

Report by Michael Hanley.

## 1. Rural Mobilty Scheme

Angela Miller (AM,WAFC officer): We are purchasing mini-buses to run the scheme, which will start in the autumn. They will 16 seater mini-buses with wheelchair access. Council employees will be the drivers. These mini-buses can be booked. The scheme will have a 10 mile radius of Penrith and Ulverston. It is a pilot and funding is short term.

M Hanley (MH, L): Can this new service not be extended to Alston? I have been repeatedly been asking WAFC to provide some form of public transport between Alston and Penrith for the last two years and nothing has been provided. I know that you subsidise the service from Alston to Carlisle, but that is in the Cumberland Council area. Northumberland Council subsidises about four bus services through Alston.

M Hodgkiss (WAFC officer in charge improving bus services): Alston came up in early discussions but due to the distance (20 miles) it was not included. We might consider extension to Alston in the future.

AM: The Dept of Transport put up the money for this scheme. Its about providing public transport to areas where there is none. We have to keep the scheme relatively tight which is why the radius is tight and we couldn't extend to Alston.

V Taylor (VT, LD): Alston was excluded in the last scheme (Bus Transport Improvement Scheme subsidising various Eden bus routes, the tender for Alston to Penrith was considered "not value for money"). We have to deal with sparsity. We are going to review and see if we can try a different way.

M Hodgkiss: We were looking at worker and student transport. It will be a demand led service.

AM: We need to publicise it before it goes live in autumn.

## 2.Active Travel

AM: Funds have been allocated.

L Baker (LB, Chair, LD): The money that came from this group was for pedestrian crossings and the cycle racks.

## 3. Electric Vehicle (EV) Infrastructure Strategy

James Hulme (JH,WAFC officer): There will be annual EV open days. The first will be this autumn. There will be EVs for test drives and examples of home chargers. The first event will be in Kendal. By summer 2027 we will have 500 more charge points (CPs) and by 2039, another 1000. Most residents will be within a three minute walk of a CP. All car parks will have CPs. We will be going out to tender next month for a car park CP provider. Most will be 7 kilowatt chargers but some will be rapid chargers (much more expensive to install).

Daniel Sample (WAFC officer): Discussed putting street chargers onto various streets in Penrith.

VT: Discussed objections from residents about the location of the CPs.

JH: Yes, we will get some people who will be very opposed. We get weekly emails asking when we are going to install EV infrastructure. The spaces will not be just for EV owners. If we get complaints about non-EV drivers repeatedly blocking CPs we might have to do something about that.

MH: Asked about Kerbo Charge (a system whereby an EV owner without off-street parking can home-charge their EV). Pointed out that he was told in a full council meeting that the trialling

period would be over at least 9 months ago and several other councils allow the use of this method.

JH: A few councils were early adopters but all other have delayed in accepting Kerbo Charge. The problem is simultaneous electrical contact ( due to earthing problems whereby the user can get an electrical shock when touching the charger). We are working with Electricity North West to reduce the risk of electrical shocks. We have 30 residents trialists signed up. We are waiting for a response from Electricity North West.

We received £3.2 million from the LEVI fund (Local EV Infrastructure and an additional £0.5 million) and we will be going out to tender next month.

G Simpkins (GS, LD): With EV charging bays, if a non-EV driver parks in an EV bay, this will prevent the EV owner from charging overnight.

JH: It will become a challenge. Until we start installing we wont know how much a challenge this will be.

VT: The visibility of chargers is an issue (trying to find them in a car park). Often chargers are not working. Could we not be able to book a charger? EV owners tend to be considerate of other EV users.

JH: On usability that is one of our questions. Also there is a national standard of accessibility, the ease of the charging experience. For disabled users we will have 8m long bays with dropped curbs. We are not mandating bookability.

MH: Asked about the method of payment and will there be more chargers in Alston (currently a dual charger at the gym)?

JH: All new greater than 8 kilowatt chargers have to have a contactless payment device (swiping your bank card). With the 7 kilowatt chargers you will have to register with an app where you usually put money into your account.

Yes there will be additional sites (for CPs) in Alston. There will be a day and night rate, the night one being cheaper.

We hope that more of the hotels will provide chargers.

#### 4. AOB

MH: When the Cabinet came to Alston in April, one of the issues that was discussed was the lack of public transport. Giles Archibald (LD councillor and Cabinet member) suggested that WAFC carry out an investigation into the problems of public transport in very rural areas like Alston. I would not like this to be forgotten, so could this working group contact the Cabinet about this?

LB: I could contact John Murray (Transport Portfolio holder) and Giles for their ideas.

GS: It would be interesting to know the cost of subsidising each passenger. We might see that some areas are getting more money than others.

M Hodgkiss: The most expensive is the Alston to Carlisle bus service at £7.43 per passenger journey . The service from Kendal to Grasmere is £4.56 per passenger journey. The average is about £5 per passenger journey.

Next Meeting: 22.9.25.