

Charity Story

PACTO

Pembrokeshire Association of
Community Transport
Organisations



About PACTO



The **Pembrokeshire Association of Community Transport Organisations (PACTO)** was established in 2004 to support community transport provision across the county. As an umbrella organisation, PACTO represents community transport operators with a remit to provide guidance and support in vehicle procurement, training, volunteer recruitment, marketing, best practice guidance, funding, infrastructure support, and project leadership.

The challenge

Community transport is a vital service for rural areas like Pembrokeshire, but the sector faces significant challenges. Like many third sector organisations, community transport operators often have limited capacity, with dedicated teams stretched across operational delivery, governance, and strategic planning.

With funding from the **Motability Foundation**, PACTO launched a transformation project to improve sustainability across the community transport sector in Pembrokeshire. **Wyndham Williams**, who leads the transformation project, recognised that PACTO and its member organisations needed external expertise to address challenges around strategic direction, financial sustainability, impact measurement, leadership and people management.

Wyndham explains: "Community transport is a very niche sector. Organisations are often grant dependent, and with limited resources, the focus tends to be on day-to-day operations rather than long-term strategic development."



Working with Cranfield Trust

PACTO contacted **Cranfield Trust** for support around long-term sustainability. Wyndham initially worked with a Cranfield Trust mentor, which helped him see the potential for wider support across the sector: "Once I got to grips with what Cranfield Trust could do, I said, well, these guys can be vital, and really important for the operators."

The partnership expanded to include consultation projects with several of PACTO's member organisations, using Cranfield Trust's Journey to Excellence diagnostic tool to identify skills gaps and develop action plans.

Nicola Russell-Brooks, Wales Manager at Cranfield Trust, notes: "The challenges in this sector reflect the wider third sector challenges: capacity to govern and lead effectively with dedicated, passionate trustees, volunteers and staff, but too few to manage the amount of work that has to be done, and leaders that have to focus on operational demand with little or no time to work on the business."

PACTO recognised that they needed to lead by example. **Ady Poole**, CEO

of PACTO explains: "We've got to start with us, PACTO as an organisation, to see and determine our direction. If we can't do it, then how could we put our community transport providers through the same process? We can hold ourselves up and say, look, we looked at ourselves under the microscope. This is what we found. This is what we're doing about it."

A fresh perspective

A key benefit of working with Cranfield Trust was the external perspective brought by the volunteer consultants. Wyndham describes the value: "This is an opportunity for organisations to reflect. They have that space with a consultant to take time to look and review, because you don't always have time. When you're stuck in the woods, you can't see the wood for the trees. This is an opportunity to get into that helicopter and look from a bird's eye view and have those thought-provoking discussions."

Ady agrees: "It is so easy to get lost in the detail. But having somebody there who can say, well, hang on a minute, take a step back. It's getting people to think outside their own boxes."

Wyndham notes: "Cranfield Trust asks these difficult questions that need to be asked. It's really important. They highlight how important the work you're doing is, but also that the right long-term structures aren't in place."



The impact

The project has delivered tangible benefits for PACTO and the wider community transport sector in Pembrokeshire. The strategic review, completed with Cranfield Trust's support, produced a benchmark report analysing the sector, providing evidence that PACTO can share with operators and partners. It will also provide a bedrock of information, insight and data to help the transformation team and to establish a new future Community Transport strategy and delivery model for the sector.

Wyndham explains: *"It's great evidence for us to go to our community transport operators and partners and say, look, this isn't PACTO saying this, this is you saying it, but working with an expert consultant who is independent. So it comes from a good source, and it's validated, it's credible."*

The support has helped organisations think more strategically about their operations. Wyndham adds: *"It comes down to better financial management, better budget management, better operations, better governance, standard operating procedures and systems, and ultimately, happier staff. The impact will be the longevity of organisations and growth."*

Nicola summarises: *"This project has really benefited PACTO and its members by giving them an opportunity to step back, to consider the changes they need to make, and to start developing plans to improve their overall sustainability."*

For Wyndham, the partnership has addressed a fundamental challenge: *"These charities feel alone. Cranfield Trust addresses that and helps alleviate that loneliness significantly."*