

North East Regional Seminar & Networking Event

Date: 19th May 2020

Subject: Barriers to Access – Connectivity & Rural Transport

Chair: Councillor Trevor Thorne, Northumberland County Council

Host: Online Event via Zoom

Learning Outcomes

3 Examples of Good Practice

- Future of Rural Mobility Toolkit - made available on our website with the presentation from Midlands Connect.
- On demand transport in Tees Valley - Using the all-new [Tees Flex app](#) (iOS and Android), customers can hail a vehicle directly from their smartphone. The app's clever algorithms enable multiple passengers to seamlessly share the vehicle. The technology directs passengers to a nearby 'virtual bus stop' (within a short walking distance) for their pick-up and drop-off points, allowing for quick and efficient shared trips - without lengthy detours, taking customers where they like, when they like!
- [The Linkage Outreach Project](#) is a unique sensory initiative funded by the National Lottery Community Fund. The project provides schools, nursing homes, children's centres, and community groups across Lincolnshire the opportunity to access, enjoy and gain real benefit from sensory resources and facilities, at no cost to them. Linkage delivers sensory support to people and places that are difficult to reach, helping to remove the financial and geographical barriers often involved in accessing services in fixed places.

5 Key Learning Points

- National Innovation Centre focused on the Rural Economy will be starting in September 2020 and is a project of Newcastle University, CCRI and Warwick Business School.
- How will demands for Rural Transport change after lockdown ends, will current habits such as working from home remain and therefore change our needs?
- Reliable 4G connectivity should be our first priority for rural areas.
- Would Digital Champions within organisations help to bring together different work areas to overcome barriers to enabling connectivity, for example Planning, Economic Development etc?
- There is a need to build on what is already there in communities to find solutions and work with existing groups.
- Concept of 'Local Transport Hubs' is the topic of further research by Midlands Connect. Further to Covid-19 and lockdown, this option will be worth further exploration to assist with mobility of rural populations.

Providing a voice for rural communities and service providers

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