



Community Centred Local Rural Transport Pilot Project Evaluation

Rural Development Trust

May 2012



**SOUTH
LANARKSHIRE
RURAL
PARTNERSHIP**

This project is part-financed by the
Scottish Government, European
Community and South Lanarkshire
Rural Partnership LEADER
2007-2013 Programme



The European Agricultural Fund
for Rural Development:
Europe investing in rural areas

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Executive Summary

1. The Rural Development Trust commissioned an evaluation of their Community Centred Local Rural Transport Pilot Project to establish the benefits of the project and inform its future development.
2. The Trust aims to support the sustainable development of rural communities in South Lanarkshire and has delivered a number of initiatives including their community transport services which are based in Douglas Water. The Trust provides a number of school contracts which have enabled it to establish a critical mass of commercial and community contract work. However, variation in commercial contract income impacts on their community services and this led the Trust to seek ways to stabilise income and maintain a consistent level and quality of service.
3. The Trust approached South Lanarkshire Council in 2009 with a proposal that combined statutory school transport with additional school and community use. The concept represented a change of approach from the traditional way of procuring and delivering rural school transport. Following negotiations and input from officers and elected members, the Council agreed to test the approach at Crawfordjohn and Wiston where the school transport contract was due to be re-tendered.
4. Following a commercial tendering process the Trust was awarded four contracts to pilot two initiatives that formally link the provision of school transport services, community transport and other demand responsive transport based around Crawfordjohn, Wiston and Crawford Primary Schools. The pilot aimed to provide each community with access to a vehicles to: transport pupils to and from school each day; provide the opportunity for schools to take part in more extracurricular activities; provide a local bus service for residents and groups from the villages around the school; and be available at evenings, weekends and school holidays for community groups to operate on a volunteer-driven basis with appropriate training provided for all volunteer drivers.
5. The tenders for Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools were issued directly by South Lanarkshire Council using a non-standard competitive tender process and this was different to all other mainstream school contracts which are procured on behalf of the Council by Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT). The Trust was the only bidder from the three organisations invited to tender. The contract value was approximately £12,000 per annum effective from August 2009. The Trust use two 16-seater minibuses to deliver the three key elements of the pilot: daily home to school transport for pupils of Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools; use by these schools of up to 40 trips per year per school at no cost; and use by local community groups either using their own volunteer driver (chargeable at 55p per mile with a minimum payment of £22) or a Trust driver. MiDAS training is available for all volunteer drivers. Contract compliance and payment has been managed, as with other contracts, by SPT.
6. There are two daily home to school contracts for Crawford Primary School. The contracts were procured via SPT's standard competitive tender process for

mainstream school contracts. The contract value is approximately £15,000 per annum effective from August 2009. Two 16-seater minibuses provide daily home to school transport for pupils at Crawford Primary School; the school does not have an allowance for free school use as is the case with Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools. However, additional use is made of the vehicles that fits around the daily home to school use. The Trust received pump priming funding from SPT for two years of £24,000 per annum for community transport service which includes demand responsive transport for the Glencaple and Lowther area. After consultation with the community this developed into a weekly shopping service to Lanark and a leisure service to Coalburn Leisure Centre charged at £1 per person each way or 50p for concessions, and ad-hoc hires by local groups and schools using the Trust's driver or a volunteer driver (chargeable at 55p per mile with a minimum payment of £22) with MiDAS volunteer driver training provided where appropriate.

7. The Trust provide a reliable and effective home to school transport service for 13 pupils at Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools and 24 pupils at Crawford Primary School. The Heads commented on the friendliness and helpfulness of the drivers who have built up excellent relationships with pupils and staff.
8. Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools benefit in two main ways from the pilot. Firstly, they are able to make significantly more trips than had previously been the case. Secondly, the process of booking the minibus is much more effective and efficient as they did not need to seek three tenders or deal with the invoicing and payment (in liaison with South Lanarkshire Council). One of the Heads highlighted that this means the school does not have to worry about booking and paying for trips, and the other highlighted that it means the school does not have to ask parents for contributions towards travel costs.
9. Between January 2010 and December 2011, Crawfordjohn Primary School and Wiston Primary School used the service 52 and 62 times respectively. The yearly averages – 26 at Crawfordjohn Primary School and 31 at Wiston Primary School – are therefore within the 40 unit limit. Use increased significantly at both schools in 2011.
10. A number of other primary schools have benefited from the pilot by hiring the Trust's minibuses when not in use on the school run or by Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools. Between January 2010 and December 2011, Crawford Primary School hired vehicles on 66 occasions - more than any of the other local primary schools. A further five local primary schools regularly hired the Trust's: Stablestone (48), Douglas (46), Abington (38), Libberton (29) and Leadhills (27). Local primary school Heads highlighted the competitive rate at which they were able to hire vehicles from the Trust; one stated this meant they did not have to ask parents to contribute to the cost of trips as often, another highlighted that more pupils could benefit from trips, and another highlighted the financial benefits from using volunteer drivers which allowed the school to use the vehicles more often.
11. The Heads of Leadhills and Libberton Primary Schools are also the Heads of Crawfordjohn and Wiston respectively and they were uniquely placed to comment on the pilot. Both Heads reported that they were able to use the vehicles more easily and more often at Crawfordjohn and Wiston than at Leadhills and Libberton and

data from the Trust confirms that Crawfordjohn (52) and Wiston (62) hired the vehicles more often than Leadhills (27) and Libberton (29).

12. The Heads of the other local primary schools were aware of the arrangements at Crawfordjohn and Wiston and all stated that they would welcome similar arrangements for their schools. One of the Heads stated that transport cost was the main obstacle to the extra curricula activities.
13. The benefits to school pupils of the pilot include interaction with their peers when attending inter-school sports events, lessons at other schools or transition sessions at Biggar High School; health and wellbeing benefits from participation in swimming and inter-schools sports; educational benefits from participation in specialist lessons at other schools and trips to museums; and travelling outwith their immediate environment also has benefits as it helps to broaden pupils' horizons, brings them new experiences and can help to raise their aspirations.
14. A number of local community groups have hired vehicles from the Trust over the course of the pilot and they cover a range of interest groups including: young people such as Biggar Beavers, older people such as Leadhills Seniors, women's groups such as Crawford & Elvanfoot WRI, and general community groups such as Crawfordjohn Hall. Local community groups visited a range of destinations including leisure venues such as swimming at Lanark, cultural and learning outings such as Glasgow Science Museum, and general outings such as to Ayr.
15. The main benefit for the organisations was financial. Some local groups reported that they no longer seek quotes from other providers because they felt the Trust was such good value for money. Significantly, the evaluation gathered evidence that demonstrates the additionality of the Trust's service - some of the groups highlighted that they would not have gone on the outings at all if it had not been for the availability of the Trust's vehicles. Quality was also important. There were numerous quotes on how flexible, approachable, and reliable the Trust's service was and the fact the Trust is based locally was also important to many groups. Service users provided further feedback on the quality of the services which was extremely positive in terms of vehicle cleanliness, punctuality, the Trust's drivers, vehicle comfort, ease of booking, availability on the date/time requested, and value for money. Feedback on the Trust's MiDAS training was also positive; one group stated that they would not go on their annual excursions if it was not for the availability of a volunteer driven minibus.
16. There were approximately 400 journeys during 2010 and 2011 on the Crawford area fixed route which forms part of the Glencaple and Lowther demand responsive transport service. One consultee described the atmosphere on the service as 'fantastic' and it allowed people who may otherwise not interact to do so. The overall impact on local communities of the pilot is to reduce rural isolation with specific benefits including social interaction, access to shopping and services such as health services, travel outwith the local area to broaden residents' horizons, and lifelong learning and cultural benefits from visits to museums and libraries.
17. South Lanarkshire Council benefits as the direct cost of the pilots is broadly the same as the traditional approach to school transport. Each school has a budgetary

allocation for transport and travel and the Council made an adjustment to the budgets of Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools to take account of their 40 units worth of travel included in the pilot; the budget reduction was broadly equivalent to the additional cost of procuring the service from the Trust. There is also an indirect saving as the pilot does not require the Council to process invoices and payments for Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools every time they use the Trust's services. In addition, the Council benefits indirectly from the fact that two of its schools are benefitting from more journeys and greater value for money and other local schools and groups can access transport provision at a competitive rate.

18. The Rural Development Trust benefits as it does not have to invoice Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools for journeys made from their 40 unit allowance, saving administration time. The school contracts secure work and income for the Trust which gives them some financial security, and community and school hires allow the Trust to generate additional income from vehicles that would otherwise be idle which enhances sustainability.
19. The pilot also plays a small part in helping the Trust to enhance its existing environmentally friendly credentials. All the Trust's vehicles run on a bio-diesel mix and journeys to local schools as part of the pilot increase the efficiency of collection of waste cooking oil from schools, which is then converted into bio-diesel at their Douglas Water depot and provide an additional use for the bio-diesel.
20. The Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools services represent excellent value for money as they have delivered additional journeys for the two primary schools compared to other local primary schools and their own situation prior to the pilot, at no additional cost. The community/schools hire services are good value for money as they provide accessible and affordable community transport services to isolated rural communities. The Glencaple and Lowther demand responsive transport also provided excellent value for money with its £1 fares (50p for concessions) which compares favourably to the cost of public transport.
21. The original resistance to change appears to have been overcome. SPT is managing a tendering process on behalf of South Lanarkshire Council to continue the pilot in Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools and extend it to Crawford Primary School. The frequent use of volunteer drivers at Crawford will need to be taken into consideration so that all three schools are treated equitably. The proposed tendering process will be openly advertised; stakeholders are uncertain what level of interest this will generate as the project may be seen as too complicated or unconventional for some providers, or uneconomical by others, particularly private providers.
22. We believe this evaluation has demonstrated that all elements of the pilot are required to make this a sustainable approach. The school transport element brings the vehicles into use locally and without it additional school and community use would be less viable, may not exist or may be more expensive as providers would need to add (or subsume) the cost of getting to the area.
23. Consultees made suggestions on future improvements including better marketing and awareness raising of the Trust's pricing structure and fleet availability, addition

of a 24-seater vehicle, upgrading of the 33-seater vehicle, discounted block bookings and local garaging.

24. The significant benefits outlined in the evaluation, in particular those highlighted for the local schools and communities and the Rural Development Trust, result in a true 'win-win' situation, in our opinion. Consultees from the pilot schools, South Lanarkshire Council and the Trust reported - without prompting – that there were no downsides or drawbacks to the pilot. The findings of this evaluation support their views and may inform decisions regarding the further roll-out of the concept.
25. Overall, the study has shown that the Rural Development Trust's Community Centred Local Rural Transport Pilot Project has significant social and financial benefits, is a quality service, is sustainable and represents better value for money than traditional and separate local rural transport service provision.

Recommendations

1: the approach piloted in Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools that combines school transport with additional use by local schools and community groups is rolled-out across rural South Lanarkshire.

2: the Rural Development Trust presents the lessons from the pilot to a wide audience including the Rural Task Force, South Lanarkshire Council and SPT which may aid the potential roll-out of the approach across South Lanarkshire and other areas.

3: the Rural Development Trust and South Lanarkshire Council encourage staff and parents from all local schools to undertake MiDAS volunteer driver training with the Trust to maximise use and further enhance the value for money provided by their vehicles.

4: a comprehensive information database, including details of hiring organisations, is developed by the Trust for future monitoring and review of this innovative approach.

5: the Rural Development Trust maintains awareness with funders and service users of their use of bio-diesel by including information in funding applications, annual reports and all publicity material.

6: consideration is given to the number of units allocated to each school and the use of volunteers prior to the tendering of contracts at Crawfordjohn, Wiston, and Crawford Primary Schools.

7: if necessary, South Lanarkshire Council/SPT should seek feedback from local transport providers that do not bid for the forthcoming Crawfordjohn, Wiston, and Crawford Primary Schools contract to establish reasons for not tendering.

8: The Rural Development Trust considers service users' comments and suggestions in the development of future services.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Rural Development Trust commissioned an evaluation of their Community Centred Local Rural Transport Pilot Project to establish the benefits of the project and inform its future development. The pilot consists of two initiatives that combine school transport services at Crawfordjohn, Wiston and Crawford Primary Schools in South Lanarkshire with additional use of the vehicles by local schools and communities. The pilot has been in operation since August 2009.
- 1.2 The specific aims of the evaluation were to examine:
- financial and social benefits of the project
 - quality of the services provided
 - financial sustainability of the approach
 - cost benefit of this approach over traditional and separate local rural transport service provision
 - future service development and improvement.

Background

- 1.3 The Rural Development Trust is a South Lanarkshire based company limited by guarantee with charitable status that aims to support the sustainable development of rural communities in South Lanarkshire. The Trust has developed and delivered a number of projects that address rural issues in South Lanarkshire. The Trust is a social enterprise that reinvests operating surpluses into new initiatives, including their community transport services which are based in Douglas Water. The Trust currently has 12 vehicles in their community transport fleet and is the only community transport provider in the West of Scotland with a maintenance depot. The Trust is an active member of the West of Scotland Community Transport Forum.
- 1.4 The Rural Development Trust started a Community Bus Scheme in 2004 to improve access to transport for community groups and not-for-profit organisations in rural South Lanarkshire, particularly those supporting young and older people. The original initiative was extended in 2007 into Cambuslang and Rutherglen following a substantial award from the Big Lottery Fund. The Trust's membership based community transport services support over 100,000 passenger journeys each year.
- 1.5 In addition, the Trust provides a number of school contracts in South Lanarkshire transporting pupils to and from local schools. These contracts have enabled the Trust to establish a critical mass of commercial and community contract work which are interdependent. The Trust previously highlighted that variation in commercial contract income impacts on their community services and this led the Trust to seek ways to stabilise income and maintain a consistent level and quality of service.

- 1.6 To address the issues of sustainability and interdependence, the Trust had detailed discussions with South Lanarkshire Council in 2009. Following a commercial tendering process the Trust was awarded four contracts to pilot two initiatives that formally link the provision of school transport services, community transport and other demand responsive transport based around Crawfordjohn, Wiston and Crawford Primary Schools. These initiatives are the focus of this evaluation.
- 1.7 The pilot's stated objective is to improve transport services to the target communities using existing public sector spend to integrate the delivery of transport services for mainstream schools, with access to leisure and training and youth diversionary activities. This was designed to develop the potential linkages between the different types of activity in order to provide better value for money and resource efficient services. The Trust based the initiative on the principle of localising provision, with an appropriate vehicle being provided for a community that would serve both the local school's transport needs as well as that of the local residents.
- 1.8 The pilot aimed to provide each community with access to a vehicle(s) to:
- transport pupils to and from school each day
 - provide the opportunity for schools to take part in more extracurricular activities which might previously be inaccessible due to transport costs
 - provide a local bus service for residents and groups from the villages around the school
 - be available at evenings, weekends and school holidays for community groups to operate on a volunteer-driven basis with appropriate training provided for all volunteer drivers.
- 1.9 Communities in South Lanarkshire have a history of having access to vehicles for community use. A previous South Lanarkshire Council community bus scheme provided a number of communities with dedicated transport for community use. In addition, transport barriers and access to community transport are prominent issues raised by rural communities which the pilot aimed to address.

Methods

- 1.10 The evaluation involved:
- a review of documents provided by the Rural Development Trust and South Lanarkshire Council
 - a review of community transport initiatives elsewhere
 - a comprehensive consultation exercise including a range of stakeholders and a survey of service users (see appendix 1)
 - analysis of data from the Rural Development Trust on vehicle use between January 2010 and December 2011.

Report Structure

1.11 This report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 outlines the development and implementation of the pilot
- Section 3 highlights the use of the services and the project's benefits
- Section 4 considers the sustainability of the pilot including a review of its value for money
- Section 5 draws together conclusions and recommendations.

2. Development and Implementation

- 2.1 This section outlines the development and implementation of the Community Centred Local Rural Transport Pilot Project. The two initiatives that make up the pilot have significant differences in both their development and implementation which are discussed below.

Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools Initiative

- 2.2 As highlighted in section 1, the Rural Development Trust was seeking ways to deliver its commercial and community services in a more sustainable and efficient manner. The Trust approached South Lanarkshire Council with a proposal that combined statutory school transport with additional school and community use. The concept represented a change of approach from the traditional way of procuring and delivering rural school transport, in particular its integration of community needs, and perhaps therefore it was not surprising that it took time for the idea to be accepted. Following negotiations and input from officers and elected members, the Council agreed to test the approach at Crawfordjohn and Wiston where the school transport contract was due to be re-tendered; the Rural Development Trust was providing the school transport service to the schools at that time with a standard school transport contract.
- 2.3 The tenders for Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools were issued directly by South Lanarkshire Council using a non-standard competitive tender process. This was different to all other mainstream school contracts which are procured on behalf of South Lanarkshire Council by Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT). Three organisations, including the Rural Development Trust, were invited to bid for the Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary School contracts.
- 2.4 The 'Information for Tenderers' document stated that:
- 'South Lanarkshire Council is seeking tenders for the provision of a community based transport service the main purpose of which is to provide a comprehensive transport facility for the pupils of Crawfordjohn/Wiston Primary School. However, the Council also wishes this transport to be used for the broader benefit of the community of Crawfordjohn/Wiston and invites tenderers to suggest ways in which this could be achieved. Examples of such benefit could include elements such as community use outwith school and term times. However this example is illustrative only and the Council is interested in any proposals tenderers can suggest in relation to this aspect of the service'.*
- 2.5 The document also stated that between the hours of 09.00 to 15.00 the vehicle must be available for the sole use of the school to include taking pupils to locations outwith the school. This use was to be free of charge to the school for travel within the Biggar learning community. In addition, 8-seater vehicles were proposed.
- 2.6 The Trust had established that Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools made approximately 15 trips per year prior to the pilot (excluding three swimming trips

paid for by South Lanarkshire Leisure). In their tender response, the Trust proposed both schools be given an allocation of 40 units based on the following:

- a return journey within the Biggar learning community to count as 1 unit of use
- a return journey to Lanark pool or library to count as 1 unit of use (despite being outwith the Biggar learning community)
- longer return journeys outwith the Biggar learning community and up to 100 miles (i.e. Glasgow or Edinburgh) to count as 2 units of use
- return journeys further than 100 miles to be negotiated as appropriate depending on mileage and timings.

2.7 The Trust also proposed that 16-seater vehicles were used not the 8-seater proposed by the Council as this would better fit the needs of the schools and be more flexible for additional school and community uses.

2.8 The Rural Development Trust was the only bidder from the three organisations invited to tender. No feedback was received from the two non-bidders.

2.9 The contract value was approximately £12,000 per annum. The amount varied slightly dependent on the level of the annual inflationary contract increase and we understand was £12,300 in the 2011/12 academic year. The contract was originally for two years effective from August 2009 and this was extended for a third year to the end of June 2012.

2.10 The Trust use two 16-seater minibuses to deliver the pilot which has three key elements:

- daily home to school transport for pupils of Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools
- use by these schools of up to 40 trips per year per school at no cost as outlined above
- use by local community groups either using their own volunteer driver (chargeable at 55p per mile with a minimum payment of £22) or a Trust driver (chargeable at approximately £15 per hour including mileage), MiDAS training is available for all volunteer drivers.

2.11 The above reflects the order of priority for use of the vehicles. The first call on the vehicles is transporting the pupils to and from school each day. The second call on the vehicles is for use by the two Primary Schools. Outwith these uses, the final call on the vehicles is local community group hire or hire by other local schools.

2.12 Following the contract award, contract compliance and payment has been managed, as with other contracts, by SPT.

- 2.13 SPT highlighted that similar models combining school transport with additional school use exist in other areas including North Lanarkshire and North Ayrshire. We understand that these services do not have additional community use and the Crawfordjohn and Wiston pilot appears to be unique in that sense.

Crawford Primary School and Glencaple and Lowther Demand Responsive Transport Initiative

- 2.14 There are two daily home to school contracts for Crawford Primary School. The contracts were procured via SPT's standard competitive tender process for mainstream school contracts. The contract value is for approximately £15,000 per annum, which varies slightly dependent on the level of the annual inflationary contract increase, for three years effective from August 2009 to June 2012.
- 2.15 Two 16-seater minibuses provide daily home to school transport for pupils at Crawford Primary School. Two buses are used to cover the school's catchment area.
- 2.16 Crawford Primary does not have an allowance for free school use as is the case with Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools. However, as described below, additional use is made of the vehicles that fits around the daily home to school use.
- 2.17 Between 09.00 and 15.00 Monday to Friday the Trust provide a community transport service utilising the vehicles from the Crawford Primary school service. The Trust received pump priming funding from SPT for two years of £24,000 per annum for community transport service which includes demand responsive transport for the Glencaple and Lowther area, including the villages of Leadhills, Abington, and Crawfordjohn. A community consultation meeting held at Crawford Primary School discussed possible destinations which developed into the following timetable:
- Monday – Shopping service to Lanark
 - Tuesday – Leisure service to Coalburn Leisure Centre
 - Wednesday to Friday – Group use for trips, ad-hoc hires and local school use using the Trust's driver
 - Evenings and weekends – hire by local schools or community groups using the Trust's driver or a volunteer driver with MiDAS volunteer driver training provided where appropriate.
- 2.18 Users of the Monday and Tuesday services pay a fixed charge of £1 per person each way or 50p for concessions. The Trust based the pricing structure on what urban residents would generally be expected to pay to access local services via public transport. The fare income does not cover operating costs but the SPT grant provides a subsidy to make the service viable.
- 2.19 Hire charges for use on Wednesdays to Fridays during the day, on all evenings, and at weekends, are 55p per mile with a minimum payment of £22 for hires involving volunteer drivers.

Overview of development and implementation

- 2.20 As highlighted above, the development and implementation of the two initiatives differed. The Trust were proactive in developing the Crawfordjohn and Wiston initiative which combines school transport services with additional use by the two schools and hire by local community groups and other local schools. The Trust was less proactive in the development of the second initiative which sees the Crawford Primary School service and Glencaple and Lowther demand responsive transport services co-exist. Although the second initiative is less holistic in design than the Crawfordjohn and Wiston initiative, implementation has required similar levels of co-ordination and integration between the school and community elements.
- 2.21 The Rural Development Trust has adopted a flexible approach to implementation whereby all of the vehicles in their fleet are available for the delivery of the pilot. In the majority of cases this means that the same vehicles are used for the various elements of each initiative described above, however on occasions other vehicles are used to suit timings or passenger numbers. This flexibility was agreed with South Lanarkshire Council at the outset.

3. Use and Benefits

3.1 This section examines the use and benefits of the Rural Development Trust's Community Centred Local Rural Transport Pilot Project. We have highlighted use and benefits for the three Primary Schools at the centre of the initiatives and other local primary schools that have hired the minibuses, the schools' pupils, local community groups that have hired the minibuses, the local communities, South Lanarkshire Council, and the Rural Development Trust.

Primary Schools

Daily home to school service

3.2 The evaluation has established that the Rural Development Trust provide a reliable and effective home to school transport service for 13 pupils at Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools and 24 pupils at Crawford Primary School.

3.3 All three schools highlighted that the service was very reliable and they were very positive about the timing and dependability of drop-off and pick-up of pupils. The Heads of the schools also highlighted the buses were comfortable and modern. The Heads commented that the Rural Development Trust compared very favourably with their past experience of other providers.

3.4 It was also noteworthy that the three schools all commented on the friendliness and helpfulness of the Rural Development Trust's drivers who, it was reported, have built up excellent relationships and trust with the pupils and staff. The Head of one of the schools highlighted how the driver had on occasions alerted the school when pupils appeared more introspective than usual which had allowed the school to assess the pupil's welfare - the Head very much welcomed this input and felt the drivers were part of the school community.

Additional school use in Crawfordjohn and Wiston

3.5 Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools benefit greatly from the contracts which include up to 40 trips per annum. There are two main benefits:

- Firstly, the schools are able to make significantly more trips than had previously been the case when they had to hire minibuses.
- Secondly, the process of booking the minibus was much more effective and efficient as they did not need to seek three tenders or deal with the invoicing and payment (in liaison with South Lanarkshire Council).

3.6 One of the Heads highlighted that the pilot means the school does not have to worry about booking and paying for trips. The other Head highlighted that the pilot means the school does not have to ask parents for contributions towards travel costs. The Chair of one of the schools' Parent Council was also very supportive of the pilot and highlighted that parents are more amenable to contributing towards the cost of other school activities when they do not have to contribute to transport costs.

3.7 Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools have used the vehicles to take pupils to a variety of destinations including:

- Swimming at Coalburn Leisure Complex
- Wiston Lodge outdoor activity centre
- Summerlee Heritage Park
- Biggar High School transition events
- Biggar library
- Inter-school sports events
- Inter-school education for specialist lessons such as French and PE

3.8 The 40 units have been sufficient to satisfy the demands made on the vehicles by Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools. Analysis of data from the Rural Development Trust on vehicle use between January 2010 and December 2011 is shown below. The data shows that Crawfordjohn Primary School and Wiston Primary School used the service 52 and 62 times respectively over the two year period. The yearly averages – 26 at Crawfordjohn Primary School and 31 at Wiston Primary School – are therefore within the 40 unit limit. It is interesting to note that use increased significantly at both schools in 2011 with the combined total increasing 58% from 43 in 2010 to 68 in 2011.

School	2010	2011	Total	Yearly average
Crawfordjohn Primary School	21 (see note 1)	31	52 (see note 1)	26
Wiston Primary School	25 (see note 1)	37	62 (see note 1)	31
Total	43 (see note 1)	68	111 (see note 1)	56

Notes: 1 – Individual school totals both include 3 journeys where the pickup point was recorded by the Rural Development Trust as ‘Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary School’. The total column includes this as 3 journeys giving a total of 43 rather than 46 (21+25).

Source: Rural Development Trust Diary 2010-11

Additional school use in other local primary schools including Crawford

3.9 A number of other primary schools have benefited from the pilot by hiring the Trust’s minibuses when not in use on the school run or by Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools.

3.10 Data from the Rural Development Trust on vehicle use between January 2010 and December 2011 allowed partial analysis of other primary school use¹. The available

¹ The analysis was limited as we relied on the ‘Pickup’ field to identify hires by other local primary schools. Various descriptions were used to describe the same school pickup point which made analysis more difficult. In addition, other descriptions were not specific and may include additional school pickups.

data shows that Crawford Primary School hired vehicles on 66 occasions over the two years of the data and this was more than any of the other local primary schools including Crawfordjohn and Wiston. A further five local primary schools regularly hired vehicles from the Trust: Stablestone (48), Douglas (46), Abington (38), Libberton (29) and Leadhills (27).

School	2010	2011	Total	Yearly average
Crawford Primary School	38	28	66	33
Stablestone Primary School	25	23	48	24
Douglas Primary School	27	19	46	23
Abington Primary School	20	18	38	19
Libberton Primary School	10	19	29	15
Leadhills Primary School	4	23	27	14
Abington Primary School / Crawford Primary School	3	9	12	6
Lamington Primary School	10	0	10	5
Tinto Primary School	2	7	9	5
Carmichael Primary School	0	6	6	3
Leadhills Primary School etc.	6	0	6	3
Leadhills Primary School / Crawfordjohn Primary School	0	3	3	2
Abington Primary School / Leadhills Primary School	2	0	2	1
Abington Primary School / Crawford Primary School / Wiston Primary School	1	0	1	1
Leadhills Primary School / Crawfordjohn Primary School / Crawford Primary School	1	0	1	1
Total				

Source: Rural Development Trust Diary 2010-11

- 3.11** Our consultations included Heads and teachers from Crawford, Abington, Carmichael, Braehead, Libberton and Leadhills Primary Schools.
- 3.12** These consultees highlighted the competitive rate at which they were able to hire vehicles from the Trust. One Head stated that the Trust's rates meant the school did not have to ask parents to contribute to the cost of trips as much as they may otherwise have needed to. Another Head highlighted that the Trust's rates meant that more pupils could benefit from trips than may otherwise have been the case.
- 3.13** Destinations were similar to those listed above for Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools.
- 3.14** Significantly, the Heads of Leadhills and Libberton Primary Schools are also the Heads of Crawfordjohn and Wiston respectively and they were uniquely placed to

comment on the pilot from a school's perspective. Both Heads reported that they were able to use the vehicles more easily and more often at Crawfordjohn and Wiston than at Leadhills and Libberton. By way of example, the Head of Leadhills reported that one trip to the swimming pool costs the school approximately £50 and booking the nine week block of swimming accounts for a significant percentage of their total annual travel budget while at Crawfordjohn booking the nine week swimming block accounts for only nine of the school's 40 units. Data from the Trust, highlighted above, confirms that Crawfordjohn (52) and Wiston (62) hired the vehicles more often than Leadhills (27) and Libberton (29).

- 3.15 Discussions have, we understand, taken place between South Lanarkshire Council, Libberton Primary School and the Rural Development Trust to examine transport provision at the school. The discussions have focused on informally adopting a similar approach to Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools whereby Libberton School's existing transport budget would be 'exchanged' for a set number of trips provided by the Trust.
- 3.16 Interestingly, the Heads of the other local primary schools we consulted were aware of the arrangements at Crawfordjohn and Wiston and all stated that they would welcome similar arrangements for their schools in the future if at all possible. One of the Heads stated that transport cost was the main obstacle to the extra curricula activities they were interested in and they would be very interested in a scheme similar to the pilot at Crawfordjohn and Wiston. We recommend that this approach be adopted at Libberton and other schools.

Recommendation: the approach piloted in Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools that combines school transport with additional use by local schools and community groups is rolled-out across rural South Lanarkshire.

- 3.17 The Head at Crawford and Abington Primary Schools highlighted the financial benefits that can be gained from using volunteer drivers. The Head, two members of staff and a parent have completed MiDAS training and they have driven vehicles hired from the Trust. The Head highlighted that the cost saving was significant and allowed the school to use the vehicles more often and this is supported by data supplied by the Trust which shows that Crawford and Abington Primary Schools were frequent users of the service. By way of example, the Head stated that the cost of hiring a vehicle to go to Lanark using a volunteer driver was approximately £25 compared to approximately £70 when using the Trust's driver. We recommend that the Trust and South Lanarkshire Council encourage all local schools to train staff and parents as volunteer drivers to maximise use and further enhance the value for money provided by the Trust's vehicles.

Recommendation: the Rural Development Trust and South Lanarkshire Council encourage staff and parents from all local schools to undertake MiDAS volunteer driver training with the Trust to maximise use and further enhance the value for money provided by their vehicles.

Primary school pupils

- 3.18** As described above a number of local primary schools use the Rural Development Trust vehicles to take pupils to a range of destinations. Our discussions with the schools identified that this has the following benefits for the pupils:
- Pupils can interact with their peers from other local primary schools when attending inter-school sports events, lessons at other schools or transition sessions at Biggar High School. This interaction helps pupils from small rural schools to develop their social skills while the older pupils are able to make acquaintances and friendships before moving on to the High School.
 - Participation in swimming and inter-schools sports has health and wellbeing benefits.
 - Participation in specialist lessons at other schools and trips to museums has educational benefits.
 - Travelling outwith their immediate environment also has benefits for pupils as it helps to broaden their horizons, brings them new experiences and can help to raise their aspirations.
- 3.19** The Head of one of the pilot's primary schools highlighted how the above benefits contribute towards the Curriculum for Excellence's four capacities of enabling each young person to be a successful learner, confident individual, responsible citizen, and effective contributor.

Local community groups

- 3.20** A number of local community groups have hired vehicles from the Rural Development Trust over the course of the pilot. The organisations cover a range of interest groups including:
- young people such as Biggar Beavers, Carmichael After School Club, Leadhills Play Group and Covey Befrienders
 - older people such as Leadhills Seniors
 - women's groups such as Crawford & Elvanfoot WRI
 - general community groups such as Crawfordjohn Hall, Lanark Gardening Club, and Leadhills Miners Library.
- 3.21** Local community groups used the Trust's vehicles to go to a range of destinations including:
- leisure venues such as swimming at Lanark and Coalburn, bowls in East Kilbride, and to the river Clyde to go canoeing

- cultural and learning outings such as Lanark Library, Glasgow Science Museum, National Museum of Rural Life in East Kilbride, pantomime and other theatre in Motherwell, Edinburgh Zoo, and the Scottish Parliament in Edinburgh
- general outings to Ayr, Inverness, Oban, Carlisle, Gretna, Dumfries, Livingston, Edinburgh, Musselburgh, and St Andrews.

3.22 We have been unable to identify the specific number of bookings made by local community groups each year from the information supplied by the Trust, as was also the case for schools other than Wiston and Crawfordjohn. The Trust maintains proper records but the booking software is not designed to extract information by hiring organisation. We recommend that comprehensive information on hiring organisations is provided by the Trust for any future reviews of this innovative approach.

Recommendation: a comprehensive information database, including details of hiring organisations, is developed by the Trust for future monitoring and review of this innovative approach.

3.23 South Lanarkshire Council gathered information on use up to May 2011 for a presentation to the Rural Task Force. At that time, 433 different client groups had made approximately 250 trips per year.

3.24 We consulted with a wide range of local community groups that had hired vehicles from the Rural Development Trust. The benefits for the individual members of these groups are discussed in the next sub-section. The main benefit for the organisations directly was financial due to the very competitive hire rates.

3.25 A number of the groups had sought quotes from other providers but we did not find one example of another provider that was able to provide a cheaper quote than the Rural Development Trust. Some local groups reported that they no longer seek quotes from other providers because they felt the Trust was such good value for money that there was little point doing so.

3.26 Significantly, the evaluation gathered evidence that demonstrates the *additionality* of the Trust's service. Some of the community groups highlighted that they would not have gone on the outings at all if it had not been for the availability of the Trust's vehicles because the cost would have been prohibitive. One organisation stated that they would have changed the date of their trip to one when the Trust could take them, such was their desire to use the Trust. Other community groups highlighted that they would have used another provider which may have cost more and then left less finance for future use, or they would have passed on the additional cost to their members.

3.27 A small number of community groups highlighted that they would have made the journey but would have used their own cars and they highlighted that this would have been less environmentally friendly. One of these groups also stated that it would be far less desirable as their volunteers would have to pick up vulnerable children from their home addresses. Another consultee also highlighted another

benefit as using the minibuses instead of cars allows family members to spend quality time together and interact better while travelling.

- 3.28 It is noteworthy that the quality of the Trust's services was important as well as cost, as reason why local community groups used the Trust. There were numerous quotes on how flexible, approachable, and reliable the Trust's service was. The fact the Trust is based locally was also important to many of the groups we spoke to. A selection of quotes from local community groups follow that demonstrate the quality of the Trust's services:

"excellent, couldn't do enough to help"

"where else are we going to go for such a services at the price we pay"

"tremendous value"

"can't do without it"

"they are used to dealing with us, it's excellent value for money and it's no hassle"

"really, really pleased with it as it is one of the few services that is there for the villages. Brilliant to have them"

"we couldn't function as a group the way we do without the Trust"

"they are brilliant with us, they let us put a tow bar on the minibus so we can tow our canoe trailer"

- 3.29 There is undoubtedly a lot of good will among local community groups – and schools - towards the Rural Development Trust. These stakeholders feel the Trust will give them a good deal and provide a good service, they are locally based and understand their needs. This is great credit to the Trust.

- 3.30 Our survey of service users provided further feedback on the quality of the services which was extremely positive:

- Vehicle cleanliness was very good - 17 of 18 organisations that responded to this question stated that vehicle cleanliness was 'very good' and one organisation stated it was 'good'.
- Punctuality was very good - 15 of 18 organisations that responded to this question stated that punctuality was 'very good', two organisations stated it was 'good' and one stated it was 'neither good nor poor'.
- The Trust's drivers were rated as very good - 16 of 18 organisations that responded to this question stated that the drivers were 'very good' and two organisations stated they were 'good'.
- Vehicle comfort was very good - 15 of 18 organisations that responded to this question stated that vehicle comfort was 'very good' and three organisations stated it was 'good'. The reason for the slightly lower rating from some

organisations was a view that the Trust's 33-seater vehicle was older and not as comfortable as their 16-seaters (although it should be stated that the 33-seater was used to accommodate numbers and is not the main vehicle used in the pilots).

- Ease of booking was very good - 15 of 17 organisations that responded to this question stated that the ease of booking was 'very good' and two organisations stated it was 'good'.
 - Availability on the date/time requested was very good - 14 of 17 organisations that responded to this question stated that availability on the date/time requested was 'very good' and three organisations stated it was 'good'. The reason for the slightly lower rating from some organisations was a view that they were limited by the need for the vehicles to be back at the schools to take the pupils home. However, organisations with older members or parents of primary school age children preferred the fact that the buses had to be back for the school pick-up as they did not like being out late or had to pick up their children from the school.
 - Value for money was very good - 17 of 18 organisations that responded to this question stated that value for money was 'very good' and one organisation stated it was 'good'. A number of groups described the value for money as excellent and fantastic.
 - Only three organisations reported attending the Trust's MiDAS volunteer driver training and they all rated it as 'very good'.
- 3.31** The Trust provide MiDAS training for volunteer drivers at their Douglas Water base. This consists of theory work, practical driving and a safety checking routine. The Trust make a small charge for the assessment but do not use the training as an income generator as their aim with the training is to maximise opportunities so as the vehicles are used as much as possible. Feedback on the training from the community groups consulted during the evaluation was very positive. One consultee from a local community group explained how they have a number of members trained to drive the vehicles and this gives the group great flexibility when they go on their annual excursions, and because more than one member can drive the minibus they are able to share out the driving duties; this group stated that they would not go on these trips if it was not for the Trust's services.
- 3.32** As can be seen from the above, none of the local community groups rated any element of the Trust's services as either 'poor' or 'very poor'.

Local Communities

- 3.33** Local communities have benefitted from the pilots via the Glencaple and Lowther demand responsive transport service and direct hires by community groups described above.
- 3.34** Data supplied by the Rural Development Trust shows there were approximately 400 journeys over the two years of the data (2010 and 2011) on the Crawford area fixed

route which forms part of the Glencaple and Lowther demand responsive transport service. One consultee described the atmosphere on the Glencaple and Lowther service as ‘fantastic’ and it allowed people who may otherwise not interact to do so.

- 3.35** The overall impact on local communities of the Trust’s services provided by the pilot is to reduce rural isolation with specific benefits including:
- social interaction which was seen as particularly important for older people, those with mobility problems and vulnerable children; one consultee described how friendships have been formed on long journeys on the minibuses which have continued after their trips
 - access to shopping and services such as health services
 - travel outwith the local area to broaden residents’ horizons
 - educational, lifelong learning and cultural benefits from visits to museums and libraries.
- 3.36** Some of the consultees highlighted that the above benefits have a role in maintaining or improving the mental health and wellbeing of some residents who may otherwise be socially isolated.

South Lanarkshire Council

- 3.37** We understand that the direct cost to South Lanarkshire Council of the pilots is broadly the same as the traditional approach to school transport. Each school has a budgetary allocation for transport and travel and we understand that the Council made an adjustment to the budgets of Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools to reflect the fact they would not need to hire vehicles given their 40 units worth of travel included in the pilot contracts. The reduction in the Schools’ budgets was broadly equivalent to the additional cost of procuring the service from the Rural Development Trust.
- 3.38** As well as there being no additional cost to South Lanarkshire Council there is an indirect saving as the pilot does not require the Council to process invoices and payments for Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools every time they use the Trust’s services.
- 3.39** In addition, the Council benefits indirectly from the fact that two of its schools are benefitting from more journeys and greater value for money through the pilots and the other local schools and community groups are able to access local transport provision at a competitive rate.

Rural Development Trust

- 3.40** The Rural Development Trust also benefit from the pilot in the following ways.
- 3.41** The Trust does not have to invoice Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools for journeys made from their 40 unit allowance. This saves the Trust administration

time. Bookings appear to be straightforward with the schools either phoning or e-mailing the Trust with details of the day, time and destination of their request.

- 3.42 The school contracts secure work and income for the Trust which gives them some financial security and allows them to plan for the future. On top of that, community and school hires allow the Trust to generate additional income from vehicles that would otherwise be idle which enhances the sustainability of the organisation.
- 3.43 The pilot also plays a small part in helping the Trust to enhance its existing environmentally friendly credentials. All the Trust's vehicles run on a bio-diesel mix which varies from one to two thirds bio-diesel to normal diesel. The Trust had an agreement which pre-dated the pilot with South Lanarkshire Council to collect waste cooking oil from schools which is then converted into bio-diesel at their Douglas Water depot. Journeys to local schools as part of the pilot increase the efficiency of collection and provide an additional use for the bio-diesel. Two of the consultees we spoke to during the study highlighted how this environmentally friendly approach was a factor in using the Trust. The Trust's project was highlighted as good practice by the Sustainable Scotland Network² and Scotland's National Rural Network³ and was the winner of the Sustainable Environment Award at the 2009 LGC Awards and 2009 Lanarkshire Social Economy Network Enterprise Awards. The Rural Development Trust estimated in 2009 that the use of bio-diesel saves them approximately £20,000 per year in fuel costs. The rise in diesel costs since then would make this figure an underestimate in 2012. We recommend that the Trust maintains awareness of their green credentials with funders and service users by including information in funding applications, annual reports and all publicity material.

Recommendation: the Rural Development Trust maintains awareness with funders and service users of their use of bio-diesel by including information in funding applications, annual reports and all publicity material.

² See <http://www.sustainable-scotland.net/conference2009/documents/SouthLanarkshireCouncil-WasteCookingOilProject.pdf>

³ See <http://www.ruralgateway.org.uk/en/node/660>

4. Sustainability

- 4.1 In this section we consider the sustainability of the Community Centred Local Rural Transport Pilot Project including an assessment of its value for money.

Value for money assessment

- 4.2 We assess below the value for money of three key elements of the pilot: Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools' 40 units, community/school hires, and the Glencaple and Lowther demand responsive transport service.

Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools' 40 units

- 4.3 A key element of the pilot is the 40 units that the Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools receive within the cost of the contract. Our understanding is that the schools have been able to make significantly more journeys during the pilot that they had previously. The evidence from the two Heads who are also Heads of other local rural schools is particularly relevant as they both stated that they were able to go on more journeys at Crawfordjohn and Wiston than they could at Leadhills and Libberton and data provided by the Trust supports this.
- 4.4 As stated elsewhere in this report, the 40 units do not cost the schools or South Lanarkshire Council any more than the traditional funding model. So for the same cost the schools receive additional journeys. This element of the model works, essentially, because the Rural Development Trust is willing to provide additional transport for the two schools within the contract value in exchange for the guaranteed income from the school runs and the opportunity to generate income from additional hires to other local schools and community groups. While the Rural Development were prepared to operate in this way, it appears that the two other providers invited to bid were not.
- 4.5 We therefore conclude that the Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools services represent excellent value for money as they have delivered additional journeys for the two primary schools, compared to other local primary schools and their own situation prior to the pilot, at no additional cost.

Community/school hires

- 4.6 To assess the competitiveness of the Trust hiring vehicles to local schools and community groups we discussed competitors and their hire charges with consultees. Although other community transport providers exist in South Lanarkshire (see appendix 2) few operate in the pilot's catchment area. Alternative providers also include private transport providers but again few operate in the pilot's catchment area. Of those that do (community and private), consultees highlighted that the Trust was invariably the cheapest local provider in their experiences. For example, one local community group sought quotes which came in at approximately £150 from the Rural Development Trust and approximately £200 from the next cheapest provider.

- 4.7 We also reviewed the hire charges of a small number of other community transport providers in rural Scotland to benchmark the Trust's charges and found the Trust to be competitive. For example, Coalfield Community transport in East Ayrshire charge £15 plus fuel replacement or 45p per mile (plus an initial joining fee of £35 and an annual re-affiliation fee of £20).
- 4.8 We therefore conclude that the community/schools hire services are good value for money as they provide accessible and affordable community transport services to isolated rural communities.

Glencaple and Lowther demand responsive transport

- 4.9 The Glencaple and Lowther demand responsive transport also provided excellent value for money with its £1 fares (50p for concessions). This compares favourably to the cost of public transport which we understand is a limited service in the area.
- 4.10 SPT funding for the Glencaple and Lowther element of the project has finished and will not be re-tendered. However, the Rural Development Trust has secured funding from the wind farm community benefit funds towards the purchase of two new minibuses and to continue the services.

Value for money overview

- 4.11 South Lanarkshire Council has stated that it will consider wider roll-out of the approach if it can be shown to be successful.
- 4.12 We believe the above summaries demonstrate the pilot's value for money and we recommend that the approach piloted in Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools is rolled-out across rural South Lanarkshire.

Recommendation: the approach piloted in Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools that combines school transport with additional use by local schools and community groups is rolled-out across rural South Lanarkshire.

Planned Procurement

- 4.13 The original resistance to change appears to have been overcome. Presently, SPT is managing a tendering process on behalf of South Lanarkshire Council to continue the pilot services in Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools and extend the project to Crawford Primary School. This evaluation has shown that Crawford Primary School is a significant user of the Trust's services already but could gain further by an allocation of journeys similar to Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools. The frequent use of volunteer drivers at Crawford Primary School (to maximise value) should not in our opinion be an issue to application of the model but will need to be taken into consideration in the development and implementation process so that all three schools are treated equitably.

Recommendation: consideration is given to the number of units allocated to each school and the use of volunteers prior to the tendering of contracts at Crawfordjohn, Wiston, and Crawford Primary Schools.

- 4.14 We understand the proposed tendering process will be openly advertised and therefore any transport provider will be able to bid; this is in contrast to the pilot which was sent by invitation to three providers. We welcome the open tendering process given that there were two non-bidders in the pilot. Stakeholders are uncertain what level of interest the tendering process will generate as the project may be seen as too complicated or unconventional for some providers, or uneconomical by others, particularly private transport providers. We recommend that South Lanarkshire Council/SPT seek feedback from potential providers that do not bid, to establish the reasons – such as lack of awareness, cost, and location - which will be useful for future tenders.

Recommendation: if necessary, South Lanarkshire Council/SPT should seek feedback from local transport providers that do not bid for the forthcoming Crawfordjohn, Wiston and Crawford Primary Schools contract to establish reasons for their decision not to tender.

Suggested improvements

- 4.15 Consultees suggested the following ways for the Trust to improve their services in the future:
- better marketing and awareness raising of the Trust’s pricing structure and fleet availability to local community groups
 - addition of a 24-seater vehicle - more than one consultee commented that they were unsure whether the Trust still had a 24-seater vehicle including one commented that they were using an alternative provider because the Trust did not have a 24-seater
 - upgrading of the 33-seater vehicle - more than one consultee commented that their organisation was using alternative providers for larger groups because the Trust’s 33-seater was older and less comfortable than the rest of their fleet
 - block bookings - one organisation that makes approximately 25 journeys per year would be interested in negotiating a block booking with the Trust and this may be an approach that the Trust could capitalise on
 - local garaging – two consultees suggested that the Trust consider garaging a vehicle in one of the villages at weekends to make it more accessible to local groups that would also benefit from time and fuel savings on pick-up and drop-off.
- 4.16 We are not in a position to accurately comment on all of these issues and we therefore recommend that the Trust considers these comments in the further development of their services.

Recommendation: The Rural Development Trust considers service users’ comments and suggestions in the development of future services.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 5.1 This evaluation has shown that the Rural Development Trust has successfully delivered the Community Centred Local Rural Transport Pilot Project. The pilot consisted of two initiatives in rural South Lanarkshire to address rural transport barriers and enhance the sustainability and interdependence of the Trust's commercial and community transport services.
- 5.2 Section 2 highlighted differences in the development and implementation of the two initiatives. The Trust was proactive in developing the Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary School initiative which combines school transport services with additional use by the two schools and hire by local community groups and other local schools. The Trust was not as proactive in development of the second initiative and it was not as holistic as the Crawfordjohn and Wiston initiative - as it is essentially two co-existing contracts – however implementation has required similar levels of co-ordination and integration between the Crawford Primary School service, and the Glencleugh and Lowther demand responsive transport services.
- 5.3 Section 3 highlighted the significant use and benefits that have resulted from both initiatives. We highlighted the reliability and quality of service provided in transporting pupils to the three Primary Schools at the centre of the initiatives, we highlighted the additional journeys that Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools have been able to make and the easier administration involved for the schools, we highlighted that other local primary schools have hired minibuses at competitive rates which the pilot helps to make possible, and we also highlighted the significant social, health and educational benefits that improved transport links have for pupils across all schools in the local areas. In addition, we highlighted that significant use has been made of the vehicles by local community groups which has brought social, cultural and health benefits to local residents including young and older people and those with mobility problems. We also highlighted benefits for South Lanarkshire Council in the administration of school transport and the social and educational benefits to pupils and local residents. Last but by no means least, we also highlighted benefits for the Rural Development Trust in terms of sustainability and efficiency.
- 5.4 Section 4 demonstrated that the approach has no additional cost to South Lanarkshire Council, SPT, the schools involved, the local community or the Rural Development Trust. Combined with the significant benefits outlined in section 3, in particular those highlighted for the local schools and communities and the Rural Development Trust, the project has delivered a true 'win-win' situation, in our opinion. Consultees from the pilot schools, South Lanarkshire Council and the Trust reported - without prompting – that there were no downsides or drawbacks to the pilot from their perspective. The findings of this evaluation support their views and may inform decisions regarding the further roll-out of the concept not only to Crawford but to other primary schools as well.
- 5.5 We believe this evaluation has demonstrated that all elements of the pilot are required to make this a sustainable approach. The school transport element brings the vehicles into use locally and without it additional school and community use

would be less viable, may not exist or may be more expensive as providers would need to add (or subsume) the cost of getting to the area.

- 5.6 We believe the lessons from the pilot highlighted in this evaluation will be of interest to a wide audience. We therefore recommend that the Rural Development Trust presents the lessons to relevant audiences including the Rural Task Force, South Lanarkshire Council and SPT which may aid the potential roll-out of the approach across South Lanarkshire and other areas.

Recommendation: the Rural Development Trust presents the lessons from the pilot to a wide audience including the Rural Task Force, South Lanarkshire Council and SPT which may aid the potential roll-out of the approach across South Lanarkshire and other areas.

- 5.7 Overall, the study has shown that the Rural Development Trust's Community Centred Local Rural Transport Pilot Project has significant social and financial benefits, is a quality service, is sustainable and represents better value for money than traditional and separate local rural transport service provision. We recommend the model piloted at Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools be rolled-out across South Lanarkshire.

Recommendations

- 5.8 A number of specific recommendations are made in this report and they are reproduced below for ease of reference:

1: the approach piloted in Crawfordjohn and Wiston Primary Schools that combines school transport with additional use by local schools and community groups is rolled-out across rural South Lanarkshire.

2: the Rural Development Trust presents the lessons from the pilot to a wide audience including the Rural Task Force, South Lanarkshire Council and SPT which may aid the potential roll-out of the approach across South Lanarkshire and other areas.

3: the Rural Development Trust and South Lanarkshire Council encourage staff and parents from all local schools to undertake MiDAS volunteer driver training with the Trust to maximise use and further enhance the value for money provided by their vehicles.

4: a comprehensive information database, including details of hiring organisations, is developed by the Trust for future monitoring and review of this innovative approach.

5: the Rural Development Trust maintains awareness with funders and service users of their use of bio-diesel by including information in funding applications, annual reports and all publicity material.

6: consideration is given to the number of units allocated to each school and the use of volunteers prior to the tendering of contracts at Crawfordjohn, Wiston, and Crawford Primary Schools.

7: if necessary, South Lanarkshire Council/SPT should seek feedback from local transport providers that do not bid for the forthcoming Crawfordjohn, Wiston and Crawford Primary Schools contract to establish reasons for not tendering.

8: The Rural Development Trust considers service users' comments and suggestions in the development of future services.

Appendix 1 – Consultees

Name		Organisation
Gordon	Muir	Rural Development Trust
Hamish	Stewart	South Lanarkshire Councillor & Rural Development Trust Director
David	Hinshelwood	South Lanarkshire Council
Alex	Scott	Strathclyde Partnership for Transport
Graham	Dunn	Strathclyde Partnership for Transport
Alan	Murray	Strathclyde Partnership for Transport
Pamela	Easton	Crawfordjohn Primary School & Leadhills Primary School
Elma	MacGregor	Wiston Primary School & Libberton Primary School
Carol	Arnott	Crawford Primary School & Abington Primary School
Jenny	Brebner	Carmichael Primary School & Braehead Primary School
Michelle	May	Chair Primary School Parent Council
Mrs	Fleming	Abington Bowling Club
Sandy	Grieve	Biggar Beaver Cubs
Mr	McLelland	Biggar Scouts
Wendy	Johnstone	Crawfordjohn Play Development Group
Lynn	Cochrane	COVEY Befriending
Heather	Craig	Crawford & Elvanfoot WRI
Mrs	Barton	Crawfordjohn Hall
Amanda	Davis	Leadhills Parents Pre-school Group
Ms	Murray	Leadhills Primary School
Mr	Davis	Leadhills Miners Library
Fiona	Foley	Leadhills Play Group
Mrs	Stone	Leadhills Seniors
Tracey	Stone	Lanark Gardening Club
Aileen	Simpson	Tinto Afterschool Club
Tony	Burley	Wiston Lodge
Keith	Black	Individual user
Greta	Clark	Individual user

Appendix 2 – Other Community Transport Providers in South Lanarkshire

Other community transport providers in South Lanarkshire are:

- Avondale Community Transport
- Blantyre Volunteer Group
- Carluke Community Transport
- East Kilbride Community Transport
- East Kilbride Shopmobility
- Forth Community Transport
- Hamilton Volunteer Group
- Larkhall and District Volunteer Group
- Strutherhill Community Bus Group
- Woman's Royal Voluntary Service

Source: South Lanarkshire Council