

Gayton and Tiffield Community Minibus

Annual Report to Tiffield Parish Council April 2026

We are still operating! Economic circumstances have caused charities such as ours a lot of problems as costs outpace income and public funding is squeezed ever further. However we are optimistic that we can keep going to provide the only public bus service for our village.

Since the loss of our annual WNC grant funding of £3,198 in April 2024 we received several donations which helped to make up some of the shortfall in our income. This enabled us to keep running last year. We also increased the number of private hire bookings and have regular arrangements with Pattishall and Blisworth Schools for sports and cultural trips and together these have raised useful funds.

Last March we applied for a grant from The Towcester Park Community Fund which has been set up by IM Properties, who are building the warehouses along Donkey Lane/Towcester Road and which is intended to help local charities such as ours. They very generously gave us £5,000, above the £3,200 applied for, and this has been very helpful in securing our finances over the past year. Now we are having to apply for further funding again as it is unlikely that WNC will support us. A local community dial a bus service, Ability, has recently announced its closure due to lack of grant funding so we are not alone in finding it difficult to keep our valuable service running.

We are continuing to get more passengers as the word is spreading and residents of Eastcote, Astcote and Pattishall now make up over half of our regular numbers and we have decided to keep running this service with an annual review. We also have had inquiries from other villages to see if we could expand our service as they are either not covered or are now stuck as the the dial-a-bus service offered by Ability has closed. Unfortunately at present we are unable to expand unless we are guaranteed more volunteer drivers in those villages.

The government's fare cap for cash customers of £2 per single journey was reviewed in the Autumn Statement/Budget and increased to £3 per single journey from 1st of January 2025. This remains the case at present. Passengers with bus passes do not have to pay anything.

We are a registered charity and it is a community bus service run by unpaid volunteers. If you want to hire a 16 seater minibus (plus driver), please contact us to see if it and drivers are available. Recent trips have been to local pubs and restaurants, airport runs, monthly dining club visits and regular school and sports team events.

Hopefully we can continue running our normal services and aim to have a viable future which will enable us to continue to provide our unique low-cost service. This is particularly important for older members of the community, especially if they don't drive and it also helps to reduce social isolation as well as being a greener alternative to private car use.

Our thanks go to all of our dedicated team of nine drivers who have enabled us to provide our low-cost, volunteer-based service. Also, without the expertise, assistance and the active

involvement of our Trustees we would not have coped with all the challenges of the past year.

We are now in our 41st year of unbroken continuous service which is a testament to our local village volunteers. Initially there were 43 local community minibus services set up in the County in 1985 by government funding – only 2 of those have survived due to a lack of local volunteers elsewhere. Our thanks go to all of our loyal trustees, drivers, helpers and supporters that have enabled us to be one of the survivors.

Our volunteer drivers are;

Steve Jowers	Tiffield	Andy Tennet	Tiffield
Cate Gardner	Tiffield	Rae Spencer	Tiffield
John Pearson	ex-Tiffield, now Pattishall	Pete Baxter	Gayton
Manja Ronne	Gayton	John Rogers	Gayton
Jens Buus	Gayton	Nick Pyke (New)	Tiffield

If anyone would like to volunteer to drive the bus, please contact me. We pay for training and testing and medical examinations if required.

I have recently been attending WNC Bus Improvement Plan meetings and have got our route and timetable registered with them. It is now publicised as part of the wider WNC transport network at <https://www.westnorthants.gov.uk/travel/bus-timetables>. We are included at the end of the Towcester Area section.

Steve Jowers – Chairman, Gayton and Tiffield Community Transport

Registered Charity No: 1118336 – Established 2005