



CHESHAM & DISTRICT TRANSPORT USERS' GROUP

Statement from Chesham & District Transport Users' Group

In May 2023, four members of the Amersham & Chesham Support Group of the MS Society approached us requesting our assistance in securing local taxis fully equipped to deal with wheelchair users.

They pointed out that whilst many taxi companies locally advertise their vehicles as being “wheelchair accessible”, in reality their drivers expect wheelchair users to get out of their chair and sit on the taxi seat, so that their wheelchair can be folded up and put into the boot. Whilst that might be fine for those able to do so, others who are unable to get out of their chair would expect the vehicle to have a tailgate lift, so that the wheelchair and its occupant can then remain in their chair, which would then be securely anchored to the floor of the vehicle. Such vehicles do exist but only in Aylesbury and High Wycombe as far as we understand.

Accordingly, we approached Buckinghamshire Council who confirmed that the situation was a throwback to the days before the County Council was a Unitary authority and as such, the previous District Councils each had their own separate policies for Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (“WAVs”). By next April, the Unitary Authority will have been in existence for five years and we believe that it's high time now that this situation was sorted out and that a uniform policy for WAVs was adopted County-wide.

We have been in dialogue with the County Council's Licensing Department for over a year now who have been very helpful and sympathetic and although we've all been going through a learning curve, the local MS Group are naturally expecting things to be moving a lot faster than they've done hitherto, hence they've announced a campaign to bring this issue to a wider audience.

We are happy to support this campaign to highlight this unfortunate situation and hopefully to expedite the provision of fully accessible vehicles in the Chesham and Amersham area so that all wheelchair users have access to taxi services that others enjoy.