

Holyrood committee to look at community transport

Getting out and about in the local community

How easy is it to get out and about in Edinburgh if you are elderly and / or disabled and find it difficult to access public transport? This is the challenge being looked at as part of an inquiry by members of the Scottish Parliament's Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee.

As part of the Committee's inquiry, a meeting is being held in Edinburgh on Monday 22 April 2013. Committee members, MSPs Jim Eadie and Gordon MacDonald, will meet with representatives from Lothian Community Transport Services (LCTS), and with both users and providers of community transport. The Committee wants to hear about problems community transport users and providers in Scotland face and also to identify examples of where services are working well.

Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee Convener Maureen Watt MSP said:-“We know that getting out and about to visit friends and family, go shopping and attending appointments is vital to people's health and wellbeing. If you can't do this, the sense of isolation that can develop can be overwhelming.

“Across Scotland, there are examples of fantastic services, but there are also communities isolated from transport networks and for whatever reason, local communities have been unable to set up the community transport services they so desperately need. We want to hear from people living and working in communities and their views will be the focus our inquiry and make sure we can try to help improve the situation for those often in greatest need.”

More than 80% of people who use community transport are

elderly and/or people with disabilities and with an increasing elderly population, the Committee knows how important community transport is to people's lives. They hope to find community transport services that are working well, and uncover the problems that stop others from thriving.

The Committee is aware of the main issues which have been highlighted in previous studies, set out below, and is keen to move the debate on, identify the main priorities and make a real difference as a result of this.

- * A lack of a strategic approach to community transport and the impact which a lack of transport has on people's lives
- * The growing demand for community transport provision
- * A lack of a coordinated approach with NHS bodies and community transport providers
- * Eligibility criteria for non-emergency patient transport and the cost to NHS of taxi use.
- * Replacing community transport vehicles and funding planning.
- * Access to concessionary fares schemes.