

Sustainable transport is a must in the 2022 elections

Councillors urged to deliver 'sustainable transport for all' as the Community Transport Association launches its Scottish local election manifesto.

Scotland's councillors have been urged to deliver 'sustainable transport for all' by a national charity ahead of the local elections.

The Community Transport Association (CTA), which represents over 160 local community groups and charities across Scotland who provide accessible, inclusive transport services, has published its manifesto ahead of the Scottish local elections on 5 May. It calls on candidates to pledge to protect funding for local Community Transport schemes which play a vital role in connecting people and communities.

Community Transport, which is never for a profit and always for a social purpose, has a large presence in Scotland with schemes in urban, rural and island communities in 30 of Scotland's 32 local authorities. The sector serves over 100,000 people every single year – especially older and disabled people, deprived households and marginalised communities, who cannot access or afford private or public transport.

The sector operates a diverse range of transport services, from as dial-a-ride and transport to health to electric car and e-bike clubs, as well as scheduled bus services on routes

which are not considered commercially viable. Community Transport vehicles are overwhelmingly wheelchair accessible with trained drivers who can assist passengers with health or mobility issues.

CTA worked with its members to develop its manifesto, which outlines the Community Transport sector's priorities for the 1,227 councillors who will be elected in Scotland's 32 local authorities, as local government is a key partner for the Community Transport sector.

Many operators receive essential grant funding from councils or are commissioned to deliver contracted services. Services often survive on small, short-term grants and rely on committed key workers or volunteers, while the pandemic has severely impacted passenger numbers and fares income.

With the rising cost of fuel, labour and vehicles and an ageing population, the CTA says that 'it is essential that local councillors protect this funding and ensure fair, adequate and multi-year funding for Community Transport to protect its long-term future'.

CTA's manifesto explains how the sector 'can help local authorities to recover from COVID-19, tackle inequality and deliver net zero'. It asks local councillors to pledge to work with Community Transport to reduce carbon emissions and improve access to health & social care services like GP surgeries, hospitals and respite care.

Community Transport can also help people to 'live happier, healthier and more independent lives for longer in their own homes and communities' by connecting them to amenities, family and friends, it argues, thereby 'reducing long-term costs for councils through prevention and early intervention'.

CTA is asking candidates in standing for election on 5 May to sign-up to its '#CTpledge' and share their commitment to the Community Transport sector on social media.

David Kelly, CTA's Director for Scotland, said: "As we recover from COVID-19 and look towards May's local elections, Community Transport is more important than ever. Our members have gone above and beyond during the pandemic to help keep people and communities connected, delivering community-led solutions to local transport needs across Scotland.

"With polling day fast approaching, we're launching a campaign to engage and influence as many candidates, councillors and parties as possible. We're asking them to show their support for Community Transport and to help us deliver sustainable transport for all."

He added: "Our members are at the heart of their communities. They are practical and passionate problem solvers who can help councils to achieve their local objectives. We hope every councillor elected on 5 May will work with us to help Community Transport thrive and grow."



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