



PRESS NOTICE

FRIDAY 18TH APRIL 2008

RURAL WEST TAXICARD GOES LIVE!

The Rural West Taxicard scheme is being launched on Friday 18th April 2008 at Longhirst Hall, at a brief ceremony commencing at 12:30 that will be attended by scheme promoter Rural West Partnership, scheme members, and accredited taxi drivers.

Rural West Taxicard is for people living in the rural west of Castle Morpeth Borough who have mobility difficulties, or who have no access to a car or public transport. It is designed to help them travel independently.

The new scheme is available to eligible Castle Morpeth residents living in the pilot area. Similar to the taxi voucher scheme that ran in Whalton in 2003-05, each service user will get a credit-card sized Taxicard that fits neatly in a purse or a wallet. Service users can use up to £8 subsidy on each taxi journey, with a total subsidy limit during the pilot of £100 per Taxicard member.

Rural West Partnership Chair George Sanger said: "Many people living in our rural villages cannot access health and other services because they cannot get there independently. We hope Taxicard will make travel by taxi more affordable to them."

The first 100 eligible residents that apply will be able to test the scheme out. Each member will get a Taxicard, with their photo and name printed on it, together with their copy of the Taxicard Handbook, containing a list of accredited Taxicard drivers and their telephone numbers.

Whalton resident, Mary Barton, said: "We had a very successful taxi voucher scheme in the village a number of years ago, but unfortunately the funding ran out. This new pilot scheme is great news for elderly and isolated people in the Rural West who do not have access to transport and cannot afford standard taxi fares."

Rural West Taxicard is being promoted by Rural West Partnership. It is one of a set of transport improvements funded by Advancing Castle Morpeth, your Local Strategic Partnership.

The project will run until March 2009. It is hoped that a successful pilot will inform decisions about rural transport when the new single authority is in place.

Anyone interested in joining the scheme should call: 0845 458 1850. For those with access to the internet, more details can be found at <http://www.ratransport.co.uk/rwtaxicard.html>

Areas covered by the scheme are Belsay, Capheaton, Hartburn, Heddon-on-the-Wall, Longhorsley, Matfen, Meldon, Netherwitton, Stamfordham, Stannington, Thirston, Tritlington and West Chevington, Wallington Demesne, Whalton