

New minibus service launched in Suffolk

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A NEW minibus service has been launched to help residents of one of the region's most beautiful and rural areas get around.

The Lavenham Area Mini Bus Scheme (LAMBS) was officially launched in the Market Place heart of the historic village on Saturday .

The flexible service has been set up to provide a means of travel for people who are unable to use public transport or who want to go places where there is no conventional bus route.

Lyn Gurling, chair of LAMBS, said: "The idea of community transport is a growing one and makes travel possible for many who would otherwise be housebound."

The scheme revolves around a modern 16-seater minibus with low floor access and tail lift for wheelchair users.

"We are able to offer door-to-door transport to those previously excluded from a number of day-to-day activities and thereby assist the parishes involved in the scheme and the organisations within those villages in the social and economic regeneration of those communities," she added.

The service includes a dial-a-ride option on Tuesdays and Fridays, with users paying an annual fee to join the scheme. There is also a regular market day run to Bury St Edmunds on Wednesdays, via West Suffolk Hospital, and Sudbury on Thursdays.

These services can also bring passengers into Lavenham from villages like Brent Eleigh, Brettenham, Chelsworth, Hitcham, Kettlebaston, Milden, Monks Eleigh, Preston St Mary and Wattisham.

The service trials have so far proved very successful, which followed a rural transport survey of the travel needs within the area, with the bus also being available for private hire by groups.

The scheme has been given funding from the Countryside Agency, Suffolk County Council and Babergh District Council. It has a paid part-time co-ordinator and a paid part-time driver as well as a number of volunteers.

"It is for the young and not-so-young, the able and not-so-able. May it be well used, talked about , encouraged and proved to be the splendid scheme that it is," Mrs Gurling said.