



Mission

To provide pay-per-use vehicles to people in and around Dunbar.

Is there a link with Transition?

Not any more, though we benefited substantially from support from the Transition initiative, Sustaining Dunbar, in getting set up. Sustaining Dunbar provided moral support in addition to helping us put together our business plan and website. They also provided valuable contacts and staff time, covered some printing, advertising and other incidental costs initially. We have now been trading for 2 years as a completely separate organization, but still work closely with Sustaining Dunbar as we share the same goals. For example, Sustaining Dunbar is helping to explore options for more efficient community transport solutions, potentially using car club vehicles.

Your product or service – how much does it help improve resilience in your local community or elsewhere?

We have 3 cars (a practical Fiesta, a workhorse 7-seater, and a trendy automatic Mini) which we hire out to our members by the hour, the day or the week, giving local people an alternative to owning their own (or a second) car, or allowing them to drive a smaller car day-to-day in the knowledge that they can have access to a bigger one when they need it. We currently have 50 business and household members (70 named drivers).

Employees

No employees. 4 volunteer directors, 3 volunteer car-minders. We contract a local firm to clean and check the cars regularly and pay a franchise fee to our parent organization that provides back-office support.

Are you in profit? If not, when do you anticipate being so? How long have you been trading?

Turnover last year was £20,000. We have been trading since April 2011 and are now breaking even -- generating enough income to keep things ticking over and to replace the cars when required.

What is your company structure and why did you choose it?

We are a community interest company (CIC). We chose this structure because it allowed us to access grant funding without which we would never have got off the ground. However, we are definitely a business and not a charity and expect to be paying our own way.

What about financial sustainability? Are you trading or part-trading without money?

We were given 2 cars and the insurance and booking systems were paid for in the first year by the 'Developing Car Clubs in Scotland Fund' administered by Carplus on behalf of the Scottish Government. We chose to use a high-tech computerized booking system that is expensive to install and run, but allows us to function without any paid staff. We are also a franchise of a national CIC, Co-wheels (<http://www.co-wheels.org.uk>), which not only gives our members access to a network of cars around the UK, but also handles all the back-office functions, again, freeing up our volunteers' time.

Are you looking to build more common wealth & ownership and is priority your profit sharing and/or community benefits versus more traditional investor returns?

We are investigating opportunities from working with local groups to adding a community minibus to our fleet.

Localisation – are you sourcing, distributing and interacting locally?

We have supported the setting up of a sister club in the town of Haddington, 10 miles away. We contract a local firm to clean and check the cars. We use local garages for repairs.

Climate impacts – negative, beneficial or neutral?

Probably beneficial, although we haven't measured this for a while. We reckon many of our members have sold a car or refrained from buying one, since they joined us, but equally, many of our members can't afford to run their own car, so being a member widens their opportunities (but increases their car use). At least one of our members has replaced his own medium-sized car with a fuel-guzzling sports car, and uses our cars when he wants something more practical, so I can't guarantee that carbon emissions have gone down. However, this same member also cycles much more than he used to.

Anything else you want to share with us?

Although carbon savings may not have been made directly, the community has benefited enormously from having access to our 3 cars. It has strengthened links within the community and created links across communities. We continue to explore opportunities to use our vehicles as efficiently as we can and are looking to trial an electric car soon.



Spare Wheels
Dunbar's Car Club