



Community Link Stafford and District (Registered Charity No.1095768)

“Finding a Home”

Sept 2023

We are well known locally and a growing Community Transport Charity operating within Stafford and District with nearly 40 years standing playing an important role across the locality with SCC community grant support for which we have been very grateful. This funding ceased 31 March 2019.

Community Link is of course SCC approved providers for this type of passenger transport in the County and we currently now employ **65** staff with an additional **7** volunteers. We positively encourage employment applications from hard to reach sector of society and take an inclusive approach to all of our colleagues.

We primarily provide older persons charity members transport including the Dial a Ride service in the town for those individuals who for reasons of poor health and lack of mobility are unable to use mainstream public transport service.

We now have a current total fleet of x 38 vehicles including x 33 Minibuses some of which are wheelchair adapted and x 5 passenger cars providing daily access for schoolchildren to Special Needs and mainstream schools.

The charity is seeking a permanent vehicle parking site within Stafford town close to our offices at Schott House on Astonfields or anywhere else in fact within the town boundary as this is our main operating centre for the surrounding districts. Our fleet is currently located at Doxey Rd ST16 2EW development site.

The area we currently occupy is a Brownfield site with existing SBC planning approval and consents to allow us to meet current organisational and operational needs. There are limited options available to secure an alternative site and fear for the future provision that we provide to the Community. It is in an ideal location and it is proving to be difficult for Community Link to continue elsewhere with the required permissions and consents.

As a suitable alternative to the current site there is an open space in the dip approximately 300m towards the new railway bridge island which has recently been occupied by travellers causing social disruption in recent weeks. This site would also provide adequate organisational growth for the future of Community Link Stafford & District.

The current piece of land at Doxey Rd is a relatively small area on the edge of the development which borders railway line, road and housing estate so its uses are limited. Community Link would be able to allow continued full rail line access to Network Rail if it was appropriate. Easements can be very restrictive for alternative uses of this site location.

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Despite the clear difficulties associated over the last 3+ years since March 2020 Community Link has been able to continue to grow and support the community throughout this period by way of food parcel deliveries, transport to vaccination centres, reducing isolation for older members of society, transporting key workers families to SEN and mainstream schools in lockdown.

In the last 12 months we are continuing to have a constant stream of new charity members joining up and requiring travel. In the next few weeks we are re-establishing a regular town centre community bus route from Baswich and Walton to serve residents in the area travelling into Stafford town.

We also make an important contribution to the local economy by way of employment of Drivers and Passenger Assistants and ensuring our people are fully trained to support the residents we serve.

We would very much appreciate being included in your Gateway development plans for Doxey Rd site and surrounds for the reasons outlined above as your plans take shape. We would like to see Community Link forming part of the new development.

Thanking you for your consideration.

Graham Wright
Chief Executive