Rural Transport Learning Network Roundtables 2025

Roundtable 3 Public and Private Collaborations on Rural Transport March 18, 2025

For some years now the University of Hertfordshire been running a set of Roundtables, looking at transport outside cities and rural transport on the basis that this does not get discussed as much as urban and interurban transport.

Presenters:
Chris Hillcoat, Mobility Hubs expert, KPMG;
Chris Morris, Sustainable Ventures
Alex Shapland-Howes, RideTandem.

Participants:
Trevor Brennan, Transport Implementation Lead, England's Economic Heartland
Gareth Cadmore, EMED Group;
Abi Clabborn, CEO, Liftshare, Mobilityways and C-Lab;
Hannah Fountain, Senior Transport Officer, Western Gateway;
Chris Hillcoat, KPMG;
Alistair Kirkbride, Low Carbon Destinations;
Emily McDonald, COO, Intelligen International Limited;
Stephen Morrison, Food and Drink NE CIC;
Jenny Milne Transport and mobility services Consultant, JLM;
Chris Morris, Sustainable Ventures;
Sharon Payne, Regional Lead at for Rural Mobility, Transport East;
Callum Reddington, Senior Policy & Strategy Officer, Transport for the North;
Anne Robinson, CPRE Transport Campaigner;
Susan Ross, Co-founder, Rural Car Club;
Abhilash Chandra Singh, Research Fellow, Trinity College Dublin;
Elizabeth Smith, Area Lead Norfolk, Suffolk, Hertfordshire, Essex, DfT;
Geoff Wallman, CEO, Intelligen International Limited.

University of Hertfordshire:
Stephen Joseph, Chair, Professor of Transport Studies, UH (Chair);
Alex Buckland-Stubbs UH;
Mike Page UH
John Sturzaker UH;
Sue Walsh UH.
John Conlon UH: Transcriber.

The following abbreviations indicate the sector making comments:

ACAD	Academic
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
CONS	Consultant
CC	County council or unitary authority
REGG	Regional transport body
GOV	National government.
INNOV	Innovation sector
OP	Transport operator
SNTB	Sub-national Transport Body

https://www.herts.ac.uk/study/schools-of-study/life-and-medical-sciences/business-support-and-consultancy/smart-mobility-unit/Roundtable-research
https://www.transporteast.gov.uk/rural-networking-partnership/

Introduction: My name is Stephen Joseph. Professor of Transport Studies at the Smart Mobility unit at the University of Hertfordshire and for a few years now, we have been running Roundtables to look at aspects of rural transport or transport outside cities, because this has been taken to include places on the edge of cities as well, like Hertfordshire for instance. We have done this because we have discovered that there was relatively little work being done on options for rural transport or on ways of providing alternatives to single occupancy car use in rural areas. The Roundtables have been used to bring together people with an interest in this and with practical solutions.

The University of Hertfordshire has got its own bus company with over 100 vehicles serving Hertfordshire and North London. It has just brought in its first electric vehicles, a first for Hertfordshire, and it is developing new routes to take account of local demand. The University has had a travel plan for many years. We are interested in exploring options for rural transport and this has been addressed via the series of Roundtables. Latterly these have been sponsored by Transport East, the lead sub-national transport body on rural transport, as part of their central rural mobility Centre of Excellence in Suffolk with Sharon Payne, the lead policy officer, who has been hugely supportive in developing these Roundtables.
The theme of this Roundtable is to look specifically at public/private collaboration with participants from private companies, the tech sector, startups and those who have been involved in supporting them.

The Roundtable will start with some presentations. With the aid of participants, we seek to establish the kinds of things that might make a difference in terms of getting more of these kinds of collaborations over the line, e.g. ways of developing them, what would be needed both from national governments, local government and sub national bodies to support this. There are people taking part who are deeply involved in aspects of rural transport who have been involved in previous Roundtables, We have also invited people with a specific expertise, and in this case, people involved in the rural transport accelerator that the Catapult has run. From this, an account will be drawn up, non-attributed where appropriate, and this will be available on the University and the Transport East websites. The Department of Transport is producing an integrated national transport strategy and are on the lookout for ideas and ways to improve transport.

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Transport East rural
transport KPMG priv

Presentation 1 Chris Hillcote, KPMG Public/private partnerships in rural transport:

- Working in KPMG's Future Mobility team, I am a transport planner and geographer by background, with time spent at Transport for London and Solent Transport. In the Future Mobility team, the focus is on digital sustainable transport, looking at decarbonising transport, including passenger, freight, operator and authority. We look at the use of technology in ticketing or intelligent transport services and traffic management, working closely with the rest of KPMG, an enormous organisation with large functions, dealing with things like tax legal questions as well as auditing. We also have relationships with private investors from banks, pension funds, large UK-based or foreign investors and this has given a useful insight into this topic as well as wider topics around how to leverage private investment into transport.

- When I joined KPMG a couple of years ago, it was just after one of the COP conferences and there was an interesting report about how private investors are seeking to invest $100 billion in sustainable transport. I went to find the person who wrote the report and informed them about possible schemes to invest in e.g. bike share schemes, mobility as a service, demand responsive transit, active travel schemes etc. The response was ‘yes but’, which is the theme of this presentation. We will consider mobility hubs and other transport services where the rural nature of transport and the interface with the private sector is quite interesting. To close, there will be a consideration on how to attract and secure private investment in transport.

- We are aware that rural transport has a specific nature, which is different in some ways to transport in towns and cities. We find that the mode share of the private car is very much higher. This is linked to the fact that public transport is generally much sparser and the opportunities for people to travel do rely on the car, although the informal networks are a lot more important. Community interaction is a really important factor in rural transport. Limited job opportunities do create higher incidences of poverty in rural areas, and that is not just economic poverty, but also transport poverty, food deserts etc.

- Then we find that because of the number of agencies and authorities who are involved, again, it looks different than in urban areas. There is an interesting relationship between the urban and the rural. There is a two-way dependency between different areas. This is an interesting place to explore if you take all of these features or natures of rural transport; to what extent can we say that there is actually an opportunity for new technologies and services which could make a real difference in a rural area, perhaps even more so than in an urban area?

- Regarding mobility hubs, KPMG hosted a workshop alongside England's Economic Heartland to look at mobility hubs and specifically at this very question of the public and the private sector. What does it look like when we bring people into the same room? We brought investors from banks, property developers, and large investment houses alongside public sector colleagues from national, regional and local government, as well as transport operators and a number of other stakeholders. We looked at what do mobility hubs look like, what are they, who wants them, why and how could we make them happen. It was interesting to see the approaches and the priorities of the different sectors all starting from different angles. Public sector colleagues think about mobility hubs in terms of fulfilling a transport policy or strategy, so it is about managing car use, reducing single occupancy vehicles, improving sustainability and thinking about multimodal interchanges, whereas the private sector are thinking 'How can I improve my investment yield?' 'How can I diversify and secure my income?' 'How can I use this as a means to secure permissions and governance for property developments?', so quite a different angle and perspective from the two sectors and some of the challenges that we found were the same. Under the challenges listed, liability and risk sharing are included under both public sector and private sector, who each fear that if they were to be involved in a mobility hub that they would be left holding the baby. They build a coalition of partners who are willing to go in and then over time, something happens, people pull out and they are left with this liability of this place that costs money and that does not quite deliver what it was supposed to.

- Other challenges are perhaps more different. On the public sector side, there was an interesting challenge that was raised around skills and experience, particularly in how to procure and secure commercial contracts for mobility hubs, and issues around how to secure funding over the long term. In the public sector, it is often easier to get hold of some capital funding to deliver a project on a one-off basis or as a pilot; it is much harder to secure that funding over the long term. From the private sector side, most of the challenges were around the fact that the scale of these projects is relatively small. The returns are relatively low and the governance is quite complicated and seems often to be scattered across lots of different authorities. So, in terms of making them a success, we looked at a number of different key success factors which are around how to build that partnership between bodies and also how to integrate digital with physical in terms of branding, promotion, services and integration. We thought a lot about the fact that these places must be convenient. They must be safe, and that includes security and discouraging antisocial behaviour. Consideration was given to how we ensure these things with a clear path to financial, commercial and governance sustainability over the long term.

- In terms of building a model that would work, we focused on the ability to bring private sector interest into mobility hubs that relies on these shared risk and governance models to provide confidence and comfort about private sector investors being involved; this might even include creating a special purpose vehicle or a new agency outside of a local authority to deliver these things on a scalable basis, standardising the governance, using a common kit of parts for design and making it as straightforward as possible to bring people in. That also applies to things like developing business cases and thinking about not just the economic benefits and the sort of wooden dollars of the real transport benefits that exist but focusing a bit more on the financial and the cash flow benefits.

- The investor relations team in KPMG came up with three ideas to make sure that mobility hubs can be attractive around monetising, returns on investment, securitising (which is about balancing risk, using things like concession agreements to really delineate who's responsible for what), and then aggregating at scale. So rather than looking at these projects as one-offs, how can you aggregate them across a whole region so that you combine the large urban sites with the smaller rural sites, bringing them together into one portfolio so that they become more attractive?

- Other services were raised and comments and discussion was invited. Three ideas on where private investment might be able or might be a challenge to integrate firstly on EV charging, very much on people's minds with the transition from internal combustion to EV over the next 5 to 10 years. Some challenges in rural areas which we might think of include that it is more likely that people have off-street parking in rural areas, which means they are more likely to be able to charge EVs at home. That is a good thing in many respects, but from an EV charging hub perspective, it makes it a bit more of a challenge to make the case for it. So we might think about how to once again aggregate a portfolio of EV charging sites across a region, adding ancillary services so that they become a little bit more like a mobility hub in their own right, balancing the risk and then also thinking about the real nuts and bolts like 'can you get the grid connection? Can you get the capacity and the power to the different sites?'

- Next then, on demand responsive transit (DRT) there was a lot of great thinking in recent years from Padam, Via, Liftandgo and others, who are thinking about options and opportunities for transforming very sparse fixed route services which do not fulfil a lot of needs, with more of a zonal based, demand responsive model which can massively speed up people's journeys and make it a lot more convenient for more people to use it in rural areas. The challenge, of course, as often with these things, is not only securing the capital funding to set up the scheme, but the operational funding, because the cost per trip usually exceeds the fare that can be charged. When this is considered in the round and existing subsidies to public transport services are taken into account, then there is an opportunity to explore balancing those. Finally, on freight and logistics, to provoke some thought, consider long distance trunk routes across rural areas. Transport East is a great example of this with the A14 and the railway to Felixstowe with a lot of freight travelling a long distance all the way across the region and out to the rest of the country. Clearly we want to see those lines electrified. We want to see the networks, both rail and road, shifting to a sustainable model and we want to be able to match the supply with the demand, so we know that the demand is growing over time. We also know that from freight operators with whom we have a lot of discussions, there is a lot of nervousness around shifting away from diesel in their HGVs. There was a frisson of excitement about hydrogen, which seems to be petering out. EV is not there quite yet for many people, although perhaps in years to come, it will be. So what are the opportunities? Again, is there something around bringing infrastructure together into a package to manage the risk and to try and encourage investment both into vehicles, into charging infrastructure or into fixed infrastructure? Is there some kind of concession model for chargepoint operators that would make it more attractive?

- We need to think about skills, maintenance and access. Who are the people who are going to build and maintain these things and is that an opportunity in terms of employment? Finally, what might we want to do if we want to secure a private investment in our transport projects. Each of these is a challenge and then an idea is presented around about what the resolution might be. At the recent Mobility Hub workshop there was a presentation from Transport for West Midlands who were talking about how their portfolio of mobility hubs is being deployed. The use of parcel lockers or other services is raising perhaps a few thousand pounds a year. Some of the private investors in attendance were wondering if they had come to the wrong event because they do not normally get out of bed for less than £100m. So the scale of investment is really quite different and it is worth being aware that to make private investors interested, you do need to scale. The resolution is that amalgamation is really important. A private investor has their attention drawn between lots of different projects, most of which would be a lot larger than a typical transport scheme. The amalgamation question is very interesting, as is including mobility hubs in developments, so some of the property developers were quite excited about the prospects. Losing a hectare of land to become a mobility hub is not seen as a cost. It can be seen as a positive because it helps to deliver the sustainability targets. It actually helps to sell the houses and fill the commercial sites. That is the first question around scale. The second one is around funding and financing: a private investor would normally seek a monetary return on their investment of at least 5% a year, with the economic benefits of enabling sustainable transport, helping people shift to active travel and helping people to live more healthy and active lifestyles. While they are of interest from a corporate social responsibility or an environmental, social and governance standards point of view, they do not butter the bread of the investors, so there does need to be a question around how to bring these benefits together in business cases so that you combine solid economic benefits with those cash returns on investment. Perhaps elements of revenue like car parking and EV charging could be included in transport schemes. While it may not be the kind of primary driver of the transport scheme, it may be something that enables more private investment to be part of the project.

- Risk and governance highlights that no one wants to be left holding the baby on these projects. So how do you secure these things over the long term? It is incredibly frustrating that each local authority has their own terms and conditions all saying largely the same thing, but in slightly different terms. Private investors also find that very frustrating, and it makes them less likely to engage if they had to sign agreements with 15 different local authorities in order to take part in a portfolio of schemes. Thinking about this new governance model, which is regional and includes some kind of new agency with a streamlined governance model, could be a really attractive way to get people involved and included.
  Finally, lack of information is an issue, so understanding the constraints of schemes, for transport professionals is taken in our stride, but actually it can be really difficult to understand what the land ownership of different sites is, the demographics of the region, who is going past this place, what are the utility connections looking like? What kind of development, constraints or planning conditions exist trying to provide this information? Both more information but also in a standardised way would really help investors understand what authorities are looking for.

Chair: The different approaches and expectations and objectives of the public and private sector will be a big part of where we go next with this. Colleagues present have done a lot with community funding, where some of those constraints and expectations may be different. The next speaker, Chris Morris from Sustainable Ventures, has provided a lot of startup funding and investment to colleagues on this Roundtable.

Presentation 2 Chris Morris, Sustainable Ventures[1]:

- As one of the co-founders of Sustainable Ventures, we try to make sure that the UK's leading climate entrepreneurs succeed in mitigating the worst effects of anthropogenic climate change and capitalising on what is a tremendous economic opportunity for both them and for UKPLC. We have an investment arm. We provide workspace and deliver a large number of public sector programmes directly supporting entrepreneurs. We operate across 5 verticals of which mobility is one. CM founded the UK's first electric car sharing business here in the UK, ECar, and worked with colleagues present on that. We had vehicles at the University of Hertfordshire for some time.

- Sustainable Ventures focus on commercially led opportunities where we can have the most impact at scale. We are looking for venture capital backable profiles in terms of the ventures that we support. This has not resulted in neglect for rural and suburban solutions. Despite being ruthlessly commercial in our investment approach, despite the sector, where the right public and private sector environment exists, there are venture backable opportunities in this space, e.g. RideTandem.

- One question is around the idea of using Special Purpose Vehicles (SPVs) as a way of providing a long-term outlook for mobility hubs, because this speaks to one of the biggest challenges faced in the past when trying to get those kinds of things off the ground. That is the fact that people are often excited about pilots but trying to create something which is actually going to have longevity and real impact and actually have a chance to get to the critical mass of utilisation that actually demonstrates it is really hard. The question is whether that is something actually seen working in practise anywhere in the country, whether that is the case or not, and what the operating model would look like there, whether there would be a separate OPCo that is set up to sit alongside the SPV, or whether it would be all of the independent integrated operators that are part of that mobility hub that would be participants in it.

- One SPV that we are aware of is West Midlands 5G (https://www.wm5g.org.uk/) that we helped to set up from a governance perspective five years ago. The West Midlands is an interesting region. It has a lot of clout from a regional perspective, but it also struggles with the governance of pushing things through so that the SPV of the 5G was around bringing together the research and academic side with the local authorities, with the private sector. It was established specifically to take it out of the day-to-day local authority side. We also provided some similar advice to a group of local authorities in the country a couple of years ago who were thinking about trying to establish something off the back of a transport scheme. This was not a mobility hub, but it was another sort of technology scheme which did not sit naturally in a local authority because of the commercial risk and financial processing. Again, it was a case where the authorities did not progress with it, but the business case that we wrote for them was all about how this new model derisks it from the local authority side and allows the opportunities for growth and development.

Chair: There is an interesting story emerging about the opportunity for some national bodies and local and regional, authorities and others to help scale up technology at scale across a region to make it attractive to the private sector.

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[1] Further info on Sustainable Ventures here - https://www.sustainableventures.co.uk/ Transport/mobility ventures they have supported include RideTandem (see below); Riding Sunbeams - https://www.ridingsunbeams.org; Hiyacar https://www.hiyacar.co.uk; Tomorrow's Journey - https://www.tomorrowsjourney.co.uk/; Lowr - https://www.lowr.co/; Rightcharge - https://rightcharge.co.uk/; Backpedal - https://backpedal.co/; Staxy - https://www.staxy.live/; Vmoto - https://www.vmoto.com/; Enso - https://www.ensotyres.com/en-GB; TripShift - https://tripshift.eco; GoCar - https://www.gocar.ie/; ClearWatt - https://clearwatt.co.uk/; Transport & Environment - https://www.transportenvironment.org; pedal me - https://pedalme.co.uk/; Parkeagle - https://parkeagle.com/home/; Onsee - https://www.onsee.co.uk/about; Xeroe - https://www.xeroe.co.uk/

RideTandem - Rural transport roundtable

Presentation 3 Alex Shapland-Howes, RideTandem (https://www.ridetandem.com/):

- We provide smart shuttles to get staff to work. RideTandem works with employers to help people commute to sites with poor public transport. Our technology and expert support turn the best local coaches, minibuses and taxis into a new flexible, sustainable way for teams to get to work. Services are fully managed by RideTandem, including 24/7 customer service, live journey monitoring and a dedicated account manager to optimise the service over time using data collected through our technology. This business is not really doing public/private partnership successfully. What we have successfully done is leveraged a different source of private sector funding to solve a problem that historically people would assume was the public sector's job to fix. What does that look like? I met a group of dads who lived in a village just outside Rochdale back in 2019 and discussed the fact that they wanted to get a job and what was holding them back. Responses were: I don't drive; I can't afford to drive and they cut the bus route 3 years ago, so my only option for how we can get to work is to pay for a whole taxi, i.e. our entire first hour's wage, to get there, and our entire last hour's wage to get home. This seemed like madness to us and obviously this is a problem that many will be aware of. This does not just impact on the mums, dads and others. It also impacts on the businesses who are based in rural areas or on the edge of towns and it impacts on their ability to attract and retain staff because again, if those people physically cannot get to where the jobs are, it means that it is going to be very difficult. So either they are spending a fortune and people on lower wages perhaps start to ask themselves whether it is worth making that journey again. It might also be about their car parking, if the only option people have is to drive to work, and that means that the car park is jam packed. It might be as businesses is increasingly measured on their Scope3 carbon emissions that they are looking for greener ways for everyone to get to work.

- What we do is effectively create private shuttle services that are designed around the needs of that particular employer or group of employers and we now do this nationally. There are services in place from rural Aberdeenshire down to Cornwall. The services are delivered in partnership with the best, usually family run, coach and minibus companies, who focus on their specialism; they drive, they work out which drivers are doing which journey, they maintain the vehicles and we layer on top of that our technology, which means that there are huge amounts of data on how the route can be optimised over time. This is not demand-responsive transport, so the route is not varying from day-to-day. There are good reasons for that kind of DRT commuting service but we do not believe this is the right option. Ultimately that data is then used by us and the employer to make sure it continues to meet the needs of both employer and employees over time. The big reflection is that there is a whole source of private sector funding going into transport, millions of pounds just through RideTandem every year, because of a lack of solutions from what might be termed the traditional public transport world. We are now doing this for Royal Mail, Next, DPD, Lidl and many other recognised names across the country, with half the services entirely funded by those employers. That is millions of pounds a year being spent on transport services. On the other half of our service, the passengers do pay a fare through our passenger app, but that journey is then subsidised by the employer. We are not the only people doing this, but according to the Financial Times recently, we are apparently the 21st fastest growing start-up in Europe. This is evidence that there is a demand for this and that the private sector is willing to put its money where its mouth is, where it is feeling the kind of challenges outlined.

- Finally we think there is more opportunity for the public sector to collaborate on this kind of thing and to be a bit more joined up in using this kind of private sector funding to create wider benefits and potentially some cost savings for the businesses rather than funding things in their entirety. There are challenges in the kind of demands of our types of customers and for example, the flexibility that they crave and the way that local authorities have traditionally viewed bus services. Flexibility will be one of the challenges, along with the tension that potentially exists between the kind of inclusivity that, again rightly, local authorities would be seeking to incorporate into their kind of service design and the kind of quality of alternative for employees who might otherwise drive. We started with people who could not drive or could not afford to drive or did not drive, but now we, for example, did an amazing bus service to Next's head office in Enderby, just outside Leicester, and those people again were trying to convince them to move out of their car. If a bus service was trying to meet all the needs for all potential users in the area it then potentially becomes a significantly inferior service compared to driving a car, whereas what we are effectively doing is a bespoke accelerated shuttle service that, at the moment, is just serving Next passengers and is tailored completely to their needs. It cannot therefore serve lots of other needs that might exist in the area, so there is some tension there that is worth exploring to get the balance right between being a compelling alternative to the car whilst remaining accessible to other people in the community.

Q: Do you have data now on whether you are getting people who could have driven but now use your shuttles? **A:** Yes, we do and increasingly so. We are studying that blue collar world where there are lots of lower paid people who are less likely to be able to drive or afford to drive. We are increasingly seeing business from white collar customers where we are having to actively convince passengers that this is a compelling alternative for them and that again is where the data that our service has e.g. how far each person is walking from their home post code, which we collect through our app to their nearest bus stop. It really helps to optimise the offer.

REGG Q: In the Transport East region, there was a non-statutory bus service that was serving a local high school that was cut on Friday with no provision made for how they were going to get to school come Monday morning. Do you feel that these types of more innovative transport services are not actively considered or understood by local authority transport planners and how they work within the wider kind of public transport network? The same applies to community transport that is not really considered and there probably is not enough education within local authorities to understand what is out there.
A: Yes, I agree. We have tried to loop local authorities into conversations because again, there are huge numbers of business customers and employers who might work with us if it was 20/30% cheaper, but for them the calculus is not quite there right now, and that would take thousands of cars off the road in particular areas. When we tried to loop local authorities in to see whether there might be scope to co-fund in that way, we have found that they have not really understood properly what we are doing. They understand traditional public bus services, whether supported or otherwise, and increasingly if they are on the trendier side of things, they understand what DRT is with an app. Our services are entirely fixed routes because again, for a commuting use case, if you need to be there for a 6am shift, then you want to be sure that if you turn up at 5:30 in the morning, your bus is going to be there at 5:30 in the morning rather than it varying depending on who else has booked the journey on that particular morning, which is obviously one of the challenges with DRT. RideTandem gets lumped in with DRT because there is a tech element, but actually that is not what we are doing. There is a lack of understanding of the potential here.

REGG: It is hoped that this been picked up in the integrated national transport strategy conversations.
DfT do not necessarily know all of these things either. They rely on Roundtables like this and working groups to understand what is going on across the country.

SNTB: On mobility hubs, one of the challenges we face is considering a private investor looking to invest in transport infrastructure and using mobility hubs as a vehicle for that. A lot of time is spent just trying to identify sites, where local authorities would be comfortable if the private sector would be willing to invest. There were about 200 sites to begin with and then we eventually got it down to about 10 sites and even they were not at the scale which would whet the appetite of private sector investment. It is a difficult mindset for authorities to go into because they are dealing with the normal challenge of running services. Then actually asking authorities to say, 'we need to park all that and we need to think about making it more palatable for the private sector to invest in' has been a challenge for us. What we have learned is that it is doable because we were surprised that the private sector felt that the sites were all a good starting point, but from a regional point of view, if we are serious about this, we have to go back and look at the sites in the marketplace again to bring that quantum of opportunities together to package it, then go back to the private sector and the investment markets to say that we have bankers in the room with £100m and that is where we are coming from; whereas we have local authorities with a couple of bus stops at the moment. There is a lot more work we need to do. It is the start of a journey around this because, as funding becomes tighter in terms of local authorities and central government delivering infrastructure, we need to do more as a sector to understand what the private sector wants; it is really clear about what it wants, i.e. seeing good projects come to the fore which build on their climate and social responsibilities, but they will want to see a return on that investment as well. More work is needed in getting our heads around that.

INNOV: I also run and set up the Durham Valley Car Club, a small, generally rural based community transport scheme. We have 8 vehicles across different sites in parts of rural Gateshead, County Durham into parts of Weardale and into Keswick as well. At the moment, we are doing that as part of a rural energy resilience scheme as well with Innovate UK where we are trialling charge points to power community centres.
When the power goes down, we also run a volunteer driver scheme for people that cannot access it and cannot drive themselves.

The following observations were made. Schemes similar to RideTandem are operating in parts of the Northeast as well, particularly on the Tees work site, which is a huge site where individual companies are all coming up with an individual solution for their area and for their employees. It does means that there are multiple different bus companies continually going on to the Tees work site, which is not coordinated in any way. While that does solve a challenge for those employees, it calls into question if this could be run as a public transport scheme, with wider benefits for those communities that are isolated in that area as well as those who cannot access it.

We have seen this in other areas as well. There were ridiculously high numbers of people (45,000) that applied for employment in ALDI, in Darlington who then were unable to access that site and therefore have been turned down for jobs. It is interesting looking at how we can develop schemes that all link together. Quite often we are constantly talking siloed approaches and a lot of the research that has been done in the Northeast shows that the siloed approach seems to continue. I often wonder how we can stack from a very local level, a community transport scheme, all the way up so that we are actually bringing these efficiencies together and that is where I think these things can work much more effectively, while not putting anything down that people are doing elsewhere. We need to try and widen this as much as we can, otherwise we are continually perpetuating the isolation that exists within these schemes.

Chair: The North East is talking about bus franchising. We are starting to see more rural authorities like Cambridge, Peterborough and Oxfordshire looking at this. Whether those ways of linking bus franchising so that it links these services in, avoids siloing and provides some of the services provided elsewhere or is it they just do not understand what by RideTandem is doing?

Alex (RideTandem): It is a fair challenge. There are various industrial estates across the country where we are one of a number of providers on site providing a service like this for an individual employer. There are some sites where we run more than one bus for more than one employer because it is easier. It would save an employer money to share the service, assuming their shift pattern is aligned. The local authority could play a role in that kind of coordination that does not really happen at the moment. The challenge with public buses sometimes is that you lose flexibility, because our services are closed door private shuttles, we do not have to give notice to the Traffic Commissioner every time we want to tweak the route or the timetable.

We support Royal Mail. In the run up to Christmas, Royal Mail gets busy and they need new routes from new places. They need them to be turned on and turned off with no notice when they need those people and when they do not, reflecting the kind of flexible business that they are running in 2025. That does not fit with the pace at which most local authorities are able to move because there are procurement timelines and notices that have to be given to the Traffic Commissioner. No exceptions can be made, but that is not the kind of world that local authorities live in, where we can turn on a bus route with two days' notice. You need people to be able to plan ahead, but a lot of these businesses need huge amounts of flexibility. They might change their shift patterns at certain times of the year according to how busy they are. Again, they will be recruiting from different areas at different times of the year. There is definitely more coordination that can be done to join things up. There are lots of SME employers who would like a service for this for five passengers where it is not going to be viable for them because it is a bus service that is never going to be viable with 5 people using it every day. So definitely things like combining SMEs together or even some of the larger employers together to share makes complete sense, but we know that the big thing that our employers want is flexibility and speed. That kind of collaboration and coordination is not always easy, whilst maintaining that flexibility and speed.

INNOV: This comes back to what was said earlier about having real good understanding of actually what bus services are, what they can do, how they can work, how they can be more flexible. Local authorities do not always get this. They stick again into their siloes of what they are used to doing and the way they are used to delivering it rather than actually how can we really deliver that from an individual's needs and point of view, then stack that together so that we actually get those services that can support those SMEs to get those jobs that we can coordinate this together, and that is something that is out of their comfort zone and they do not understand and therefore stick with what they have always done because it is easier.

Chris Morris, Sustainable Ventures: It looks like actively bundling together employer contracts where you are operating in those larger industrial parks has already been addressed. There must be the opportunity for some of that baseline demand to be handled on an aggregate basis and then for you to have some flexibility above that, while appreciating the contractual challenges when people are moving the goal posts the whole time. The observation was that obviously the large corporates that you are looking to work with are unlikely to use your services if they are able to recruit the employees that they need and get them to work in a more efficient manner, financially speaking, whether that is just slight increases in salary or otherwise, but that does not mean that there will not be lots of individuals who could access that work and could be potential recruits for those businesses if they were not prohibited by access issues and the lack of transport. It looks like those are the circumstances where it would be good to see you being funded in part by the public sector where there is not necessarily going to be a corporate, privately funded solution, but there are still many excluded potential employees that could be accessing work if your solution was being provided.

Alex, RideTandem
We have been having some interesting conversations in the last couple of months with some welfare to work providers who have got hundreds and thousands in some cases of people who want to work but physically cannot get there. The DWP has thought about this and is willing to fund transport for 12 weeks from the moment they start work. There is free-flowing funding for that period so that they will fund taxis in their entirety in some cases, for the first 12 weeks of somebody going into work, but then as soon as the 12 week period ends, the funding disappears and goes to 0, which just seems hopelessly short sighted. For a service like RideTandem, as well as other similar solutions, where some level of ongoing subsidy may be required, it means that Welfare to Work for others does not work with us because there is no point having a service just for 12 weeks if it is going to be turned off on day one of week 13. So again, there is a whole other pot of government money which ultimately would save millions if the process was more joined up.

INNOV Emily Macdonald/Geoff Wallman CEOs at INTELLIGEN INTERNATIONAL LIMITED
(https://intelligen.energy/):
We are based in the North East and we have been developing one of our products as part of the rural accelerator mentioned earlier, the CPC project. We have been developing micro mobility solutions like LEV charging and storage solutions for E-bikes and other kinds of accessibility and other sorts of micro mobility. We are keen to discuss with colleagues about the public private partnership.

Q: With the example of the Midlands 5G, is there a transport example you know of? A (Chris Hillcoat): This overlaps with what we are working on with some local authorities and we identified closely with the problems described. There are not any model articles for adoption here and all of the terms of reference differ from one local authority to another.

Q: How far down the road are we with things like model articles or any kind of exemplars in terms of that collaborative approach in a transport context, rather than in a comms context? A: There are no suitable examples available just yet.

Emily: we are working on a project with Northumberland County Council looking at a shared cargo bike scheme, working with Steven Morrison Cairns on the benefits of a cargo bike to local businesses in terms of offering deliveries, with an increased turnover of 25% to 33% for all sorts of businesses, including food or drink retailers, pharmacies doing deliveries from some sort of a base, using a shared cargo bike, and sometimes for SMEs, the barrier to adoption of something like an e-cargo bike is the initial cap-ex of getting these things in the first place. They can be expensive. What we have going in shortly is one of our power pods and with the CPC accelerator support we have a solar powered e-cargo bike locker, which is then accessible with a back end which we have coded and deployed which enables local business owners to then book online to borrow that cargo bike, increasing the value that they are offering customers in terms of deliveries and then return the bike back to our power pod at that end point. We think that model is really quite compelling and we are at the start of data collection to assess exactly how much of an impact that has had. What is very interesting is that Northumberland County Council have actually been supportive in terms of working with us and with the host for where the power pod would go, subject to a delay of reaching an agreement where we have the host for the power pod that is happy with it being under the cartilage of their building. The local authority, who own the cargo bike and are aware of the insurance implications, placing that somewhere and being stored for the insurers, I am happy to have something permanently sited in the box and then being hired out at different points. It is a really interesting model and it would be good to report back to the group in the future with some data to give an idea of the efficacy of that and how much of an impact it has had. If anyone has any documentation to help the process along, that would be helpful so that every time we look to deploy this in a different area, we are not rewriting every single document to suit every single local authority.

[**Chat:** Q: Do you also work with other mobility innovators Alex (RideTandem) (Unverified) such as Mobilityways and CalCommute on workplace travel planning?

A: Yes - we know and talk to Mobilityways. Haven't come across CalCommute actually so will reach out to them. Can also share https://www.commutifi.com/ if you've not come across them https://www.triply.net]

[**Chat**: With UK school summer holidays underway, Cumbria Tourism has launched a new online travel planner using powered by ‘You. Smart. Thing.’, https://yousmartthing.com/]

ACAD Steven Morrison Cairns Food and Drink NE Community Interest Company

I'm from the National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise Newcastle University, working within rural transport, specifically micromobility. I am also part of a trade sector organisation called Food and Drink NE with a remit to look at local food procurement and decarbonising the supply chain. One of the companies I worked with on that did a lot of food and drink deliveries with cargo bikes, both rural and urban. Nearly everything is city or urban centric, but there are some great champions out there that are doing logistics mobility with their services using cargo bikes in North Yorkshire, Calderdale (working with Beate Kubitz and Anthony de Hevingham, https://www.cargodale.co.uk/) and Northumberland County Council; all predominantly rural with some bigger urban centric populations.

Some of the barriers such as the silos and politics are noted, having worked on active ravel with local authorities for the last 16 years. It has been tough but there are some chinks there. Durham and Northumberland have got officers that want to deliver change. We are seeking to work collaboratively together; it is the only way to solve the challenges. On the micromobility side, which is new to a degree, it is a tricky barrier where cargo bikes are concerned. A bike is my main mode of transport. Every day, someone asks about how to access a bike like this. The supply of cargo bikes is one of the big barriers that I am working on with some of the other colleagues and some European bike manufacturers to try and bring them into the region.
There are a couple of projects within Northumberland, one in Berwick and one in Hexham. There are probably a few more that are going to come a little bit closer to Newcastle as well. Often the engagement with some of the projects is business orientated, but it is a real hard sell, even in the urban setting. It is hard to try and get businesses on board with cargo bikes, but it is the public that want access to them. I am working with Riese & Müller bikes, a German based cargo bike manufacturer. More details to follow.

Chris Hillcoat KPMG

- Details were shared from a previous project about corporate structures. There are different options for this, e.g. publicly owned company, privately limited company or local authority trading company (LATCO) which also has some sort of technical differentials around procurement law. The Swift ticketing scheme is a smart ticketing system used in the West Midlands for public transport. It allows travellers to load various tickets and travel credit onto a Swift card, which is then used to pay for journeys on buses, trains, and trams. It is owned by consortium of LAs, giving them advantages around subsidy of services from other functions. It is still able to receive public funding. It does not have to run its own procurement authority because it can rely on the combined authority. The cons are: it does not give freedom of movement, so it still has to stay where it is and any profit made has to be reinvested.

- The second example is DG Cities, a London-based consultancy at the forefront of urban innovation. This was set up by the Royal Borough of Greenwich in 2015 as a private limited company, working with other bodies to do things like roll out gigabit fibre and other kinds of innovative technology, allowing it to have a more commercial focus to get profit from this fibre internet network and then reinvest it, giving them good quality staff and good rates on loans for financing, but it does require grant funding.

- The third example is a local authority trading company called Cardiff Bus (Reading Buses is another example) It was set up from Cardiff Council at arm's length but still controlled by the authority structure, so it allows for loaning of money and it does not have to pay VAT, another benefit of that structure. The cons are that it still maintains a link to political machinations in the local authority.
  All these examples are close to what has been discussed today, and you can imagine that similar things could be created. There are no common articles but they cold be developed.

INNOV Are there any opportunities to integrate funding around some of this? One of the things that has been shown along with examples like the welfare to work programmes, again, is all of that funding is siloed or we have total barriers to funding quite often. We may hear of some bus funding, but it is only for capital or it is only for revenue and we have all of these restrictions. Continuously there is healthcare funding out there, there is employability funding out there, there is bus funding out there, but it is all very specific on how that can be spent or what it looks like. There is something about how we integrate some of that funding and generally it is central government funding in some way or another, so how do we actually rework some of that and is it even possible? There is an element though that funding is what silos a lot of the work that we do across bigger local authorities, and therefore there needs to be something that needs to be integrated because we cannot really have this joined up thinking around integrated transport if everything is done on a silo basis around that and if that was able to be lifted, that would then allow for more of that private sector investment to potentially come across as well and align with some of that, which is very difficult to do when it is either very restricted in the way the funding can be used, or it is very short term as well, where you may have six or nine months or a year to do this and because of that liability and risk that often goes with it, people therefore do not necessarily want to commit, particularly local authorities who can be very concerned about taking on schemes where the liability is there straight away after a year.

Chair: This relates to an ongoing conversation taking place with DfT's bus representatives about whether you could apply forms of bus franchising to more rural area. There is a lot of innovative thinking which has been demonstrated in the Roundtable, but it is not generally with the people who do public transport and local authorities or with traditional operators and so it is possible that the next Roundtable in this series will be exploring ways in which you could do forms of franchising in rural areas. One of the things that could happen is that you create an arm's length mobility manager from the local authority, which oversees some of this and brings some of the silos together, acting as a pool for all the different funding regimes. It was something that was thought about at the time of the total transport pilots in 2015, but was not followed up, e.g. Northampton, so there are opportunities there and that would allow you to, for instance, make use of current tendered services money.

INNOV Chris Morris, Sustainable Ventures
Q: There is a basic question about the large subject of bus franchising. I live in an area of the country which, like many others, has a spine route which is attractive to operators, but 40%+ of the population is in villages, which are largely unserved. Does anyone have experience with bundling a number of sub-economic routes with a more desirable one, and, if so, any thoughts on the potential opportunities or pitfalls with that approach?

Chair: As it happens, under the way in which bus deregulation in the 1985 Act is structured, it is illegal to bundle because you have a division between commercial and non-commercial routes under the act. This is why discussions about forms of franchising are interesting because it takes us beyond that to the point where you could bundle commercial spine routes with feeder services. Having said that, Lincolnshire has done this for years with Lincolnshire Interconnect/Callconnect[2] in which Lincolnshire funds Demand Responsive Services that are formally linked into the spine routes, so it can be done. This is why Cambridge and Peterborough combined authority are heading in the direction of franchising.

SNTB: If you look at the robust case the combined authority made around franchising, they are explicit that, in terms of the more profitable routes, i.e. in the denser areas, there will be an element of that to cover the cost of rural bus services. They have been explicit in terms of that.

Some thought has been given to the use of SNTBs and how they might get involved. There was a piece of work last year looking at could an SNTB create a regional bus network and some work was done with Systra and other consultants. We identified how you might look to develop a regional bus network and the second piece of work is looking at broadly all the authorities in England's Economic Heartland and having some sort of regional opportunities is a good thing. Taking this further, we are looking to understand what the cost of operating that regional network might look like as well as trying to address who would operate it, who would manage it, who would fund it etc. To do something of that scale takes a lot of time. We are not saying that EEH would do it, just trying to understand the opportunities and also there is an effect in terms of the wider devolution agenda coming out from central government. Does that then mitigate the fact if authorities are coming together, would they look to franchise or operate buses within the devolved authority areas and not look at regional opportunities as well?

The feedback received from our authorities is that the existing model of enhanced partnerships with bus operators in many instances is operating quite well, so they are not necessarily going down the franchising

[2] https://lincsbus.com/callconnect/

route and we do not yet know if creating a regional enhanced partnership might be a way to bring a little bit more coordination in, but there is not a new risk associated with that in terms of better coordination between authorities. It is a hard task to think about because our authorities are busy with their day jobs and they are not coming in asking about regional opportunities. They do not have the capacity to even think about it before EEH publishes a policy statement.

INNOV Ali Clabburn Founder CEO of Liftshare, Mobilityways and C-Lab:

Looking at the challenge of public transport and community type services and what you can or cannot do, one of the issues at Kings Lynn is there is a route that is lightly served by a main operator but at the wrong time and not nearly as flexible as it needs to be, and it is a perfect route for the local community bus team to put in a service, but they have got the challenge of competing, potentially with one of the bus operators, so it is difficult. The other thing is competition law. Without it, we could put an amazing bus services to the hospital and all the major employers, but because of this, the tendering processes must be observed when there are only 2 local suppliers that would do the service anyway who would be happy to work together but are not allowed to. It is a challenging situation at the moment with rules that stop it from working.

[Chat: Ali Clabburn Our project IVORA was looking at how to increase vehicle occupancy in cars (and buses) at Kings Lynn Hospital. As part of the preparation work, we used our Commute IQ tool to analyse the commuting options available at 5 of the largest local employers and aggregated the data to see the potential for new bus routes and DRT type services for the employers. The data helped us to make a compelling pitch to the Councils, the hospital and the bus operators and we are expecting this summer to see 2 new direct bus routes and 1 new early morning community bus to take staff to work, with minimal funding needed due to the large number of potential passengers. The basic story is about the use of data to identify demand and to make the most of what is there and what is going to end up as public bus services]

Chair: This is exactly the sort of thing that that DfT buses are interested in. Franchising up to now has been thought of as what TfL or now Andy Burnham has been doing, with gross cost contracts and fixed route services, where local authorities take all the risk, decide all the services and decide all the fares. Clearly there are opportunities outside cities to do things very differently.

The Bus Reform Bill does include specific authorisation of more local authority trading companies, so more Reading buses and so on. This could be another solution actually in some of these cases so there is a dialogue to be had. One of the things that is in the bill would allow local authorities to take the existing tender network and let it as a combined franchise or as a set of franchises so that those providing it and those using it have a certainty of five to seven years and that would allow you to do this and to bring in other services within it. One of the things that does is to do what Padam does in, say, France, where they provide DRT contracted services as part of the mix and with the franchising arrangement you get over the competition laws. There is something really interesting there and it is worth considering about franchising or forms of franchise. It could be things that you would use for some of Chris Hillcoat's other examples like freight for instance. Could you do a local freight delivery franchise using cargo bikes, for instance? The local authority would let a contract for providing delivery services in a particular area to reduce the number of white vans running around the place. There are opportunities there.

CONS Alistair Kirkbride:

The interpretation of the RideTandem offer is that there are all these opportunities hiding in full view. The Cumbria example is there because we built it into the recent submission to the DFT's integrated national Transport strategy to demonstrate what the scale of the problem was but also the opportunity that was there. Being neutral on the public or private sector and looking in from the outside, the challenge is trying to work out if there are these opportunities hiding in full view and how do we identify them now? I work on tourism a lot and tourism revenues leak all over the place. There are huge amounts of tourism spend, with multi £billion industries in Cumbria for instance, but capturing that revenue is really hard. Quite often through these Roundtables, is it the governance gap or is it a market failure and what is the difference when we are looking at these things? You have identified something that was hiding and you worked out where monetising it from a visitor perspective in rural areas, there are probably many opportunities where we can start capturing those revenues that currently leak to wherever. The challenge is who is it? Where are the goggles that need to be put on to identify what those opportunities are now? There is a lot of contention at the moment about visitor levies and how we capture them and they are all negative discussions. Yet there are a lot of people who think there must be a way of catching these revenues to pull them right back into much better quality transport

services for visitors. Then visitor transport in the UK is dreadful compared to that overseas in the Alps and Greece etc. and yet there is an awful lot of revenue that is not being captured. How do we identify these opportunities and who identifies those opportunities. How do we turn them into investable propositions?
I look at it from alongside saying I don't know.

[Chat: Alastair Kirkbride: in Cumbria, tourism contributes £4.6bn (2023) and employs 45k jobs; 82%/59% visitor businesses cite lack of or poor public transport as barriers to recruitment/retention. Who would need to do what next to crack this? You.Smart.Thing have been working in Cumbria with the DMO and local authorities to tackle some of these challenges and have also had some success in other areas coordinating consistent travel messaging and journey planning for large trip generators including local businesses. Happy to send more info or pick up separate discussions after the meeting. https://yousmartthing.com/blog/the-lake-district-the-smart-way]

INNOV Steven Morrison Cairns Food and Drink NE CIC:
As part of the National Innovation Centre for Rural Enterprise, we have been hosting some climathons, an international design Sprint type exercise. Some of our team in Gloucester have been doing work with The Forest of Dean and Gloucester Council on energy and transport. I have been working on this with the National Trust in the Northeast and other visitor destinations. We held a transport climathon that was well attended with the combined authority, looking at how we could then draw in rural transport and visitor transport. and going back to the levy. The levy needs to be ring fenced. If we are going to introduce a tourism levy for visitors, at the Lake District as a prime example, 90% of visitors come by car every day, that is 45,000 vehicles. A lot of it is narrative and the messaging that it is not just a tax. We want visitors to the Lake District, but we need it in a sustainable way that is not just a benefit for the visitor, but also for the local community and for the emergency services to be able to get round. There are friends and colleagues who work or volunteer within the rescue teams and they have major problems trying to gain access to get people off the mountains. These are interesting times.

CONS Alistair Kirkbride: There is a lot of work going on the three main valleys in the Lake District at the moment. The problem comes down to capacity in the public sector, but who is going to lead on setting out and articulating clearly what the attractive investable propositions are rather, than we need an extra bus late one evening, which is about as far as it gets, but we have been trying that over the last year in a project on tourism. What does world class look like? How much does it cost? What are the opportunities for investment? And everyone says, Let's get on with it. The money is going to run out. The document will gather dust. I want to be positive about it because we rarely try to set out at a locality level what does world class look like and therefore what are the propositions for actually investing in that. We have been trying it over the last year, most of these other contentious discussions kind of fall away and consensus is achieved. It is what we want but it is not the role of the public sector. So we are left with this, but we have moved on because we have recognised that it is millions of pounds of investment required for relatively small localities, but once you start looking at that in a different perspective, then it starts to look attractive for other reasons, but there is a gap in who then grabs that.

Chair: The late Dai Powell, who ran the HCT group, spoke about having a middle tier of enterprise between local authorities and providers that would group and bring together contracts, funding and so on and that feels like something that has come out of this. Regarding changes in the public procurement rules, does this help smaller innovative providers where publicly reportable KPIs have to be set? Given the earlier discussion about sub-national bodies, is Transport for the North a place that does this? It has done a lot in cities and that has been where its focus has been.

CONS Alistair Kirkbride: There is a group called Strategic Vista Management Group (www.strategicvistas.com) which is all your public sector bodies, but focusing directly on business items and they have recognised that no single body can do it; it needs to be a partnership. What they have not yet recognised is that the public sector probably cannot deliver it. They probably just do not have the skills, expertise, ability to do it, but they need to be involved.
A special purpose vehicle, but for what is the challenge to a body like that to try and bring constructive challenge to what the opportunity might be. Would Transport for the North be the body to look at it? Very possibly.
[Chat: some thoughts from a train ride last year https://lowcarbondestinations.org/subsidy-investment-visitor-levies-but-for-what/; the Lake District project summary: https://lowcarbondestinations.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/LCD-3-valleys-summary.pdf]

Chair: There is a live discussion around levies etc. around the Norfolk Broads as a way of financing this. There has been some discussion about using the Hope Valley in the Peak District as a pilot for some of this.. Are there last thoughts that people have about where to go next?

Regarding model articles, common terms and conditions, etc. might make it easier both for startups and investors to get things over the line. Does that feel like something that STBs might be able to commission and do?

REGG Sharon Payne: There is the Innovation Procurement Empowerment Centre (IPEC) which is part of the Connected Places Catapult (https://cp.catapult.org.uk/project/innovation-procurement-empowerment-centre/). Procurement and innovation is a challenge in that in local authorities, especially around transport and then adding in the social value element that has just come in with the new procurement regulations. It is a challenge for local authorities to understand how they sit , so it might be about promoting IPEC to them utilising that and to make sure that DfT understand this as well.

SNTB: There are probably other bodies, other quangos that are incredibly focused. If this is set out in terms of the notes in this meeting, this can be raised to one of these innovate bodies and pose that question because ultimately it is their responsibility to provide effective guidance for SMEs and others in terms of the wider growth agenda.

Chair: Does this sound like this is a direction of travel that might bring some clarity for investors and startups?

Chris Hillcoat, KPMG: It feels like one of the big pain points to address. As an investor I would ask, 'who are all these people, who are all these agencies and authorities, how on Earth do I grapple with this?' Having a streamlined approach would have a much bigger impact than we might imagine.

Chair: Final reflections were invited in terms of things that the public sector can do to overcome barriers? Are there things that we could do that the private sector might do more?

INNOV Alex Shapland-Howes RideTandem: We are not even getting to the kind of points of procurement for most of these services because we are just not in conversations with local or regional authorities and whatever other authorities there might be. We have not given up entirely, but we have to some extent given up on trying to engage local authorities with our type of service even though we know there is a huge opportunity there for both impact for people and the kind of commercial opportunities, but it just takes too long and it is too slow. The people we engage with so far have not seen the potential to collaborate in this way. This is an open invitation to anyone who thinks that they would be interested in the chat. The procurement issues are just so far away from where we are at the moment.

Chair: It might be worth having a conversation with the rural STB group and others. Mobilityways is a known quantity. The view is that there is a whole other world out there which local authorities are not even aware of, which is providing a lot of transport. These schemes might not be taking lots of cars off the road but they are helping people and getting them to work who otherwise would not be able to.

INNOV Alex Shapland-Howes RideTandem:
We are taking cars off the road even if we do not exactly know how many because again at about 80% of our services are for sites of employment where people have not got much of an alternative, but we know that the average ride time of vehicles got more than 30+ people on board. If the alternative is taxis or cars, then yes, it is definitely greener.

Chair: There will be more work on shared mobility in the next financial year.

REGG Sharon Payne: From the previous research, there is a lack of shared mobility. The challenge is to take these commercial examples and how do you make that work potentially in rural areas. Contacts state there is a massive amount of capacity in coaches across England, but getting the business plan to work is a challenge. There are opportunities around this that will come into that conversation.

Chair: Thanks to everyone for their contributions. It has been an interesting combination of discussion about policy, barriers and ways forward and also practical examples of really interesting things going on the ground. The whole discussion around rural transport says, Oh well, everybody just drives SUVs everywhere, or get lifts if they have to. What we found as ever is that there is lots of other stuff going on and lots of really interesting ideas out there. The challenge is how to bring that together and scale it and make it easier for people to do this. So thank you very much, everybody. I hope it has been useful.

[Chat: https://www.kingstrust.org.uk/about-us/news-views/youthindex2025 - some interesting info here re transport. The King's Trust TK Maxx Youth Index 2025 reveals the impact of unemployment on young people's mental health and aspirations.]