

## UNITED KINGDOM

### Local development

#### Location

Wales, UK

#### Programming period

2014 - 2020

#### Priority

P6 – Social inclusion & local development

#### Measure

M7 – Basic services & village renewal

#### Funding (EUR)

Total budget: ~691 000

EAFRD: ~292 000

Public: ~399 000

#### Project duration

2015 – 2016

#### Project promoter

Carmarthenshire County Council

#### Contact

[MRPhillips@carmarthenshire.gov.uk](mailto:MRPhillips@carmarthenshire.gov.uk)

#### Additional information

[www.bwcabus.info](http://www.bwcabus.info)

An on-demand local bus service, 'Bwcabus', tailored to the needs of rural passengers has helped improve accessibility, reduced car dependency and assisted in lifting rural communities out of deprivation.

### Summary

An initiative in west Wales is showing that new approaches can deliver a sustainable model of integrated rural public transport. In addition to a number of fixed bus routes, it operates an on-demand bus service, which registered users can pre-book using a dedicated telephone booking service



All Bwcabus buses have low, wide, accessible entrances and can pick up and set down passengers with reduced mobility or those in particularly remote locations at/near their home address.

The service addresses the issue – faced by many villages and small towns in rural areas across Europe – of increasing isolation in cases where 'uncompetitive' bus services are cut to save costs. As a result, local people and especially the most vulnerable can find it increasingly difficult to access employment opportunities and the services they need.

### Results

Bwcabus enables people to travel between local towns and villages or connect to the main line bus or train services.

The service helps those without cars to access key services including health and education services, as well as to employment opportunities. It makes a particularly significant contribution to the lives of people with reduced mobility

The service has increased the frequency of public transport use and encouraged a reduction in car use.

Bwcabus has provided a boost to local businesses and the local economy by generating an overall increase in passenger journeys – including by workers and customers.

### Lessons & Recommendations

- Bwcabus has proven that it can deliver a cost-effective user-focused local transport service.
- The project highlights the need for local targeted services to link in with mainline bus or train services to travel further afield.
- It shows that a sustainable transport network can support connections between rural and other areas in both directions, benefitting both local people and local businesses.

## Context

Many villages and small towns in rural areas across Europe have become increasingly isolated as uncompetitive local bus services are cut to save costs.

Without a usable local transport network, rural people become increasingly reliant on cars to get to other villages, and into nearby towns and cities. For those who do not have a car, it becomes increasingly difficult to access employment opportunities, important services including healthcare and even opportunities for social interaction.

## Objectives

Bwcabus sought to put in place an affordable and sustainable solution for providing rural communities in west Wales with an efficient local transport network.

It sought thus to provide improved access to jobs and services for local people, benefitting particularly those most at risk.

## Activities

The Bwcabus (book-a-bus) initiative started from a 2008 ERDF project. It was able to access EAFRD support in 2015 to ensure continuity of service provision. The initiative was led by Carmarthenshire County Council, in partnership with Ceredigion County Council, Traveline Cymru and the University of South Wales.

In addition to a number of fixed routes, it operates an on demand bus service, which users can pre-book. The bus service is supported by a website that provides passengers with detailed information on the service, including the location of bus stops, fares and how to book.

Once they have registered for free, passengers are able to pre-book their journeys using a dedicated telephone

booking service. The bus service operates Monday to Saturday from 07:00 to 19:00. Passengers must book before 19:00 for travel the next morning or before 11:30 to travel that afternoon.

All Bwcabus buses have low, wide, accessible entrances – wheelchair ramps are available on request.

Whilst most users are asked to meet the bus at their

nearest stop, passengers with reduced mobility or those in particularly remote locations can request to be picked up and set down at or near to their home address, providing it is safe and practical to do so.

## Main Results

Bwcabus enables people to travel between local towns and villages within the Bwcabus zone or connect to the main line bus or train services to travel further afield. Bwcabus is enabling those without cars to access key services in nearby towns at appropriate times. This includes access to health and education services, as well as to employment opportunities.

The service has increased the frequency of public transport use and encouraged a reduction in car use. Bwcabus makes a particularly significant contribution to the lives of people with reduced mobility by improving their access to services and greater opportunities for social interaction.

Bwcabus has provided a boost to local businesses and the local economy. This is because, as well as bringing workers into the town, the service also brings in customers. A 2016 study of local businesses in the town of Newcastle Emlyn has found that business owners have noticed a difference since the service was introduced.

## Key Lessons

Bwcabus has proven that it can deliver a cost-effective user-focused local transport service. The project highlights the need for local targeted services to link in with mainline bus or train services to travel further afield .

It shows that a sustainable transport network supports connections between rural and other areas in both directions, which benefits (vulnerable) people in rural communities as well as providing a boost to businesses in rural areas.

*“Without Bwcabus I would no longer be able to keep my current job as I have no other means of transport and a taxi would prove too expensive.”*

Melanie Heath  
Bwcabus passenger, Llandysul