

2021 Annual Report from High Suffolk Community Bus Ltd.

To Parish Councils

Covid-19

When the occurrences of Covid-19 started to increase significantly in March last year it became apparent that the bus could not be operated safely given that vast majority of our passengers and drivers were classified in the highly vulnerable category. Therefore it was with great sorrow that from Wednesday 18th March 2020 the community bus service was suspended.

The committee has been considering how and when would could safely restart the bus over the last year, last summer we examined running the bus with many covid precautions in place but then the virus took off again and we found ourselves back in lockdown.

All of our drivers and passengers should have had second doses of the vaccine by this coming June and on that basis we are planning to resume the bus in line with Step 4 of the government's road map out of lockdown, which is currently no earlier than June 21st. The first date of service would be 22nd June and the bus will run in accordance with our published timetable. If this Step 4 date is delayed then our restart date will be delayed accordingly.

Please note that at this time it is not clear what, if any, social distancing regulations will apply to public transport after Step 4, we await the outcome of the government's review on social distancing next month. Any requirement to maintain social distancing such as 1 Meter+ will reduce the number of passengers that we can carry on any journey.

Replacement Bus

It was previously reported (2019) that our current bus was coming to the end of its life. The work to find and secure a replacement had to be suspended when lockdown was imposed last March. Once we are up and running again we will resume the work to source a replacement bus later this year.

Donations

We would like to record our sincere thanks to

Worlingworth Charities

Monk Soham Townland Trust

For their greatly valued donations last year.

Donations, from Parishes, Trusts and Passengers are an important part of our funding, helping to cover running costs and replacement bus fund; we only get reimbursed 75% of our fares foregone by the County Councils concessionary fares schemes, which applies to around 90% of our passengers.

Fares

Thanks to receiving various covid support grants which more than covered our ongoing upkeep of the bus over the last year we have been able to keep fares at pre lockdown level, as set in 2019, for our restart of services.

Drivers

We rely totally on a pool of volunteer drivers. Over the last year we lost a few drivers who, for various personal reasons, could no longer driver for us.

At this time we have just enough drivers (including two prospective new recruits) available to run our standard timetable but very little slack to account for illness, holidays and so on. Therefore we are appealing for two or three more drivers to join us.

Management Committee

Last October, after more than 20 years service to the bus, Gerry Garwood stood down as Chairman of the bus. We would like to thank Gerry again for his service to the bus over the years. Gerry has not gone far though, as he remains one of our drivers and is always glad to offer his experience to the committee from time to time.

A new Chairman was needed to ensure that the Ltd. Company that operates the bus could remain in legally existence and avoid winding-up thus ensuring that the bus could be returned to service. Alan Nette-Thomas (previously Vice Chairman) volunteered to take on this role and was elected to this role by the management committee.

We have two vacancies on the committee which we are keen to fill and so are also appealing for volunteers for these positions:

Vice Chairman

Minutes Secretary.

Website

We now have a website:

<http://www.combus.org.uk/index.htm>

On this website you can find latest most up to date information about the bus as well as timetables, fares, annual financial accounts, auditors report.

We also have an email address for general enquiries:

support@combus.org.uk

This email is monitored and enquires are responded to promptly.

John Smith Memorial Seat

The committee agreed to jointly fund a seat in memory of John Smith, to be installed at the Worlingworth Community Centre. This active was started in 2019 but was rather delayed by the various lockdowns. Gerry Garwood is coordinating with other interested parties to progress this.

AGM

We are aiming to hold our delayed AGM (normally in May) on September Xth at 7:30 the community centre, with refreshments to follow.

You are all very welcome to come and support the Bus.

We thank you once again for your support and we look forward very much to getting back to serving our communities and passengers.

The High Suffolk Community Transport Management Committee