

Annual Report 2008

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Executive Summary

The County Limerick and North Cork Transport Group Ltd (Rural Bus) was formed to respond to the lack of publicly accessible transport, which serves as a means of inhibiting social, economic and personal development. Funding for the company operations was derived mainly from two sources during 2008, namely the Department of Transport, administered by Pobal under the Rural Transport Programme and the Community Service Programme also administered by Pobal.

Introduction

It was found by the organisations represented on the County Limerick/North Cork Transport Group that across County Limerick and North Cork the level of social interaction, particularly amongst the least advantaged was severely constrained by the lack of accessible public transport. Those who are isolated in rural locations and without access to their own vehicle have little scope for social interaction.

In the present circumstances rural dwellers are penalised for choosing to live outside of urban areas since they are required to have their own vehicle if they wish to engage in the full range of social and economic experience.

The company was formed in late 2002 and by March of 2003 had put in place its first services, these services have continued to grow and 2008 was a record year both in terms of passenger journeys made and number of services operated.

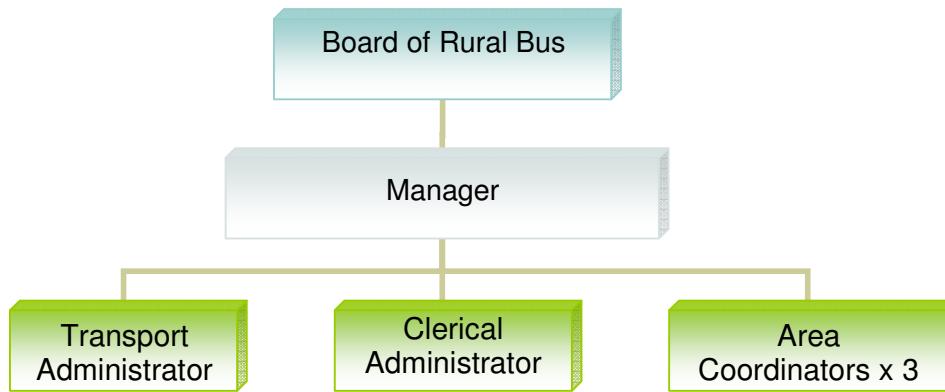
The company continues to operate from offices in Newcastle West and the board remains made up of volunteers from varied sectors of the community, both private people and employees of various statutory bodies and other organisations.

Company Aims

- To consolidate/coordinate and maximise existing rural transport services within the County
- To provide other services where a need has been identified but to date could not be financed
- To research and pilot other services targeting youth, health sector and other groups/organisations isolated from services due to the lack of transport
- To strive to ensure that transport is accessible, responsive and flexible for all in the community
- To ensure provision of quality, affordable door-to-door transport
- Continually evaluate, analyse and measure the passenger figures to maintain a successful transport system

Company Management and Organisational Charts

Organisational chart



The Office based manger runs both the RTP and CSP programmes.

The East Limerick Area Coordinator position was filled in 2008 and the remaining staff levels are the same as in 2007, with 1 full time Transport Administrator, 1 part time Clerical Administrator and 3 area Coordinators.

Board of Directors

The board is made up of representatives from the following organisations:-

West Limerick Resources Ltd. (WLR)

West Limerick Resources Limited is a rural development partnership company that covers a catchment area of approx. 520 square miles and includes 70 District Electoral Divisions (DED's) in West Limerick with a population of 64,586 in 2006 West Limerick Resources main office is based in Newcastle West.

The main activities of West Limerick Resources Limited is the administration of the National LEADER Programme, the POBAL Local Development Social Inclusion Programme, The Rural Social Scheme, the Millennium Partnership Fund and a variety of other targeted services. Under the National LEADER Programme assistance is provided to community groups, private individuals and new / existing business with an emphasis on Information Technology and innovative projects.

The Local Development Social Inclusion Programme is targeted at the disadvantaged and those who experience social exclusion such as the unemployed, youth at risk, travellers, disadvantaged women, small holders and people with disabilities.

Ballyhoura Development Ltd.

The Ballyhoura Development Area encompasses the geographic area of South and East County Limerick and North East County Cork. (As per the Department map, it relates to Area 20; East Limerick and North Cork). The area includes 89 Electoral Divisions (ED's). This includes the extension to the area which was formalised in July 2007 to include the North East Limerick area comprising 13 ED's and a population of 16,793 persons (2006). The main office is based in Kilfinane, with outreach services to Charleville, Mitchelstown, Kilmallock, Croom, Hospital and their hinterlands.

The principal activity of the company is the implementation of a long-term integrated multi-sectoral Rural Development Plan to revitalise Ballyhoura Country. As part of this plan, Ballyhoura Development Limited has responsibility for the disbursement of LEADER+ ('01-'08) and the National Rural Development Programme ('01-'08) funds and interim '08 funds as agreed with the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and EU, the Local Development Social Inclusion Programme ('01-'06) and interim '08 funds as agreed with Pobal, Cohesion Funds as agreed with the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs in association with the County Development Boards, the Rural Social Scheme as agreed with the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs and Pobal, the Transition to Employment Programme ('05-'08) as agreed with Department of Justice, Equality and Law Reform and Pobal, the Millennium Fund as agreed with Pobal, the Advocacy Programme ('08-'11) as agreed with Citizens Information Board Skillnets ('07-'09) as agreed with the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment and Skillnets and the Harnessing Rural Capital Project ('06-'08) as agreed with the EU Commission. In addition Ballyhoura Development manages relevant pilots and projects in the area.

Limerick County Development Board

The primary objective of the County Development Board is to oversee the implementation of a County Strategy for Economic, Social and Cultural Development. The strategy is a broad-based strategy covering all major service areas and is the result of up to two years of research and consultation with communities and various organisations and was agreed and endorsed by all the board members. One of the actions contained within the strategy is a commitment to provide rural transport services.

The membership of the Board is broadly based and its 27 members are representative of four main sectors:

- Seven representatives from the represented Local Government Sector, by the Cathaoirleach (Chairman of the Council), the five Chairpersons of Strategic Policy Committees and the County Manager.
- Seven representatives from the Local Development Sector which comprises of representatives from the County Enterprise Board, Ballyhoura Development Limited, Tipperary LEADER Limited and West Limerick Resources Limited and County Limerick Childcare Committee.
- Eight representatives from the State Agency Sector including Shannon Development, the Mid-Western Health Board, FÁS, Teagasc, Limerick County VEC, Industrial Development Agency, Department of Social & Family Affairs and An Gárdá Siochana.

- Five representatives from the Social Partners, which represent the Trade Union, the Farming and the Employers Sectors together with two representatives from the Community & Voluntary Sector.

Health Service Executive (Mid west)

Community welfare officer for the elderly, ensuring that older persons suffering from consistent poverty and social disadvantage receive financial and information supports to allow an acceptable standard of living to include adequate food, clothing, housing, heating and other specific needs as necessary

Enable Ireland

Founded in 1948, Enable Ireland provides services for 3,500 children and adults. It support's people with disabilities and their families in 14 regional locations.

Their services for children and their families cover all aspects of a child's physical, educational, and social development from early infancy through adolescence.

For adults it offers a range of services covering personal development, independent living, employment, and social and leisure activities.

Enable Ireland have a nationwide chain of retail shops selling clothes, books and bric-a-brac. Proceeds go directly to Enable Ireland, improving the services we provide. Funds raised help build a future for their services - essentials like new and improved services centres, pre-school equipment, assistive technology, outdoor play areas and hydrotherapy treatment pools.

The demand for Enable Ireland's services continues to increase throughout Ireland. They have set themselves the challenging goal of meeting these needs by providing a full range of high quality services, and expanding into local communities.

Members of the community

One of the board members is an active participant in the community and is a peace commissioner and a service user, another is an active member of Ardagh Voluntary Housing Association.

Experience

The members of the board have been responsible for the local delivery of aspects of the Leader I, Leader II and Leader + and National Rural Development Plan Programmes, which relate to economic development in the service area.

All of the members have experience in social development. Work undertaken in the past by the project members has included interventions with all of the disadvantaged sectors of the community across the entire county.

As can be seen from the list of the board members all are operating within the community development sector at local government, non-government and local level.

Three of the members are working directly with people with disabilities within the service area. (Community of Interest)

Legal Structure

- The company is limited by guarantee not having a share capital.
- The Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Secretary are elected at the AGM of the Company.
- The Manager of the Company reports directly to the Board.
- The Board and management follows strict accepted accounting practises and all relevant financial guidelines.

Staff

The staff of the company operates from offices in Newcastle West, there are 6 staff as follows:-

- Manager (full time)
- Transport Administrator (full time)
- Clerical Administrator (part time)
- Three Area Coordinators (part time)

The Manager is responsible for management of financial, operational services and health and safety procedures ensuring that the company complies with POBAL directives and statutory company policies.

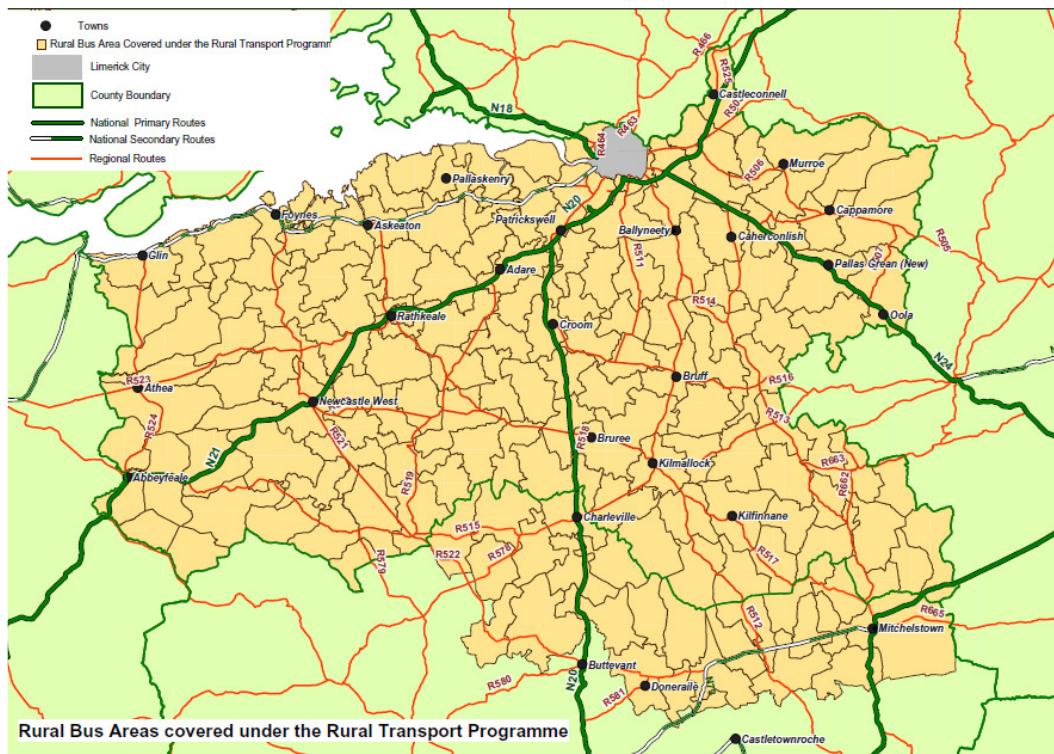
The area coordinators work in their own local areas setting up and maintaining services we provide. They also ensure consistency, quality and standards of each of our services.

The Transport Administrator collates information on the services and manages the operators. The Clerical Administrator completes the company book keeping and all other administration work.

Rural Bus is an equal opportunity employer.

Area of Operation

Limerick County and parts of North Cork are covered by the company. The inclusion of North Cork is due to the natural catchment area with people travelling from County Limerick and North Cork.



Current status

At the end of 2008 the company operated 64 active services, the majority of these are weekly services to facilitate pension collection and shopping, with some twice monthly or monthly services. Other services provided in 2008:-

- 1 Tea Dance Service
- 3 Day Care Centres
- 3 Afterschool Services
- 2 Visually Impaired Services
- 2 Community Development Group Services
- 1 Active retirement Service
- 1 Wednesday Club Service
- Youth Services
- Foroige
- 1 Elderly Swimming Group
- 3 Butterfly Club services for children with special needs

Method of Operation

The service requires passengers to pay a membership fee, this allows the keeping of records of the amount of trips made by each member, and also allows for records to be kept which provides the demographics of the users. The annual membership fee in 2008 was €20.00 for a full year, decreasing by €5 per quarter for single adults, a couple €15 and children €5.

When a passenger travels, the cost for adults is €5.00 return or free for free travel pass holders and €2.50 for children.

Community Services Programme

The Community Services Programme (CSP) began operating on 1 January 2006 as the successor programme to the Social Economy Programme previously managed by FAS. The objective of this Programme is to support local community activity to address disadvantage, while also providing local employment opportunities. It continued to be a very important and integral part of the company operations in 2008 enabling the company to maintain the staffing level.

Community Involvement

We are continually involved with the community groups, through our Area Coordinators', members of the board and the internal office staff to ensure that our services are fully available wherever necessary, subject to funding.

Service Development

The Rural Transport Programme was mainstreamed during 2008. The Business Plan that was submitted in November 2007 was accepted in March 2008 and the funds allocated to Rural were subsequently increased. As part of this process all static services had to be retendered and new contracts issued.

Due to the increase in funds and based on the feasibility study that was completed for the Business Plan the services for 2008 were expanded to 64 from 38 in 2007. The majority of the new services started in October/November 2008. This helped to increase the number of passengers carried by 7,364 (18%) passenger journeys at the end of 2008.

The company continues to operate all its services on a sub contracted basis. The board is also investigating the possibilities of vehicle brokerage with other agencies.

Retendering All Routes

The tendering process started in September 2008 and continued through to December 2008. As a result of the tendering process the company has a total of 16 sub contracted operators based throughout County Limerick and North Cork. It also reduced the monthly cost of transport by €3,752 (12.5%).

Driver Training

17 sub contracted drivers completed MiDAS training in 2008.

Summary of Services

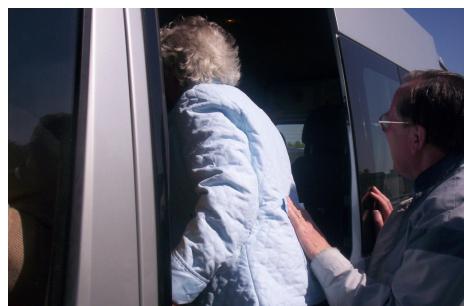
All of our services operate on a door to door basis.

Route 1.	Galbally to Mitchelstown	2 nd & 4 th Monday of Month	Route 28.	Ballyhahill to NCW	Friday Weekly
Route 2.	Ballingarry to Wednesday Club	2 nd & 4 th Wednesday of Month	Route 29.	Knocklong to Kilmallock	Friday Weekly
Route 3.	Kilmeedy to NCW	Tuesday Weekly	Route 30.	Rathanny to Dooradoyle	Friday Weekly
Route 4.	Athea to NCW	Tuesday Weekly	Route 31.	Doon to Dooradoyle	Friday Weekly
Route 5.	NCW to Des Complex	Tuesday Weekly	Route 32.	Dromina to Charleville	Saturday Weekly
Route 5a.	NCW to Des Complex	Tuesday Weekly	Route 33.	Dromcolliher to NCW	Saturday Weekly
Route 6.	Shanagolden/Ardagh to Des Comp	Tuesday Weekly	Route 34.	Broadford to NCW	Saturday Weekly
Route 6a.	Shanagolden/Ardagh to Des Comp	Tuesday Weekly	Route 35.	Knocklong to Hospital	Tuesday 1 st a month
Route 7.	Bruff to Dooradoyle	Every 2 nd Wednesday	Route 36.	Youth Service	Adhoc
Route 8.	Knockcarron to Dooradoyle	Alternating with 52 Thursday's	Route 37.	Foroige	Adhoc
Route 9.	Athea/Templeglantine to Des Comp	Thursday Weekly	Route 38.	NoName Club	Adhoc
Route 10.	NCW to Des Complex	Thursday Weekly	Route 39.	Charleville to Hospital	2 nd & 4 th Wednesday of Month
Route 10a.	NCW to Des Complex	Thursday Weekly	Route 39a.	Shanballymore to Hospital	2 nd & 4 th Wednesday of Month
Route 10b.	NCW to Des Complex	Thursday Weekly	Route 40.	Specials	Adhoc
Route 11.	Ballyhahill/Ardagh to Des Complex	Thursday Weekly	Route 41.	Abbeyfeale to Rathkeale	1 st Saturday of month
Route 12.	Bruff to Drombana	Thursday Weekly	Route 42.	Tournafulla to Rathkeale	2 nd Saturday of month
Route 13.	Kilfinane to Mitchelstown	Thursday Weekly	Route 43.	Glin to Rathkeale	3 rd Saturday of month
Route 14.	Galbally to Mitchelstown	Thursday Weekly	Route 44.	Hospital to Knocklong	Mon-Fri
Route 15.	Ballingarry to NCW	Thursday Weekly	Route 45.	Ballingarry to Rathkeale	Mon-Fri
Route 16.	Kilcornan to Dooradoyle	Alternating with 17 Thursday's	Route 46.	Awbeg Caherconlish	Adhoc
Route 17.	Askeaton to Dooradoyle	Alternating with 16 Thursday's	Route 47.	Caherconlish	Adhoc
Route 18.	Hospital to Tipperary	Thursday Weekly	Route 48.	West Limerick Resources	Adhoc
Route 19.	Garryspillane to Drombana	Thursday Weekly	Route 49.	Ballyhoura	Adhoc
Route 20.	Athea to Glin Day Care	Alternating with 21 Thursday's	Route 50.	Mount Collins to NCW	Tuesday Weekly
Route 21.	Ballylongford to Glin Day Care	Alternating with 20 Thursday's	Route 51.	Shanballymore to Mitchelstown	Thursday Weekly
Route 22.	Ardagh to NCW	Friday Weekly	Route 52.	Ballylanders to Dooradoyle	Alternating with 8 Thursday's
Route 23.	Glensharrold to NCW	Friday Weekly	Route 53.	Kilbehenny to Mitchelstown	Thursday Weekly
Route 24.	Kilmeedy to NCW	Friday Weekly	Route 54.	Various to Mitchelstown	Thursday once a month
Route 25.	Castletown to Charleville	Friday Weekly	Route 55.	Askeaton to Newcastle West	3 rd Wednesday of Month
Route 26.	Kilmallock to Charleville	Friday Weekly	Route 59.	Ballingarry to Granagh	3rd Sunday of month
Route 27.	Loughill/Foynes to NCW	Friday Weekly	Route 62.	Charleville to Charleville	Mon-Fri

Marketing and Publicity

The majority of the company's marketing is carried out by the Area Coordinators; the company is very aware of the benefits of free marketing and advertising and pursues this route.

The community radio station West Limerick 102 has been very supportive of the company and has carried a number of interviews with the staff.

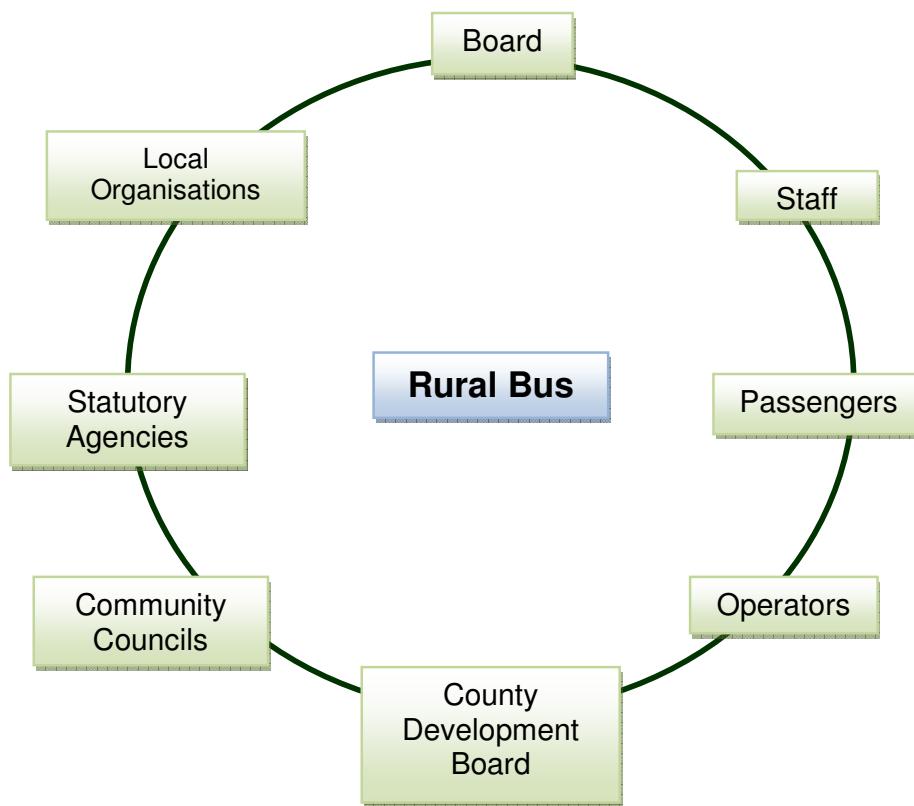


Some Pictures of Passengers visiting the Desmond Complex

Monitoring and evaluation

Qualitative Outcomes

The company staff regularly travels on each of the services to ascertain passenger's views and we continue to receive many expressing their absolute pleasure at having the option of using our services. Many of the passengers we speak to have made it quite clear that without the services we provide they would be prisoners in their own homes again. Many of the older generation do not want to be seen as a burden on their relative's and friends and so do not like to repeatedly ask for a lift to the nearest village or town and really do not have any other option.



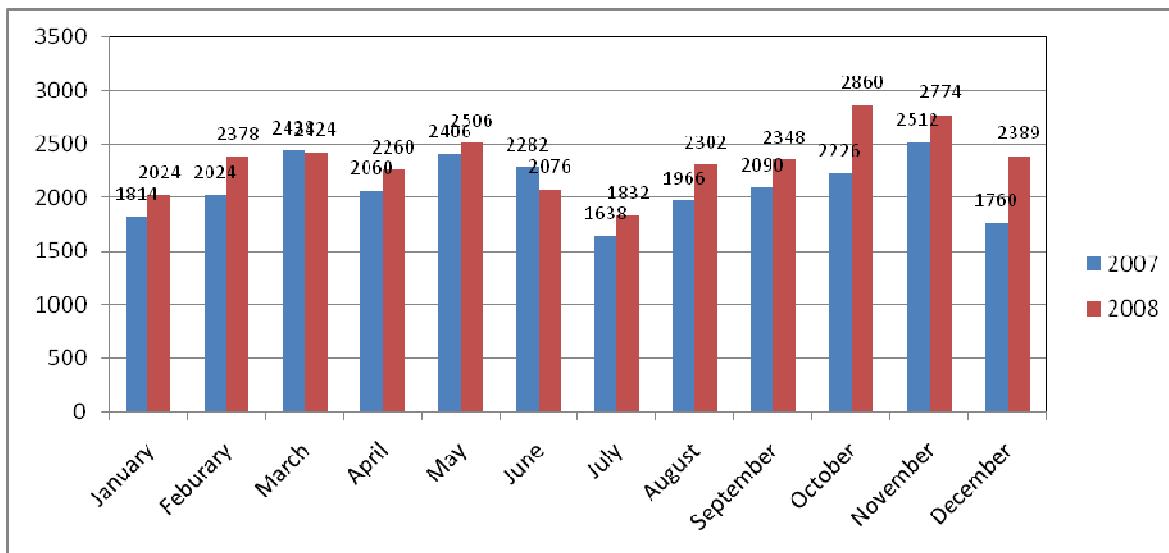
Quantitative Outcomes

Passenger Figures	2007	2008	% Change
January	2194	2800	13%
February	2876	3370	12%
March	2988	2864	10%
April	3048	3156	10%
May	2942	3424	12%
June	3156	2750	9%
July	2120	4228	20%
August	2528	2866	11%
September	2314	3180	14%
October	3750	4250	11%
November	3254	3830	12%
December	2396	4212	18%
Total	33566	40930	12%

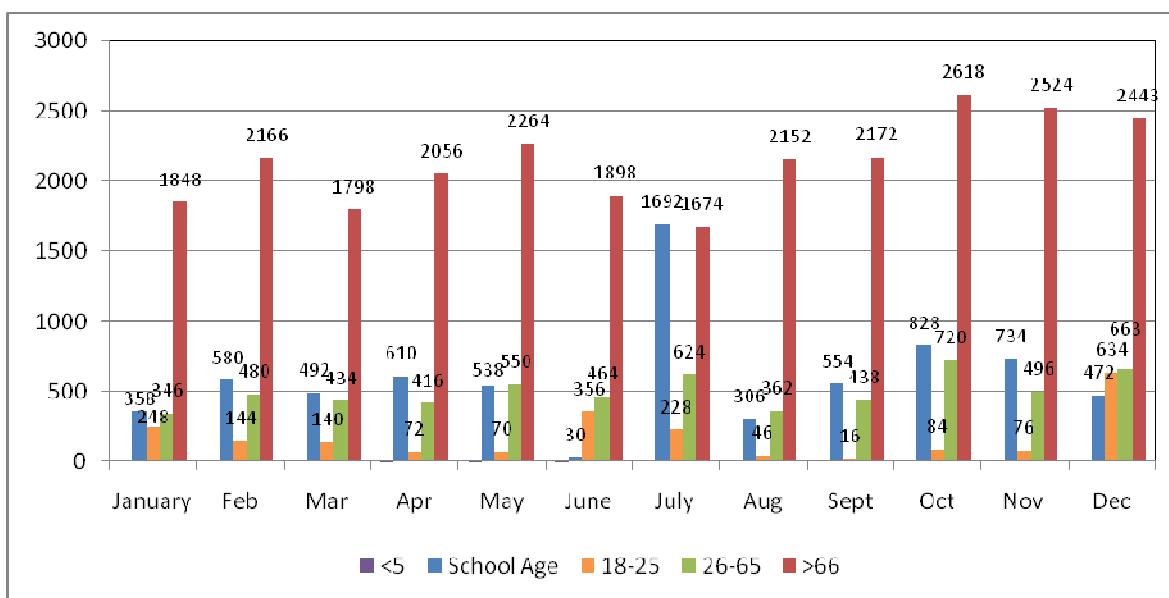
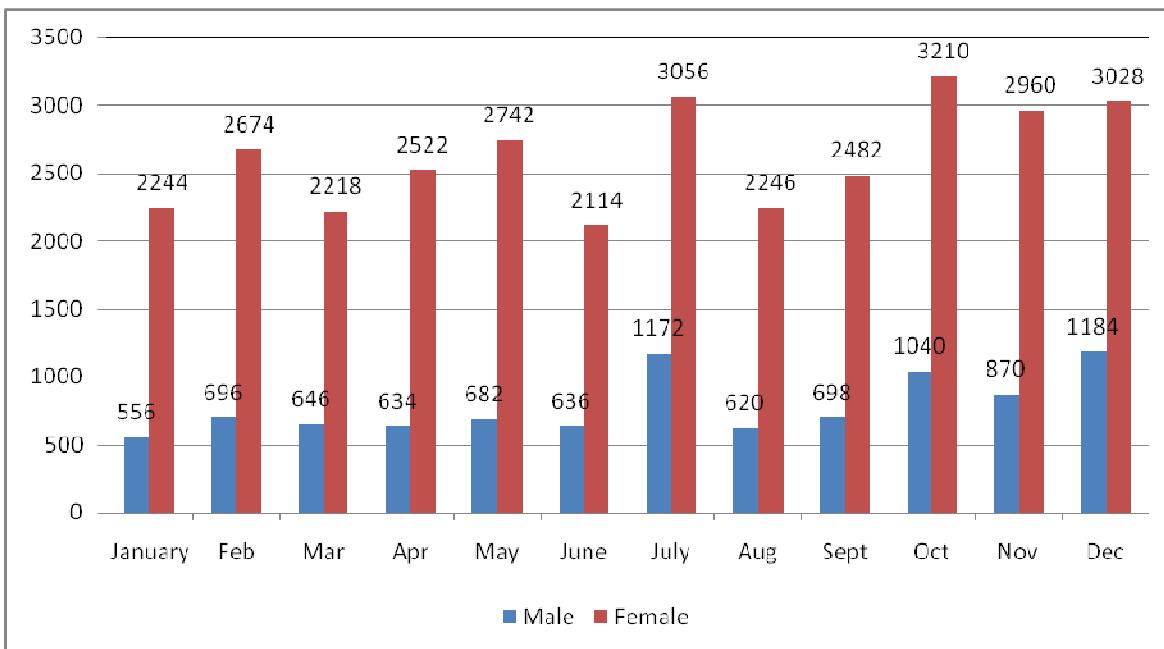
		Free Pass Holders			
		Over 66	Under 66	Male	Female
28,173			12,757	9,434	31,496
69%			31%	23%	77%

Free Pass Holders	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
Total Trips	18049	24644	29096	33566	40930
Free Pass Holders	15362	16100	20708	25216	28173
% Free Pass Holders	85%	65%	71%	75%	69%

Free Travel Pass Usage 2007/2008



Passenger Figures 2008



Board Meetings

As part of its review procedure the Company holds monthly board and staff meetings, at these meetings all relevant figures are presented showing passenger numbers, number of services operated, any new contracts obtained and all financial information is presented to the board meetings. This is extra to the monthly reporting that is carried out for Pobal.

Proofing Obligations

The project meets the following obligations required by the National Development Plan in relation to equality, rural, poverty and environmental issues.

Does the project contribute to reducing or preventing poverty?

Poverty is not only applicable by way of financial income but also in the resources available to obtain an acceptable standard of living.

Our project has helped to reduce poverty by providing a low cost service which enables people to access the facilities necessary to improve their quality of life.

How does the project promote equality generally and between genders?

Our project is open to all and any user, we have found that the vast majority of our users are female.

How does the project promote accessibility?

Our services are designed to bring people from rural areas into their nearest town or village to allow them to access services that would otherwise be difficult for them to access. All our services are designed to take into account the needs of mobility impaired passengers.

How does the project contribute to rural development?

The White Paper on Rural Development states.....

"Rural communities will enjoy access to education, training and lifelong learning and to an adequate level of social and other services and infrastructures."

Our service has given rural dwellers in our area the opportunity to travel into their nearest town or village and to avail of services and facilities they would not normally have had access to.

All of our passengers equally value and enjoy the social aspect of their journey when they meet their neighbours and friends who they may not have met in some time due to a lack of transport; therefore the service contributes to rural development by alleviating social isolation and improving the quality of life of residents in rural areas.

A lot of younger people in rural areas may have moved to cities in search of employment, improved infrastructure and now the availability of our service makes rural Ireland a more attractive place in which to live.

How does the project promote sustainable rural communities?

The white paper on Rural Developments states.....

"There will be vibrant sustainable communities with the range of age, income and occupational groups, such as to allow them to adapt to ongoing economic, social, cultural and environmental

change and to enjoy a standard of living and a quality of life which will make them attractive communities in which to live and work”

On setting up all of our services, communities in our catchment area were very eager to help and to bring a service to their own area, knowing how valuable it would be to their residents. The service contributes to sustaining rural communities by increasing community participation and allowing rural dwellers to have access to all facilities which enables them to live independently in countryside. Rural Ireland experiences a lot of social isolation and up until the beginning of the project a lot of people would have had to rely on friends, family and neighbours to give them a lift to their nearest town or village which takes away a persons independence. The majority of our passengers have increased their social interaction, increased their sense of independence and become more aware of what is going on in their community, which makes them feel more involved.

How does the project impact on the environment?

By providing a regular service into local towns and villages we have reduced the dependence on people using either their own vehicles or those of friends' family and neighbours, this obviously have an effect on the number of vehicles using the roads and reduces the pressure on parking facilities in local towns and villages.

Key Challenges and Issues

The key transport issues affecting people will always remain until a comprehensive transport service can be provided on a more regular basis.

- An ageing population and depopulation within rural areas will lead to an increased demand for public transport to and from those areas.
- The continued reduction in services such as post offices, health care from rural communities to larger centres of population will increase the necessity to provide local transport
- Lack of access to transport and a reliance on the family car is still an issue for young people in rural areas, this is compounded by the recent changes in regulations for learner drivers.
- There is still a lack of transport cohesion

Key Achievements

- ✓ The service is now viewed as a providing a social and functional service for the elderly and not so elderly in the area.
- ✓ Passenger trips have increase from 33,566 in 2007 to 40,930 in 2008 a 69% increase in usage.
- ✓ In 2008 the transport services expanded out in other areas such as Limerick Youth Service and Foroige.

Future Plans

The key Priorities for 2009

- Consolidate and sustain existing services
- Coordination with other public and special interest transport providers
- Identify and provide services in those areas where there is currently a demand
- The provision of transport for young people to sport and recreational facilities
- The provision of transport to part-time education and training programmes
- The provision of transport for after schools study
- The provision of transport to Care Centres and family resource centres - This will require the development of alliances with the Health Board
- Continue to provide accessible transport where possible