

# HCL

Handicabs (Lothian)

## HCL: Our Story

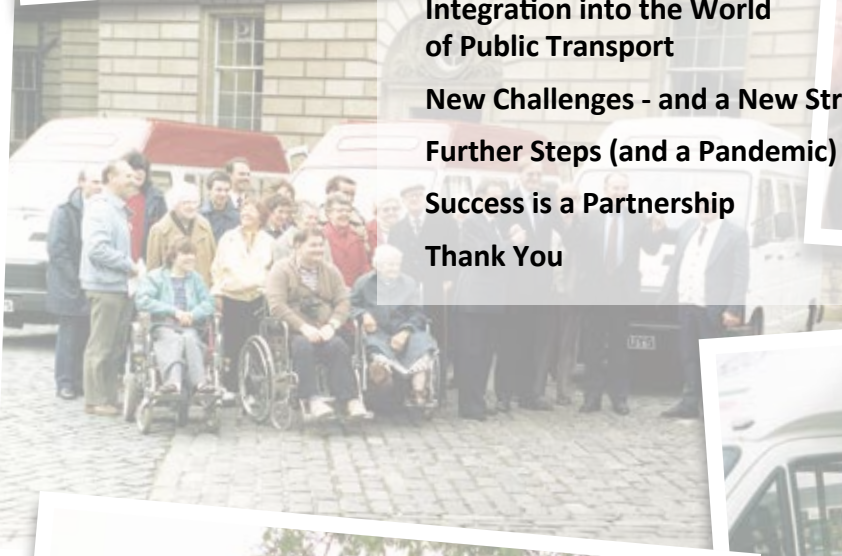
## The First 40 Years





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# Introduction

On 9th November 2022, HcL (Handicabs Lothian) celebrated its 40th birthday. This booklet tells our story as we celebrate this anniversary; but we also look to the future. Over such a timescale any third sector organisation sees many changes but the reason we exist remains constant - how to best meet the transport needs of disabled people and others with mobility challenges. One of those changes is in our name, for our first 17 years we were simply called Handicabs (Lothian) but in 2009 our trading name changed to HcL.

HcL is one of the biggest and most highly regarded community transport services in Scotland. We are a registered charity and limited company serving Edinburgh and the Lothians across 4 council areas. While our work has developed over the years as we shall see, our main services continue to be the door-to-door 'Dial-A-Ride' and, from 1990, 'Dial-A-Bus' operations.

Dial-A-Ride has always been at the heart of HcL services, offering people travel to where they want to go, when they want to go - potentially 7 days a week, 365 days a year; subject of course to availability. Dial-A-Bus provides regular trips to pre-determined shopping centres and supermarkets at set times, operating as a 'semi-scheduled' (but still door-to-door) bus service.

All services offer not only a door-to-door service but also what we call 'door-through-door' assistance: meaning that drivers support passengers as required, for example carrying the shopping inside, or help with coats and keys. It is a personal service, based on the passenger's needs.



# Beginnings



HCL was born from the International Year of Disabled People (IYDP) designated by the United Nations in 1981. Of course, at that time, mainstream public transport services - buses, trains and taxis - were almost universally physically inaccessible to most disabled people. Local bus services typically had high floors with steps to negotiate. Lifts were rare at railway stations and taxis could not carry a wheelchair user.

In the years preceding IYDP, the emerging global disability movement began to question and challenge the systemic exclusion of disabled people from all aspects of life. Of course, transport is a key enabler of being able to do so - and the absence of viable options a key barrier. In the UK, inspiration was drawn from the developing disability rights movement in the USA and from Europe, especially Sweden where inclusive public transport systems were developing. International Conferences on

Transport for Elderly and Disabled Persons were held at Cambridge University in April 1978 and again in 1981 (these became the 'TRANSED' conferences, still meeting every 4 years.)

Across the UK, early attempts to provide accessible transport options were pioneered by voluntary organisations. In the mid-1980s, the Greater London Council began to develop a comprehensive network of 'Dial-A-Ride' services across London as well as a 'Taxicard' scheme which discounted taxi fares for disabled people. In major urban centres such as Birmingham and Manchester, similar 'Ring'n'Ride' operations began and in Glasgow the Strathclyde Passenger Transport Executive launched its Dial-A-Bus service. In urban areas, at least, it appeared that transport authorities began to accept the proposition that some specific services were needed for disabled people who were excluded from mainstream public transport services.

Aspirations grew to start a Dial-A-Ride type service in Edinburgh and the Lothians. Edinburgh had in fact pioneered some of the first accessible transport initiatives in the UK, with Edinburgh Voluntary Transport (later to become Lothian Community Transport Services) launching a 'minicab service' using 2 converted wheelchair accessible vehicles in 1976. From December 1979, the 'Edinburgh Cripple Aid Society' (now renamed simply ECAS) developed an innovative partnership with local taxi firm Radiocabs, which provided disabled people with 'chits' to use on the new Metrocab taxis which were designed for wheelchair access. This scheme was later replaced by Lothian Taxicard. In this context, the Lothian Liaison Committee for the Disabled (LLCD) decided in 1979 to mark the approaching 1981 IYDP by setting up a Dial-A-Ride type service in the Lothians. A fundraising programme was developed to raise funds to appoint a full-time coordinator to plan activities for IYDP in the Lothians and

£60,000 was raised over the following 2 years. George Masterton was appointed to lead the programme.

In order to set up the scheme, extensive collaboration was required across voluntary and public agencies, involving not only the Regional Council but also the Scottish Office, 4 district councils in the Lothians and numerous health, transport and social work networks. As is still often the case today, establishing a multi-agency consensus on responsibilities to organise - and fund! - a new transport scheme was no easy task. Much of this was led by Alan Rees, Assistant Director of the Edinburgh Council for Social Service (now EVOC), who was to play a leading and lasting role in HcL's development. Another pivotal figure in assembling the coalition of support was Dr Frank Stewart, a Bathgate GP who became the first Chairman of HcL. The energy and persistence of these key individuals was vital to the project's success.



By February 1982 the LLCD had defined the project aim as "to build on the experience gained in Edinburgh by mounting an enlarged Dial-A-Ride service in an action research project for a 3-year period throughout Lothian Region with a view to the service becoming a permanent feature of overall transport policies within the area". As plans were made to launch the service, the name of the new service was agreed.

Alan Rees wrote to Dr Frank Stewart on 6th May 1982: "It would be nice if we could agree on a name for the service to include in the draft Memorandum and Articles of Association and to this end would seek your views in advance. The name needs to have 2 elements, a) one that can be used by the public, is memorable and has appeal, and b) one that is appropriate as a trading name on formal documents. The 2 elements can be separated or rolled into one, the latter being preferable. I put forward several suggestions including some already bandied about such as "Homebound Transport Limited" and "Door to Door Transport Limited". Another was "Maxicabs for Disabled People". However,

the one I would favour is "Handicabs (Lothian) Ltd"

During 1982, a business plan with a £50,000 budget was finalised and 6 vehicles purchased, at a cost of £72,000. While management staff were paid from project funds, drivers and administrative personnel were funded by the Manpower Services Commission - the government agency providing temporary jobs for long term unemployed people. Handicabs (Lothian) Ltd was officially launched at Lothian Regional Council Chambers in Edinburgh on 9th November 1982.





# The Early Years

The Dial-A-Ride service was an immediate success, as disabled people found out about this new form of transport that offered personal mobility. HcL could take you anywhere you want, at any time! This was a complete game-changer for many disabled people, especially for those who had no access to a private car as options had largely been confined to trips to day centres and medical appointments provided by welfare and ambulance services. Some 4,000 trips were carried out in HcL's first year and the service grew steadily in these initial years, under the first manager John Goodman followed in quick succession by Bill Hogg, John Simpson and then Wayne Pearson. HcL initially operated out of its official registered address at 11 Colme Street in Edinburgh's New Town, but this was not a suitable site for a transport operation and premises were soon rented at 14 Braefoot Terrace, Liberton. Operational bases for drivers, vehicles and booking staff were also set up initially in Bathgate, Gorebridge and Haddington for West Lothian, Midlothian and

East Lothian respectively. Later (1986) the Astley Ainslie Hospital became the HQ. The East Lothian and Midlothian bases were merged into Dalkeith premises in 1985 and subsequently, merged again with Edinburgh operations.

Early vehicles were mostly adapted vans, such as the Renault Traffic favoured by early Dial-A-Ride operations because of a relatively high ceiling, allowing wheelchair users to remain seated. Passenger access was either through a side door, or at the back, via a ramp for the many wheelchair users among HcL's passengers. Over time a more diverse range of vehicles came to be used on services.

In 1985 however, HcL faced its first major funding crisis. It was announced that the Manpower Services Commission, which funded drivers and administrative staff was to be wound up, which would mean HcL's funding model became unsustainable. Urgent representations, backed up by evidence of the success of the enterprise, were made to the Public Transport Authority, Lothian Regional Council (LRC) - which agreed to take over all revenue funding from April 1988.



# Integration into the World of Public Transport



This was a key milestone in HcL's history and a major factor in ensuring HcL's lasting success. All staff were placed on permanent contracts for the first time. Settled funding from the Public Transport Authority not only provided a secure financial basis for the long term, but it also cemented HcL's role as a recognised part of the 'public transport mix'. Until this time, HcL had largely been a project of the third sector, with support from health and social work 'welfare' networks.

1985 also saw the passing of Nicholas Ridley's Transport Act, which had as its central purpose the deregulation and privatisation of bus services. However, the Act also introduced a new licensing environment for community transport operators. HcL's services were now operated under so-called 'Section 19 permits' which exempted transport operators from some of the regulations normally required of public transport operators; but also placed certain constraints on what a service could do. Notably, passengers were restricted to a special group,

rather than the general public and services were excluded from concessionary travel schemes. This meant that passengers could not benefit from discounted - or in Scotland - free travel using a National Entitlement Card.

The new accountability to Lothian Regional Council also meant a more explicit expectation that HcL would contribute to LRC's wider priorities, not least in demonstrating 'value for money'. This was one reason for the launch of the 'Dial-A-Bus' service in 1990, a concept promoted by LRC to increase the number of passengers on journeys and therefore reduce cost per trip. Unlike Dial-A-Ride, Dial-A-Bus offered passengers a trip to a designated local shopping centre or supermarket once or twice a week on a heavily branded bus-type service, still from the passenger's home, but with a set choice of time and destination.

HcL were asked by Lothian Region Council to operate Dial-A-Bus under a formal Service Level Agreement setting out performance targets and standards for a set level of grant aid. It was an

endorsement of HcL's management that LRC chose to partner with HcL in providing this service rather than, as was becoming increasingly common for a wide range of council services, procuring a service through competitive tender.

Like the initial Dial-A-Ride service 10 years before, Dial-A-Bus was also an immediate success. It attracted a new user group, especially older people who were typically more mobile than HcL's usual customers (with few wheel-chair users for example) but who also valued a door-through-door service with the assurance of a helpful driver. Initially, Dial-A-Bus used a concept low-floor 'Omni' vehicle, which had excellent passenger accessibility. Unfortunately, this wasn't matched by reliability and was soon replaced by more traditional minibuses.

Under these circumstances, HcL services largely prospered and grew through the 1990s, with passenger numbers growing steadily. Over 100,000 passenger trips were made each year between the 2 main services by the millennium. HcL came to be regarded as one of the most successful and high-quality Dial-A-Ride services



and almost certainly the biggest third sector transport provider of its type in Scotland.

Looking back from the perspective of 2022, it is remarkable that local authorities at the time had both the ambition and the funds to support not only HcL's growing Dial-A-Ride service but also new and emerging transport like Dial-A-Bus. HcL also benefited from LRC capital grants for vehicle replacement, which were a constant operational need, with vehicles averaging around 50,000 miles each year, and typically needing replacement after 3 years. Credit should be recorded to the transport conveners of Lothian Regional Council at the time (particularly Cllr Ron Muir of West Lothian and then Cllr David Begg in Edinburgh) for recognising the value of this investment of public funds.





HcL always remained at the heart of Lothian's 'multimodel approach' to promoting accessible transport (which increasingly also included initiatives to improve the accessibility of taxis, buses and rail). This led to Lothian Regional Council receiving the inaugural Equality Award from the European Commission in Scotland in 1995 in recognition of its work.

However, another potential threat to HcL's stability - and potentially even its future - arrived in the form of Local Government reform in 1996. Through the Local Government etc. (Scotland) 1994 Act, unitary Councils were to replace the two-tier system of Regional and District Councils. This would mean the abolition of HcL's main funder, Lothian Regional Council.

In the event for HcL, the transition to the new local authority structures proved relatively seamless. Arrangements for transferring responsibilities to the new Councils involved many complexities carried out at lightning pace, and for the time being, the new Councils agreed to maintain joint funding of the full range of accessible and concessionary transport services. This included Taxicard, Lothian Community Transport Services as well as HcL's Dial-A-Bus and Dial-A-Ride services, with the City of Edinburgh Council acting as lead authority.

This enabled HcL services to continue virtually unchanged during the transition. Over time, however, inevitably the 4 new Councils began to assert their own policy and budget priorities.

For HcL, capital funding for vehicle replacement became increasingly difficult to secure from Council sources and revenue funding was also squeezed, resulting in real term cuts.

Nevertheless, HcL succeeded in broadly maintaining operations and staffing levels across the Lothians, with increased reliance on charitable trusts especially for vehicle replacement.

Another vital component of the funding comes from Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG), formerly 'Fuel Duty Rebate' which is paid by the Scottish Government to eligible bus services.

Some new initiatives in response to local priorities were also developed such as the 'Handicabs East Lothian Project' (HELP). This provided additional resources to rural East Lothian communities, jointly funded by East Lothian Council and the National Lotteries Charities Board from 1997 to 2003. In West Lothian a new 'HealthLink' service started with NHS and Council funding initially to address persisting problems accessing the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, and later also encompassing the Western General and St John's hospitals. Nonetheless, Dial-A-Ride and Dial-A-Bus services continued to form the core of HcL services, despite pressures of rising costs and static (indeed, in real terms declining) funding. HcL ridership across all services peaked around 2004, when some 10,000 passenger trips were made every month on all services.

# New Challenges - and a New Strategy

However, for HcL 'business as usual' increasingly appeared to be an unsustainable position for the longer term. While many disabled people had virtually no alternative mobility options when HcL was launched, 30 years later trains, taxis and buses had greatly improved accessibility. The passing of the Disability Discrimination Acts in 1995 and especially 2005 (which rectified the omission of transport from the initial DDA) led to public transport slowly becoming more accessible. Perhaps most significantly, the low floor bus began to replace traditional high-floor vehicles from the late 1990s on and had become the norm in Edinburgh by 2010. This was a game-changer for many disabled people, including wheelchair users - if they could get to the bus stop!

Uptake of the motability car lease scheme across the UK had also increased markedly from around 20,000 when HcL was launched to more than 500,000 by 2010. With disabled people becoming less dependent on community transport, the use of Dial-A-Ride type services levelled off and began to fall across the UK. By 2014, HcL passenger numbers were some 20% lower than the peak a decade earlier. At the same time, concerns about the environment and climate change were increasingly becoming the top strategic issue facing the transport landscape. Low Emission Zones were mooted for city centres and there was rising interest in cutting private car mileage and increasing active travel. Services based on carrying passengers in diesel vans looked increasingly out of step. Aside from changes in the world of passenger transport, disabled people also looked to have greater control over services which they receive through person-centred funding mechanisms such as 'self-directed support'. HcL services needed to adapt and evolve.

In 2014, Kelvin Cochrane replaced the long-serving Wayne Pearson as Chief Executive Officer. One of Kelvin's first initiatives was to commission the first formal corporate strategy





for HcL, to provide a framework for how HcL would address future challenges. This resulted in the publication of 'Opening Doors' which essentially had the twin priorities of how to not only maintain HcL's core services, but also to modernise HcL. This meant considering opportunities to meet the transport needs of disabled people and others with mobility challenges in new ways and embracing the wider social and environmental context of transport policy.

In 2015, HcL finally moved its headquarters out of the Astley Ainslie Hospital to new premises in the Bilston Glen Industrial Estate in Midlothian which was well positioned for operations in the wider Lothians area especially to East Lothian and Midlothian.

In 2018, Muriel Williams, Chair of HcL's Executive Committee since 2001, stood down to be replaced by the current chair, Dr Kenneth Brown. HcL was very proud that in November 2021 Muriel was the recipient of the UK Community Transport Association Lifetime Achievement Award for recognition for over 25 years voluntary service to Community Transport.

The Executive Committee is the governing body of HcL and, in line with the principle of 'nothing about us without us', must have a majority of disabled people and people with mobility challenges among its membership. The governance of HcL has been remarkably stable over such a long period, with only 5 chairs of the Executive Committee since its inception: Dr Frank Stewart, Professor Jim Hughes, Alan Rees OBE, as well as Muriel and now Kenneth. This might be a timely place to also note and record our thanks to the many volunteers who have served on the Executive Committee over the years. HcL has been especially fortunate in the service provided by our dedicated professional treasurers - notably the late Ronnie Sinclair and more recently Jaslin Bhagrath.



# Further Steps (and a Pandemic)

In the spirit of 'Opening Doors', HcL developed a number of new initiatives. In Edinburgh, the Council was looking to community transport providers to provide more help with transport to voluntary sector day centres and clubs. HcL entered into a 'Public Social Partnership' with the Council alongside other community transport providers: Pilton Equalities Project, South Edinburgh Amenities Group, Lothian Community Transport Services and the Dove Centre. Then in 2021, a new strategic plan was introduced 'Reducing Inequalities, Increasing Mobility' which covers the period from 2021 through to 2026.

Another innovation associated with the new approach was initiating a town service for residential areas in Broxburn for the general public under a 'Section 22' Community Bus permit. HcL also converted Dial-A-Bus services to operate under Community Bus permits, piloted in West Lothian under the new name 'WlcomBus' (West Lothian Community Bus). The crucial difference for passengers was that this would admit HcL services to national

concessionary travel scheme, enabling eligible Dial-A-Bus passengers to travel free.

In March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic suddenly brought public transport to a standstill and HcL services were no exception.

In addition, to the effects on the health and well-being of our passengers, the pandemic had of course a major impact on HcL itself. But while most of our drivers were furloughed as



Dial-A-Bus and day centre transport ceased, Dial-A-Ride remained operational, albeit limited in accordance with Government guidelines. At the same time, a whole range of new needs emerged overnight. HcL was able to respond to these quickly and with great flexibility. In particular, we initially focused our resources on providing transport for people with urgent hospital or medical appointments that the NHS had not cancelled and for people attending funerals.

We were also concerned about our passengers and whether everyone could manage to access food deliveries, especially with Dial-A-Bus services suspended. As early as the 15th of April 2020, we began working with the SCRAN Academy (a catering social enterprise in Edinburgh). We assisted in delivering over 120,000 meals up to the end of August with 5 drivers covering 3 days a week. As a result of this work, we were very proud to win (along with SCRAN Academy and Pilton Equalities Project) the Community Transport Association Partnership of the Year Award in 2021.



Also almost immediately, we supported Tea J's in Armadale to deliver lunches to older and disabled people. HcL helped deliver over 50 meals per day, 5 days a week to Armadale, Whitburn, Bathgate, Blackridge, Westrigg and Westfield. We supported the Boghall Drop-In Centre to deliver food packages one day a week to local people who were vulnerable, isolating or shielding. We also delivered for the Larder Cook School in West Lothian on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays delivering over 160 meals per day.



In Edinburgh, we worked with the Food Project delivering food parcels to HcL passengers in Edinburgh and across the Lothians. We were an active member of the Midlothian COVID-19 Forum, through which we received referrals for health transport from Midlothian Council, East Lothian Council and the Red Cross.

As the pandemic persisted, HcL continued to play a vital role, pivoting services towards high priority needs notably the national vaccination effort. We offered free travel to vaccination centres for anyone who needed it; a genuine lifeline service given that many disabled people felt (and indeed were) at high clinical risk. Adopting the highest standards of sanitation, ventilation and personal protective equipment, HcL enabled hundreds of people to access vaccination centres who would otherwise have struggled to gain immunisation. From January 2021 till June 2022, we completed over 2,000 passenger journeys.

Through the Edinburgh Community Transport Organisations Group (ECTO) we also provided 56 Edinburgh Care Homes with vaccination transport for nurses and PPE to vaccinate residents and we provided over 1,000 journeys for nurses to vaccinate people in their own homes.

By the summer 2022, all HcL services resumed although, like regular service buses, passenger levels for most services were yet to reach pre-pandemic levels. As with regular bus travel



too, many passengers were cautious about returning to a multi-occupancy environment where they felt at risk. Together with changes such as increasing work from home and online shopping, the long-term effects of the pandemic are still unclear. However, a pointer to the future may lie in the success of the WLCOMBus, where with passengers enjoying free travel, user numbers have recovered strongly, now exceeding pre-pandemic levels. Throughout the past 40 years at HcL, we know that our staff and volunteers are what make the service - from our despatchers speaking to people, to our drivers supporting our passengers, to our operational management ensuring our resources are where they need to be and our small core staff behind the scenes all working together as a team. After an extremely challenging 18 months through the COVID lockdowns we were delighted to have everyone back supporting our local communities. In February 2022, we were also proud to become a Living Wage Accredited Employer. We continue to promote the importance of volunteering

recently extending the advertising of our volunteer opportunities.

Recognising that local authority funding remains highly constrained for the foreseeable future, HcL has increasingly focused on generating non-council income, appointing a part-time Fundraising Officer and Service Development Manager. Ongoing support has been provided by cultivating relationships with influential third sector bodies including the Robertson and Cranfield Trusts. Working with partners will continue to grow in importance both financially and in service delivery.





As well as operating transport to day centres, adult learning centres and centres for children with complex needs on behalf of The City of Edinburgh Council, we recently developed our transport support for the third sector including community provision for older people, people living with dementia and other disadvantaged groups. We have also secured small funding awards from sources such as the Volunteer Centre East Lothian, Social Isolation Fund and from Enliven Edinburgh from the Edinburgh Wellbeing Pact in order to provide day trips for passengers with mobility challenges who

continue to feel the impact of COVID and to be socially isolated.

While local authorities have increasingly faced constrained budgets, not all changes in the funding environment have been negative: in 2020, HcL secured £170,000 from Transport Scotland to upgrade 17 vehicles to Euro 6 standard and we are also exploring funding options for further innovation, for example through the “Mobility as a Service” and “Digital Transformation” funding schemes. A key challenge - and opportunity - for the coming years will be transforming

the vehicle fleet to low and zero emission buses, contributing its part to the goal of decarbonising transport, in line with Glasgow COP 26 commitments.

Looking ahead, HcL has the capacity and flexibility to respond to changing political and social changes, and to develop services as needs change. With a National Transport Strategy having a central aim of ‘reducing inequalities’ with the ‘just transition’ at its heart, services which take a person-centred approach to meeting disabled people’s mobility needs will surely continue to be valued.



# Success is a Partnership

Our success continues to rely upon the partnership of the commitment of our staff and volunteers and the loyalty of our passengers. Here we present just a flavour:



## Neil Young: Driver

Neil has worked as a driver for HcL for 4 years having previously worked in various driving jobs and was a delivery driver for Asda before coming to work for us. Neil enjoys working at HcL having the opportunity to work across different services he has driven for both our Dial-A-Bus and Dial-A-Ride services and particularly enjoys Dial-A-Ride getting to see different people and different places "the variety is always good and interesting".

Neil was one of the 3 drivers who worked throughout the COVID lockdown, quickly adapting to the demands of our new essential provision. Neil was involved in delivering hot meals but more than that also providing some social contact and a friendly face to people who were the most isolated and vulnerable. He also provided the transport for people to get their free vaccination appointment journeys and for nurses to get out into communities to vaccinate people in their homes. Neil explained that although at times these new services could be challenging particularly in the cold winter weather and snow(!), he was pleased to be involved and it was "really good to know that the help we were providing was important and making a difference for people".

Neil is always keen to be involved in different

things and has enjoyed the opportunity to be part of our Green Committee looking at the environmental aspects of the organisation along with other staff and a Board member. He feels confident giving his opinion and be involved in discussions.

Neil explained that he enjoys popping into the office, phoning in or taking part in meetings because everyone is approachable and helpful "there is an open atmosphere in the office which makes it a good place to work" and "it's good to be able to have a chat and ask questions".

Even though Neil worked during the COVID restrictions he says it was very odd not to see other staff and he has been happy to get back to normal seeing other people and all of our passengers again.

## Kirsty Kinnaird: Despatcher/Finance Assistant

Kirsty has worked for HcL for 6 years as a Despatcher/Finance Assistant but her connection goes back much further as her mum was one of our drivers starting with us 30 years ago before Kirsty was even born!

Before leaving school, Kirsty completed both her bronze and silver Duke of Edinburgh Awards and then went on to work as a receptionist at Macsweens and as a full-time carer before coming to work at HcL. Kirsty really



enjoys working for us, particularly having the experience of working both as a Despatcher and in the admin office as our Finance Assistant. Kirsty explained that she enjoys taking calls in her Despatcher role as it gives her the opportunity to speak to passengers and if people phone regularly, she “gets to know people, hear their stories and have a chat”. In her role as Finance Assistant, Kirsty has the opportunity to be involved in other aspects of the organisation and to develop her skills. She is particularly grateful that HcL are giving her the chance to undertake a 2-year AAT level 3 & 4 accounting course and she is delighted to have recently passed her first exams. Kirsty explained that there is a really relaxed atmosphere in the office which makes it a good place to work and there is an effort to make staff feel involved and learn about what else is happening in the organisation.

Kirsty was furloughed for a year during the COVID restrictions and says that the best thing about getting back was the reactions of our passengers “hearing how happy people were and the difference our support makes to getting people out and about”. It’s good getting back to providing that service for people” she said.

**Margaret Purdie:  
Passenger and Board Member**

Margaret has been living in retirement housing in Bathgate for the past 12 years. She is a wheelchair user and uses HcL transport to get out and about. Here she tells us a little bit about herself and what she thinks of our services.



Margaret started using our services 18 years ago when she started experiencing mobility challenges due to her osteoporosis and arthritis. Although finding things difficult at this time she was much more mobile and able to walk and so she used our services occasionally particularly because of the “excellent support from the drivers”.

Unfortunately, 8 years ago Margaret had a serious fall which resulted in her breaking her neck and then a complicated operation and lengthy stay in hospital. Since this time, Margaret’s mobility has been much more restricted, she now uses a wheelchair permanently and is unable to walk without falling. It is important to Margaret however to be as active as possible and to maintain her independence, she says HcL plays an important role in this.

Margaret now uses our Dial-A-Ride service regularly, she travels with us to her dentist appointments, the beauty salon and to meet her friend in Livingston. Margaret explained that she never worries about her Dial-A-Ride journeys as “everything always goes to plan” and everyone is so helpful. “Phoning to speak to Frances or Gary is always so easy”. Margaret also organises group outings in the summer for the residents at her retirement housing and always uses HcL for the transport because “the buses are always comfortable, and it is a pleasure to be on board”. HcL has taken the groups far and wide including Ratho Barge trips, Klondyke & Roseburn Garden Centres and Benny T’s Fish & Chips. Margaret explained how much she missed our service during the COVID lockdowns and how glad she was when we got back to normal. Margaret said she always recommends HcL to her neighbours “I’m always advertising your wonderful services”.

**Ann & Nick Le Marechal: Passengers**

On 23rd September 2022, we had the great privilege of providing the wedding transport from Drummond Grange Care Home to the beautiful Melville Castle for Ann and Nick Le Marechal. Here Ann and Nick explain why they chose to use our bus on their special day.

Ann and Nick have been using our services, particularly Dial-A-Ride, for a number of years including medical appointments, social occasions and holidays to North Berwick.



They explained that our through-the-door service was invaluable for Ann getting out and about both from home and now from Drummond Grange.

Nick also said that they always have “peace of mind as HCL transport is always good, comfortable and reliable” and this is the reason that they chose us for the transport on their wedding day. They were delighted with our service, the bus looked great and the effort of Gary, the driver looking so smart in his suit made the transport perfect!

Ann and Nick have been to lots of places over the years including summer trips to concerts, the Botanic & the Secret Herb Garden in Midlothian. They also have a winter journey planned to see the Snow Queen at the Festival Theatre.

Ann and Nick explained that HCL “drivers are always helpful, pleasant and punctual” and they are looking forward to lots of journeys with us in the future.

## Thank You

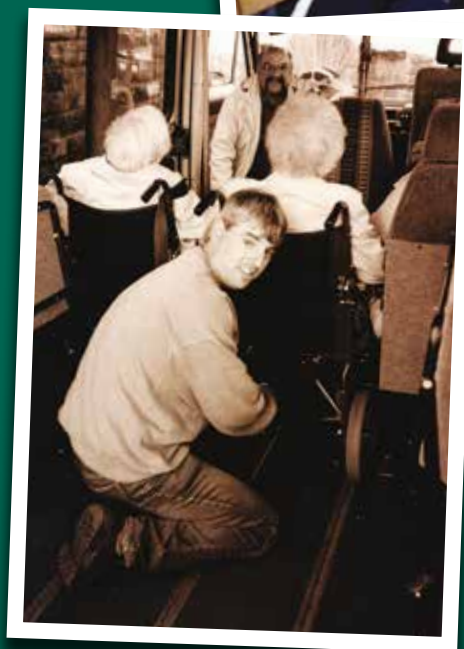
*HCL's Trustees would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has supported HCL throughout the past 40 years including Kelvin Cochrane (Chief Executive), every member of staff, volunteers, passengers and of course for all of the funding that we have received and continue to*

*receive through grants, trusts, funding agreements and donations particularly the constant and ongoing support of The City of Edinburgh Council, East Lothian Council, Midlothian Council, West Lothian Council and the Scottish Government.*

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