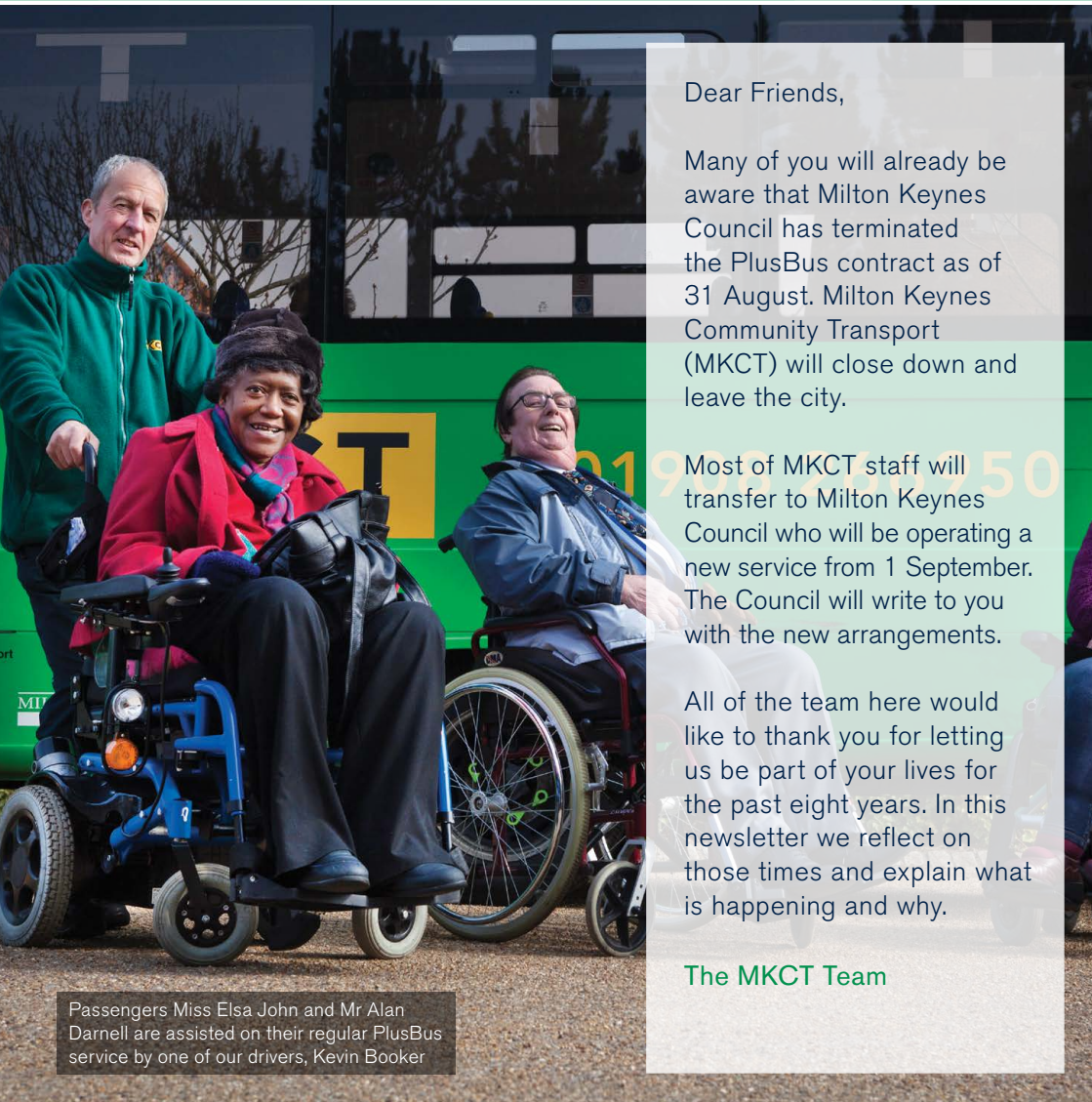


# PlusBus News

AUGUST 2014

A goodbye from PlusBus!



Dear Friends,

Many of you will already be aware that Milton Keynes Council has terminated the PlusBus contract as of 31 August. Milton Keynes Community Transport (MKCT) will close down and leave the city.

Most of MKCT staff will transfer to Milton Keynes Council who will be operating a new service from 1 September. The Council will write to you with the new arrangements.

All of the team here would like to thank you for letting us be part of your lives for the past eight years. In this newsletter we reflect on those times and explain what is happening and why.

**The MKCT Team**

Passengers Miss Elsa John and Mr Alan Darnell are assisted on their regular PlusBus service by one of our drivers, Kevin Booker



**Milton Keynes Community Transport**

part of ECT Charity – your leading community transport provider

31 Burners Lane, Kiln Farm, MK11 3HA

**T:** 01908 266950 **E:** [mk@ectcharity.co.uk](mailto:mk@ectcharity.co.uk)

**W:** [www.ectcharity.co.uk](http://www.ectcharity.co.uk)



## Reflecting on success and looking to the future

### A personal message from our chief executive

When we first came to Milton Keynes eight years ago we were welcomed by everyone. Since then, we have worked hard to carry as many people as possible on our services, taking them where they wanted to go.

You will be pleased to know that the Milton Keynes PlusBus operation has grown into one of the most well known, respected and efficient door-to-door services in the country. It is now replicated elsewhere and often viewed with great interest by other transport

authorities seeking to improve their own door-to-door provision. It's a star!

Despite the uniqueness of the city, its transport system, the grids, and its political scene, we have lived through the changes over that time - both the ups and the downs. We move with the times but stick to our values.

I am incredibly proud of the achievements of our team in creating such a successful operation, in sometimes difficult conditions. Always uppermost in our mind was

trying to provide the best service we could for the money available.

Please know our dedicated team of local drivers, controllers and other staff are as sad to be going through the current changes, that the Council has decided to make, as you are.

We know public money is tight – but we also know that whilst it is easy to save money on transport, leaving people without their mobility and access to places they want to go can mean higher costs

for other Council departments and an increase in public expenditure in healthcare, social care and so on. And not forgetting the well being and joy people experience when they venture out and meet others on the bus and at their destinations. That is priceless.

**ECT fully respects Milton Keynes Council's position and has endeavoured to help as best it can with the transition phase.**

However, as a charity campaigning nationally for better transport for older and disabled people, it is our duty to advocate access to transport as being part of the solution for independent living and preventing isolation.

We understand the need for efficiency that all local authorities must consider. Indeed, we have been finding ways of taking on more and more people through clever scheduling. We have also made suggestions for further efficiencies to achieve better value.

It has been suggested that the new 'in house' service, that the Council will now run itself, will be for fewer people as the eligibility criteria are tightened and membership closed to new users. This may mean that the service will stop



Anna Whitty awarded Director of the Year at the 2014 FTA Everywoman in Transport & Logistics Awards

being part of public transport and become one for bespoke journeys to fewer individuals.

We cannot always please everyone all the time. We are well aware of that. Our remit for a 'public transport' service meant that we always considered a service that would provide door-to-door journeys for the largest number of people.

I cannot help but be very sad that part of the ECT family will be gone. However, we will be

very busy rolling out similar services in partnership with local authorities elsewhere in the country, including ones tackling isolation and demonstrating new ways of delivering better transport for older and disabled people.

Until we meet again, thank you for allowing us to be part of your lives in Milton Keynes.

*Anna Whitty*



2008

Shortlisted for a National Transport award



2013

We delivered a thorough reschedule



2014

MKCT contract ends. Thank you for a successful eight years.



## The History of MKCT

MKCT is part of ECT Charity - a leading national social enterprise and charity which delivers transport solutions to people with mobility difficulties, isolated people, community groups and those who commission transport services. The organisation combines business thinking with social values to deliver the highest quality transport services and greatest social benefit for the communities it serves.

We operate in several places in the UK. In 2012, ECT

Charity delivered, as lead partner, the London 2012 Accessible Shuttles project on behalf of the Olympic Delivery Authority. Mayor Boris Johnson hailed the team "the unsung heroes" of London 2012.

We continue to work to deliver transport solutions for those unable to use other forms of transport and, as a charity, keep our assets for community use, reinvesting in our services in accordance with our charitable objectives.

MKCT commenced operations in 2006, originally as a joint venture with Age Concern MK. The PlusBus service has been part of the public transport provision in Milton Keynes, taking as many people as possible to common destinations.

The success in turning around a failing service led to the shortlisting for a National Transport award in 2008.

Over the years, our passenger surveys have told us what

you think. In the most recent survey, which had a very high response rate, 74% of survey participants rated the PlusBus service as 'excellent', with 99% overall rating the service as either 'excellent' or 'good'.

This was recently endorsed by the Council's consultation earlier this year, again with a very high response rate and overwhelming desire for the service to continue in a similar way, as well as highlighting how much of a "life-line" it is for those who

use it. Take a look at our achievements in the section 'PlusBus in Numbers'.

Over the last couple of years, Milton Keynes Council had tendered the community transport service twice and failed to award. Our contract was extended whilst this took place.

As the years went by, more and more people were using the PlusBus service. We had to manage that demand in the face of no further

Council resources. In 2013, we delivered a thorough reschedule to open up more space for additional bookings.

In 2014, the Council announced that the community transport service would end. Following a consultation exercise, the Council decided to end the contract and take the operation "in-house".

We will miss all our customers and wish you all well in the future.

## What does this mean for PlusBus passengers?

### Why is PlusBus changing?

The Council needs to save money and they believe integrating with their existing services will be more efficient. Our existing contract has already been extended and the Council did not believe it could be extended again.

### I am a PlusBus passenger

The Council will be writing to you directly with the new arrangements. Their intention is to continue for now with existing regular bookings. They will let you know if they decide to make any changes.

MKCT will stop taking requests for casual bookings from Tuesday 26 August for journeys from 1 September. Please note that Monday 25 is a Bank Holiday, when our offices are closed.

### What will happen to Kiln Farm?

After eight very happy years at Kiln Farm, we will be closing our depot on 1 September.

### My organisation uses the Group Transport service

All organisations who are registered for our Group Transport services will have received a letter explaining the changes and that we will not be able to offer transport in the future. Organisations with regular bookings will already be aware of the last day that we will be providing transport.

### I use local bus services 80, X80, 62, G1

We have already given notice to the relevant authorities that MKCT will not be operating from September onwards. You will need to contact the relevant council's transport department for information.

### I like to go on day trips

MKCT will be closing down on 31 August so will not be offering any day trips from September 2014. We suggest that you make the most of the existing August programme - a few spaces still remain.

### From 1 September:

- You will need to call a different phone number if you need to make future bookings or changes to your existing regular booking. See details overleaf.
- The buses will no longer be green.
- Most drivers will remain the same but they will be wearing different uniforms.



A PlusBus in front of Peterborough Cathedral, on one of the many great day trips over the years

### I would like to get in touch after 1 September...

Please write, email or telephone us at the following:

ECT Charity  
Greenford Depot  
Greenford, Middx  
UB6 9AP  
Tel: 020 8813 3210  
Email: info@ectcharity.co.uk

However, after 1 September, we will not be able to discuss any matters in relation to your regular bookings which have transferred to Milton Keynes Council's operations.

We are working with the Council to facilitate a smooth transfer of essential information. Please read the section about Data Protection on page 8, which gives important information about the data we have about you. If you do not want information about you or your regular journey to be passed on - you MUST let us know by calling us.



Driver Kevin assisting Mrs Doreen Edwards using one of our passenger lifts



Ola and Wiktor enjoying a busy day in the Kiln Farm office



**DATA PROTECTION ACT**

MKCT holds information about you and the regular journeys you currently make on PlusBus. We are required to share this information with Milton Keynes Council to ensure that these journeys continue. If you do not want this information to be shared, you must tell us immediately. Please call or email us as soon as possible.

**MILTON KEYNES COUNCIL CONTACT DETAILS**

Telephone number for all enquiries will be: **01908 252266**.  
 Booking lines will be open between 9 am and 3 pm Monday to Friday.  
 The new e-mail address will be: **community.transport@milton-keynes.gov.uk**

**PLEASE DO NOT USE THESE UNTIL 1 SEPTEMBER** as they will not be monitored until then.

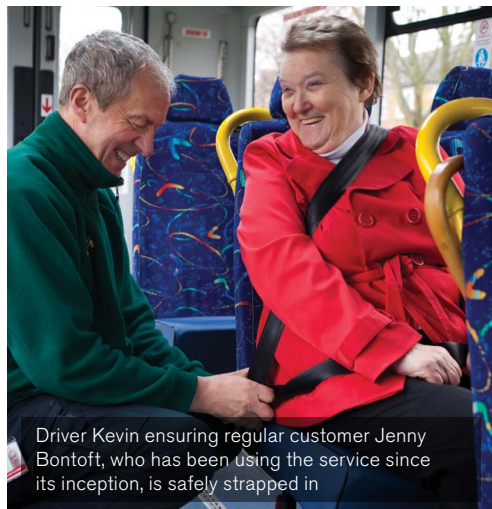
**PlusBus in Numbers Since 2006**

- Close to **5,000** registered members of MKCT
- Almost **3 MILLION** miles covered by MKCT buses
- Nearly **1 MILLION** trips scheduled over all MKCT services
- Over **750,000** PlusBus trips scheduled
- 2,000** PlusBus trips scheduled per week
- 16,000** trips for community groups
- 550,000** PlusBus trips carried out
- 7,000** Day trips

Driver Kevin assisting Mrs Edith Banton on a trip to the shops



Driver and part-time lyricist, Wayne Perdue, on a PlusBus day trip to Windsor



Driver Kevin ensuring regular customer Jenny Bontoft, who has been using the service since its inception, is safely strapped in



Driver John Scott with passengers Mrs Cooper and Mrs Bousfield of Olney, enjoying some Christmas shopping

## We are the Plusbus Drivers

(To the tune of My Old Man's a Dustman)  
Written by Wayne Perdue, MKCT driver

*Two of our regular drivers Wayne and Kevin's double act has become a regular feature at our staff Christmas party. We asked Wayne to write a song to say goodbye to MKCT, and he came up with the goods!*

Now here's a little story, to tell it is a must  
About some unsung heroes, who drive round your PlusBus  
Some people earn a fortune, others earn a mint  
But if you're a PlusBus driver, in fact you're flipin' skint.

Oh we are PlusBus drivers, we drive round your PlusBus  
We try to serve the public with a minimum of fuss  
Oh the lift goes up, the lift goes down, the step goes in and out  
We provide a first class service of that there is no doubt.

We cruise all day, around MK, the ops prepare our sheet  
It is a thing of beauty, and always works a treat  
To be an Ops Controller, there only is one test  
Just chill out in the office 'cos the drivers do the rest.

CHORUS

There's rules and regulations for everything we do  
Like defect sheets and feedback forms, they come from 'you know who'  
But have you heard the latest, we thought it was a prank  
Now every time you drive a bus you have to fill the tank!

CHORUS

We meet some lovely ladies, they sometimes like to flirt  
It could be our slim figures or the colour of our shirts  
We love the daily banter, it gives us a real lift  
We often end up telling funny tales from our shifts.

CHORUS

Our driving skills are legendary, they are a sheer delight  
And when we are manoeuvring, we like to get it right  
So if you want to join us, but just don't have the skills  
Well that's OK, but don't delay, they need you down at Bills.

CHORUS

We're moving to the Council, it will be a new start  
It could be quite a challenge, but we all will play our part  
We've got a great new slogan, on that we all agree  
Soon everyone will be shouting 'THANK YOU ECT'.

CHORUS



## A message from our first general manager

It's amazing to think MKCT started more than eight years ago, and that so much has developed in that time!

In the early days, it was all about finding ways to offer more and more journeys, and I remember the excitement of breaking the 2,000 trips per week barrier for the first time!

Once we knew that PlusBus was pretty much at its limit, the focus turned to putting the case for more buses. But at the same time, we were still able to expand our day

trip programme. Seeing four buses head to Southend on a sunny Saturday was a great achievement, reinforced by hearing the enthusiasm of a user who hadn't been to the coast for more than ten years!

There were other innovations, too - route 80 from Stony Stratford proved almost too popular, with a duplicate bus needed on some days!

I moved on to other projects within ECT in 2010, but have really enjoyed seeing MKCT continue to develop.

Above all, it's always great to pop back and be reminded of the friendliness and professionalism of the drivers, which is one of the key strengths of the service.

It'll be sad to see ECT leave Milton Keynes, but that won't take away from the eight years of progress and all the experiences - from weekly shopping trips to summer days out - that MKCT has helped make possible.

**Toby Parsons**