



(L-R) Richard Falconer, managing director of Co-Wheels; Cllr Ged Bell, Newcastle City Council's Cabinet Member for Development, Neighbourhoods and Transport; Martijn Gilbert, managing director of Go North East; and Jamie Driscoll, North of Tyne Mayor

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Bus company and car club team up with new shared mobility solution to support car-free lifestyles

North East based businesses Go North East and Co-Wheels have collaborated to launch a dynamic new flexible mobility solution which blends the best bits of using both a bus and a car when you need them.

'Flexility' is a new smartcard-based season ticket which enables you to use a bus for your regular journeys and still have access to a car when needed without the need to own one – making sustainable lifestyles even easier.

Flexility can be used on Go North East buses but, in a UK first, it also includes car club membership on a single smartcard so it works as both a bus ticket and car club membership key.

The companies hope that the new product will play an important role in doing more to ease congestion and improve air quality.

It comes with a double headline for the North East and North of Tyne Combined Authority area as both businesses are locally based in Newcastle where the initiative is being launched, continuing to put the region on the map as a hotbed of both mobility and technology innovation.

The car club offer sits on top of a Go North East bus season ticket on a smartcard that includes free car club membership, £30 driving credit and no monthly subscription fees.

Existing Go North East smartcard holders can request a free upgrade to Flexility, and existing Co-Wheels subscribers are being offered a 15% discount on Go North East bus season tickets.

An easy-to-use online car club registration process checks driving licence eligibility and links the smartcard to a user's account.

Commenting on the launch, Martijn Gilbert, managing director of Go North East, said: "The Flexility smartcard is something that we believe is a particularly good fit with the emerging new norm changes to peoples travel patterns and examples of things like blended home-office working where full-time car ownership is now even less financially viable for many people.

"Whilst not a completely new concept, the partnership between Go North East and Co-Wheels is a UK first and this latest generation offer gives an easy to use solution with a good coverage of cars and car sites available across Newcastle and Gateshead. It also comes at a time when using a shared mobility platform is becoming more acceptable as people re-think their travel needs following the pandemic.

"We need to be open-minded to finding and embracing creative new solutions to society's mobility needs. Supporting our work to improve bus services with a flexible blended solution that includes an affordable car

option for the occasional, more bespoke, journeys that are sometimes less easy by public transport will help enable more car-free lifestyles.

“These are the sort of behaviour changes that will make a real difference to reducing congestion and improving air quality by making use of low carbon public transport a viable alternative for even more journeys.

“I've been car-free myself for over six-months now and trialling the test version of Flexility on my bus pass. I can personally highly recommend it!”

Richard Falconer, managing director of Co-Wheels, said: “Flexility is the ideal solution for those who commute by bus but need a car for the occasional shopping trip or days out.

“You get the best of both worlds – cheap bus travel and access to a car when you need it without the expense of owning one. We have wanted a scheme like this for a long time as we know car club members make much more use of buses for their daily travel needs so the two work together perfectly.

“We are delighted to be teaming up with a forward-thinking company like Go North East and hope it will lead to much more joint working in future as we try to cut peoples' travel costs and at the same time reduce CO2 to combat climate change, especially as most of our cars are hybrid or electric.”

Jamie Driscoll, North of Tyne Mayor, added: “We need an integrated transport system. One which gives people the flexibility they need for work, education and leisure and at the same time is better for the environment.

“This new shared mobility solution, a collaboration between local businesses Go North East Buses and Co-Wheels, is going in the right direction. It will make low carbon public transport a more attractive option for most journeys and reduce the need for car ownership. All of us will benefit from the likely improvement in air quality and reduced congestion on our roads.

“Transport plays a key role in tackling the climate emergency and the Flexility scheme will make it much easier for people in Newcastle and Gateshead to make green travel choices.”

More information and the application process can be found online at

www.gonortheast.co.uk/flexility.

[Go North East website](#)