



PHOENIX
COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

A proposal, not yet a service. No Phoenix bus runs yet. The route and times below are a draft, and we are gathering support, volunteers and funding.

COMMUNITY BUS PROPOSAL · WEST KENT

A bus that belongs to the villages.

Phoenix is a plan for a not-for-profit community bus from Paddock Wood through Nettlestead Green, Watlingbury, Teston and Barming to Maidstone Hospital and Maidstone, with minibus feeders bringing Yalding, Laddingford, East Peckham and a dozen more villages to it — early mornings, evenings and Sundays included.



One route

One number, one timetable

7 days

Sundays and bank holidays too

06:40-22:57

Four round trips, plus a proposed 22:10 late bus from Maidstone

Bus passes

Concessionary passes accepted

The problem

Buses in these villages are spread across several operators and route numbers, with school-day variations, request stops and conditional diversions. When the proposal was written in August 2026, we found:

- no Sunday or bank holiday service to most of the villages;
- the last buses back from Maidstone leaving around 5pm on many routes, so an afternoon appointment can mean no way home;
- East Peckham without a bus from Saturday afternoon until Monday morning;
- the frequent Maidstone-Tonbridge buses passing along the A26 at Watlingbury all day without turning into the villages.

When we asked in local community groups, people told us about missed hospital appointments, children with no way home from school, and older residents who no longer risk a trip into Maidstone in case they can't get back.

The idea

Owned by the community

A Community Interest Company: not-for-profit, with any surplus kept for the service.

Driven by neighbours

Volunteer drivers from the villages at the wheel of the feeder minibuses. The main bus, if it is a full-size bus, needs professional drivers with a full bus licence.

Filling the gaps

Early mornings, evenings, Saturdays and Sundays — the times existing buses don't run. It is meant to complement them, not compete.

Room for everyone

A wheelchair lift and space for walking aids, pushchairs and shopping.

Where it would go

Paddock Wood (Station)

Nettlestead Green (Hop Pole)

Wateringbury (The Wateringbury)

Teston

Barming

Maidstone Hospital

Maidstone West Station

Maidstone King Street

Maidstone East Station

Minibus village feeders would meet it at Paddock Wood and the Hop Pole from Yalding, Laddingford, East Peckham, Hadlow, Mereworth, Capel, Horsmonden, Marden and more.

What happens next

The proposal has been prepared for Yalding and Nettlestead parish councils. Before a bus can run we need their support, a community bus permit from the Traffic Commissioner, volunteers, and start-up funding.

If you would use the bus, please register your interest — it takes two minutes, and every confirmed sign-up is counted in the totals we show the councils. If you could drive or help run it, or know a good spot for a stop, get involved.

Phoenix Community Transport — a proposed not-for-profit community bus from Paddock Wood, Nettlestead and Wateringbury to Maidstone, with minibus feeders from the villages around.

Contact: hello@phoenixbus.co.uk

phoenixbus.co.uk · draft of 29 September 2026



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Draft timetable

Proposed, not running. Monday to Sunday, including bank holidays. All times are approximate and would depend on road conditions. Concessionary bus passes would be accepted.

Outbound — Paddock Wood to Maidstone

STOP	TRIP 1	TRIP 2	TRIP 3	TRIP 4
Paddock Wood (Station)	06:40	10:10	13:40	18:10
Nettlestead Green (Hop Pole)	06:48	10:18	13:48	18:18
Wateringbury (The Wateringbury)	06:55	10:25	13:55	18:25
Teston	07:02	10:32	14:02	18:32
Barming	07:10	10:40	14:10	18:40
Maidstone Hospital	07:15	10:45	14:15	18:45
Maidstone West Station	07:18	10:48	14:18	18:48
Maidstone King Street	07:20	10:50	14:20	18:50
Maidstone East Station	07:25	10:55	14:25	18:55

Return — Maidstone to Paddock Wood					
STOP	TRIP 1	TRIP 2	TRIP 3	TRIP 4	LATE BUS PROPOSED
Maidstone King Street	-	-	-	-	22:10
Maidstone East Station	07:40	11:10	14:40	19:10	22:15
Maidstone King Street	07:42	11:12	14:42	19:12	-
Maidstone West Station	07:45	11:15	14:45	19:15	22:20
Maidstone Hospital	07:48	11:18	14:48	19:18	22:23
Barming	07:53	11:23	14:53	19:23	22:28
Teston	08:00	11:30	15:00	19:30	22:35
Wateringbury (The Wateringbury)	08:08	11:38	15:08	19:38	22:43
Nettlestead Green (Hop Pole)	08:15	11:45	15:15	19:45	22:50
Paddock Wood (Station)	08:22	11:52	15:22	19:52	22:57

One route. One number. Every day.

It fits on a phone screen: no route codes, no conditional diversions, no school-day variations. A round trip from Paddock Wood takes under two hours, so one bus can run all four. Yalding, Laddingford, East Peckham and other villages connect by feeder minibus.

The late bus PROPOSED

Trip 5 is a proposed **late bus leaving Maidstone King Street at 22:10**, a two-minute walk from the bingo hall in Lower Stone Street, then Maidstone East at 22:15 and every stop on the way back, reaching Paddock Wood at about 22:57, where the late feeders meet it. It would mean a way home after an evening in Maidstone — bingo, a late shift, hospital visiting, a meal or a film, a train into Maidstone East — seven days a week, at the same time every night.

There is no matching late bus *into* Maidstone: the bus would run there empty after trip 4. Would you use the late bus? Register your interest and tick “the late bus home” — it helps

decide whether it goes ahead.

From the villages

Small village feeder minibuses would meet this bus at Paddock Wood and the Hop Pole: arriving 10 minutes before it leaves, and leaving 10 minutes after it gets back. They run when you book a seat, up to an hour before.

Have a suggestion about a stop or a time? [Tell us](#).

Phoenix Community Transport — a proposed not-for-profit community bus from Paddock Wood, Nettlestead and Watlingtonbury to Maidstone, with minibus feeders from the villages around.

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phoenixbus.co.uk/timetable.html · draft of 29 September 2026



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Village feeders

Proposed, not running. None of these minibuses runs. The times are planning estimates, worked back from Phoenix's own draft timetable so every feeder meets the bus. Late feeders depend on the proposed late bus going ahead.

Phoenix's main bus runs from Paddock Wood to Maidstone and no longer goes into the villages. The feeders are four small minibuses that would bring the villages to it — Yalding, Laddingford, East Peckham, Hadlow, Mereworth, Golden Green, Beltring, Capel, Five Oak Green, Whetsted, Lamberhurst Quarter, Horsmonden, Brenchley, Matfield, Chainhurst, Collier Street and Marden — arriving 10 minutes before Phoenix leaves for Maidstone and leaving 10 minutes after it gets back.

Three meet Phoenix at **Paddock Wood station**; one meets it at **the Hop Pole, Nettlestead Green**. They would be small minibuses driven by volunteers from the villages.

Book a seat

Every feeder journey, early morning to late evening, would run **only when someone has booked a seat**. Book up to an hour before the journey leaves its first stop, except the first journey of the morning, which closes at **22:00 the evening before**. For the late feeders, book by 22:00 for the Hop Pole and 22:07 for Paddock Wood. If nobody books, that journey does not run, so no minibus drives empty lanes. The times stay fixed, so you always know when your connection is.

How booking would work

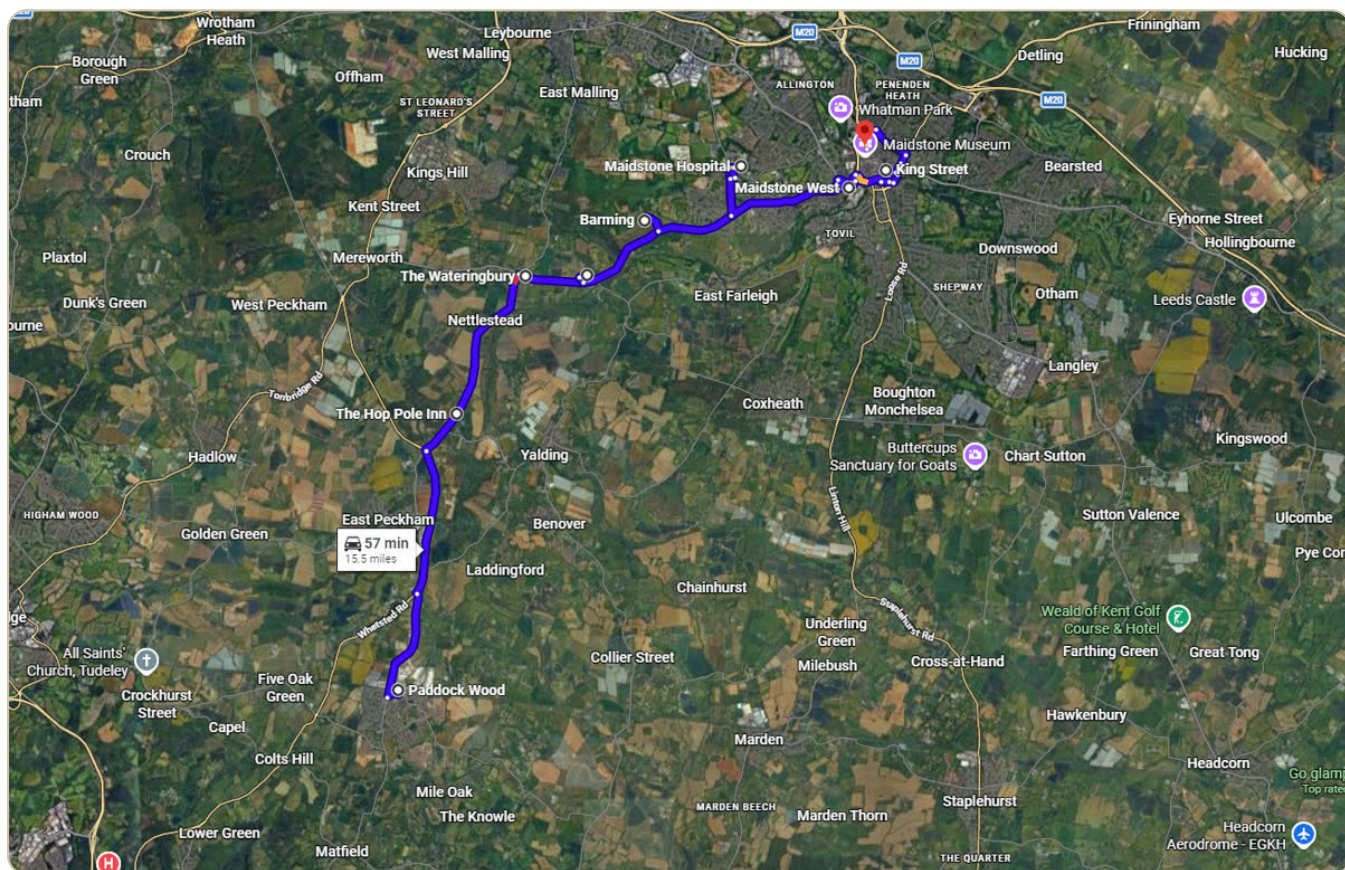
- **Online**, at any hour, up to the cut-off.
- **By text**, to one Phoenix mobile number, in plain words — for example *Horsmonden early tomorrow both*. The reply spells the booking out so you can check it.
- **Regular journeys** — the same trip every weekday, say — can be booked once and kept until you cancel. A relative or neighbour can set one up for you.

Book both ways at once, so the minibus knows to bring you home. Tell us how many of you are travelling, and if you need the wheelchair space. You would pay on board, as on the main bus, and bus passes would be accepted; booking itself would be free.

If your plans change, cancel as early as you can, so a driver isn't called out for nobody.

Try a demonstration of booking, online or by text. Nothing booked there is real: no feeder runs yet.

If Phoenix is running late, the feeder waiting for it would wait. And if a booked journey home could not run — a driver taken ill, a minibus off the road — we would text and call you and arrange another way home.



The main route, Paddock Wood to Maidstone — about 15.5 miles, 57 minutes by car. Map data and imagery © Google.

The Phoenix buses the feeders meet					
PHOENIX	EARLY	MIDDAY	AFTERNOON	EVENING	LATE
Leaves Paddock Wood for Maidstone	06:40	10:10	13:40	18:10	–
Leaves the Hop Pole for Maidstone	06:48	10:18	13:48	18:18	–
Back at the Hop Pole	08:15	11:45	15:15	19:45	22:50
Back at Paddock Wood	08:22	11:52	15:22	19:52	22:57

The four feeders at a glance

Minutes from the first stop. Schematic, not to scale.

A · Western villages

○ Hadlow	0 min
○ Mereworth	10
○ Golden Green	23
○ East Peckham	35
○ Beltring	43
● Paddock Wood station	55

B · Capel and Five Oak Green

○ Capel	0 min
○ Five Oak Green	6
○ Whetsted	12
● Paddock Wood station	22

C · Southern villages

○ Lamberhurst Quarter	0 min
○ Horsmonden	12
○ Brenchley	22
○ Matfield	30
● Paddock Wood station	45

D · Marden to the Hop Pole

○ Marden station	0 min
○ Chainhurst	10
○ Collier Street	20
○ Laddingford	30
○ Yalding village	38
○ Yalding Station	43

Feeder timetables

A · Western villages

Towards Paddock Wood station BOOK A SEAT				
STOP	TRIP 1	TRIP 2	TRIP 3	TRIP 4
Hadlow	05:35	09:05	12:35	17:05
Mereworth	05:45	09:15	12:45	17:15
Golden Green	05:58	09:28	12:58	17:28
East Peckham	06:10	09:40	13:10	17:40
Beltring	06:18	09:48	13:18	17:48
Paddock Wood station — arrive	06:30	10:00	13:30	18:00

Back to the villages BOOK A SEAT			
STOP	AFTERNOON	EVENING	LATE
Paddock Wood station — depart	15:32	20:02	23:07
Beltring	15:44	20:14	23:19
East Peckham	15:52	20:22	23:27
Golden Green	16:04	20:34	23:39
Mereworth	16:17	20:47	23:52
Hadlow	16:27	20:57	00:02

The main bus no longer goes into East Peckham; this feeder is how it would connect, along with Hadlow, Mereworth, Golden Green and Beltring.

With one minibus, the early and midday returns would reach Hadlow after its next trip should already have left, so they are left out and the minibus goes straight back for its next trip instead. Filling the gap needs a second vehicle, a shorter route, or a change to the main timetable.

B • Capel and Five Oak Green

Towards Paddock Wood station BOOK A SEAT				
STOP	TRIP 1	TRIP 2	TRIP 3	TRIP 4
Capel	06:08	09:38	13:08	17:38
Five Oak Green	06:14	09:44	13:14	17:44
Whetsted	06:20	09:50	13:20	17:50
Paddock Wood station — arrive	06:30	10:00	13:30	18:00

Back to the villages BOOK A SEAT					
STOP	EARLY	MIDDAY	AFTERNOON	EVENING	LATE
Paddock Wood station — depart	08:32	12:02	15:32	20:02	23:07
Whetsted	08:42	12:12	15:42	20:12	23:17
Five Oak Green	08:48	12:18	15:48	20:18	23:23
Capel	08:54	12:24	15:54	20:24	23:29

C · Southern villages

Towards Paddock Wood station BOOK A SEAT				
STOP	TRIP 1	TRIP 2	TRIP 3	TRIP 4
Lamberhurst Quarter	05:45	09:15	12:45	17:15
Horsmonden	05:57	09:27	12:57	17:27
Brenchley	06:07	09:37	13:07	17:37
Matfield	06:15	09:45	13:15	17:45
Paddock Wood station — arrive	06:30	10:00	13:30	18:00

Back to the villages BOOK A SEAT			
STOP	AFTERNOON	EVENING	LATE
Paddock Wood station — depart	15:32	20:02	23:07
Matfield	15:47	20:17	23:22
Brenchley	15:55	20:25	23:30
Horsmonden	16:05	20:35	23:40
Lamberhurst Quarter	16:17	20:47	23:52

With one minibus, the early and midday returns would reach Lamberhurst Quarter after its next trip should already have left, so they are left out and the minibus goes straight back for its next trip instead. Filling the gap needs a second vehicle, a shorter route, or a change to the main timetable.

D · Marden to the Hop Pole

Towards Hop Pole, Nettlestead Green BOOK A SEAT					
STOP	TRIP 1	TRIP 2	TRIP 3	TRIP 4	
Marden station	05:48	09:18	12:48	17:18	
Chainhurst	05:58	09:28	12:58	17:28	
Collier Street	06:08	09:38	13:08	17:38	
Laddingford	06:18	09:48	13:18	17:48	
Yalding village	06:26	09:56	13:26	17:56	
Yalding Station	06:31	10:01	13:31	18:01	
Hampstead Lane	06:36	10:06	13:36	18:06	
Hop Pole, Nettlestead Green — arrive	06:38	10:08	13:38	18:08	

Back to the villages BOOK A SEAT						
STOP	EARLY	MIDDAY	AFTERNOON	EVENING	LATE	
Hop Pole, Nettlestead Green — depart	08:25	11:55	15:25	19:55	23:00	
Hampstead Lane	08:27	11:57	15:27	19:57	23:02	
Yalding Station	08:32	12:02	15:32	20:02	23:07	
Yalding village	08:37	12:07	15:37	20:07	23:12	
Laddingford	08:45	12:15	15:45	20:15	23:20	
Collier Street	08:55	12:25	15:55	20:25	23:30	
Chainhurst	09:05	12:35	16:05	20:35	23:40	
Marden station	09:15	12:45	16:15	20:45	23:50	

The main bus no longer goes into Yalding, Laddingford, Yalding Station or Hampstead Lane; this feeder is how they would connect.

Why the main bus no longer goes into the villages

The first draft ran the main bus through Yalding, Laddingford and East Peckham before Paddock Wood, which took about an hour and a quarter of every round trip. Starting at Paddock Wood instead lets one bus keep a simple, reliable timetable to Maidstone, while the feeders reach far more villages than one bus could.

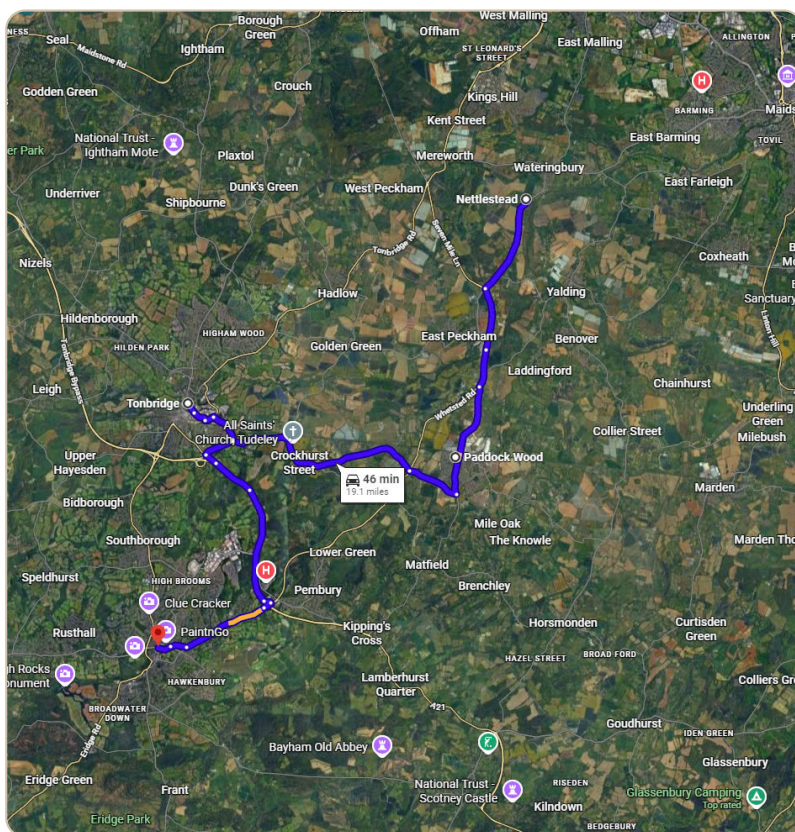
It is a trade-off: people in Yalding, Laddingford and East Peckham would change buses where the first draft let them stay on one all the way. The feeders are timed so the change is a short, fixed wait.

Would a feeder work for your journeys? [Tell us](#).

Also being looked at: Tunbridge Wells

A second idea, with no times yet: a link from Nettlestead through Paddock Wood and Tonbridge to Tunbridge Wells, for its hospital at Pembury, shops and trains.

- Nettlestead
- Paddock Wood
- Tonbridge
- Tunbridge Wells



Nettlestead to Tunbridge Wells — about 19.1 miles, 46 minutes by car; a bus stopping on the way would take longer. Map data and imagery © Google.

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How it would work

A community bus, run as a not-for-profit

Phoenix would be set up as a **Community Interest Company** registered with Companies House. A CIC has to use its assets and any surplus for the community it serves, so money from fares goes back into keeping the bus running.

It would operate under a **Section 22 community bus permit** (Transport Act 1985), issued by the Traffic Commissioner. That lets a not-for-profit run a registered local bus service open to everyone, with the route, stops and timetable registered in the usual way.

Fares and bus passes

Passengers without a pass would pay a cash fare. Holders of an English National Concessionary Travel Scheme bus pass would travel under the national scheme, with the operator reimbursed in the normal way.

Drivers

What a driver needs depends on the size of the vehicle.

- **The main bus.** A full-size bus, as proposed, needs drivers with a full bus licence (category D), so it would be driven by **professional drivers**, and we expect them to be paid. If the main bus turned out to be a smaller vehicle, this would be looked at again.
- **The village feeders.** These are small minibuses, driven by **volunteers** from the villages. Many people who passed their car test before 1997 already hold a minibus (D1) entitlement.

If you're interested in either, [get in touch](#) and we'll help check what your licence covers.

The bus

The proposal is for a **heritage single-decker** in a distinctive community livery, adapted with a rear wheelchair lift and space for mobility aids, pushchairs and shopping — a bus the villages will recognise as their own.

It is planned to run on **waste cooking oil** collected from local pubs and restaurants and filtered for use. The carbon released when that oil burns was taken from the air by the crops that produced it, so its lifecycle emissions are far lower than fossil diesel's.

Paying for it

Running costs would be met from fares, bus-pass reimbursement and grants, with the possibility of a small contribution from the parish councils served, to give the service a secure base. Detailed figures will be published once they have been checked.

Keeping it safe and legal

The vehicle would have regular preventive maintenance inspections and an annual MOT, and the service would meet the conditions of its permit and registration.

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phoenixbus.co.uk/how-it-works.html · draft of 29 September 2026



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Get involved

Phoenix only happens if the villages want it. Here's how you can help — every sign-up and message goes to a real person.

I'd use the bus

Tell us where you'd travel from and to, and when. Real journeys make the case to councils and funders.

[Register your interest](#)

I could drive a feeder

The village minibuses would be driven by volunteers, especially people who passed their test before 1997. We'll help you check your licence.

[Volunteer to drive](#)

I hold a bus licence

The main bus would need professional drivers with a full category D licence. Tell us if you might be interested.

[Tell us](#)

I could help run it

Admin, fundraising, publicity, oil collection, bus washing — all useful.

[Offer some time](#)

I know a good spot

Suggestions for stops, overnight parking or workshop space in the parishes.

[Suggest a place](#)

For parish councils

We're asking for:

1. in-principle support for a community bus service;

2. a letter of support for the permit application and for funding bids;
3. help finding volunteers, stop locations, parking and maintenance space;
4. in future budget rounds, consideration of a modest contribution towards running costs.

Contact

Email hello@phoenixbus.co.uk. We read everything, and we'll only use your details to reply to you about Phoenix.

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