SHOPMOBILITY ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE YEAR END 30.9.24

2023/4 saw Shopmobility having a mixed year with below average figures compared to the situation pre-Covid. We handled 4,576 actual days of hire and secured 595 new users over the 12 months, which is at the lower end of our average over the last 15 or so years excluding the Covid period. As we are a good measure of how tourism is performing it does not indicate a good outlook if the current trends continue.

We have continued to work in partnership with other organisations and we have good relationships with a number of these including Enable Jersey, Maison des Landes, St John’s Ambulance, RJH&A and with Ports of Jersey. The detail of activity is as follows. In respect of Enable we have assisted with some of their client’s scooter problems and have supplied mobility equipment to some of their less well-off clients. For Maison des Landes we have supplied several power chairs, scooters, and wheelchairs to them to hire out to their guests who require them. St John’s Ambulance has a wheelchair in an ambulance to avoid having to borrow one from the hospital when taking people there. For the RJH&A we loan manual wheelchairs for their shows for visitors to use free of charge. Finally, with the Ports of Jersey as well as offering advice to the Airport we have been trying to find a model of power chair suitable to use on the boarding ramp as some people are so heavy that it makes the loading job extremely difficult. Co-operation is part of our ethos and we try to practice it wherever we can, frequently offering advice to individuals and fellow charities.

During the summer we held a major one-day exhibition in the lounge of the central library including a formal visit by the Lt Governor. As the Chairman was out of the island this was manned by Sue, Jim, Trevor, and Pam who explained what Shopmobility does, displayed a selection of our equipment and demonstrated how we assist disabled people. It also offered us an opportunity to illustrate what we bring to the economy of the Island particularly the tourist sector. Other show and tell events were regularly attended on a similar basis over the 12-month period.

2025 is our 20th anniversary year which offers us an opportunity to celebrate in the context of disproving the opinion by many who when it was decided to set up a Shopmobility scheme claimed it was “a good idea but it will never happen!” How wrong they were and now we are an established Jersey charity with many local users as well as providing a service to a considerable number of tourists on an annual basis. Some visitors to the Island would not come if Shopmobility were not here, so we offer considerable benefit to hotels and guest houses as well as shops and restaurants. At a rough guess it is estimated that we now help to contribute something in the region of a quarter of a million pounds annually to the economy.

For personal reasons, our driver Tony left at the beginning of 2024 moving to Scotland and shortly thereafter Kieren joined us as delivery driver and office assistant. Craig our manager has now been with us for getting on for 3 years and our Saturday young lady, Ellen, completed 2 years, though unfortunately she will be leaving before we end the next financial year. We are grateful to all of them for all the work that they do. Our volunteers Trevor Lister and David Bull and Sue help when asked. David continues delivering and collecting manual chairs and smaller items in the East and Sue and Trevor in manning the office when asked. Pam keeps an eye on Facebook and other sites and advises when she sees something that might be useful to us. As a result, we have sometimes had items such as walkers, chairs and other items donated. We thank them all for their considerable help. We also work closely with Parking Control and the Disability and Inclusion Group and thank both bodies for their assistance when needed. Since we opened Profreight/Ferryspeed has brought from the UK much of our larger items all free of charge and we are pleased to thank them for their continued assistance.

Gabby, a former Saturday girl, has now very successfully completed her university degree and was appointed a new trustee during the year. We are actively considering recruiting more younger people as the current trustees are “of a certain age”........

Turning to the financials. It can be seen from the accounts that our hire fees increased by over £7,500 due in part to more individuals using our scheme to assist those on Income Support with scooters at about £1 a day thus offering them improved mobility and saving the taxpayer substantial sums. Our revenue against operating costs continues to show a deficit and our actual surplus is due entirely to the recovery of the stock market which significantly boosted the value of our investment portfolio. With staff costs now running at about £3,500 per month (we pay the living wage) we need to find other ways than hire charges to raise money. Our charges now are at the top end of scale compared to other schemes in the British Isles. Our hire charges were last increased for the 2023 calendar year although we left the local members rate at the same level. This partly accounts for the growth in hire charges with the latter decision being designed to try to help local people faced with the increasing cost of living. Currently there is no intention to increase the £40 annual membership fee nor the members £4 user charge, but it may have to be considered when we next change our general tariffs. Up to now we have not sought grants or other financial support as we were able to achieve a rough balance of income and expenditure with a surplus at times, but this is now becoming more difficult. Our staff costs are essentially fixed with little room to reduce these thanks in part to the voluntary input of the chairman currently. The complexity of our system in having to log where each piece of equipment is at any one time and when it is to be delivered and collected, makes it is impractical to expect a volunteer attending one day a week to be able to cope without the strong chance of a record failing, revenue being missed and kit being mislaid or failing to be delivered or collected. We are at future risk as two key current volunteers become either too old or unfit to give numerous hours a week to the office thus further paid staff might be required with finances not being able to stand this as things are at the moment.

We have in the region of 350 pieces of equipment ranging from large mobility scooters capable of 8 mph to a grip for picking something off the floor. All this needs to be kept somewhere safe and dry. We have stores in the Sand Street and Pier Road car parks together with 4 small stores dotted around Clos Gossett. This last is inefficient and we hope that someone will be good enough to offer us 750 to 1,000 square feet of dry and secure storage at ground level with easy access for our van in due course.

Our accounts show that we have had over £9,000 in donations in the last 12 months which is substantially made-up of a basic figure plus the income tax reclaimed. Most of this was from one very generous person who over 2 years has now donated £11,000 to which has been added the 25% tax rebate. For this support we offer sincere thanks as it has enabled us to purchase modern up-to-date equipment but realistically, we cannot expect this person to continue to be so generous. Other sources of income and donations iare now becoming more critical hence a drive for more grants and support in the coming years. Some might suggest legacies might be the solution but in nearly 20 years we have received only 2, one for £500 and one for £1,000 and these were many years ago. Still, this might present an opportunity for us to persuade our local users and others that they put something in their Wills remembering Shopmobility. Many other Charities gain a much larger proportion of the annual income from such sources.