

# Representations Received

The following is a summary of the points made by the representatives of the various organisations seen by the Transport Task and Finish Group.

### **Welland Procurement**

1. Procurement is a time consuming activity, particularly for home to school/college transport as the numbers for each bus are fluid. Finding competition for routes is difficult but there can be alternatives to providing transport. For example, Kent County Council provide bicycles for their students as a way of offering transport to school.
2. It would be possible to tender all the routes with one company. This would be more efficient but might put the small operators out of business.

### **Voluntary Action Rutland**

3. The health authorities (specifically East Midlands Ambulance Service) by withdrawing hospital transport other than for emergencies had put more pressure on VAR.
4. When providing transport VAR prioritises hospital, medical, social in that order and sometimes has to withdraw transport previously booked for a social activity has to be withdrawn because of demand for a higher priority trip such as a hospital appointment.
5. VAR cannot always meet demand despite having 51 drivers with vehicles (they don't all work every day) and volunteer drivers to drive VAR's vehicles; a 7 seater, an accessible vehicle (driver and 3 passengers); a 15 seater accessible minibus and a 16 seater standard mini bus. The accessible vehicles take wheelchairs. Despite a turnover of volunteers they seem always to average 50.
6. Volunteer driver support ranges from one hour a week to every day.
7. VAR, as well as responding to requests from the public, also provide transport for RCC adult social care, for example for transport to day centres. This is commissioned and paid for by RCC. Some Leicestershire Social Care adults are similarly supported because although they are supported by Leicestershire social services they live in Rutland. The Task and Finish Group wondered why the Council weren't making direct payments to these residents who could then secure the transport they needed themselves.

8. VAR does cross Rutland's borders to transport people into Rutland, but only if they live just over the border.
9. Rutland bus pass holders pay half price for the journeys (costs met by RCC); non Rutland bus pass holders pay full price. This seemed an anomaly to the Task and Finish Group.
10. VAR focuses on the most vulnerable; the frail, elderly, disabled (including those temporarily disabled) in the main.
11. The Transport Task and Finish Group were told VAR's clients prefer them to alternatives such as Call Connect (for those in the Stamford area) because VAR's cars are reliable, door to door and the drivers are friendly.
12. Transport from VAR has to be booked 5 working days in advance and Wednesday and Thursdays are their busiest days.
13. In a 7 day period there are an average of 190 drives undertaken by VAR.
14. Journeys are charged at 45p a mile which is reimbursed to the drivers, except in the case of bus pass holder (see paragraph 9 above).
15. VAR does not keep data on client journeys but know that they have repeat clients and regular journeys, often those going to day care.
16. The Task and Finish Group were advised that VAR's biggest problem is with hospital appointments. Hospitals rarely provide an "end of appointment" time. If drivers are away from home over 3 hours with clients, for example at the hospital, the client is asked to give the driver £5 to buy a sandwich/drink. Appointments are also arranged and cancelled at short notice which causes difficulties for VAR to administer their transport efficiently.
17. VAR reported that GPs are expected to provide emergency hospital transport but they rarely do.
18. VAR has notified community groups that it has a minibus which can be hired with or without a driver at £1.10 a mile and a £5 booking fee. The take us is not as high as VAR would like.

### **Centrebus**

19. Centrebus is privately owned and has been trading for 10 years. There are four depots locally but none of these are within Rutland. Currently Centrebus run the majority of public buses in Rutland and a few home to school buses. As a business their major stress is high fuel costs. They also aim to see maximum utilisation of their fleet. This aim would

make it unlikely that they would tender to operate Rutland's entire home to school transport contract.

20. Centrebus would like to work more closely with RCC to explore the possibility of offering more public service routes that would also serve the needs of school and college students. Centrebus also felt that when RCC's home to school routes were due for renewal the Council should talk to the public transport operators to see if the public service routes could be "tweaked" to take school/college pupils rather than the practise the Council currently has of automatically re-letting home to school/college routes.
21. Members raised the issue of non connecting buses. One example given was the service 19 from Nottingham which can arrive late into Oakham due to adverse traffic problems encountered along the route. Passengers going on to Stamford and Corby miss their connections because the 19 is late. If the 9 and the RF1 were timed to leave a little later, or an official connection agreed, the problem could be overcome. All three services are operated by the same company, Centrebus, who explained that when buses connected, a bus could not wait for another if it was running late as this would have repercussions further along the route. Centrebus are looking at extending some services over the next few months.

### **St. George's Barracks**

22. Oakham is the County Town of Rutland and is where events involving the army are often held but it is difficult for families from St George's Barracks to get to Oakham and support their service family member, despite the Regiment having been given the freedom of Oakham. There are 189 families with, between them, 416 young people under the age of 18 at the barracks. In addition there are 509 single soldiers. To get to Oakham takes 2 buses and two and a half hours. Call Connect does not serve Oakham. Call Connect is also limited in that the buses cannot take prams and buggies and so, although Call Connect serves Edith Weston, it is limited in its suitability. The consequence is that to even go to the doctor in Empingham requires, for many of the families, a taxi.
23. The demographics at the barracks is such that there are many young mothers who do not drive or do not have access to a car. They are also married to the lower paid soldiers making taxi fares prohibitive. There are also a number of foreign and commonwealth soldiers stationed at the barracks and a number of their wives do not have good English. There is no longer a post office in Edith Weston, there is no doctors or dentist surgery and no bank. This lack of facilities puts a strain on these families. The Group wondered whether the tourist bus could stop in Edith Weston and at the White Horse in Empingham.

This would facilitate access to the doctors' surgery and to Oakham for other facilities.

24. There are a number of single soldiers stationed at St George's barracks. These soldiers tend to travel to Stamford for their leisure activities. The senior officers who met the Transport Task and finish Group felt that they should be encouraged to relax in Oakham, bringing money into the town, and that a bus service would help achieve this.
25. Whilst there are likely to be troop movements in the next year or two the officers reflected that there were likely to be more, not fewer, personnel stationed at St George's barracks in future.

### **Rural Community Council**

26. The Rural Community Council is the body which supports Rutland Community Spirit. Part of the work undertaken by Rutland Community Spirit is to support villages set up community programmes including community transport. Community transport is now well established in Whissendine through the village's Good Neighbours' Scheme but Rutland Community Spirit is less well established in other villages, despite transport being a key concern in Rutland's villages. The way the Whissendine scheme is run is that there is a mobile 'phone (provided by Rutland Community Spirit) held by the village co-ordinator. Residents needing transport use the mobile 'phone's number to arrange this. There is more than one co-ordinator and the 'phone is held by whomever is co-ordinating on any given day.