is skewed to over 50 year age groups and has a higher than national average percentage of people living in the area between the ages of 50 and 80 years.

⁷ Welsh Parliament, Welsh Climate Change, Environment and Infrastructure Committee (2025) Bus Services (Wales) Bill: Stage 1 report. Available at: <https://laiddocuments.senedd.wales/cr-ld17359-en.pdf>

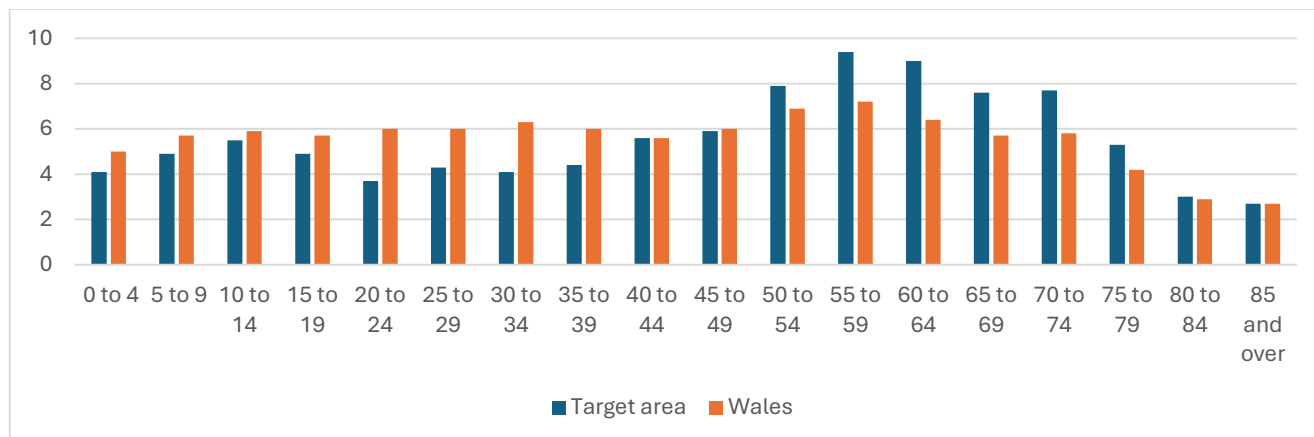


Figure 2 Percentage of population by age in target area and Wales (ONS, 2021)

The percentage of registered disabled people (under the Equality Act) living in the target area comprises 17% of the population.

Car ownership at the household level is higher than the national average (94.6% car ownership in the target area compared to a Welsh Average of 80.5%). In the target area, 35% of households have 1 car/van, 39% of households have 2 cars/vans and 21% have 3 cars/vans. Nationally, 42% of households have 1 car/van, 28% of households have 2 cars/vans and 11% have 3 cars/vans. There is a small proportion of households in the target area with no cars/vans (5.5%) with limited transportation available. Nationally this figure is 19.4%, which highlights car dependency in the target area.

Table 3 Average household car ownership comparing target area and national statistics (Office for National Statistics Census 2021)

Number of cars or vans (per household)	Rural Car Scheme area	Wales average
No cars or vans in household	5.5%	19.4%
1 car or van in household	34.6%	41.7%
2 cars or vans in household	38.7%	28.1%
3 or more cars or vans in households	21.3%	10.7%

Existing transport options

Community transport

Other than the existing services delivered by SDCP shown in the above map (p.7), community transport provision in the county includes a Dial-a-Ride (run by Denbighshire Limited) which is available for permanent residents who live along the North Wales Coast covering the area from Abergele along the coast to Prestatyn

and down to Denbigh and Llandyrnog (outlying rural community of Denbigh) ⁸. No community transport provision exists between Denbigh and Ruthin, and Ruthin and Corwen that would otherwise supplement bus services assisting the needs of disabled and older people.

Existing public transport

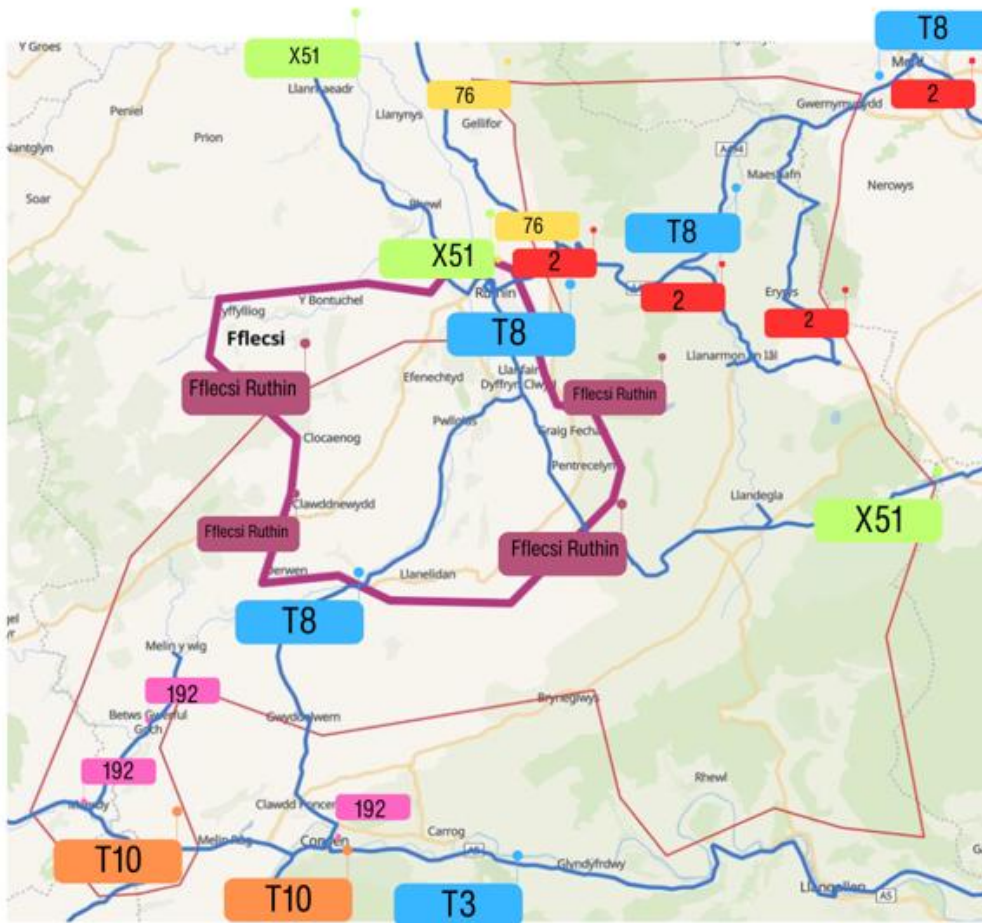
The existing public transport provision serves the main highways linking key destinations but does not serve the hinterland of rural communities and some services do not offer evening or Sunday services (Table 4).

Table 4 Bus services in target area (Traveline Cymru, 2025)

Service	Route	Daytime Mondays to Saturdays level of service	Evenings and Sundays
2	Ruthin - Mold via Llanarmon, Eryrys, Maeshafan	Every two hours	No service
T3	Wrexham - Barmouth via Llangollen, Corwen, Bala, Dolgellau	Every two hours	Every two hours
T8	Corwen - Chester via Ruthin, Mold, Broughton	Hourly	No service
T10	Corwen - Bangor via Cerrig, Betws y Coed, Bethesda	Every two hours	Every two hours
X51	(Rhyl -) Denbigh - Wrexham via Ruthin	Every two hours	No Sunday service
192	Melin y Wig - Llangollen via Maerdy, Uwch y Dre, Corwen, Carrog	Two return journeys Mondays to Fridays	No service
76	Ruthin - Denbigh via Llandyrnog	Approx five return journeys	No service
Ruthin Fflecsi	Serving Ruthin and the following villages in the red area: Bontuchel, Clawddewnydd, Clocaenog, Cyffylliog, Derwen, Efenechtyd, Graigfechan, Pentrecelyn	Effectively hourly Mondays to Fridays off-peak only 9.30a.m. -2.30p.m.	No service

⁸ [Community Transport Provision North Wales](#)

Figure 3 Bus services operating within the target study area (service details available from Traveline Cymru, July 2025)



Key

- Blue lines = bus routes running on major highway roads (T10, T3, T8, 192, X51, 2, 76)
- Purple outline = area of Fflecsi on-demand bus service
- Red outline = approximation of SDCP red zone
- Yellow lines = other major highway A roads

The current Fflecsi bus is limited to a small geographic area within the target study area and operates within a limited time frame as a survey participant comments,

“I would prefer not to drive and am used to using buses but there aren't any! The Fflecsi bus is good, but I need it before 9.30 and up until 10.30pm.”

Denbighshire has two standard train stations, Prestatyn and Rhyl, both on the North Wales Coast Line. Ruthin is 18 miles from Rhyl. Stations located to the east of the target area, in the adjacent county of Wrexham (Chirk and Ruabon) are 22 miles from Ruthin. These stations have connections to Chester, Manchester, Liverpool, and Birmingham as well as Manchester and Birmingham International Airports. There is a tourist vintage rail line in operation through summer months between Llangollen and Corwen (priced in 2025 at £23.50 per adult return).

The proposed target area for an extended Rural Community Car Scheme has relatively higher level of accessibility deprivation as data from the Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 demonstrates (Table 5). In 3 out of 5 of the LSOAs of the proposed target area, journey times are considerably longer by public transport on average, than those of the current community transport provision in Corwen and Llangollen. This demonstrates a need on the basis of the journey time by public transport in the proposed areas being long and far longer than journeys undertaken by private car. A return journey time of about 1 – 2 hours or more for visiting the pharmacy or GP surgery exists in the proposed scheme area. This does not take into consideration, however, the frequency of bus services of every 2 hours or less leads to significant waiting times. Depending on the timing of a GP appointment, a person may take a day to go to their GP by bus. It may not always be possible for a person to wait for 2 hours for a bus depending on their health and mobility, for example, and/or they may not be able to get to a bus stop to undertake such a trip given the rurality of some of the houses and the higher than average proportion of people between 50 and 80 years of age within the target area.

Table 5 Average travel time to services comparison between public transport services and private car to pharmacies and GP surgeries in the target area LSOA's and existing community transport provision LSOAs (Welsh Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2019)

LSOA code	LSOA name	Average public return travel time to a pharmacy (minutes)	Average private return travel time to a pharmacy (minutes)	Average public return travel time to a GP surgery (minutes)	Average private return travel time to a GP surgery (minutes)
Existing community transport provision areas					
W01000 192	Corwen 1 (existing community transport provision)	68	13	70	14
W01000 208	Llangollen 1 (existing community transport provision)	77	10	78	10
Target area LSOAs for Rural Community Car Scheme extension					
W01000 207	Llanfair Dyffryn Clwyd/Gwyddelwern	121	16	124	17
W01000 203	Llanarmon-yn-Ial/Llandegla	105	23	97	22
W01000 202	Efenechtyd	138	20	134	19
W01000 204	Llanbedr Dyffryn Clwyd/Llangynhafal	82	14	75	14
W01000 193	Corwen 2	43	5	47	6

Demographics of survey respondents

In total, 70 survey responses were completed (2 completed in Welsh). An additional 40 attempted the survey but were ineligible based on the selection criteria and screened out. The majority of responses were completed online (67%). Although an older demographic may still not be able to access online surveys, the inconvenience of dropping or posting the survey for them may have resulted in less of this group completing the survey (either online or by post).

Very few adults registered disabled under the age of 40 completed the survey (n=1) and responses are skewed to ages over 50 years. The highest number of respondents (33%) are aged 61-70 years with 66% are aged over 60, and hence eligible for a concessionary bus pass. These ages are in any case the majority of users of the current community transport provision offered by SDCP.

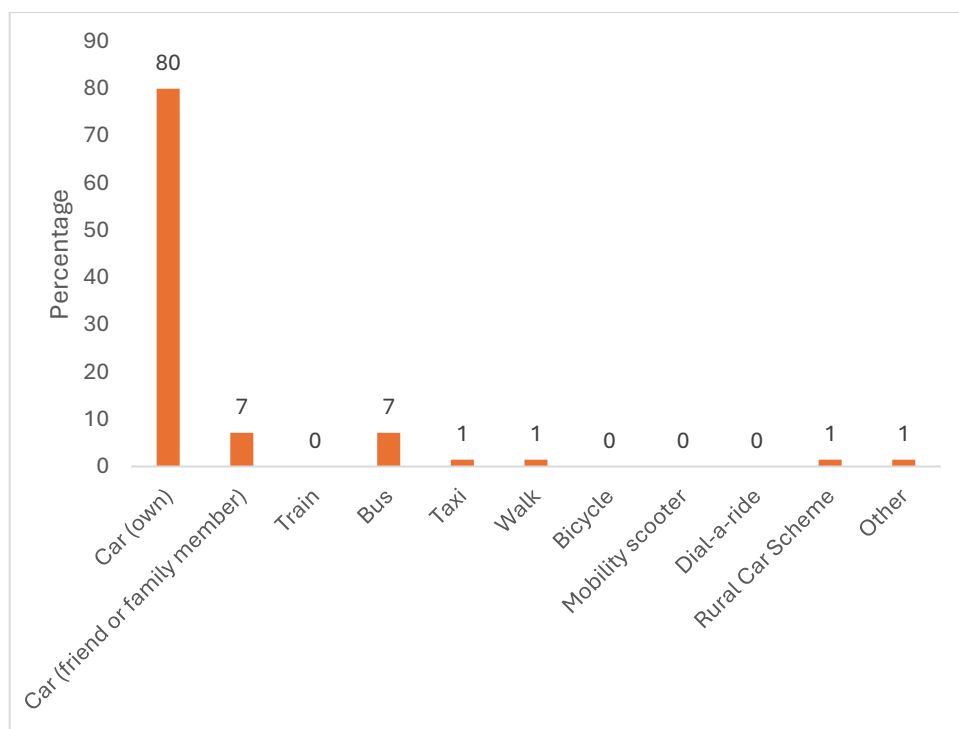
Table 6 Age profile of survey respondents

Age (years)	Percentage of respondents
18-30	1
31-40	0
41-50	6
51-60	27
61-70	33
71-80	20
80+	13

Travel behaviour

The survey demonstrates a high level of car dependency whereby 80% of all respondents state their own car is their primary mode of transport. A fifth of respondents do not have their own car.

Figure 4 Primary Transport Mode

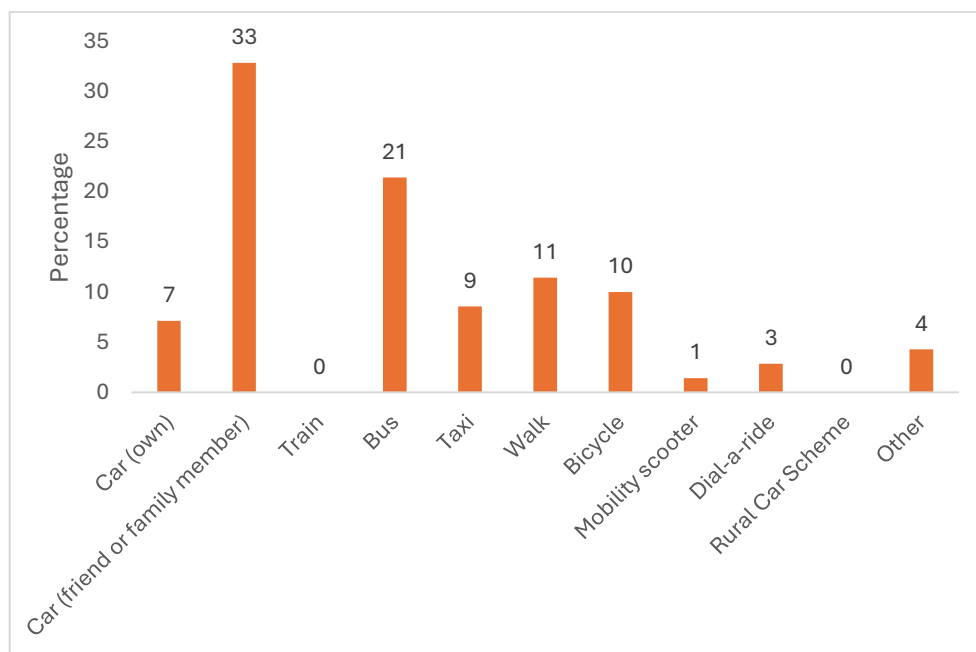


Car ownership is lower than that reported in the Census 2021 for the target area (94% of households own a car/van). A further 7% rely on the car of a friend or family member as their primary mode of transport. The

demographic of people surveyed (over 18 and disabled, but primarily those aged over 55 years) are more dependent on the limited public transport provision available than average for the local area.

Considering respondent's secondary mode of transport, the most commonly cited is use of the car of a friend or family (33%). When their own car is unavailable, or when respondents cannot use public transport, they are dependent on car and some (9%) use taxi as a secondary mode. Bus service use is much higher as a secondary (21%) rather than primary mode (7%), indicating the limited accessibility of buses in the area.

Figure 5 Secondary Transport Mode



Travel demand

Respondents were asked how frequently they require a transport service for various trip purposes. Stated demand for a transport service range between 4 – 30% of the respondents. 'Several times a week' is the most common journey frequency selected by participants and it seems that most respondents would not have daily travel needs. Depending on the trip purpose, the frequency of service required changes. Shopping trips are wanted more frequently (several times a week is the most popular frequency suggested) than other trips, followed by visiting family and friends, going to the GP and 'other' trip purposes. Hospital trips are required less frequently (23% less than once a month) as are trips to optician and dentist. Trips to GP are spread across the frequency requirement as are trips to the pharmacy.

Overall, the highest trip purposes creating demand for a Rural Community Car scheme are trips for shopping, to a pharmacy, GP, hospital, optician, dentist, banking, and visiting friends and family. Unpopular trip purposes include Job Centre, education, and day centre visits.

Table 7 Required frequency of a transport service for various trip purposes (percentage of survey respondents)

	Daily (%)	Several times a week (%)	Once a week (%)	Once a fortnight (%)	Once a month (%)	Less than once a month (%)	All frequencies required (%)	I use my own transport/ never (%)
GP surgery	0	4	1	3	7	11	27	73
Hospital appointments	0	1	0	3	0	23	27	73
Pharmacy	0	1	6	0	9	13	29	71
Job Centre	0	0	0	0	1	3	4	96
Adult Education	0	1	1	1	1	3	9	91
Visiting family and friends	0	6	6	4	1	4	21	79
Shopping	1	10	6	1	6	6	30	70
Day Centre Visits	0	0	1	0	0	3	4	96
Banking or Post Office	0	3	7	1	4	7	23	77
Optician	0	0	0	0	0	26	26	74
Dentist	0	0	0	0	0	24	24	76
Other	0	4	3	1	0	7	16	84

Although Fflecsi only covers a small part of the target area during off-peak times, a respondent comments on the advantage of it for accessing shopping, which was the most popular trip purpose selected by respondents.

“No internet at home so shopping in Ruthin is essential - over 50 years living in same house – one of us is 90+ years of age and one 80+ years. The Fflecsi bus is outstanding. [It gives us] access to the world”.

Respondents were asked the time of day they wanted to make these same trips (destinations included in Table 8) both within and outside of the times possible to be provided by a Rural Community Car Scheme. Options given were for morning, afternoon and ‘other times’. Of those who state they currently require a transport service to the various destinations, 55% fall within our current community transport operating times, however, a significant number (45%) would have needs that cannot be met under the proposed expansion of SDCP’s Rural Car Scheme (Table 9). That is because SDCP operates between 9:00 and 15:30, which is the same timing as the current Fflecsi service, and would not cover the demand created by the limited availability of evening public bus services.

Table 8 Timing of trips required (total trips across the destinations e.g. GP surgery, shopping etc.)

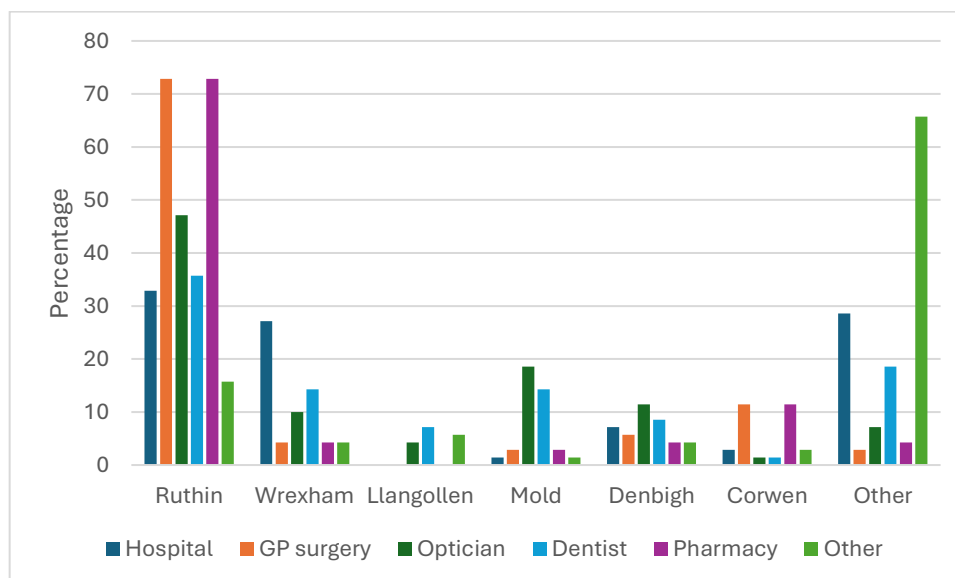
Morning 9:00-12:00	Afternoon 12:00-15:30	Other times (outside SDCP operating hours)	Total no. of trips across trip purposes and journey times by respondents
58	38	80	176
33% of all required trips	22% of all required trips	45% of all required trips	100%

Respondents were asked where is the location of their nearest health care provider (including hospital, GP, optician, dentist, pharmacy and ‘other’). Just under half (46.3%) of trips to the various health care providers are to Ruthin, which is also popular for shopping, accessing bank and Post Office services. A transport service, therefore, might focus on providing the rural hinterland access to and from Ruthin. Mold is also popular for optician and dental services. Other destinations also feature strongly among those of health care providers (see below).

Table 9 Popularity of various health care destinations for health provision (percentage of respondents)

%	Ruthin (%)	Wrexham (%)	Llangollen (%)	Mold (%)	Denbigh (%)	Corwen (%)	Other destination (%)
Hospital	33	27	0	1	7	3	29
GP surgery	73	4	0	3	6	11	3
Optician	47	10	4	19	11	1	7
Dentist	36	14	7	14	9	1	19
Pharmacy	73	4	0	3	4	11	4
Other health care provider	16	4	6	1	4	3	66
Average across destinations	46.3	10.5	2.8	6.8	6.8	5	21.3

Figure 6 Popularity of various trip destinations for health provision



Within ‘other’ destinations of health care provision, a qualitative analysis of comments (see Table 11) finds that:

- 52% state Glyn Clwyd Hospital Bodlwyddan
- 13% state Wrexham Maelor
- 13% state they access dental services outside of Wales

Providing services across the border to England and across the border of the county could add complications for service delivery depending on the source of funding for a service and funder requirements.

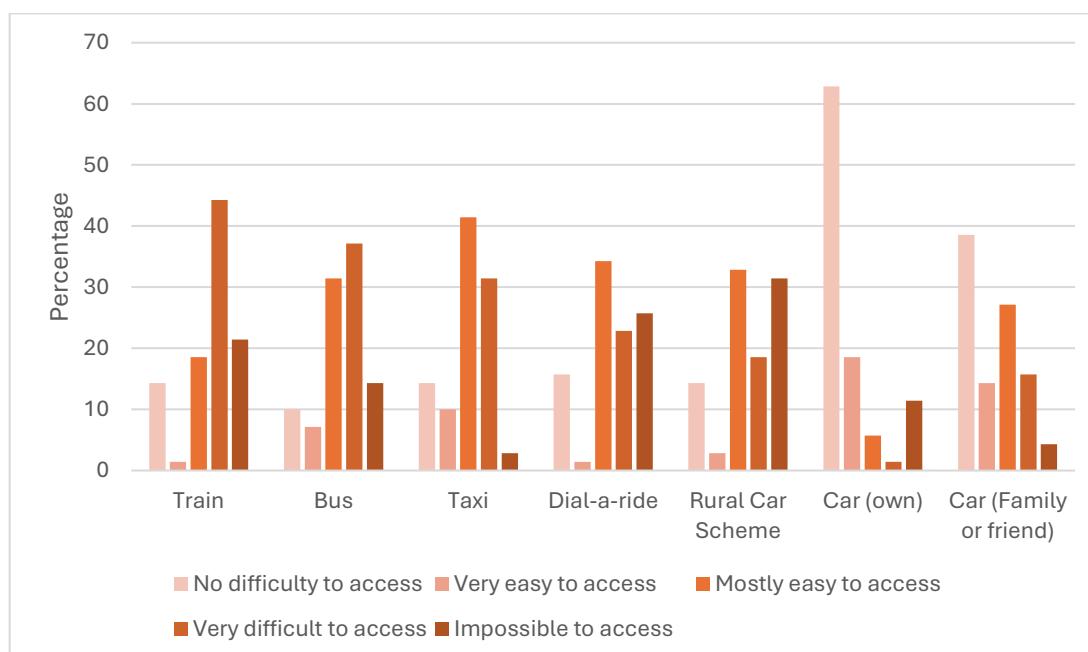
Table 10 Summary of 'other' health care provider destinations

Summary of 'other' destinations	Count of reference	Notes given
Glyn Clwyd Hospital Bodelwyddan	12	34-mile round trip from centre of Ruthin - assuming you could get to Ruthin to get a bus.
Out of Area (England)	3	Unable to access Dental Services locally
Wrexham Betsi Cadwaladr	3	34-mile round trip from centre of Ruthin - assuming you could get to Ruthin to get a bus to Wrexham Maelor
Local Pick-Up arrangements	1	Village Shop offers prescription collection service
Conwy	1	Specialist Eye Hospital - Nearest to Denbighshire
Multiple Venues	1	Disabled with Complex Medical Needs
No Access to service	1	Dental
Home Visits/Deliveries	1	Opticians, Dentist Home Visits, Prescription deliveries.

Accessibility of current transport provision

Respondents were asked to rate the accessibility of various transport modes with choices ranging from 'no difficulties to access' to 'impossible to access'.

Figure 7 Accessibility of various transport modes

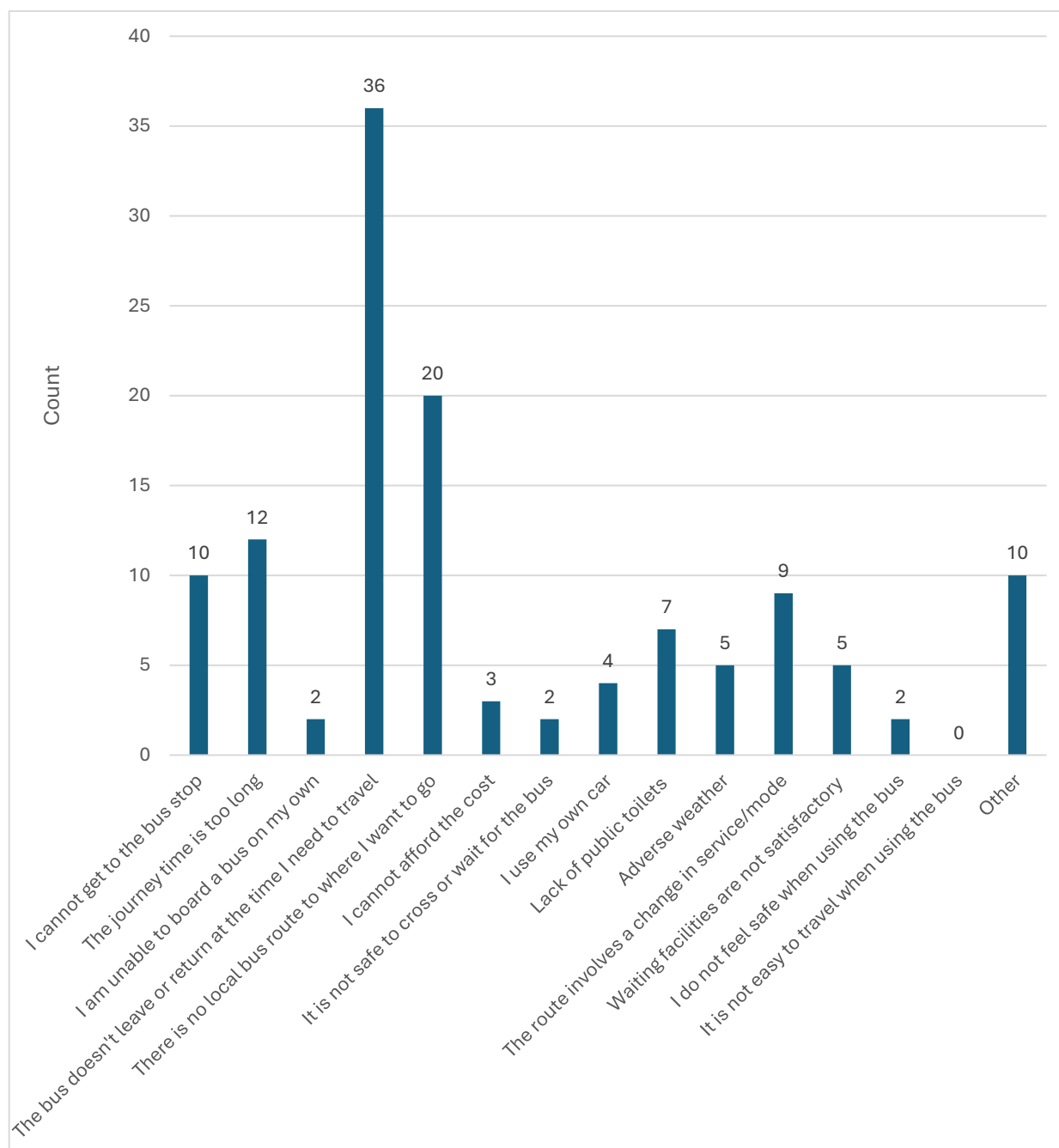


The results demonstrate car dependency and convenience, as well as the relative difficulty in accessing public transport. As expected, private car (owned) is considered the most accessible and convenient transport mode available among some 80% of the respondents as their primary mode of transport. The car of a friend or family member was the second most accessible mode of transport (39% state no difficulties accessing this), but not for everyone. Twenty seven percent consider it 'mostly easy' to access the car of a friend or family member while 16% state this is 'very difficult' and impossible for 4%. The situation demonstrates that people without cars cannot be left to rely on friends and family for lifts while for some this is sometimes or often an options, for others, it is more difficult and affects people's autonomy.

Bus services are accessible to some (31% consider it mostly easy to access a bus service) but not all (37% of respondents find it difficult to access bus and 14% find this impossible). This question does not comment on the regularity or journey time of the bus services available, which often do not suit people's needs.

Participants were asked their reasons for not using the bus (Figure 6). The main reason chosen for difficulty in accessing bus services (n=36) was lack of service at the time they wished to travel. Furthermore, 20 state there is not a service that would take them to their required destination. Other common difficulties include long journey times, inability to get to a bus stop (which can relate to lack of last mile service provision and/or an individual's mobility), connectivity of a route, and lack of toilets.

Figure 8 Reasons for not using the bus



Comments given within the survey indicate some of the challenges in accessing public transport. For example, the frequency of public transport was raised as an issue for accessing appointments:

“Transport on buses has become very difficult. Timetables are not geared up for rural communities outside early morning or afternoon timings. This makes appointments difficult to access.”

Others comment on the unavailability of evening and weekend services:

“[There is] little flexibility with times. [There’s] no service after mid-afternoon, on evenings, or weekends.

It would be impossible for anyone to rely on it during normal business hours.”

“Transport links from villages to towns need to be available early morning, evenings, and weekends”

One respondent commented on the need for services to link to train services connecting them with cities in England:

Bus and train times need to be coordinated e.g. T8 & trains to Liverpool/Manchester”

Another relates limited bus accessibility to their community’s car dependency:

“Prior to COVID 19, the village (Llandegla), had a bus either to Ruthin or Wrexham every hour. Since the service has returned post-COVID and a campaign by local Councillors, the MS and residents, we now have a service which is once every two hours. The service only runs between Wrexham and Denbigh, [however]. Everything else requires at least one change of bus and no certainty how other services might connect. The current provision of a bus service does nothing to aid residents to reduce their carbon footprint as households with two adult occupants need two cars, three adults equals three cars, or some adults are left without transport whilst the other adult is out. Furthermore, considering that the village is on Offa’s Dyke there is no easy access for walkers/ tourists.”

The train is more difficult to access in this area than bus (65% of respondents state negative accessibility experiences). Limited bus access, lack of joined up journey times, lack of and last mile connectivity compound the difficulty of accessing the train stations in the county for long distance trips.

A comment on the issues of accessing a train given in the survey was:

“There’s nothing that can get me to a railway station other than a taxi “

The cost of taxis is problematic, however, as another respondent suggests:

“A taxi is £20 from where I live to Ruthin, that’s too expensive, you know, for a pensioner”.

The multi-mode connectivity is presented as an issue:

“I would use trains more often if there were bus services to local railway stations, e.g. Penyffordd, Wrexham & Chester. I could not live in this village without my own car as the public transport service is inadequate and there is no service whatsoever on a Sunday.”

Another respondent comments on proposed toilet changes to trains that would make them inaccessible:

“The proposal for new trains without toilet facilities will mean I can’t use trains to get anywhere”

Impact of limited accessibility and provision of public transport

Participants were asked how their access to public transport impacts their wellbeing based on three indicators including their mental wellbeing, feelings of isolation and autonomy.

Table 11 Impact of public transport limitations on wellbeing

Wellbeing Indicator	Percentage of people who rely on public transport negatively impacted
---------------------	---

Affects my mental well-being negatively	67%
Contributes to me feeling isolated	78%
Affects my ability to be independent	78%

Of those who state they rely on public transport a high percentage report negative implications to their mental wellbeing (67%). Almost 80% feel isolated and unable to live independently as they might with access to a transport service.

There is also the issue of car dependency and the concern this gives rise to among participants, particularly given that 33% of survey participants are 70 years and above. Respondents were given the opportunity to add their own comments on transport needs. The most recurring comment (14 out of 35 comments) were concerns around car (and public transport) dependency and the implications of that as they aged.

“We live very rural. We rely on our own transport to get around. Having one car to rely on is often very worrying”.

“I am 94 and still drive short distances. My friends have given up driving and urge me to do so. But I live in a remote place.”

“I have my own car at the moment and good neighbours if I can't use it for hospital etc but we are all mid to late 60's so anything can change quickly with requirements.”

“My current situation may change as I age and my mobility changes. Due to ill health, I may have to hand in my driver's license and give up driving.”

“The day will come when I cannot continue to drive. I will then become dependent on public transport. I haven't applied for a bus pass at this time as I don't envisage using them. I have had to rescue my neighbour who tried to use busses but found himself stranded with the connecting bus having already left and it being at least an hour until the next one.”

It was clear that the majority of respondents who are car owners would in the next 5-10 years face challenges around car ownership including financial, mobility, and health reasons, and it was important to understand, and timely in light of the Bus Reform Bill, what, if any, thought had been given to their longer term transport needs and the impact major life changes might have on their existing preferred mode of transport.

For example, a participant states they want a community transport type service available when they need to stop driving:

“When I become unable to drive the [proposed] service would be most useful”

Some fear having to move from their home when they cease to drive:

“At this point I have my own car. Should this change, I will have to reconsider where I live as local transport is not currently an option.”

The scope of the project was widened to look at more medium to long term implications of limited transport provision for older people and their families. We held two Focus Groups to explore how this overlapped with wellbeing.

The first question asked “Have you thought about the impact on your life if you were unable to use your own transport?”

One participant comments on the difficulty of doing things they find fulfilling and rewarding because of limited transport:

"It's all juggling. I don't do lots of things 'I'd like to because I don't know if I will have regular transport e.g. I'd like to go swimming first thing in the morning, I'd like to join a theatre group, I'd like to go to a dance class."

Another comments,

"There's a lot of people in the town that don't walk very well. God knows the woman who used to live in my house. She never got out much because there was no transport. She didn't drive. She had to get people to do everything for them."

They note the dependency on others and consider it to be negative. Their comment also highlights that mobility issues are not limited to isolated rural villages and affect those living in town.

One participant has made a decision to live rurally but close to a bus stop.

"I have a slightly different view (sic) because where I lived before, which was very rural, there was only two buses a day and we made the decision to move for various reasons to a place that's on a bus route and when it'll be every two hours that'll be amazing because we didn't have that facility."

Even when people move to a village served by a bus route, they may still not be able to access some appointments by bus and are concerned what will happen when they can no longer drive and if they can remain where they are living:

"When we moved to Llandegla, that was where I wanted to be our forever home and we've done it so that we wouldn't have to move, but now I look at it and I think we wouldn't be able to go to the doctors or to try and make appointments, particularly hospital appointments with the service the way that it is at the moment, I think we would have to move."

It is not easy for people to consider moving in future as one participant comments:

"...or we move somewhere where we can access it, so you know. And that's ridiculous to think you have to move."

Caring for others is a concern of those living rurally:

"Now I also have a very old an elderly mother who lives in London."

When people cannot access those they care for by bus when they also travel by bus, a solution is to move them to a location accessible by bus so that the carer can reach them:

"My aunt lives on the outskirts of Ruthin and there is no bus service, so I can get to Ruthin, but I can't actually get to her. As she is now getting older, they are having to sell the house that they have lived in and wanted to stay there forever and move into Ruthin because there is no transport for her."

The implications of lack of rural transport provision for older people in isolated rural communities and their families overlaps with wellbeing because of the worry and the emotional labour involved in moving home.

The increased demand and availability of affordable, suitable, accommodation while older people may need to move to an area with more accessible services without adequate public transport provision, could expand the problem from a transport issue to a housing and social care problem. Moving to an area with greater transport provision and services is not a complete solution for the respondents because people with limited mobility tend to need a door-to-door service. This could also result in social isolation while moving away from friends in their

home community. Social isolation is in itself very detrimental to wellbeing. For example, the World Health Organisation, report 870,000 deaths a year are attributed to loneliness⁹.

The second question was, **“what transport provision would give you more confidence in maintaining your independence and remaining in your own home?”**

When responding to this question, participants did not have confidence. One suggests community transport linking in with their existing community projects and spaces, another suggests the difficulty of volunteering to drive and through community transport needs more investment, another is more apathetic and comments on reliance on others therefore imagining a future with no independence.

One participant recognises the challenge of provision by mainstream providers for access health care and suggests community transport solutions:

“I think it's unrealistic where I live to increase the timing of the bus as there's not enough people that live in the village, but some sort of scheme where you could get a community car or something, you know, like community organising itself. I also volunteer in a community shop, maybe that's something we could feed into and maybe provide that as a community, maybe with some backup from the Council, that sort of thing, you know, where there's less population, so more targeted. I need to get to the dentist in Llangollen. And how can I do that?”

There was a response recognising the difficulty of relying on volunteer drivers, such as insuring their vehicle, and the need to financially support rural transport:

“The problem is that for an individual, i mean that doesn't matter so much for me at the moment, but if an individual in certain circumstances couldn't carry passengers because their insurance is invalid, you can't do it [volunteer as a driver] and I think that's the difficulty is that you can have the community schemes, but the community schemes need to be supported in some way somehow, whether it's from Council tax or government, whatever it might be. Transport for Wales budget, whatever.”

Related to this point, the survey gave the opportunity for people to find out more about being volunteer owner/drivers in the target area to assess whether any need identified could be met by increasing the Rural Car Scheme. No responses or follow-up were received for this. This doesn't mean that no volunteers would come forward if a new scheme were launched, however, it gives concern that out of 70 survey responses none have shown an interest in volunteering.

Focus Group question 3 was: **“what should the next Welsh Government do to enable you to have even more impact? What should the next Welsh Government not do?”**

Two participants suggests consultation is required:

“They should have some sort of consultation before services are changed. I think that at least, even if the service changes, at least you [should] have a say.”

“So, when you think of for the people organising the service to have a think about: where people are going to need to go and try and build it round that, you know, doctors, dentists, etcetera, you know, shopping and stuff. Well, you know, you might have to wait for two hours, or we'll try and sort it out in some way.”

⁹ <https://www.who.int/multi-media/details/social-isolation-and-loneliness-have-serious-impacts>

Another stresses the need to consider and understand the rural context where people can be very limited without public transport:

"I think what the government tends to look at.. and it doesn't matter whether it's the Welsh government, English or Scottish .. it's their focus on the towns and the cities. And if you're living rurally, then they don't seem to think you need to use the public transport and that's how it feels. Because there's masses of buses running the same routes and then they then suddenly go out in, you know into rural connections, but there are so many of the villages, particularly around Ruthin, which are not connected at all, which used to have bus services and don't anymore. And that means you isolate that community."

And a participant relates this to a need to provide investment in infrastructure for rural communities suited to those communities such as community transport:

"I think that if you want these rural communities to be living communities rather than holiday homes or Airbnb's, I do think that you have to provide a level of infrastructure. And I know this might be contentious, but I think that we can't expect the same level as London or you know, places like that or cities. And part of the beauty of living in a rural environment is the beauty around us. But I think if you want the villages to stay, living rural communities, to stay living, you have to have to think about the infrastructure that people are going to need. Otherwise, they'll just leave and it'll all just go to Air B&B won't it?"

I think the point you made earlier about if you want these communities to thrive is I think. That's the common thread here is that you need community transport. Community transport is the main part in these communities."

Another is apathetic stating:

"About my age.. Yeah, there'll be an occasion government says you're not allowed to drive anymore because you're old. Sorry."

They noted their concern about their future mobility, but do not seem to trust the government to support their future needs whilst taking away their ability to drive their car.

These comments demonstrate that lack of public transport leaves rural communities feeling excluded from essential services but also comment on being excluded by a lack of rural infrastructure investment, and lack of consultation with communities.

Impact on wellbeing from improved access to transport

We interviewed three people agreeing to participate in the Most Significant Change interviews. These short interviews were designed to consider the positive impact community transport services have on users' wellbeing.

Comments included:

"I have something to look forward to every week, even if it's only the shopping. When in one of your vehicles I'm always mindful of the massive way your charity has changed my daily life, and the life of many others"?"

“I’ve got much more to look forward to, even if it is only sit-down exercises, and Wednesday I wouldn’t miss for anything. We sit in that bus, and we put the world to rights. “

“It’s fantastic, I’ve lived here for a year now, but I’ve been coming here for seven years to visit my friend. I now have lots of friends here, and through talking to them, we’ve been able to get people to come to use your service, to follow our experiences. We wouldn’t be able to do without them. Myself in particular, because when my daughter and son-in-law eventually move away, I will be on my own. The service and staff are fantastic; we get to go to do the exercises. It gets people out; you meet a lot of people.”

A key theme relating to the positive impacts is the possibility for socialising and the benefits of this to people’s wellbeing. Another theme is relating to physical health and that the transport service enables individuals to access exercise classes designed to help support their health and their independent living by being mobile. The transport services enables people to have independence from family members and they do not have to worry if they are to move away for example and the negative impact that could have on their wellbeing.

Conclusion

Out of all survey participants, 80% use their own car as their primary mode of transport whereas 20% do not. Car ownership is lower among this survey sample than average within the target area (94% of household own car (Census, 2021)). This is likely because the sample comprises of 66% aged 61 years and over while it attempted to collect responses from those aged 55 years and over, and those aged 18 years and over who are also disabled. Some 7% rely on the car of a friend or family member as their primary mode of transport and 33% rely on this as their secondary mode of transport. Just 7% of participants use bus as their primary mode of transport and none use train.

The survey demonstrates challenges accessing public transport for those living within the target area with particularly long journey times to services and amenities for the most isolated and sparsely populated areas of the area. There are significantly limited transport services in the evenings or on the weekends. This contributes to car dependency in the area even for those aged over 80 and 90 years of age who may not otherwise choose to continue driving into their later years. For the fifth of respondents that do not use a car, their mobility is restricted to limited bus services and other alternatives like taking a lift from friends or family.

Forty per cent of the additional comments given at the end of the survey highlighted the issue of car dependency and concern about their longer-term needs. Some, for example, are considering relocating the home to where services are based. Family members are involved in decisions while caring for elder family members. There is significant emotional labour involved in relocating in later life.

The border areas tend to be particularly deprived in terms of accessible transport. Living within the Denbighshire boundaries means that statutory services can be many miles away on the other side of the county, whilst people prefer to access larger shopping facilities and leisure pursuits that are in another county, but geographically closer.

The last mile provision and lack of a door-to-door service is another issue for residents who do not drive or don’t have a convenient access to another person driving them to and from a bus stop. Getting to the nearest bus stop over a mile away on a journey that often includes steep and uneven terrain and may not include pedestrian infrastructure is not possible for many residents.

The study identified two challenges to the feasibility of an expansion of the Rural Community Car Scheme. Firstly, no interest was expressed from survey participants in wanting to become volunteer drivers. The long distances between health care facilities and isolated rural houses also impacts on the willingness of volunteers to undertake these journeys and must be considered when planning similar or alternative schemes. Volunteer recruitment challenges would make it difficult or impossible to expand the existing Rural Community Car Scheme despite the sufficient demand, particularly among the 20% who do not have access to their own car and

those who do not feel safe to drive. While designing services, such as the proposed rural scheme, consideration is needed including; provision of incentives for volunteers, enabling people in employment time for to volunteer without sacrificing their salary, and how a later retirement age impacts volunteer recruitment. An alternative consideration would be to cost in the payment of employed drivers to the financing and provision of rural community transport. Secondly, the analysis of the times that respondents require transport reveals that 55% of those trips fall within SDCP's current community transport operating times. However, this still leaves 45% of trips after 3:30 pm and on weekends that SDCP could not accommodate.

SDCP is also unsure currently how the bus policy reform will impact on the current service provision, which could change. For example, franchising and more involvement in the local provision could see more public bus services available in the study area. Journey times to services and amenities may reduce if transport services are better integrated, as is proposed in the policy reform, and this may serve some of the demand identified in the study. The consistency and quality of services may also improve. Ultimately, there is uncertainty how demand for alternative community transport may change in the area in the coming years.

While SDCP may not be able to deliver an extension to the current Rural Community Car Scheme, alternative solutions must be considered. We make this recommendation on the basis of the following policies. The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act (Wales) 2015 aims to create 'cohesive communities', 'a healthier society' and 'a more equal society'. Yet the communities studied are experiencing inequalities created through car dependency and inaccessibility of rural public transport. This is particularly the case for the most vulnerable and marginalised groups of people living in the isolated communities of the Rural Car Scheme expansion target area. Furthermore, the Welsh Government's transport policy, [Llwybr Newydd](#), sets a target of 45% of journeys being made by public transport, walking, and cycling by 2040. It prioritizes a shift towards more sustainable modes of transport and aims to reduce reliance on private cars. Addressing the high dependency on cars, and the higher-than-average number of cars per household in rural communities will contribute to achieving this target.

The planned bus policy reform could contribute to producing solutions for rural communities such as those within this study. Reforms could enable a redistribution of subsidies to pay for a minimum level of bus services, regardless of how many people use that service. A minimum provision of services should be consistently available – through franchised service contracts - throughout the county and nation, for both rural and urban communities. For example, we recommend scaling up Fflecsi services out of their pilot phases and locations, enabling the study communities to have equal access to such services. We recommend a budget is set for local authorities to provide Fflecsi on-demand services, and that over time skills are developed within the local authorities to deal with planning transport routes, services, and managing tenders to save cost of outsourcing this work to consultation companies.

As a means to redistribute financial subsidies from bus companies to community transport operators, the use of travel vouchers could be considered. For example, in Greater Manchester, certain individuals who cannot use standard buses due to severe mobility issues or blindness can apply for travel vouchers instead of a concessionary bus pass. These vouchers can be used for taxis and accessible transport options like [Ring and Ride](#). Similar to Fflecsi, Ring and Ride provides a door-to-door accessible minibus service for people of all ages who find it difficult to use ordinary public transport.

Our recommendations for policy and provision priorities are summarised below:

- Support alternative rural transport suitable for isolated communities (community transport, ride-shares, subsidised taxis, on demand/last-mile services)
- Enhance public transport (affordable, reliable, accessible, integrated with other services, more frequent services including evenings and weekends)
- Integrate public transport with health and care planning.

- Develop age-friendly, accessible and inclusive transport infrastructure (e.g. safe, accessible pavements and crossings, toilets available, clear information and waymarking)
- Review driving policies for older adults and consider implications of changes.
- Invest in research to guide age-inclusive policy suited to rural communities.
- Support older aged drivers with safe driving and their transition to driving cessation (e.g. health checks, refresher training, information about driving alternatives, consider relocation advise and support) .
- Invest in mobile services (including finance services), outreach and community hub delivery, and local rural economies to reduce the need for trips.
- Involve older people in transport planning and recognise their diverse needs.

We identified the following limitations to the study:

1. The survey captured very few responses of those over 18 years of age (and under 55 years) who are disabled and have/could have a concessionary bus pass, and who would be suitable users of a community transport scheme. The impact of this limitation is that we were unable to represent their transport needs accurately. For example, considering access to education, employment and other trips undertaken by those under 55 years of age.
2. The survey questions did not capture future travel needs other than in the opportunity to give qualitative ‘additional comments’ at the end of the survey. People are not necessarily planning what they will do when they cannot drive and were not prompted to. The Focus Group questions were subsequently designed to overcome this limitation, but these were answered by fewer participants. It is also more difficult to get accurate perspectives when thinking of the future and their needs, which are unpredictable. For example, health conditions and mobility can change unpredictably, but with significant consequences to driving a car or walking to a bus stop. It would be useful for similar studies to illicit consideration of future mobility, and available accommodations for scenarios that necessitate driving cessation, or that impede mobility.

Acknowledgements

Communities of Hiraethog villages of Pentrefoelas, Cerrigydrudion, Llanfihangel Glyn Myfr and Llanrhaeadr, the Vale of Clwyd and Llandegla who shared their experiences by taking part in the consultation, Focus Group and individual interviews.

Existing Community Transport Members of the Llangollen Community who so generously shared their experiences and the positive impact Community Transport has on improving their quality of life.

Our thanks to the following who gave their time, support, and expertise:

Ken Skates MS - Cabinet Secretary for Transport and North Wales

Lee Robinson –Executive Director for Regional Transport and Integration Transport for Wales

Liz Saville Roberts - Liz Saville Roberts MP Dwyfor Meirionnydd

Michell Clarke – Deputy Director Wales CTA

Peter Daniels – Mayor of Ruthin

The Project Team		
South Denbighshire Community Partnership	Together for Change	Aberystwyth University
Haul Lloyd Davies, Research Assistant to the CEO.	Jessie Buchanan, Director	Dr Lucy Baker, Research Associate, Cymru Wledig Rural Wales Local Policy and Innovation Partnership (LPIP) Research Mentor
Sian Dixon, Operations Manager Community Consultation	Amy Nicholass, Community-led Action Research Facilitator for Cymru Wledig LPIP Rural Wales	
Gwion Tomas Jones, Senior Community Development Officer		
Crystal Pinell – Community Development Officer.		