



# PADAM

M O B I L I T Y

## DRT Expertise Pays Dividends



HertsLynx Service

The continual crisis in bus funding with passenger numbers only just returning to pre-pandemic levels means there is constant discussion of the role demand-responsive transport (DRT) can play in bus operations.

DRT has the potential to reduce costs and increase coverage. It could ensure that the network can be

maintained in areas experiencing difficulties (especially to ensure services at the beginning and end of the day). Equally, it could be used to expand services to improve coverage in poorly served areas in line with Bus Service Improvement Plans (BSIPs) as part of Enhanced Partnerships in England. As such, it could provide a lifeline to both passengers and operators.

So far, DRT has still not been widely used in the UK and understanding of how best to design services

is not yet widespread. However, Padam Mobility's UK-based team, Jack Holland and James West, has possibly the most longstanding and broad experience of DRT in the country. They both have worked piloting the first DRT schemes for bus operators in the UK – as well as launching new services in Lincolnshire, Surrey, Leicester and Hertfordshire for Padam Mobility. This experience of working within the bus industry and understanding the business pressures it faces can really pay dividends.



Left: Jack Holland, Head of Northern Europe Business Development  
Right: James West, UK Business Development

## Meet the Padam Mobility Team

### Jack Holland, Head of Northern Europe Business Development

Jack is a graduate of the Arriva General Management Graduate scheme where he learnt how to run a bus garage and gained his bus licence. From running bus depots in Buckinghamshire he joined the team that launched ArrivaClick in Sittingbourne.

*“I’ve spent years managing bus depots looking at price elasticity, driving hours, managing overheads, marketing services and I have seen first-hand great routes that run at high frequencies and carry thousands of people every day. I’ve also seen underperforming routes – due to population density, town planning, socio-demographics and various other reasons. With the improvements to DRT software in the past few years, I believe some of these services could be run with fewer resources and serve their users in a much greater way.”*

### James West, UK Business Development

James spent two years on the RATP Dev UK Graduate Management Scheme and has worked across bus, tram and coach services. He moved from writing business plans and forecasts for commercial bus operators to becoming Operations Manager for Slide Bristol, before launching and managing Slide Ealing.

*“Having managed DRT operations and the teams that help make them function every day, I understand the needs and challenges that define DRT versus those of a traditional fixed line bus. Through my experience in urban, suburban and rural routes, I can see and have seen how DRT can benefit suburban feeder services, whilst also allowing rural areas to offer an accessible transport option. I have also seen the flexibility that DRT can offer, and how constraints from fixed routes on service design can be removed to create a service that best fits the end user.”*

*“DRT solutions have advanced hugely since I started in the sector and we must now use them to adapt our wider transport services to complement lower-frequency bus routes to make them better. In doing this, operators can help reutilise existing resources to increase their reach to users.”*

### Pranav Chittur, Business Development Manager UK & Nordics

Pranav has a background in transport, with a consultancy role in rail and public transport during his previous employment with the VINCI Group. He subsequently moved from an intermediary role to the DRT and mobility solutions sales division at Padam Mobility, where he currently oversees the Northern Europe and Scotland region.

### Data Is Key

In this new environment, data plays a much more important role. DRT services enable better insight into travel patterns and rapid changes to configuration.

Jack Holland:

*“There is no magic bullet for bus services. However, what we need to be much better at is the use of data in the industry. For too long have we relied on historic data and routes. When I was a General Manager, many of the routes had stayed the same in terms of routing for decades or longer. Our environments are continually evolving with new developments and destinations. For example, town centres are no longer the key destinations that they used to be. Industrial estates and warehousing continue to be built in out of town,*



Alice Missler, of Hertfordshire County Council, designed and launched the service with Padam Mobility and the operator UNO

*hard-to-serve areas.*

*“We need to understand data better to serve the general public. Tap on, tap off will help. New analysis tools by the likes of Prospective Labs will too. In addition, I believe DRT has its role in serving areas that are very difficult to serve by fixed line buses.”*

## Data and DRT: The HertsLynx Experience

HertsLynx launched in September 2021, serving the market town of Buntingford in Hertfordshire as well as surrounding villages and hamlets. Most people in the area have traditionally had little or no access to public transport. Jobs, services and rail links are located in surrounding towns.

Hertfordshire County Council set up HertsLynx to provide transport connections for local people. It is designed to serve residents across a zone covering villages in North and East Hertfordshire, as well as providing transport links to fixed destinations in key hub towns:

Stevenage, Letchworth, Hitchin, Baldock, Royston and Bishop’s Stortford. It covers an area between 7 and 9 miles in each direction from Buntingford, serving a total area of around 150 square miles (400 square kilometres).

HertsLynx launched with three minibuses with 16 seats plus one space for a wheelchair user. This has expanded to 5 vehicles, including one electric bus, in September 2022. The service operates 0700–1900 Mondays to Saturdays and 1000–1600 on Sundays and public holidays. Journeys can be booked in real-time or in advance. Fares are based on distance travelled, from £2 (up to 2 miles) to £5 for over 10 miles. Concessionary pass holders travel for free, and SaverCard holders and children under 10 travel for half fare. HertsLynx runs as a cashless service.

Alice Missler, of Hertfordshire County Council, designed and launched the service with Padam Mobility and the operator UNO. She has guided the DRT service as it developed and has continually

reviewed the service data.

*“We’ve gone from a situation where we had very little data to one where we can review the data, identify trends and make sure the service aligns with them.”*

This data means that the team can see people increasingly using the service for more diverse trips.

Passengers can use HertsLynx for travel anywhere in the Free-Floating Operator Zone (where there are no fixed routes) and from the Free-Floating Operator Zone to designated locations in the key hub towns. Travel is permitted between key hub towns but is not available for journeys between points within them.

*“Initially journeys were from free-floating stops to the key hub towns. Now we are also seeking journeys within the free-floating zone – patterns more consistent with GP visits, social calls and local shopping.”*

Conversely, the data can be used to adapt the DRT design to evolve with public demand.

*“We know that 25% of passengers are SaverCard holders (between the ages of 11 and 25) and the college in Buntingford is one of the top three pick-up and drop-off points. So we’ve engaged with Padam Mobility to create a semi-fixed line to the college. The algorithm will ensure that students get to college on time but it will organise journeys to enable the most people to travel.”*

The service surpassed its year one target within 10 months and has expanded in September 2022.