

Connecting Clydesdale Project

VASLan is the Third Sector Interface for South Lanarkshire, supporting voluntary and community organisations to be strong, sustainable and effective. The post focuses on Clydesdale, responding to the locality's rural geography, transport challenges, and the need for strong local networks and partnership working. The need to sustainably connect up rural communities has been a priority for Clydesdale residents and community organisations for decades. Evidenced repeatedly through population surveys, focus groups and ongoing community engagement, there have been successful initiatives over the years, such as the Stand Up for our Buses Campaign, and the Rural Development Trust's (RDT) Community Transport service, however viability, and sustainability remain key factors. As public sector cuts continue to impact core services, particularly in isolated communities, the pressure on communities to find their own local solutions increases.

In more recent times, new community-based solutions have evolved, however it was recognised that there was a need for more joined up, cross-sector collaboration to enhance better outcomes for all. In 2024 a scoping group for rural transport was established by South Lanarkshire Council, with representation from key Clydesdale Third Sector anchor organisations, RDT, the Community Transport Association (CTA) Scotland, and VASLan. The Connecting Clydesdale project has evolved from the work of this group.

The Connecting Clydesdale consortium consists of VASLan, as Lead Partner, working closely with place-based partners to engage with communities, map, link-up, share, and co-produce locally-led, connected solutions around public, community and active travel requirements. The project is initially funded for 1 year and this will focus on 4 key Clydesdale locations, with a view to connecting more widely across Clydesdale in due course. Focusing on these 4 key pilot areas, the project will map existing and emerging transport services, identify innovative practices, and establish a network of active and sustainable travel options. It will promote resource-sharing and replication of successful models, such as lift sharing, bike hire, transport interchange hubs, community minibuses, community-run Demand Response Transportation, or community-owned public transport initiatives. A robust and inclusive community engagement programme will ensure that community voices shape the process and the solutions based on their own experiences. As each community is unique, the work will evolve differently in each area, with some moving quickly to set up test initiatives, whilst others will use the time to explore what the communities need and want.

This foundational initiative will act as a catalyst for future transport innovations, including shared mobility models, local transport hubs, digital tools, and capacity-building for local partners. Ultimately, Connecting Clydesdale will generate a strong evidence base to inform future action, ensuring that transport solutions are not only efficient and cost-effective, but also equitable, inclusive, and community-led.