

# Annual Review 2022-23



## Introduction

Despite the pressures felt within our communities, SWRCCS continues to deliver our promise to get people to where they want to go. All this through the dedicated service of volunteers as drivers and telephonists, ensuring that local residents can make it to their appointments, see friends and family, get their prescriptions delivered to their doors and access the services they require such as opticians, dentists and hospitals where and when they want it. It is a measure of the dedication of individuals in the communities we live in that despite the pressures faced, we are still able to deliver transport for those who need it.

The cost of living crisis has meant that the prices have increased alarmingly over the year. Petrol prices, in particular, have risen dramatically and yet despite our best efforts, HMRC rates of allowable expenses have remained the same. So, volunteers are put in a position where they have to carry the burden of that additional cost without the appropriate re-imburement. SWRCCS would like to be able to increase the rate but that would also mean additional tax implications for all volunteers which would put people off volunteering. SWRCCS continues to lobby the government on this issue working with the Community Transport Association and others to try and ensure that volunteers get a fair deal and are re-imbursed adequately for their volunteering.

After Covid, hospitals in the area are starting to play catch up and even arranging Sunday appointments to address the backlog. For SWRCCS and its volunteers this means additional runs to get people there. Other services that once existed in the area, such as dentists and opticians, no longer practice here and so residents have to go further afield to access these services and yes, it is volunteers and SWRCCS who are asked to deliver the transport to get them there where no appropriate public transport exists.

**Our records show that SWRCCS drivers have travelled a huge 26,067 miles during this year of which 18,308 miles were travelled with a passenger in the car getting them to wherever they needed to be.**

**1542 deliveries have been made to doorsteps including prescriptions and lunches throughout our area.**

**A massive achievement.**

## Volunteers

So, the effect of these external pressures for SWRCCS is that the number of journeys is up, the number of longer journeys is up and even the number of journeys requested at short notice is up. But thankfully, the number of volunteers is also up as people see the benefits and value of SWRCCS and the work it does and want to get involved. They are also aware of the pressures on residents

and want to help and that without them volunteering and delivering the transport needed, the pressures would be felt even more.

The commitment and dedication of our volunteers, as drivers, telephonists and board members has enabled us to continue to provide this essential service to our communities. Giving their time, the use of their cars or telephones, donating and sharing a friendly conversation and smile all make SWRCCS' work hugely valued in the community. Long may it continue! A big 'thank you' to you all.

Our volunteers offer their time, telephones and cars for the benefit of the local community. This year a number of new volunteers have offered their services as drivers or bicycle riders! Many of our volunteers continue to be involved to benefit themselves through having that feeling of being useful, they report that volunteering develops strong relationships with people in their communities, provides a feeling of connectedness and purpose. All this and the benefits for the users of the service! Volunteering is certainly a win win! SWRCCS now has a total of 46 volunteer drivers and 10 telephonists.

Huge thanks for all their work in the past go to Rosie Arthur and Teresa Mitchell who both stepped down as telephonists.

Our telephonists have been giving regular calls to many users and other residents to check in on them. The recipients of these calls have very much appreciated hearing a kindly voice and the opportunity to chat and catch up.

SWRCCS is always actively seeking new volunteers and with the increase in the number of runs needed we could certainly do with more drivers and in particular telephonists to ease the burden on the current volunteers. To be a telephonist you just need an empathetic ear and a phone - although access to a computer can help as well. Get in touch if you feel you can offer even one shift a month, it all helps!

As one of the volunteers have said:

*"Thanks for organising the social last night. It was very enjoyable and we had a chance to chat, catch up and indeed meet for the first time!"*

## Users

Living in such a remote and beautiful part of the country is often a pleasure, but if you are elderly or living alone, it can also be isolating and getting to appointments that are further and further away to access the medical support you need can be a challenge. So, it is with great appreciation that users of the car scheme take up the lifts that are given to them by SWRCCS and its volunteers. They often tell us about how they can rest easy knowing they will be able to get to an appointment, that the volunteers are helpful and kind and that without the car scheme providing the service, they may not have been able to access the treatment they need to continue to live in the area independently. As one of them said:-

*"That's great, I can have my breakfast without worrying about how I would get to the scan!"*

## Car Runs

SWRCCS drivers have continued to deliver prescriptions and get people to medical appointments at local medical practices, hospitals, opticians, dentists, audiologists and the list goes on. Although some are relatively local (about a 15 mile round trip), many involve journeys of 120 plus miles to get to hospital appointments and to access other services. This year we have also resumed social runs and increasingly runs to access connections to public transport as people feel more comfortable getting together and being within larger groups.

The car runs table shows that our volunteers have delivered 688 journeys and our telephonists have organised 739 – an average of nearly 62 every month and an increase of 14.6% over the year.

2022/2023									
	Organised Regular	Organised Hospital	Delivery Runs	Total	No of deliveries	No driver available	Cancelled by passenger	Completed journeys	%age increase organised runs
April	8	15	30	53	149	1	3	49	-18.5%
May	10	14	33	57	134	0	3	54	0.0%
Jun	16	10	38	64	194	0	4	59	1.6%
July	14	11	32	57	150	0	4	53	0.0%
August	21	7	36	64	112	0	4	60	20.8%
September	14	13	35	62	133	0	3	59	8.8%
October	18	11	33	62	130	0	2	59	3.3%
November	19	16	36	71	111	1	3	67	47.9%
December	24	16	18	58	125	2	6	50	87.1%
January	17	16	26	59	71	1	7	49	31.1%
February	15	13	32	60	122	1	1	58	17.6%
March	26	9	37	72	111	0	1	71	24.1%
<b>Year to date</b>	<b>202</b>	<b>151</b>	<b>386</b>	<b>739</b>	<b>1542</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>688</b>	<b>14.6%</b>

## Coordinator

It is a privilege to work as the coordinator and be able to be in regular touch with so many people from the communities SWRCCS serves. With the support of the board the job is made much easier and even more enjoyable! I liaise with many local organisations and am looking to get more involved with local development plans and other initiatives that are happening in the area. I have also been involved more in national lobbying with the local MSP, MP and Community Transport Association in calling for an increase in allowable expenses rates determined by HMRC to recompense volunteers better for the journeys they undertake.

SWRCCS also helped out with the administration of an e-bike loan scheme with Energy Savings Trust and Torridon & Kinlochewe Community Council. This enabled a number of local residents to access an e-bike to test it out and have a go in view of possibly getting one in the future to get around locally.

## Governance

The Board have worked hard over the year to ensure that the charity and the company adheres to all the statutory requirements and fulfils the objectives of the organisation laid down in its constitution. In order to develop the organisation we are in the process of becoming a SCIO (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation) which will involve adopting a new constitution and new reporting systems to OSCR and will simplify the structure of the organisation. It will also put the organisation more firmly in the hands of its members and the system of how to become a member will be more clearly defined. An Extraordinary General Meeting will look further into the issue and vote on the way forward.

Other developments have been discussed and evaluated such as the feasibility of having a community vehicle and supporting larger groups to access transport to get to events in different places. These discussions are ongoing and have involved other local partners so watch this space!

## Funding

SWRCCS continues to be supported by our core funders, the Highland Council and NHS Highland. Although the funding from NHS Highland continues, we will have to apply for continued funding from the Highland Council this year. However, we are pleased that the communication and relationship with the Highland Council is better than ever and are hopeful that funding will be available.

There has also been an increase in donations which have come from users of the scheme, drivers and from other sources such as the Hickman Trust, individual supporters and the sale of the famous tea towels!

## Linking in with other organisations

SWRCCS continues to value working closely with other organisation; sharing good practice, sharing responses and solutions to different scenarios and listening to people about their needs and ways in which we can support our communities. This year we have worked with a number of different organisations including:-

Community Transport Association (Scotland)	Highland Third Sector Interface
Local Community Councils	Volunteer Scotland
Shieldaig Parents Group	Skye & Lochaber Council for Voluntary Organisations
Energy Savings Trust	

We have also been fortunate to have strong and growing relationships with local community councils, medical practices, the Howard Doris Centre and other local organisations. Our strong

relationships have meant that we can be more responsive and meet the needs of our local communities appropriately and respond quickly to local needs.

## Challenges

SWRCCS is stronger than ever through the efforts of the board, the volunteers and with the support of our funders, local residents and organisations. The need is greater than ever and the ability to respond to that need appropriately remains solidly in place. There will be further challenges and as ever the environment in which we work, will change and develop over the next year. Even the condition of the roads continues to have an effect on our journeys and therefore directly impacting on the service we are able to deliver. But SWRCCS will continue to ride over the potholes and rough patches to ensure that we continue to deliver the transport so badly needed in the area.

Finally, as always, the challenge to support both volunteers and users to access the services they need remains at the heart of what we do and long may that continue and improve.