

The Love Bus Community Project

Andover Radio was awarded £77,000 from the Big Lottery Fund (Building Communities Fund) and Her Majesty's Government Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) to acquire and renovate a single decker bus, design and deliver projects which reduce social isolation.

The Love Bus is a mobile community hub with broadcasting facilities. We plan to use the Love Bus to go to different parts of the community to encourage them to get together, share their stories and their skills and find connections.

Andover, as well as having areas of deprivation within the estates around the town, has several villages around it where people suffer social isolation, especially those of an older generation.

Andover and the surrounding area have many military families around in need of assistance to connect with local civilian families. Andover is growing fast with lots of new, large housing developments, new residents to the area need a platform to meet each other and make connections with those who are already residents of Andover and surrounds.

The bus is a mobile hub, staffed by two part time workers and volunteers, that are able to visit those out in the community and meet with people in the areas of which they live. They will be able to share information, offer digital and media skills training, but just as importantly call people to get together and share their stories with the group and even on the radio. We will be there to connect with people and get them to connect with others both locally and more widely in the community.

We believe that everyone has something to offer and that asking them to share helps them connect to the people round them of any generation. Although the bus will be in use at community events, and therefore in contact with potentially thousands of people, some of its most important work will be done with smaller groups of people on weekly rounds.

We plan to use the bus in Andover and the surrounding villages to work with the older generation and young people. Also visiting areas affected by social deprivation. We have also developed a loneliness survey for people to complete. Can you kindly fill this out it will only take a few minutes:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/MFFZSRW>

Below is a little bit of information on the help we have had with our project so far, we have already managed to connect individuals by getting them involved by volunteering their time and also local business & organisations have had a huge part to play in the journey so far.

Maurice Sweeney

Maurice Sweeney is one of the vital cogs of ensuring this project runs smoothly. Maurice has a background in community driven projects this combined with knowledge, determination and a fantastic vision is proving to be something very valuable. Although there have been a couple of occasions where there has been a bump in the road, Maurice challenges these and manages to turn this around to ensure this project is something that will benefit by everyone in the community, he has done a great job of connecting individuals and businesses, his enthusiasm for this in a whole is very infectious.

Ella Palmer

Ella Palmer has been on the ball from the get-go when it comes to the design of the Bus, from interior design to designing each project that the bus will deliver to the community. Ella has added sparkle & tantrums through passion of ensuring the project, feels and looks the part.

Ella has volunteered her time giving to the community on many levels and glows enthusiasm. She has a lot to offer to the community on many levels and is also a vital part of this project from beginning to end.



Rob Martin

Ex NASA engineer, Rob Martin has been project managing the project. He has been a keystone in moving the project forward. Project managing, co-ordinating all the different tradespeople coming together.

Rob is often here, there and everywhere with his job. One week France, the next Belgium, all over the UK, yet at every opportunity he has dedicated his time and passion to the Love Bus. Alongside this he cares





for his wife. Rob has gone above and beyond time and time again to get this project

up and running.

Angel Call Handling – Sarah Sharp & Angela Saunders



The Angels have been key in co-ordinating and sourcing local people to get involved with this unique community project. Both Angela and Sarah let nothing get in the way, always finding an alternative whenever we were



faced by brick walls.

Their positivity and determination has had a huge positive impact in the success of the bus project.

John Cockaday

Community Driver, retired coach builder. JC has been volunteering his time in Andover for over 38 years. He is pivotal in the over 50s club run from King Arthurs Hall. He has been a trustee at various local organisations as well as a borough councillor.

JC helped to strip out the interior of the bus to make moving forward possible.



Jenn Sweeney

Poor Jenn was roped into helping out without ever knowing. Her husband promised her a weekend away and she got more than she bargained for! It all started well with a flight to Manchester and an overnight stay, until she asked what time the flight home was – only to find out that they were driving! The bus! It was freezing cold with no heating and limited seating. She has never

forgiven us but she is still always there when we need her to offer support or get stuck in.



Lenka Mead

Family driven Lenka Mead is never far from offering a helping hand. We only had to mention a community project and Lenka was there. She helped to strip out the bus, getting stuck in to get the job done.

Kevin Ridgeon



Kevin has been a great sport in helping us with setting up IT support within the Love Bus. Nothing is too much to ask for Kevin and he is a great addition to the team.



Red Post Services

Russel and Kelly were sourced by Angela and Sarah. The moment we met them, nothing was too much trouble. They brought the bus alive and made our dreams come true. They are so kind and welcoming, true community workers. We can't wait to do more community work together in the future.

Jason and Stuart

With any project there are always sticky situations. We found ourselves having one of these moments when we couldn't get the bus to move. Stuart

from SG Automotive and his friend Jason went out of their way to come to the rescue and replace the batteries when we were clueless. If it wasn't for them, we would have been stuck for much longer.

Over 50s (Charloteers and Weyhill Seniors)

At the beginning of the project, we met with the Weyhill Seniors and asked what they thought about the project. They were quite enthusiastic about some of the ideas we had already had: having computers on the bus, younger people working with older people, silver surfing, delivering sexual health to older people and breaking down barriers of social isolation. They liked the idea of a mobile community hub and the radio station capturing people stories. They also participated in the Loneliness Survey. They did suggest having a green screen to help develop films of themselves that they could share with others. They also suggested linking with Andover, Massachusetts and connecting with some older people there at some stage of the project.

Young People (Worthy Down and Middle Wallop)

We met with the young people from Worthy Down and Middle Wallop. They were excited about the project and were asking about what toys would be on the bus. They wanted things like an X-box and Play Station (no promises!), as well as being keen on informal education and making use of the computers. Maurice Sweeney is working weekly with the young people at Middle Wallop. He is developing trust and relationships and getting input from young people. The plan is that these young people will be further involved with the Love Bus project in the future, getting informal education on sexual health and drug and alcohol awareness among other issues. We will be looking at breaking down barriers and reducing their social isolation. Some of these young people are socially isolated due to rural location and others have issues with building attachments due to a mobile childhood. Because of the organic nature of the project, what we do with the young people in the future is very much up to them.

Stannah

A chance conversation led to our first contact with this important local company. Graham Mears came to the bus and got excited about the project and let Stannah know. They think it is exciting, unique and innovative



community project. Stannah are supplying us with hoodies, T-shirts, laptops and other equipment as well as investing in what we are doing in the community. We have asked them as stakeholders to come out to the coal-face and experience the work we are actually doing.

A spokesperson from Stannah said "Projects like this are vital to help bring people together and enable them to feel part of the community. We are always looking at ways we can engage with local projects that benefit those who might be struggling to fit in. We are delighted to be able to help the Love Bus in their drive to tackle social isolation and wish them every success in the future".

Steel Signs and Signs in Motion

Gareth (Steel Signs) designed the whole wrap himself along the lines of bright and bold with a cool graffiti style. As he didn't have a workshop large enough to hold the bus, he brought in Signs in Motion to help do the work. They did a brilliant job of getting the body and paintwork of the bus up to scratch before adding the wrap. We love what they did and are impressed with how much effort they put in to making the bus a great statement.

Partners

On this project we are working with Unity, Cardia, Military Community, Stannah and I Can Therapy Centre. We are also getting backroom support from Angel Call Handling.

We also gratefully appreciate the support from Test Valley Borough Council's Councillor Community Grant.

If you would like to be a partner or have some involvement with this Community Project, please contact Ella or Mo by email – ella@loveandover.com or call 01264 883393.



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