Midlothian Voluntary Action is a Council of Voluntary Service (CVS) and part of the Midlothian Third Sector Interface (TSI). We run a day care club for frail elderly people, Woodburn Day Care Club (WDCC).

We also organise and chair the Midlothian Voluntary Sector Forum and requested comments from the members for this Inquiry.

The provision of accessible transport from the Lothian Community Transport Service (LCTS) is absolutely essential for the running of the WDCC. The members are elderly, most are frail, and a significant number have disabilities. Without access to affordable and accessible transport, we may not be able to provide a service to some of the most vulnerable and isolated older people. Some individuals do not get outside their own homes socially except to attend the Day Care Club. The area the Club services includes 2 data zones ranked in the most deprived 10% of the Scottish Index of Multiple of Deprivation (SIMD) 2012.

Many other voluntary/community groups in Midlothian are also heavily reliant on community transport services (LCTS and others). Without transport that is both affordable and accessible, many groups would struggle to provide services, particularly to people on low incomes, and to people with disabilities and/or health problems. We are aware that community transport is not only essential to larger voluntary organisations, but is even more essential to small volunteer run community groups, e.g. lunch clubs, that operate with little or no outside funding. If costs increased some organisations/groups would have no alternative than to pass these costs onto their service users – this is likely to mean that some of the most vulnerable clients may no longer be able to afford to attend.

We are also aware that many individuals, particularly with disabilities, are reliant on accessible bus services e.g. dial-a-bus. Community transport services are also vital to provide services to villages where it is unlikely that commercial bus companies would be willing to provide one without considerable subsidies.

In our view it is vitally important that community transport providers are able to continue to provide affordable and accessible services. We are aware that this is becoming increasingly difficult because of increasing costs and the need to replace existing vehicles.
We believe that, in the long term, it would be potentially more expensive to provide essential services to people who cannot continue to live in their own homes because of isolation and/or inability to access services (e.g. residential care and/or increased hospital admissions) than to provide adequate funding to local community transport providers.

Midlothian Voluntary Action
23 April 2013