



Campaign Newsletter No.9 (1 March 2018)

House of Commons Debate!

The **House of Commons** held a transport debate on February 27th. The results of our campaigning were evident. In total, 11 MPs who contributed to the debate spoke about community transport and the threats we face as a result of the Department for Transport's proposals. From the speeches, it was clear that, as we have recommended, many local CTs have been effectively lobbying their local MPs and many were able to give a detailed account of the important work of CTs and the scale of the threat they face.

All the key arguments against the proposed changes surfaced in the course of the debate. Here are some of the main points made by MPs during the debate:

"The change the Department is proposing has placed many services under direct threat. Just one small group of commercial operators, led by one individual, which wants to cherry pick CT contracts has managed to persuade Ministers that new rules are needed. I urge Ministers to rethink" **Gareth Thomas MP**



Gareth Thomas was well-briefed by **Mobility Matters**

"If the proposals go ahead the impact will be severe....the costs [of the proposed changes] look astronomical for a small society." **Cheryl Gillan MP**

"the Minister [Jesse Norman] has set out exemptions for community groups – such as where there was no alternative contractor, or if the alternative contractor confirmed they did not regard the community group as a competitor.....this is not really going to work." **Anne Marie Morris MP**

"Ministers appear to be fixed in their belief that the changes will affect only a small number of CT

organisations. This is getting close to disingenuous, as the evidence of likely impact is there if we look for it."

Mark Hendrick MP

"Only yesterday, I witnessed how useful CTs are at making sure disabled people are fully integrated with the community. The social impact of CTs is so important. I am sure the Minister is hearing that message loud and clear." **Maggie Throup MP**

*"It seems that the **Bus & Coach Association** is hell-bent on taking the maximum advantage through legal pressure for a 'level playing field.' But there is an important distinction. CT providers are not-for-profit, so any surplus is used to extend the reach of community transport. I hope the government will respond to the legal challenge in a way that is proportionate and does not fatally undermine community transport."* **Alex Chalk MP**

"My local CT is at risk of being priced out of the wonderful work it does because of the high cost of training being mandated, so I am asking the Department to protect community transport services." **Kemi Badenoch MP**

In addition MPs praised the work of their local CTs during the debate. Those getting an honourable mention included: **Chiltern Dial-a-Ride, Community Connexions, Dawlish CT, Enfield, Erewash, Go North Devon, Harrow, Newton Abbot CT, Our Bus Bartons, Preston CT, and Uttlesford CT.**

The support for CTs, and the opposition to what the Department is trying to do, was cross-party. This is important. The Department would be less concerned if this had become a party political issue. As a result of **Mobility Matters** campaigning, and the effective lobbying local CTs are doing, we have now had a Select Committee inquiry – which produced a unanimous cross-party report criticising the Department – and now a debate showing a cross-party consensus against the Department's proposals.

This effective political pressure needs to be maintained. We are still aiming for a Westminster Hall debate. If you have not yet contacted your local MP, please do so. We have template letters/e-mails you can use. The political pressure on the Department for a re-think is mounting and as this debate showed, the tectonic plates under their feet are now shifting.

DfT CT Licensing Consultation

As our last newsletter indicated, the **DfT consultation** is now open and **closes on 4 May**. We **strongly recommend that CT operators DO NOT respond to this consultation until they have read our guidance first**. The CT sector needs to be extremely careful about its response. **Mobility Matters** will be issuing guidance to CT operators on how to respond and we urge you to read this before you send your response.

DfT Consultation Events

DfT has announced a number of consultation sessions: *“As part of our consultation, Buses and Taxis Division officials are keen to meet community transport operators and users at a series of events across the country. The purpose of these events will be to explain our policy proposals and answer questions. The sessions will consist of a presentation followed by a Q&A over a two-hour session.”* Two sessions per day have been announced at the following locations:

- Ipswich - 9 April,
- Nottingham - 13 April
- Pontypridd - 20 April
- London - 27 April

DfT is hoping to announce further sessions, hopefully with venues in Scotland, the North and West of the country.

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/community-transport-consultation-ipswich-afternoon-session-tickets-43591334856>



London Strategic CT Forum (LSCTF) Annual Conference 21 & 22 March



The **LSCTF** annual Conference is taking place on Wednesday and Thursday 21 & 22 March in **Bognor Regis**. This two-day event will be discussing the current issues relating to section 19 & 22 permit guidance changes; what constitutes ‘commercial’; what an updated permit regime might look like and how a CT can demonstrate its Social Value. We have speakers from Russell Cooke solicitors, Beverley Bell consultant, former senior Traffic Commissioner, Buzzacott LLP and the Department for Transport will be starting their consultation at our conference on the 22 so come along and join us and make your voice heard. Booking is open till the 7 March. For more information and to book

<https://westwayct.org.uk/services/events/lscf-conference/>

Driver & Vehicle Standards Agency

On 1 Feb **Mobility Matters** wrote to **DVSA**, with the express purpose of requesting it to desist from taking any enforcement action against CT operators and drivers pending conclusion of the consultation and clarification of the law. We received a response from **Gareth Llewellyn** Chief Executive of **DVSA** reaffirming its support for the community transport sector and maintaining the permit system. He also confirmed that no action would be taken against CT operators unless there was clear evidence they were operating illegally.



Mobility Matters Needs Your Help

Next week, **Mobility Matters** will circulate its own data request to its members. This will be a Survey Monkey questionnaire which will not take long to complete. This data is vital so that we can build up a strong collective response for DfT demonstrating the size, scale and importance of Community Transport.

DfT Response to the Select Committee

DfT’s response to the Transport Select Committee’s recommendations are not as positive as **Mobility Matters** would have hoped, but we were pleased to note that it has conceded some of its advice. In the meantime **Mobility Matters** is continuing our dialogue with **DfT** to try to resolve the outstanding matters and to find practical solutions to protect the CT sector. You can read the full DfT response here.

<https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/transport-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/community-transport-17-19/>

The Work Continues – How You Can Help

The vital campaign work of **Mobility Matters** will only continue with your support. But we cannot do any of this without your help and so we please ask you to make a financial contribution as soon as you can. We are making real progress but we cannot do it without funds and resource and so don’t delay – please pay today, every little helps! Thank you!

<https://ctpermits.org/fund-appeal>

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