



**CAB Cornwall**

## **Remote Access**

Results of a Study  
conducted by  
CAB Cornwall Campaigning Action Group  
to highlight  
problems people living in rural areas experience  
accessing everyday services.

May 2010

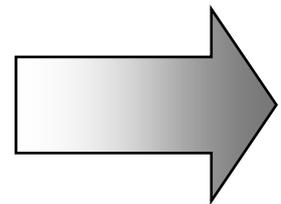
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# How far do people living in rural Cornwall have to travel to access services?

Imagine you live in Westminster, London indicated by the ★.

With little or no public transport you have to access the key services listed below.

The examples shown on the map give an idea of how far on average someone living in rural Cornwall has to travel to access these same services.



## *Legend*

 A&E	 Court	 Major Hospital	 Secondary School
 Bank	 Dentist	 Supermarket	 Swimming Pool
 Cinema	 Doctor	 Post Office	 Airport (Internal UK)
 Pharmacy	 Solicitor	 Rail Station	 Airport (International)



## INTRODUCTION

One of the key factors affecting the ability of people living in rural locations to participate in modern life is the ease with which they can access services. Demand and supply are linked and as a result services are most commonly located in centres of population. For rural dwellers, accessibility is governed by distance and the availability/affordability of both public and private transport.

The study was conducted by gathering evidence from 27 rural locations randomly identified across the county. The map (see inside back cover) shows approximate locations.

## SUMMARY

Access to services depends on transport, whether public or private. In rural Cornwall however, many services require a private car to get to them. This is particularly so in the north and east.

Buses with frequencies of 1 to 1½ hrs provide the majority of public transport. A quarter of villages have no bus service.

Bus ticket costs are perceived to be higher than travel by car.

Schools, local provision is greater at nursery and primary level. However, choice is not available to 30 to 40% of locations.

While there is good access to GPs and Post Offices in the villages studied, lack of public transport severely limits access to major hospitals.

Other medical services are located in towns within a reasonable average distance from villages; as are solicitors, though Local Authority offices and Courts of Law are more distant.

Locally organised Lunch Clubs, Day Centres and Childrens facilities are available in many

villages, but where there is nothing, having a car is essential. While social and religious facilities are to hand, sports centres, swimming pools and cinemas are up to 25 miles away.

In the south and west all locations have some access to services via public transport. By contrast, in the north and east up to 1/3 of surveyed journeys to key services are impossible without a car.

There is low awareness of public transport service availability. At least one route between two main towns has no direct bus service completely cutting off a major town and many villages from the rest of the county.

As services continue to concentrate in urban locations and fuel costs rise, public transport and flexibility of service provision will become ever more important particularly for the rural poor, vulnerable and disadvantaged.

## BACKGROUND

In the 20 years to 2001, Cornwall had the fourth fastest growing shire county population in the country, with a growth rate 4 times that of the UK as a whole<sup>1</sup>. Cornwall's picturesque image masks its position as second most deprived county after Durham and most deprived Shire County in the country.<sup>2</sup>

The county is notorious for having the lowest wages and highest housing costs, and this is particularly true in the N & NE of the county, where public transport provision is at its lowest. There is a spread of deprived households across these areas too small and widely dispersed to show up in statistical demographic analysis, but living where cheaper houses are to be found, that is, where there are fewest services. Perversely, this aggravated lack of

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<sup>1</sup> Cornwall LTP2/Census 2001

<sup>2</sup> Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2004

opportunity for those who need it most is caused by these families attempting to help themselves by seeking more affordable housing.

Cornwall's unique geography, including the factor of only one boundary with the rest of the UK, greatly affects access to services and transportation. While there is high car ownership there are areas where 30% of households do not own a car.<sup>3</sup>

The Cornwall Council Local Transport Plan 2006 – 2011 (LPT2) identified five priorities and a vision whereby "all the population has access to a wide range of services and community facilities". Transport Aim 1 was to "Improve access to (employment and services) to meet local needs by providing travel choice and reducing the need to travel..."

## METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in two parts, a questionnaire completed by branches with knowledge of the locations, addressing three groups, viz

- Doctors, Schools, Hospitals, Post Offices and Accessing Cash
- Transport and Communications
- Other Services

and a desktop research project analysing public transport availability.

## RESULTS

The rural locations were of differing types; one or two cottages, a hamlet or a village, but for ease of reference all are referred to as "villages". Given political emphasis on choice in recent years, availability and accessibility of alternatives was noted.

## **Public transport availability and cost**

Bus services, when available, had an average frequency between 1 and 1½ hours. Costs of journeys by private transport were estimated as base (fuel only) and full cost (taxable allowance figure). With the exception of journeys to Hospitals and Secondary Schools, public transport exceeded private transport costs in all cases. (NB Return and periodic fares are available, which would reduce these charges, and school services are often provided outside the normal bus timetable/routing. Dial and ride and other community services were referenced where available.)

## **Primary Services**

A grouping of key services was identified and studied to look at distance and availability of choice.

**Doctors** Access to GPs was relatively convenient for the study group. 26% had a GP in the village. The average distance to a surgery was 2.9 miles. Distance to an alternative surgery averaged 5.1 miles but a third of the studied locations stated there was no (perceived) choice.

**Schools** At earlier ages, availability of local services was higher with primary schools being in-village for 48% of cases. At Secondary level, there was only one located within village. Average distance to Secondary School was 5.1 miles.

Choice of school has been widely promoted, but this is something not easily available to people in rural areas. Between 30 and 40% of villages had no choice of school, those with choice being further limited by lack of public transport. Although school bus services are available and were not included in this study, local government policy, paying transport to the nearest school, effectively limits choice.

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<sup>3</sup> Cornwall LTP2/Census 2001

**Hospitals** The average distance to a minor injuries unit was 8 miles, however a third of locations had no public transport access to these. A&E services were twice as far away and major hospitals were even further distant (average 24 miles). Over 40% of locations have no public transport access to their major hospital.

Choice was again limited in this category. With only one major hospital, locating an alternative requires a journey out of county. Cornwall's unique geographical relationship with the rest of England means that going "out of county" frequently requires a longer journey than would be the case elsewhere.

**Post Offices** 60% of locations had a Post Office in the village. While 2 had full service post offices the average distance to these was just under 5 miles.

**Access to Cash** This is a problem in rural areas. Only one village had a bank and the average distance of travel was just over 4 miles. For 63% however that nearest bank was seen to have no alternative. Cash was available via ATMs in 8 villages (30%) and on average the journey to a cash point was 2.7 miles. Almost half had no alternative.

### **Transport and Communications**

**Bus** 74% of locations had access to a bus stop within walking distance. However the comments on availability of services included references to infrequent service (anything from hourly to 2½ hours/daily/weekly or poor services), need to make multiple changes and lack of evening or late evening buses. This also means that in 26% of cases there was no public transport service at all.

**National Coach** 89% could access a national service at an average of 5.7 miles.

**Rail** On average rail services were 11 miles distant although a third of villages did not have access to branch lines.

**Airports** UK Services were on average 28 miles away, European 56 miles and Intercontinental 188 miles.

With infrequent or non-existent public transport, **Taxi and Car Hire Services** gain more importance. In a surprising 25% of cases taxi services were available within walking distance at an average 3.6 miles and Car Hire services 6.4 miles.

**Broadband** Increasing emphasis is being placed on accessing services via the Internet. European funding has helped Cornwall to raise its connectivity. Our study showed three quarters of locations had broadband access although less than 25% of these had speeds above 3 Mps and 15% had slow to nil speeds.

N.B Other studies have shown as many as 40% of CAB clients in Cornwall have no landline and so are unlikely to have Internet access.

### **Case Study**

A man suffering from long term post traumatic stress disorder placed in Council accommodation in mid Cornwall could not access his Jobcentre Plus in Bodmin (11miles) as there was no bus service so changed to Bude (17mi). He had no money and walked to Bude where he successfully applied for a crisis loan but could not get to Barnstaple to claim and collect it (a further 35mi) and still return home on public transport. He gave up and walked 17mi home from Bude without the loan.

## **Other Services**

For this group of services, average bus fare costs exceeded all private car petrol cost assessments and the majority of those assessed on a full cost basis. A perception that car travel is not only more convenient but cheaper is perhaps understandable.

The availability of medical services (**Dentist, Pharmacy, Optician, Chiropodist, Physio/Chiropractor**) was low in villages with only two having a dentist or chiropodist and 4 a pharmacy. The average journey to any of these services was between 4 and 6 miles with private car times of 11 to 16 minutes.

No villages had local legal or official services (**Solicitor, Magistrates Court, County/High Court, Local Authority/One Stop Shops**). Solicitors were more accessible being on average a 5.1-mile journey away (maximum 12 miles). Courts were more distant at 13/16 miles (maximum 35/45 miles), while Local Authority locations were 8 miles (maximum 31 miles).

**Social Facilities and Entertainment** were varied. While 33% had Lunch Clubs, only 11% had Day Centres. For those having to travel out of the village to access these, a journey could be from 3 to 13 miles, with buses over an hour apart and little or no service in almost a quarter of cases.

**Church, Chapel, Community Centre/Village Hall, Pub and Children's Facilities** were well represented, with between half and two thirds of locations having them in the village. Bowling Clubs and Sports Centres were less likely to be found locally, being an average of 5½ miles distant, while cinemas and swimming pools required longer journeys, with some people having to travel up to 25 miles to reach one.

Some locations have local bus services provided by voluntary or funded groups on

a booked or dial and ride basis. Service levels and provision standards vary greatly across this group. A more detailed study may be an option to establish how these add to the commercial provision however these offerings are not targeted at providing regular timetabled services required for employment or regular service access.

### **Case Study**

An unemployed man accused of a criminal offence could not consult a criminal solicitor or appear at the Magistrates Court since these were in Bodmin. He was unable to drive and had no money. His court appearance was scheduled for 9:30 am which, was impossible for him to make since there is no direct public transport link from Launceston to Bodmin.

### **Comment**

Accessing services and work in rural areas of Cornwall is highly dependent on private transport. Public transport is generally infrequent and does not provide a service suitable for commuting. Less than 5% of journeys to work in Cornwall are made on public transport of any type.<sup>4</sup>

Using public transport is further complicated by the mismatch between appointment times and timetables. The study showed that even where bus services were available appointments had to be organised suitably. Service providers do not always consider the logistics of making an appointment at a specific time when the client is based in a rural area.

Behaviour that it would be reasonable to label as uncooperative or worse in an urban setting can simply be the product of rural isolation in the country. To apply sanctions to those who fail to comply with impracticable demands is simply to further alienate the already disenfranchised rural poor.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk>

## DESKTOP RESEARCH PROJECT – PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Information about average journey times and frequency is not representative of actual service provision experienced. Because of this, an additional study was done using an Internet-based information source ([www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk))<sup>5</sup> to assess the practicality of people being able to reach an appointment at their nearest service location on time via public transport.

For this study an appointment at 10 am at a Jobcentre Plus, County Court and Major Hospital was used. Appointment duration was 1 hr, except hospital at 2 hrs. Two journey times were recorded; the journey to the service, including walking sections, and a total journey time from leaving home to arrival back.

Mapping of sample points showed a gap in North Cornwall in the Launceston/Bodmin Moor area and for this reason 3 extra locations were added giving a total of 30.

### Going to Hospital?

**Be fit enough to walk and devote a whole day to the adventure.**

### Going to Court?

**Pack a bag; you may need to stay overnight.**

### Looking for work?

**It could take you 6 hours to visit your local Jobcentre Plus.**

## Results

**Major Hospital.** Of the 30 returns 9 journeys (30%) were impossible.

A quarter of total journey times exceeded 6 hours 20 mins.

In one case the return bus left before the person could have arrived at the appointment.

A quarter of all total journey times involved walks of over 36 minutes for access and connections.

The majority of journeys to Court and Hospital required at least one change.

**County Court.** Of the 30 returns 10 journeys (33%) were impossible.

25% of one-way journeys exceeded 1hr 50 mins with 25% of total journey time exceeding 5½ hours.

In one case, a total return journey time of 8 hours included over 1hr 20min walking. In two cases the only option to reach the appointment would have been to travel the previous day.

A quarter of all total journey times involved walks of over 44 minutes for access and connections.

**Jobcentre Plus.** From the 30 returns 7 journeys (23%) were impossible (no service or too late).

25% of total round trip journey times including return to home exceeded 4 hours maximum 6 hrs. In two cases the return bus left before the person had arrived at the appointment.

<sup>5</sup> Referenced as source of information by Cornwall Council website.

**Overview.** Strong contrasts were observed between the West and South of the county and the North and East. In the West and South, availability of rail travel had a marginal effect on journeys to hospital and County Court. Journeys to and from all locations and services were possible on public transport and in some cases by using trains.

The North and East of the county accounted for all examples of the journeys identified as impossible or arriving too late to make the appointment. In at least two instances, while a journey to a service was possible, a return on the same day was not. In two cases the information provided by the website was inaccurate and would have resulted in someone being stranded 30 miles from home.

In rural locations, few bus stops are marked either by posts or on the road. Awareness of availability of services is poor, even among locals, and tourists depend on Tourist Information, the Internet and the printed timetable. While the latter has maps of town services, there is no Cornwall-wide route map. In at least one case (Launceston/Bodmin a distance of 22 miles) there is no direct service. Journeys between these towns take between 1hr 24 mins and 2hr 29mins by bus while a car journey is 20-25 mins.

### **Case Study**

A disabled man with no money contacted Jobcentre Plus (JC+) for help. They suggested the social fund but directed him to another JC+ (35 miles) to collect. He couldn't get there, as he had no money. JC+ offered a travel warrant. Client walked 14 miles to JC+ & collected warrant only to find the JC+ he had to go to closed 30 minutes before any bus would arrive. JC+ were not sympathetic.

## CONCLUSIONS, OBSERVATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Accessing services in Cornwall requires use of private transport, but as petrol prices increase and services become more concentrated in urban locations, rural dwellers will become more isolated. Public transport service availability needs to be expanded, and this is particularly the case in the North and East of the county.

Where bus services are available, a frequency in excess of one hour on rural routes does not encourage usage or provide an impression of a reliable service.

There is low awareness of and confidence in public transport options in rural areas, both by locals and visitors. Bus stops are mostly unmarked and service intervals in excess of an hour do not help public awareness. Cornwall Council Local Transport Plan 2 aims to expand SMS (text message) based information across the county, but appears to be focussed on routes around Truro. The need for information is greatest in rural areas.

To aid visibility of the service, perhaps consideration could be given to marking rural bus stops on the road rather than relying on "general knowledge". A code identifying the stop number could be added. (This is the system in Jersey, Channel Islands and works effectively there.) Customers could text the number to the bus company and discover the arrival time of the next bus. Until real-time data is available, timetable information could be provided. Additionally, the formal introduction, confirmation and publicity of "hail and ride" would improve accessibility.

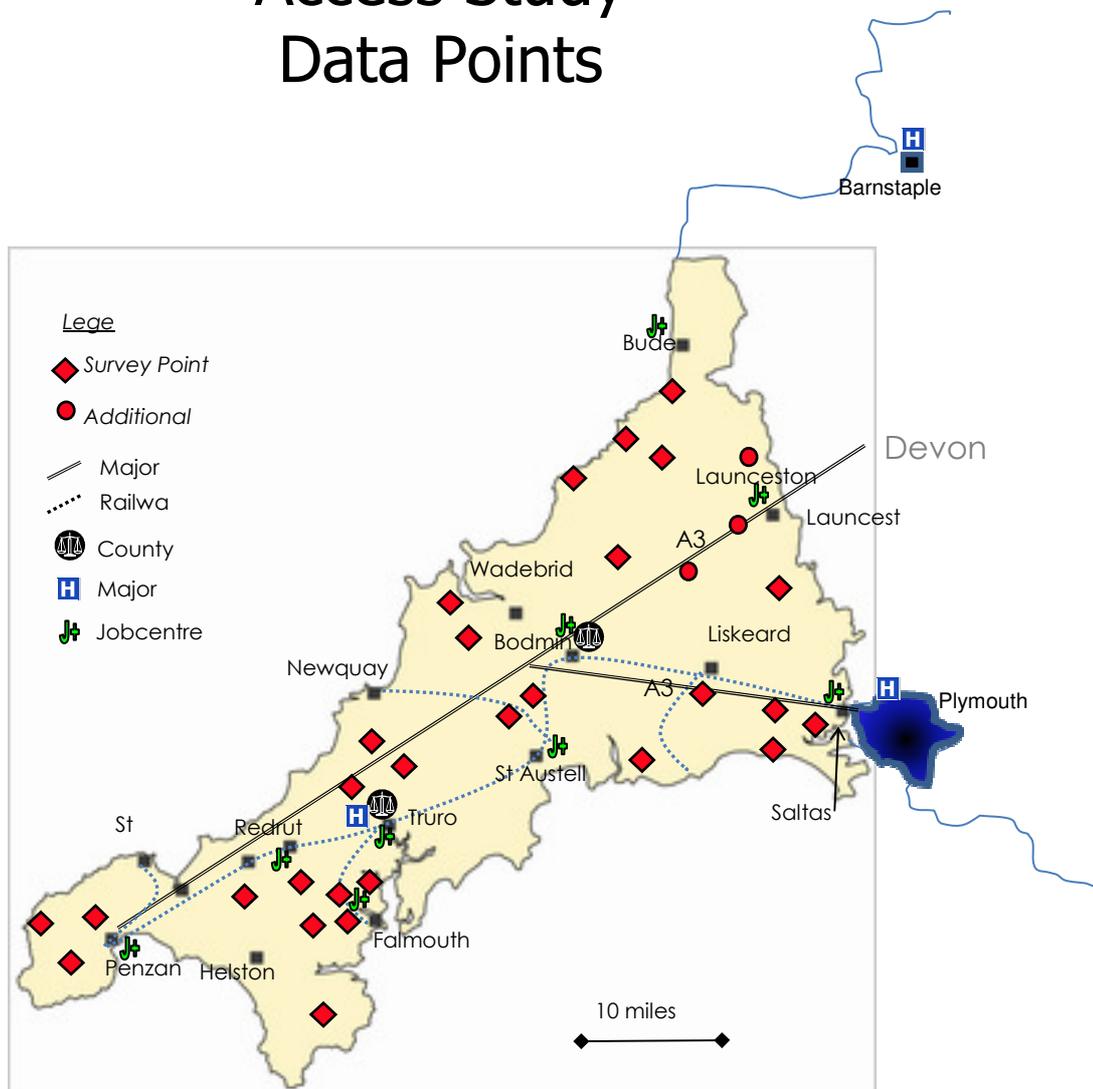
Service providers often book appointments without reference to the distance between the client's home and the service location or potential problems accessing public transport. This can create situations in which people fail to meet targets and receiving sanctions as a result. While such behaviour could be labelled as uncooperative in urban areas, in the country it can simply be a factor of rural isolation. Rather than encouraging and involving rural people, the impact of sanctions can therefore be to further disaffect and demotivate them.

A more sensitive approach and greater awareness of travel problems would improve the quality of service for the client and reduce administration loads caused by the need to rearrange appointments.

The services most easily accessible in our study were Post Offices and GP surgeries. What opportunities are there for using these outlets as a local access point for other services?

Access to major hospitals by public transport is particularly poor. (This is the subject of another study.) There are particular issues with travel to Derriford Hospital from North Cornwall.

# Access Study Data Points



Base Outline map, free source,  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cornwall\\_map\\_small.png](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cornwall_map_small.png)

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## ***Enquiries***

Contact: Alan Brook, email: [campaign@northcornwall.cabnet.org.uk](mailto:campaign@northcornwall.cabnet.org.uk)

Postal: CAB Cornwall, Shire Hall, Mount Folly, Bodmin, Cornwall PL31 2DQ

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