

**Improving transport services in
Research project for the 3 Together Big Local**

January 2019

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1. Introduction

This research examines the transport infrastructure and services of the Easington Lane area of County Durham. It has been commissioned by the Local Trust to support the work of the 3 Together Big Local which operates under the umbrella of the Easington Lane Community Access Point (ELCAP). ELCAP is a charity which promotes the health and well-being of the area's residents through advice, training, education, recreational and social activities and community transport.

Easington Lane forms a south eastward extension of the town of Hetton-le-Hole. Along with the villages of Low Moorsley and High Moorsley, they form the 3 Together area.

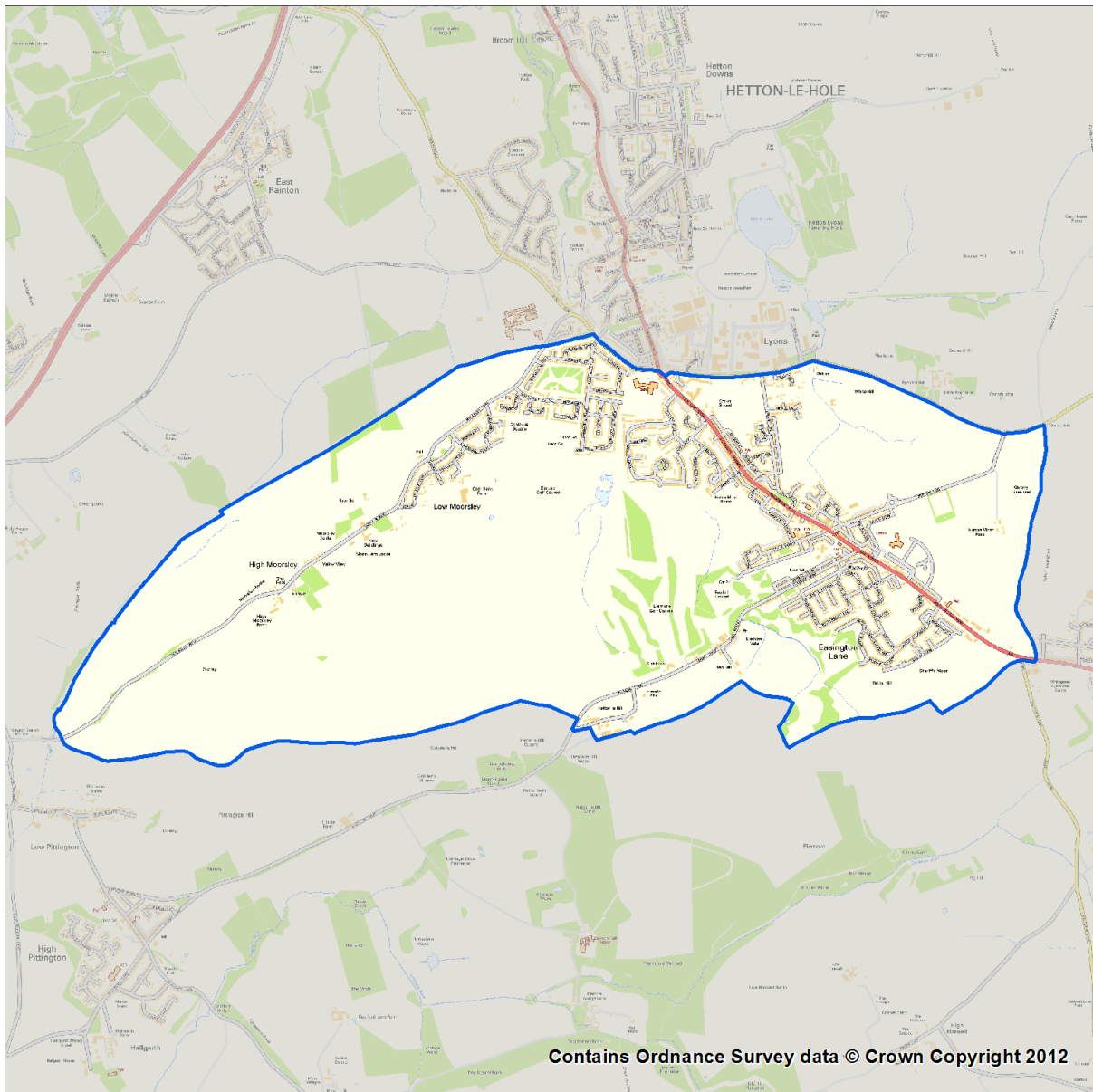
Easington Lane is approximately 7 miles from central Sunderland to the north, 6 miles from Durham to the west, and 2.5 miles from the large town of Houghton le Spring to the north. The area lies on the administrative boundary between Sunderland and County Durham. Easington Lane and Hetton-le-Hole are part of the City of Sunderland while South Hetton to the south east lies in County Durham.

Easington Lane and Moorsley villages are located within the former Sunderland Coalfield. They have an ageing population and suffer many of the type of deprivation associated with former colliery settlements in the area. This includes low educational attainment, reliance on low skill employment and high numbers afflicted with poor health.

The report uses a variety of data sources to identify the transport needs of the area. These are set against existing transport provision and plans for future improvements. Subsequently these are compared with transport options available in similar areas both locally and elsewhere in the country. Finally, the report offers brief recommendations on ways transport provision in the 3 Together area could be improved.

2. Context

Summary



Demographics and statistics suggest the Hetton ward (of which the 3 Together area forms a part) has characteristics likely to result in particular transport needs:

- Hetton has fewer young people and significantly more older people than the national average
- Employment levels are below national and county averages while managerial and professional occupations are under-represented
- More than a quarter of the population report that their day-to-day activities are hindered by poor health - nearly 10 per cent above the national average
- The percentage of people in the Hetton ward with no qualifications is nearly 12 per cent above the national average. Those qualified to NVQ4 or above is around half the average
- A third of households in the ward have no access to a car, significantly above both the county and national averages.

Detail

The 3 Together area forms part of the larger local government ward of Hetton. Drawing from a number of sources including the 2011 census, key statistics for the ward are set out below.

| Age profile | | | |
|--------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------|
| | Hetton ward | County Durham | England and Wales |
| 0-17 years | 18.6% | 19.5% | 21.3% |
| 18-64 years | 61.4% | 62.5% | 63.2% |
| Over 65 | 20% | 18% | 15.5% |

While the working age population of Hetton ward is broadly in line with the national average, the area has fewer young people and significantly more older people than the national average.

| Employment | | |
|----------------------------|-------------|---------------|
| | Hetton ward | County Durham |
| All employment (16-74) | 60% | 64.4% |
| Part time | 12.9% | 13.2% |
| Managerial or professional | 17% | 23.4% |

In Hetton ward, 60 percent of those between 16-74 years are economically active. Of the remainder, a third are retired, with nearly one in six being long-term sick or disabled. While only 1.9 per cent were long-term unemployed, 12.9 per cent work part-time only.

Managerial and professional occupations are under-represented in Hetton. Manufacturing, construction, retail, health and social work form the largest employment categories, collectively making up over half of all employment in the ward.

| Illness and disability | | | |
|--|-------------|---------------|-------------------|
| | Hetton ward | County Durham | England and Wales |
| Day-to-day activities limited a lot | 14.7% | 12.3% | 8.5% |
| Day-to-day activities limited a little | 12.9% | 11.4% | 9.4% |

More than a quarter of the population report that their day-to-day activities are hindered by poor health, with nearly 15 per cent report such activities are hindered a lot. Nearly 35 per cent of households report at least one person with a long-term health problem or disability.

| Education | | | |
|------------------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------|
| | Hetton ward | County Durham | England and Wales |
| No qualifications | 34.5 | 27.5 | 22.7% |
| NVQ4 or equivalent and above | 14.2 | 21.5 | 27.2% |

The percentage of people in the Hetton ward with no qualifications is 8 per cent higher than the county national average and nearly 12 per cent above the national average. The percentage of people in Hetton ward qualified to NVQ4 or above is around half the national average and a third lower than the county average.

| Transport | | | |
|----------------------------|-------------|---------------|-------------------|
| | Hetton ward | County Durham | England and Wales |
| <i>Access to car / van</i> | | | |
| No car in household | 33% | 27.2% | 25% |
| One car in household | 43.2% | 42.9% | 43% |

While the number of 'one car households' in Hetton is exactly in line with national and county levels, a third of households in the ward have no access to a car, significantly above both the county and national averages.

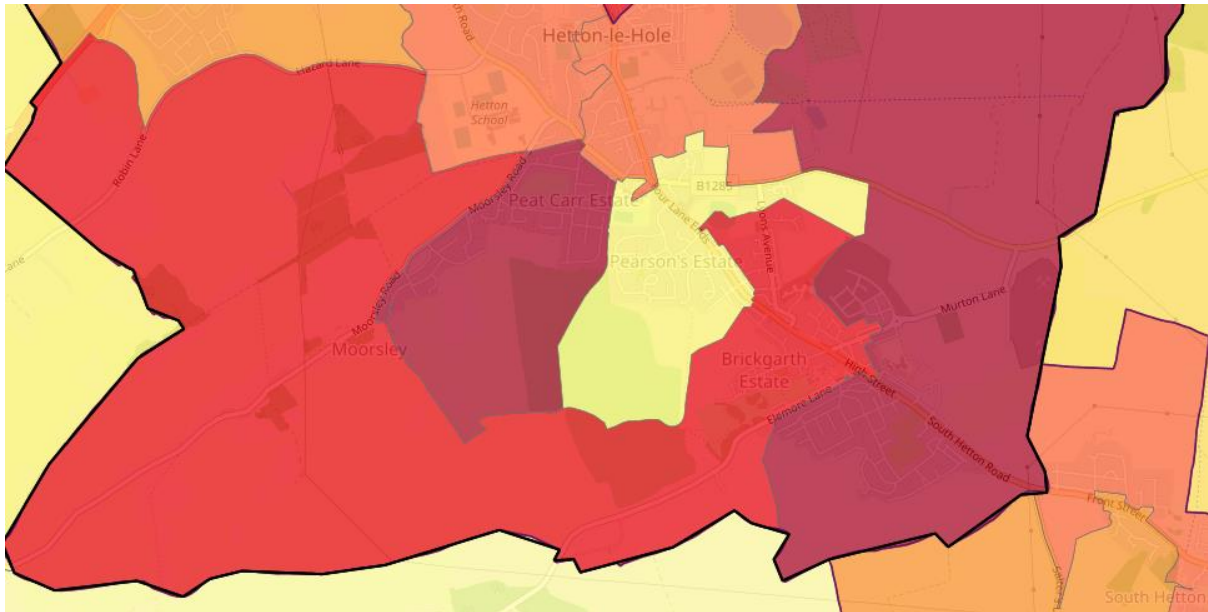
Deprivation

The 2015 Indices of Multiple Deprivation uses 37 indicators to assess and rank local circumstance across the country. Using Office for National Statistics (ONS) Lower Layer Super Output Areas (LSOAs) allows detailed assessment of the 3 Together Big Local area, which covers three LSOAs with smaller parts of another two areas.

Sunderland 036A LSOA is ranked 1,033 out of 32,844 LSOAs in England. It is amongst the 10 per cent most deprived neighbourhoods in the country, faring in the bottom 10 per cent for income, employment, education and skills, health, deprivation affecting children and deprivation affecting older people.

036D is ranked 987 in England and is also amongst the 10 per cent most deprived neighbourhoods. It ranks poorly for income, employment, education and skills, health, deprivation affecting children.

036B ranks at 4,941 and is in the bottom 10 per cent for employment and health deprivation. 035E and 036C fair better in overall IMD rankings, but still score poorly for income deprivation.



(Open Street Map and Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2015)

Statistics sources

- <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea?compare=1237320820>
- <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/localarea?compare=1946157058>
- <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/bulletins/keystatisticsandquickstatisticsforlocalauthoritiesintheunitedkingdom/2013-12-04>
- <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/disability/articles/disabilityinenglandandwales/2013-01-30>
- <http://dclgapps.communities.gov.uk/imd/idmap.html>
- https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/census/2011/QS701EW/view/2092957703?rows=cell&cols=rural_urban

2. Existing transport infrastructure

This section sets out details of existing transport provision in terms of road infrastructure and public transport services. It also details the main ways in which existing transport infrastructure is used.

Roads

Easington Lane lies on the A182, a non-primary A-road following a south-east to north-west alignment between the main arterial routes of the A19 and the A690 (the latter crosses the A1(M) 3.5 miles to the west of Easington Lane).



(map via <http://www.collisionmap.uk>)

The map above shows road accidents from 2011 to 2017 (yellow dots represent 'slight' traffic accidents with blue squares being 'serious' non-fatal crashes and red triangles fatal accidents). While one fatal incident has occurred should be noted, roads in the area can be regarded as very safe with few reported accidents of any type.

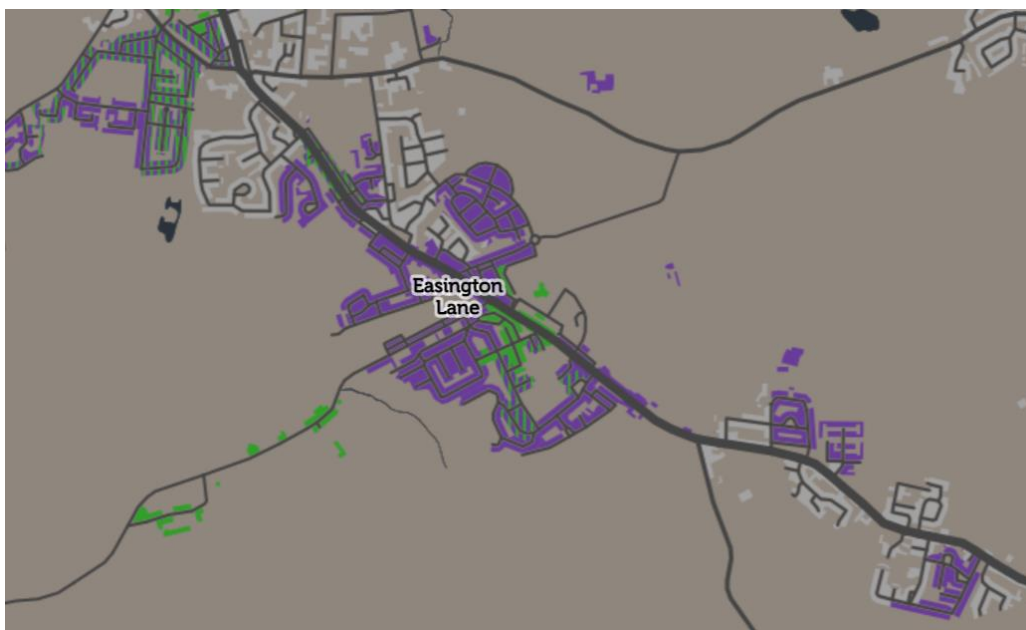
Commuting: Mode

The following maps illustrate that journeys to work are currently dominated by private car journeys, with bus and on-foot travel taking up nearly all of the remainder. The are based on data from the 2011 census.

Travel to Primary mode of transport:



Secondary mode of transport:



Data sources

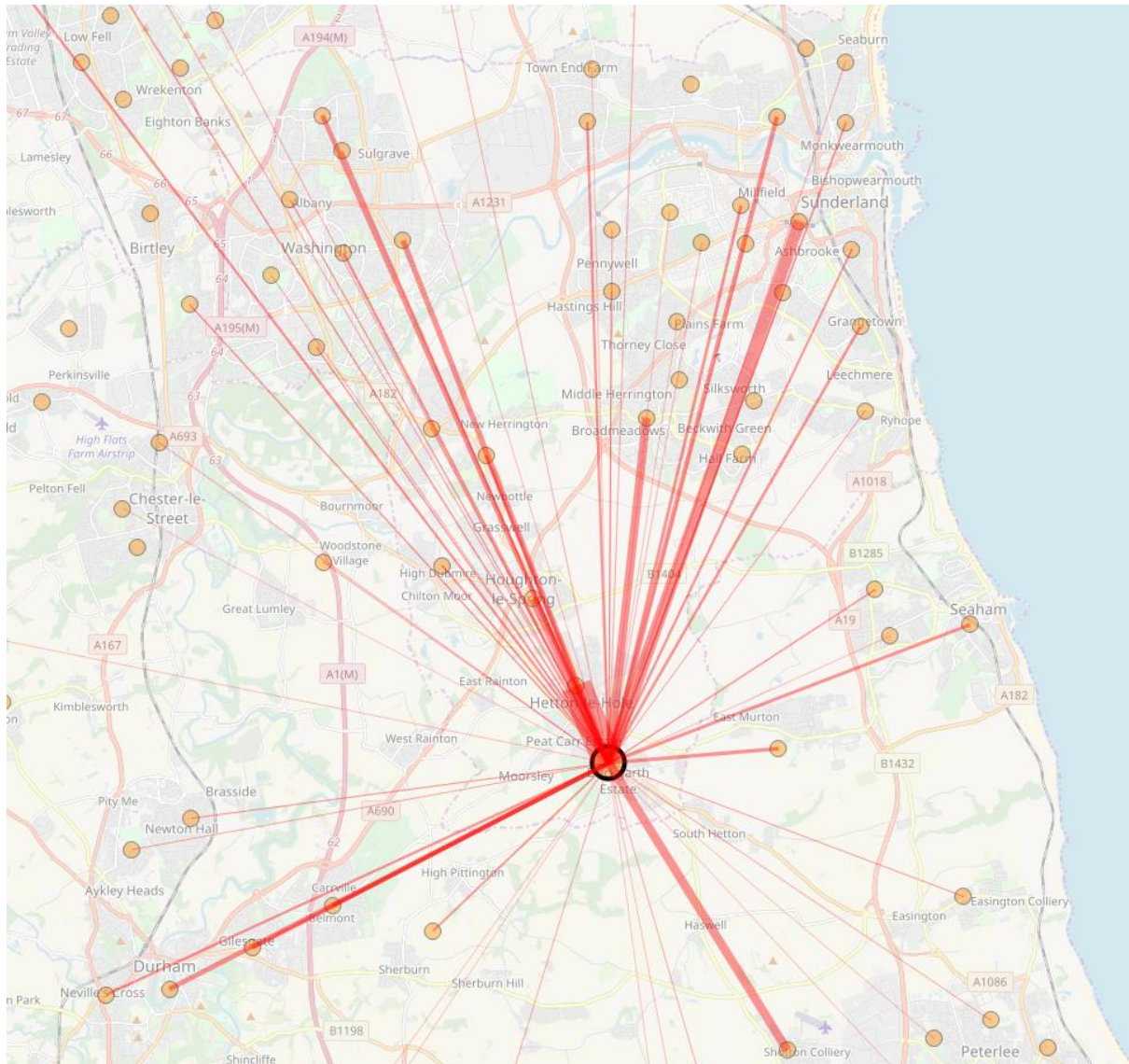
- <https://maps.cdrc.ac.uk/#/metrics/traveltowork/default>

Commuting: Destination

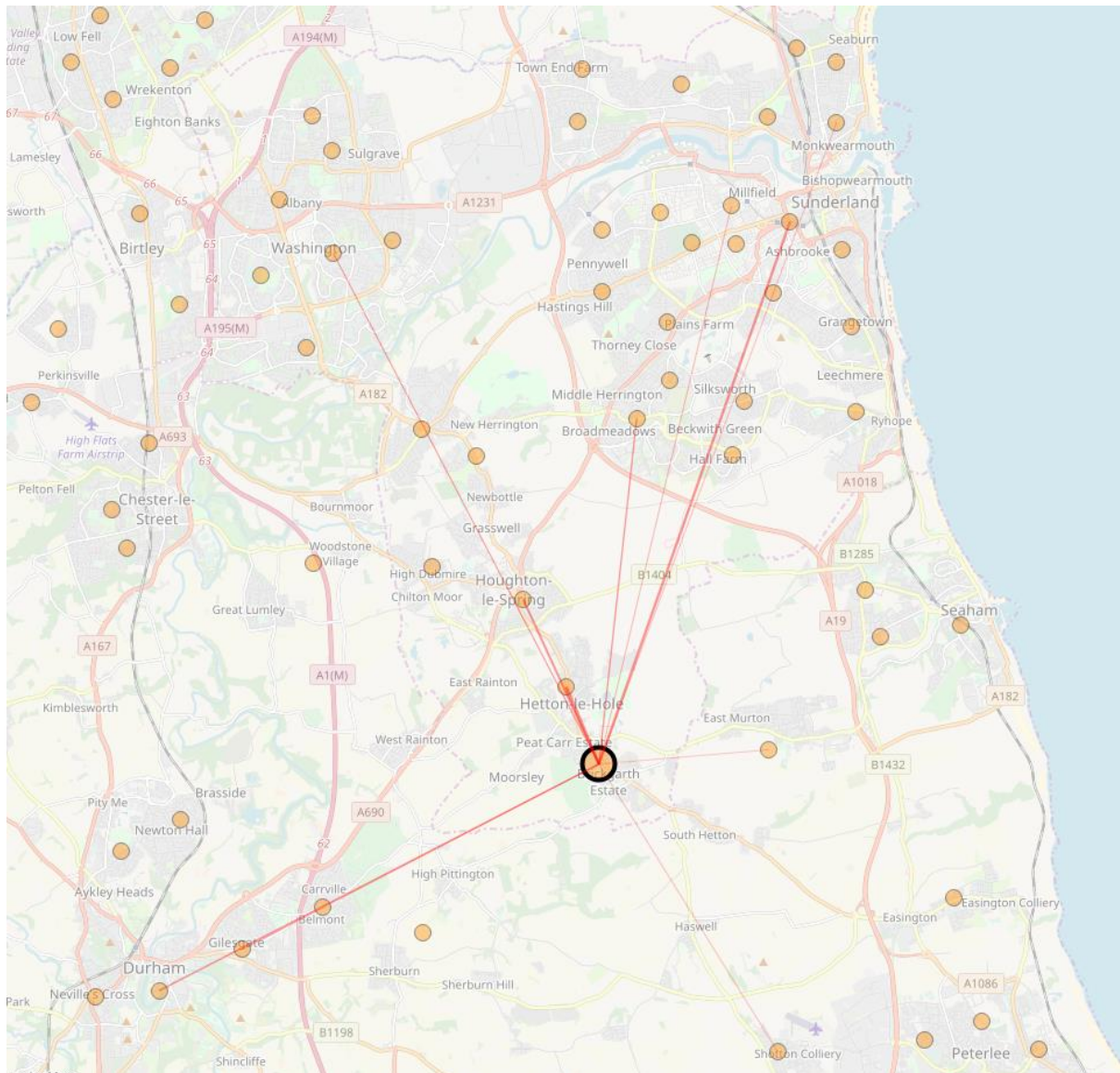
The following graphics show commuting destinations Easington Lane. Based on census data from 2011, the thicker the red line, the larger the number of people undertaking the journey.

As previously noted, private car is the dominant form of transport for work. Primary destinations for commuting are broadly similar for bus and private car. The largest generator is Hetton-le-Hole. Beyond this, central Sunderland, Washington and Durham are responsible for most journeys for employment.

By car:



By bus:



Date source:

- <http://commute.datashine.org.uk>

Destinations by numbers commuting

The following table sets out the numbers commuting from the study area using data from the 2011 census (destinations receiving over 50 commuters are included):

| Output area destination name | Main settlements | Numbers commuting | Link to location map |
|-------------------------------------|-------------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Sunderland 035 | Hetton, Rainton | 316 | http://statistics.data.gov.uk/doc/statistical-geography/E02001825 |
| No fixed place | - | 223 | - |
| Mainly from home | - | 157 | - |
| Sunderland 013 | Central Sunderland | 123 | http://statistics.data.gov.uk/doc/statistical-geography/E02001803 |
| Sunderland 036 | 3 Together area | 118 | http://statistics.data.gov.uk/doc/statistical-geography/E02001826 |
| County Durham 034 | Shotton Colliery | 91 | http://statistics.data.gov.uk/doc/statistical-geography/E02004326 |
| Sunderland 029 | A19 / A690 intersect | 87 | http://statistics.data.gov.uk/doc/statistical-geography/E02001819 |
| Sunderland 034 | Houghton | 84 | http://statistics.data.gov.uk/doc/statistical-geography/E02001824 |
| Sunderland 017 | Washington east | 58 | http://statistics.data.gov.uk/doc/statistical-geography/E02001807 |
| County Durham 030A | City of Durham | 52 | http://statistics.data.gov.uk/doc/statistical-geography/E02004314 |

The data shows that most commuting is very local. People reporting no fixed place of employment are likely to include trades people employed on-site.

Bus services

Routes and frequencies

The table below shows the bus routes serving the 3 Together area. All services are provided by Go North East with the exception of ED2 (Arriva). Services to Newcastle, Sunderland and Washington are run in conjunction with Nexus (Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Authority). Those to Durham are operated separately.

| Number | Main destinations | Monday - Friday | | | Saturday | Sunday |
|----------------------|--|---------------------|-------------------|----------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
| | | Times | First service | Last service | | |
| X1 Easington Lane | Newcastle, Gateshead, Washington, Hetton, Houghton | Every 10-15 minutes | 5.30am | 11.00pm | 5ph 6.30am to 11pm | 2ph 7.20am – 11pm (1ph off-peak) |
| X5 Easington Lane | Sunderland, Hetton, Houghton, Hartlepool, Peterlee | 2 ph | 6.30am | 11.30pm | 2ph from 7.50am (1 ph after 7.20pm) | 1ph 9.10am to 11.25pm |
| 35 Low Moorsley | Sunderland, Hetton, Houghton, Chester-le-Street | 2 ph | 6.55am | 10.50pm (1ph after 7.50pm) | 2ph from 8am to 10.50pm (1ph after 5.45pm) | 1 ph 8.50am to 10.50pm |
| 168 | East Rainton, Hetton (hail and ride service) | 1 ph | 7.30am | 5.30pm | 1ph 7.30am – 5.30pm | No service |
| 202 | Peterlee, Seaham, Station Town | 1 ph | 7am | 8.50pm | 1 ph 8.30am – 8.45pm | No service |
| 208 | Peterlee, Durham | 1 ph | 7.30am | 5.45pm | 1 ph 9am – 5pm | No service |
| 265 | Durham, Seaham | 1 ph | 7.10am | 7.45pm | 1ph 7.30am – 7.45pm | No service |
| 923 | Peterlee, Rainton Bridge (npower and Evolve) | 2 services | 7.40am and 8.40am | 4.25pm and 5.25pm | No service | No service |
| 968 | Easington Lane – Waterview Park (Washington) | 2 services | 7.10am (out) | 4.45pm (return) | No service | No service |
| ED2 | Washington, Peterlee (EDC) | 4 services | 8.10am | 5.45pm | No service | No service |
| S454 | Easington Lane, St Roberts School (Washington) | 2 services | 7.45am (out) | 3.25pm (return) | No service | No service |

- Easington Lane has a wide range of bus services and destinations. Services between Durham and Seaham also call at Low Moorsley.
- Easington Lane benefits from its location on the A182 and from being inside the Nexus administrative area. The X1, X5 and 35 bus services provide frequent access to Newcastle, Gateshead and Washington seven days a week.
- Services Durham are less frequent and there are no late evening or Sunday services.
- Local buses are also less frequent but 202, 208 and 265 all support east-west journeys through the 3 Together area.
- The 168 services offers an hourly 'hail and ride' service between East Rainton, Hetton-le-Hole and Easington Lane.
- A number of business parks have special services targeted at employees (e.g. Spectrum Business Park – 202, Waterview Business Park – 923).
- In addition, National Express coach services operate from Peterlee and Durham.

Key destinations and accessibility

The table below identifies key destinations and their accessibility via public transport from Easington Lane. Timings have been calculated using bus timetables and the Travel Line website. They do not include a time allocation to travel to bus stops at Easington Lane but do include an estimate of time taken to walk to the final destination from the closest bus stop. Journeys are via direct buses only and trips which require more than 10-minute walk have been excluded.

| Leisure | | Services | | Employment | | Education | | Transport interchange | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|---------------------------------|---------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Sunderland City Centre | 35 - 45 minutes | Sunderland Royal Hospital | 55 minutes | Sunderland City Centre | 35 - 45 minutes | East Durham College (Peterlee) | 16 mins | Mainline rail @ Durham | 30-35 minutes |
| Durham City Centre | 25 - 30 minutes | University Hospital North Durham | 1 hour (with 1 change) | Durham City Centre | 25 - 30 minutes | Sunderland College (Sunderland) | 40 minutes | Local rail @ Seaham | 35 – 40 minutes |
| Newcastle City Centre | 55 - 60 mins | Local supermarket (Tesco @ Hetton) | 6 minutes | Doxford Park | 20 mins | Sunderland University | 45-50 minutes | Metro @ Sunderland Interchange | 42 minutes |
| Dalton Park retail outlet | 23 mins | Large supermarket (Lidl @ Houghton) | 15 minutes | Rainton Bridge | 10 mins | St Robert of Newminster | 50 mins | | |

- All the main categories of destinations are accessible via direct buses from the Easington Lane area.
- Three separate city centres can be reached in under an hour.
- Main health services are some way distant in terms of time, with the nearest Accident and Emergency facilities nearly an hour away, although local health services are available in Houghton-le-Spring.
- Major areas of employment can be reached swiftly although some are served by peak period buses only.
- North East-wide Pay As You Go ticketing across bus and Metro services would benefit from better integration with rail:
 - Bus services which stop at rail stations
 - Easier access to Metro services (a relatively long journey is currently needed to access the Tyne and Wear Metro although this is partly dictated by the geographic extent of the existing Metro network).

Rail

The 3 Together Big Local area is not served directly by a railway station. However, two stations are located relatively nearby:

- Durham: A major station in the East Coast Main Line offering local and national services.
- Seaham: Seaham is on the Durham Coast Line which links Newcastle upon Tyne with Middlesbrough, via Sunderland and Hartlepool.

Journey times and frequencies for each of station is set out in the table below:

| Station | Destination | Fastest journey time | Peak frequency |
|----------------|--------------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|
| Durham | Newcastle | 15 minutes | 3-4 p/h |
| | Edinburgh | 1 hours 45 minutes | 3-4 p/h |
| | London | 2 hours 55 minutes | 3-4 p/h |
| Seaham | Sunderland | 9 minutes | 1 p/h |
| | Newcastle | 31 minutes | 1 p/h |
| | Middlesbrough | 45 minutes | 1 p/h |

4. Community and social transport

ELCAP

ELCAP operates its own well-established community transport initiative. This aims to provide

"a customer focused transport service aimed at improving access to health, education, social and economic opportunities to all sectors of the community and to help with social isolation."

<http://www.elcap.org.uk/index.php/whatweoffer/transport>

The operation consists of three vehicles including one accessible minibus. These are managed by three part-time members of staff (two drivers and one project manager / driver) who offer a pre-booked door-to-door service for shopping, access to ELCAP groups such as a lunch club, and excursions. Mini buses can also be hired by local groups for self-drive.

Coordinator, Dave Ellison, describes it as a befriending service as well as community transport - a notable benefit beyond that which dial-a-ride services offer. Anecdotal evidence from community transport users suggests these can lack the local connection and personal touch that ELCAP's transport offer provides.

The ELCAP community transport service is highly popular. Many of its services are fully subscribed, carrying a reported total in the region of 7,000 passenger journeys each year. The services benefits from paid staff taking on additional unpaid time to meet commitments. Other than the ELCAP website, no active promotion takes place.

A variety of groups make use of community transport. This includes older people, single parents' groups, disability groups and schools. Dave Ellison suggests demand for services would be likely to support the addition of a fourth mini-bus if the human and financial resources were available for such an enlarged operation.

Costs and funding

Achieving long-term financial sustainability remains a challenge. One of the three buses is reaching the end of its serviceable life and will need replacing in the near future. Achieving such ends requires successful grant fundraising.

Income: Currently, income from fares and hire charges is circa £36,000 p/a (fares are priced at £4). Further support comes via the Big Local funding and the Coalfield Area committee of Sunderland City Council.

Outgoings: Staff costs total circa £40,000 p/a, with other costs (fuel, tax, insurance etc.) accounting for a further £10 - 15,000 p/a.

Other community transport providers

In addition to ELCAP's community transport offer, there are two other community transport providers operating around the Easington Lane area:

- *East Durham Community Transport*: Based at Peterlee, EDCT provides accessible transport to voluntary and community groups, schools, statutory bodies and any other non-profit group. It also runs a travel club for disabled and elderly local people offering day trips. EDCT has a fleet of seven vehicles.
- *Compass Community Transport*: Compass Community Transport is based in Sunderland and was launched in 2002. It is a large operation with around 30 vehicles and over 30 paid staff. It is used by around 150 local groups.

5. Comparisons

This section compares public transport provision in Easington Lane with those of three settlements with similar attributes.

The four areas selected are intended to give a simple indication of how Easington Lane's public transport services compare with those of comparable areas.

This is intended to be indicative, suggesting how Easington Lane's public transport offer measures up. Its limitations should be noted, however. It is not intended as a rigorous benchmarking process which, while useful, would be outside the scope of this research.

The areas selected for comparison are briefly described, below. A simple table is then included comparing key facets of the public transport offer of each area.

Annitsford

The Annitsford / Fordley / Dudley area (referred to here as Annitsford) is a group of conjoined villages located 7 miles north of central Newcastle upon Tyne. The area has been selected as a comparison site because of its size, location relative to the Tyne and Wear conurbation and social factors.

Annitsford lies on the border between Tyne and Wear and Northumberland. Newcastle is the major local centre with local services available at Cramlington to the north. Annitsford has no railway station but is served by a number of bus services.

The area has a higher than average percentage of population over the age of 65. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation ranks the area in the lowest 10 per cent nationally for employment, education, skills and training and health.

Perton

Perton is a village located approximately 4 miles west of the centre of Wolverhampton, lying in the South Staffordshire council area.

It has been selected because of its location on the outer border of a major conurbation which is overseen by a combined authority with transport services managed by an executive body (Transport for the West Midlands). The Indices of Deprivation ranks the area in lowest 10 per cent for deprivation affecting older people.

Partington

Partington is within the Borough of Trafford, Greater Manchester, located ten miles south-west of Manchester city centre, the area includes an overspill estate constructed after the Second World War.

Partington ranks as one of the most deprived areas of the Greater Manchester conurbation. It falls in the lowest 10 per cent of areas in the England for income, employment and skills, health and deprivation affecting young and older people.

Harefield

Harefield is an outer suburb of Southampton, located around 3 miles from the city centre. The area has a significantly higher percentage of older people than average with over a quarter of households consisting solely of over 65s. The Indices of Multiple Deprivation rank the area in the lowest 10 per cent for employment, education and health.

Findings

| | Bus journey time to city centre | Peak bus frequency to city centre | Evening and weekend services | | | Access to hospital (inc. A&E) | Closest 6 th form / training | Mainline railway station |
|---------------------------------|--|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|-----|-----|-------------------------------|---|---|
| | | | Eve | Sat | Sun | | | |
| Easington Lane | 25 mins (Durham), 35 mins (Sunderland) | 5 ph (Newcastle), 2 ph (Sunderland) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 55 mins | 16 mins | 30 mins (Durham) |
| Annitsford | 28 mins (Newcastle) | 2 ph | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 35 mins | 25 mins | 1 hour (Newcastle) |
| Perton (West Mids) | 26 mins (Wolverhampton) | 3 ph | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 45 mins | 20 mins | 55 minutes (inc. change at Wolverhampton rail) |
| Partington (Greater Manchester) | 1 h 15 mins (Manchester) | 4 ph | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | 18 mins | 50 mins | 1 h 10 mins (Manchester Victoria or Warrington) |
| Harefield (Southampton) | 33 mins | 2 ph | ✗ | ✓ | ✓ | 57 mins | 33 mins | 37 mins (Southampton Central) |

- Easington Lane's bus services to the local area are comparable with other selected areas and the variety of destinations which can be accessed is better than others looked at.
- Frequency of services toward Newcastle compares favourably with comparison areas, although the potentially more desirable destination of Sunderland (see commuting patterns) is significantly less well served.
- With the exception of Harefield, all the areas looked at have good seven day a week bus services, reflecting their proximity to major urban areas.
- The ability to access a hospital with Accident and Emergency facilities by public transport is slower for Easington Lane than the other selected areas
- Access to East Durham College at Peterlee is swift by comparison with other areas, but only limited services allow this journey
- The close proximity of Durham Station is a clear benefit to the area, but this is partly undermined by the absence of direct bus connections on Sunday

6. Transport bodies, policies and strategies

A number of bodies are involved in setting transport policy in the 3 Together area. Details of these are briefly set out below.

Nexus

Nexus (the Tyne and Wear Passenger Transport Executive) is responsible for overseeing transport services across the North East.

Nexus' strategy for buses is informed by customer research undertaken in 2016. This identified priorities as provision of high frequency services connecting people to work. <https://nexus.org.uk/sites/default/files/Nexus%20Service%20Review%20Consultation%20Outcome%20-%20Appendix%201.pdf>

The NECA funds Nexus through a levy on the five district councils of Tyne and Wear; Gateshead, Newcastle, North Tyneside, South Tyneside and Sunderland. The seven North East local authorities have agreed that Nexus will continue to provide this service on the creation of a second combined authority.

| Area | 2010/11 | 2016/17 | 2017/18 | 2018/19 (budget) |
|-------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|------------------|
| County Durham | £2,385,233 | £3,277,391 | £3,194,813 | £3,082,437 |
| North East Combined Authority | £14,436,939 | £11,315,301 | £10,361,379 | £9,618,468 |
| Hartlepool | £545,134 | £0 | £0 | £0 |

https://bettertransport.org.uk/sites/default/files/research-files/Buses-in-Crisis-2018_0.pdf

Campaign for Better Transport has been charting local authority financial support for buses since 2010.

The North East Combined Authority's strategy for buses has three named objectives:

- "to arrest the decline in bus patronage;
- to maintain (and preferably grow) network accessibility, and
- to deliver better value for public money."

<https://nexus.org.uk/our-major-projects/bus-strategy>

Achieving these ends will be challenging, bucking the trend seen in most large urban areas including the Tyne and Wear. While concessionary and child bus journeys within the Nexus area have remained largely static since 2010, adult journeys have fallen from 82 million in 2010/11 to 70 million in 2016/17. Travel on services which are subsidised by Nexus have also declined in each of the last four years.

<https://nexus.org.uk/sites/default/files/Nexus%20Annual%20Report%202016-17.pdf>

While in 2017 / 18, the North East recorded the second highest spend per capita on buses of any English region outside London there continues to be pressure on local government funding settlements. Nexus' financial support for bus services was maintained between 2010 and 2014, but it has subsequently fallen by around a third.

The following services are run on commercial contracts:

208 (Go North East)
202 (Go North East)
ED2 (Arriva)
923 (Go North East)

X1 (Go North East)
265 (Go North East)
968 (Go North East).

The 168 service is tendered as part of a single contract that also includes 81, 82, 83, 84, 85 and 86.

The X5 service is let as a de-minimis cost contract and is incorporated with service 35A.

North East Combined Authority

The North East Combined Authority was established in 2014, bringing together seven local authorities and taking strategic responsibility for policy areas including transport. In November 2017, the authority members made in principle agreement to restructuring of governance arrangements with the three 'north of the Tyne' authorities (Newcastle City Council, North Tyneside and Northumberland) creating a second combined authority in the region. The remaining 'South of the Tyne' authorities will continue to have Combined Authority powers while Nexus will continue to operate on behalf of all authority members.

The two Combined Authorities are in the early stages of developing a shared strategic plan for transport. It is unclear if these changes will have any impact on policy or funding for buses.

Transport for the North

Transport for the North (TfN) is a Sub National Transport Body bringing together 20 local transport authorities, Network Rail, Highways England and other local stakeholders. It sets high level strategy for transport infrastructure investment. Its 30-year plan highlights the need for an increased percentage of the journeys to be taken by public transport, with investment in transport interchanges and multi-modal ticketing to help achieve this. The intention is to make buses more attractive and easier to use across Northern England.

Durham County Council

Durham County Council supports a range of additional transport options outside of mainstream bus services:

- Bookable hospital transport for patients and visitors, and a separate volunteer driver service for hospital patients.
- A door-to-door access bus to shopping and leisure destinations for those with mobility issues.
- An accessible dial-a-ride mini-bus service (Link2) for short journeys.

There are also taxi-bus services aimed at shift workers in some parts of the county, although these do not currently operate in the Easington Lane area.

7. Findings and recommended next steps

The 3 Together area has particular transport needs:

- It has a relatively dispersed population coupled with low levels of car ownership
- A high percentage of population falling in older age groups and high numbers reporting poor health.
- Skills and qualifications are a weakness, and unemployment is above average.

Overall, the area's public transport offer is good:

- Easington Lane has a wide range of bus services and destinations with frequent services to three city centres.
- Services to Newcastle and Sunderland benefit from 7 day a week services from 6am to 11pm. Major employment areas appear well served, something supported by additional services at peak times.
- Local transport is supported by an hourly 'hail and ride' service between East Rainton, Hetton-le-Hole and Easington Lane, and three community transport operators (including ELCAP).
- Education and training are supported by special services to secondary and further education providers, although these only operate at peak times.

But there are potential areas for improvement:

- Despite good bus services and local ownership, bus use is low. Understanding why this is considering steps to improve patronage may be important in ensuring service levels are maintained.
- East-west services are less good than those running north-south. In particular, services to Durham (including its hospital and railway station) are weaker than for other city centres and do not operate on Sundays.
- Main health services are some way distant, however, with the nearest Accident and Emergency facilities nearly an hour away by bus.
- Integration with rail is weak, with few bus services calling at railway stations. Access to the Tyne and Wear Metro would also benefit from improvement, although this may be difficult to improve greatly within the confines of the existing Metro network.

Community transport performs a very important function:

While detailed comment of future planning of ELCAP's transport offer is outside the scope of this research, a number of areas may be worthy of future consideration:

- As part of the development of a new transport strategy for the Nexus area, it is important county and city council, and Nexus understand the nature of transport service being offered by ELCAP (and other community transport operators in the area), who they serve, and how the complement conventional bus operations.
- With bus patronage and public sector support for bus services falling nationally and locally, it is important that ELCAP is aware of which local bus services receive a subsidy and who this currently benefits.
- Along with detail of existing user groups, this will help establish an evidence base regarding those who ELCAP is supporting, what would happen if ELCAP's transport offer were not available, and increased pressure on ELCAP and other community transport operators if conventional services were reduced.
- Some elements of such work may be a suitable subject for under-graduate or post-graduate research and could support future funding applications.
- The suggestion has also been raised that demand for ELCAP's transport offer exceeds what can currently be provided. Further research regarding who is being disadvantaged by this situation may also be useful.
- ELCAP may wish to consider a community consultation including the extent to which transport is considered a barrier locally, and knowledge of the extent of local public

transport options already available. This may allow ELCAP to make a case for improved public information about bus services in the area.

Joint working

- Opportunities for joint working with other community transport operators might also be considered.
- While provision of services would remain separate, there may be opportunities for closer working in training of staff, research, maintenance of fleet or other back office functions.

Campaign for
Better Transport 

January 2019