

How will the Demand Responsive Transport system trouble-shoot issues Q&A

CVAF C&NEWG have been working with B&NES & WECA for the last 2 years to try to get improvements to bus services in the Chew Valley and we are now having weekly joint meetings with transport planners in B&NES/WECA to help ensure that local people get the maximum support in transitioning to new services. Below is our best effort to give clear information about the emerging situation with bus changes. We hope this helps people understand why we are where we are now. We will update it as things evolve.

Can the Demand Responsive Transport evolve over time?

Demand Responsive Transport is underpinned by a virtual platform that people use to book a lift (via App or website or by making a phone call to a staffed phone back office.) This virtual platform also gathers information cumulatively across time, that will be used to help the provider predict likely demand and commonly used routes. It will pick up on pinch points and help the provider plan their provision.

Does DRT have any predictable routes?

Initially there will not be any predictable routes but as people start to use the system its virtual platform records usage and builds a picture of when and where vehicles are most commonly taken. So in time it may fall into regular routes for commutes or school runs for 6th formers, for instance and remain much more random at other times. This is a good reason to use DRT for regular journeys.

This developing data will also be used to consider what services will be needed in 2 years time when the funding for this trial ends. If your community doesn't use it the system will assume there is no public transport needed in your Parish, so it is important to use it as much as you can.

Will DRT wait for you to make an onward bus connection or for your bus connection to arrive at the DRT pick up?

We understand there will be a short stay at a stop to wait for you to arrive or if you are on a scheduled service that is running a few minutes late, but drivers will not be able to wait for long if they have other pick up scheduled. This will be one of the challenges of the system that bus operators and DRT operators and WECA will be working hard to make work. Improving the reliability of buses on bus corridors such as the A37/9 is one of the active intentions of all providers in this scheme.

How do we know this system will work?

We won't know until we try it. As with any new system there are bound to be teething problems in the first month or so, and our group will be collecting data about successful and unsuccessful journeys so that we can ensure WECA is aware.

Part of the rationale of keeping the 672 operational until June is to allow for some initial glitches.

Because it is a virtual platform it can also gather data that will help the service provider to fine tune their offer over time. This is one reason why it is really important to take the plunge and use the service, so that it knows there is demand in your area and it picks up on pinch point issues.

DRT is already working in other rural areas in the UK (the Highlands of Scotland, the Welsh valleys, semi-rural Cambridgeshire for example.)

The app that is being used is tried and tested in other areas, and data for the WECA region is already being fed into the system. However, it will probably take time for everyone to get used to this virtual system.

What happens if a journey doesn't work?

CVAF C&NEWG will be gathering data about problems with specific bookings and passing these to B&NES & WECA on a regular basis.

You can email jch.221@gmail.com or phone 07900 641 839. Please note this will be simply to gather data, we will not be able to problem-solve the issue in real time.

In the short term WECA will fine the service provider for not keeping to the agreed contract. This is a powerful incentive for the company to get the offer right.

In the longer term, if it has not become profitable within 2 years it is likely to be withdrawn. This could leave the Chew Valley with no public transport services. So we need to make it work!

CVAF C&NE Sustainable Transport Working Group

This information was accurate on 26/1/23

More up to date information can be found here:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/858992922045608>