



COMMUNITY TRANSPORT FUNDING

Report by Chief Officer, Assets and Infrastructure

PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the Report is to seek approval for an updated process for distributing and awarding funding to providers of community transport.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Comhairle has historically funded a number of local organisations to provide community transport. During the 2024/25 budget setting process the Comhairle agreed to the removal of £120k from Community Transport Grants funding.
- 2.2 The number of groups that claim community transport funding has reduced over the years with only six groups being funded since 2023/24. These groups had all been contacted in March 2024, advising of the reduced funding and their proposed allocation and that fresh applications would be required for 2025/26.
- 2.3 In May 2024 the Comhairle agreed to allocate £120k from the Islands Cost Crisis Emergency Funding to the Community Transport budget for 2024/25, allowing the groups to obtain their previous level of funding. It is understood that as part of the budget setting process, there will be a proposal to retain this budget for 2025/26, funded from the Crown Estate Fund.
- 2.4 In the event that the temporary funding is not retained options for dividing the proposed allocation between the various groups is detailed at paragraph 7.6 with the recommended option at paragraph 7.8.
- 2.5 An application form, including grant criteria, is detailed in the Appendix to the Report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 **It is recommended that the Comhairle agrees to:**
 - a) **introduce an Application Form and grant criteria as detailed in the Appendix to the Report;**
 - b) **allocate 2025/26 funding to groups based on their percentage share of the 2024/25 budget but if there is reduced funding, ensuring that each group gets at least £1000; and**
 - c) **develop a Community Transport Policy to help direct future funding allocations.**

Contact Officer: Colm Fraser, Head of Municipal Services
Appendix: Community Transport Fund Application Form
Background Papers: None

IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

Resource Implications	Implications/None
Financial	None other than detailed in the report.
Legal	None other than detailed in the report.
Staffing	There are limited staffing resources within the Transport team and the development of a Community Transport Policy will have to be prioritised against competing demands.
Assets and Property	None
Strategic Implications	Implications/None
Risk	None
Equalities	The main impact was from the previously agreed budget reduction, temporarily reinstated, which is not part of this report. There is not expected to be impacts for 2025/26 based on the application process.
Corporate Strategy	The development of a Community Transport Policy will feed into the Comhairle's commitment to ensure our connectivity infrastructure meets the needs of our communities.
Environmental Impact	None
Consultation	There will be limited community consultation as part of the development of the Community Transport Policy.

BACKGROUND

- 5.1 Community Transport can be considered as any land-based transport initiative or service which involves local communities. It is intended to provide transport solutions to all community needs created by gaps in regular transport (bus) services.
- 5.2 The current provision of Community Transport funding in the Western Isles is historically based on the Rural Community Transport Initiative (RCTI), a Scottish Government grant funding scheme that was available to community groups by application. There was also a smaller contribution from the Rural Transport Fund which helped minimise the need for financial contribution from community groups who made a successful application for RCTI funding.
- 5.3 The Comhairle had continued to finance these schemes since 2008, with little change other than the withdrawal of some groups from the programme. As it was originally based on applications from individual groups in 2008, rather than a wider Western Isles strategy, funding is not currently spread evenly in all areas.
- 5.4 The number of groups applying for funding in recent years has fallen with only six groups claiming funding.
- 5.5 A study was commissioned by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar on behalf of the Outer Hebrides Community-Led Local Development Local Action Group (LAG) into community transport in the Outer Hebrides with a [baseline study](#) and a [final report](#) issued in March 2023. The report provides an overview of the existing community transport in the islands and had created a number of recommendations, including some for the Comhairle, which due to resourcing issues have not been progressed.

FINANCES

- 6.1 The Comhairle has a Community Transport budget of £193,354 for 2024/25, comprising of £73,354 from Service budgets and £120,000 from the Islands Cost Crisis Emergency Funding. Due to the reduction in community groups claiming funding it is anticipated that the spend in 2024/25 will be £142,792. To retain the current level of funding for the six groups in 2025/26 the anticipated additional funding required is £70,000 for 2025/26.

FUNDING DISTRIBUTION AND USE

- 7.1 The current Community Transport funding is distributed amongst the following six groups:

Ness Community Council	£6,960
Uig Community Council	£2,500
North Lochs Amenity Group	£4,496
Tagsa Uibhist	£76,522
Eriskay Community Council	£9,460
Voluntary Action Barra & Vatersay	£42,853
Total	£142,791

- 7.2 Historically, funding has been allocated to the groups on previous years submissions and claims. The funding covers a number of different approaches to community transport, from groups running their own vehicles and others commissioning services from local bus operators.
- 7.3 The funding helps provides free or subsidised transport for a number of areas including:
- Shopping trips (including banking and post office)
 - Community activities (including youth and senior groups)
 - GP surgery visits
 - Day care and respite visits
- 7.4 The users of the provided transport range from pre-school to the elderly and those with support needs, including those with mobility issues. The transport can be for particular events and activities or to fill gaps in the public bus service.
- 7.5 If the funding for 2025/26 remains the same as the current year it is proposed to distribute the money on the same percentage basis, subject to the groups applying for funding and meeting the grant criteria.
- 7.6 If the funding for 2025/26 is kept at the proposed £73k budget the following options are proposed for distribution:
- a) equal percentage reduction for all groups based on the available budget;
 - b) equal percentage reduction to all groups but ensuring the smaller groups receive at least £1,000 so that they can provide some service; and
 - c) the Comhairle look to support seven smaller projects up to £10k each with larger groups being able to apply for more than one project.

- 7.7 The services have limited information on the impact and wider effects of current funding so if it was reduced would find it difficult to apportion money based on need, without disadvantaging another area. As the funding has been provided to these groups for a number of years, a significant reduction may prevent the groups from providing any community transport, especially those groups receiving smaller amounts of funding.
- 7.8 It is proposed that if there is a funding reduction in 2025/26 that there is an equal percentage reduction to all groups but ensuring the smaller groups receive at least £1,000 so that they can potentially provide some service.

APPLICATION FOR FUNDING

- 8.1 It is proposed that the groups seeking funding for 2025/26 onward will have to complete an application form and demonstrate that they meet certain criteria. The proposed application form and criteria is detailed in the Appendix to the Report.
- 8.2 It is proposed that applications for 2025/26 will be subject to a relatively light assessment for funding, with the Comhairle developing a community transport policy with the potential for a more detailed assessment and awarding criteria for future applications.

**COMHAIRLE NAN EILEAN SIAR
COMMUNITY TRANSPORT
2025-2026**

**APPLY FOR UP TO 100% OF THE TOTAL
FUNDING COSTS FOR YOUR
COMMUNITY TRANSPORT PROJECT**

**MAXIMUM AWARD AVAILABLE PER
APPLICATION WILL BE DETERMINED BY
AVAILABLE BUDGET AND APPLICATION
SCORE**

**This form should be returned by 31 March
2025**

PLEASE NOTE: THERE IS ONLY ONE ROUND OF FUNDING PER YEAR

Please ensure your application

- Is received by the above deadline
- It meets the eligibility criteria (pages 3 and 4)
- The form has been fully completed
- All supporting information is supplied (checklist on page 6)

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

Support of Community Transport Projects

Welcome to the Support of Community Transport Projects application pack.

Not-for-profit community organisations who have a constitution or a Scheme of Establishment are eligible to apply.

Completing the application form

For your application to be considered, you must return the completed application form, and supply all relevant items listed in the checklist by **31/03/2025**.

If returning your application by email, please include your group name in the email title bar.

The assessment process

After the application deadline the Comhairle Transport Office may contact you for further information if required. Please note that Comhairle Transport Office do not make final decisions on funding awards. They will assess the application and give recommendations to Management who will decide by early March when available budget is confirmed. Assessments and recommendations will be based on the scoring criteria on page 3 of this document.

Successful applicants will need to sign a contract before funds are released. Funds awarded will need to be spent **within the 25/26 budget year**. Groups funded will be required to evidence how they have spent the funds by completing detailed summary sheets for services provided. .

Data protection

The information supplied on these forms will be used for the purpose of assessing your Community Transport Funding Application, and appropriate measures are in place to protect your personal data.

Contact

If you would like to discuss your application, you can contact jim-morrison@cne-siar.gov.uk

Criteria for Support of Community Transport Projects

Applicants can apply for **up to 100% of current funding costs**. The maximum award available should not exceed your current allocation. **Award will be determined by the budget available and the scoring of the application.**

The fund is not currently available for Capital spend projects and only revenue budget applications will be considered

Funding is only being considered for 25/26 financial year, with a new application required each year if funding is available. Funding from external sources (including NHS) and from other sources within Comhairle nan Eilean Siar should be declared when making the application.

Applications to the fund must demonstrate and evidence that they meet one or more of the following categories:

- 1. The direct benefit to individuals and groups in the local community. Include service provision for older members of the community, disabled including those with mobility issues who are unable to access current public transport.**
- 2. How the service supports the current bus network. This to include services provided to areas with very limited or no current service for shopping, access to essential services and social inclusion. Groups should also consider options to expand their services to the wider community in remote rural areas.**
- 3. How the project could remove barriers in the community, particularly to assist children, young people and vulnerable adults to provide transport opportunities to allow access to services including nursery, learning, sports, activities, or employment.**

Applications to the fund must demonstrate and evidence that they meet the following:

- 4. Evidence the applicant has the necessary expertise and resources to deliver the service outlined in the application including current fleet and if required staff/volunteers available. If buying in services provide evidence the operator used is of good repute.**

Applications must:

- Be for Community Transport Services being provided between April 2025 and March 2026.
- Be submitted by an organisation with an eligible governing document and operating on a non-profit making basis.
- Be compliant with the Equalities Act 2010.

All community organisations who work with children and vulnerable adults must:

- Have a safeguarding policy in place. If you are working on a safeguarding policy we will accept your application however any award will only be granted on submission of the policy.
- All drivers and passenger assistants must have completed an enhanced check under the PVG Scheme introduced in November 2010, as amended by the Disclosure (Scotland) Act 2020.

APPLICATION CHECKLIST

Items to include with your application

Please tick to show that the following items, where relevant to your organisation, are included with your application.

Scanned, photocopied or emailed copies of supporting documentation are accepted. Please note we are unable to return any documents sent.

Tick	Items Required
<input type="checkbox"/>	Constitution or Articles of Association.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Include a statement showing how much the organisation has in all bank or other accounts. If an organisation has significant balances a statement detailing why they cannot be used for the purposes for which the Community Transport Fund is being applied for should be provided. Bank statements should have the account number, sort code, name of group and name and logo of the bank. The statement should be from within the last 3 months.
<input type="checkbox"/>	If applicable Include a signed copy of the most recent audited or independently examined accounts or OSCR return.
<input type="checkbox"/>	If you use your own vehicles please provide a copy of your section 19 permit, vehicle registration(s) and insurance.
<input type="checkbox"/>	Safeguarding or child protection policy for groups who work with children and/or vulnerable adults.

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Community Transport Fund Application Form

Please make sure you refer to the guidance in the application pack.

Your application will be assessed using the scoring criteria on page 3 of this pack.
Please consider this when completing the form.

Please complete the form clearly in black ink or type.

Section 1: Your details.			
Q1 Your organisation			
Name of organisation			
Name of main contact (to whom correspondence will be sent) <i>(*this question must be completed)</i>	(Title, first name, surname)		
Title / role in organisation			
Address for correspondence			
Postal town		Postcode	
Telephone number			
Email address <i>(*this question must be completed)</i>			
Organisation's website / media link (if applicable)			
Section 2: About your organisation.			
Q2	Please provide a summary of your project		

Q3	Please provide the start and end date of your project. All funding must be committed to be spent between April 2025 and March 2026.
Start date:	End date:
Q4	What are the main activities of your organisation relevant to a Community Transport application for support? These can normally be found in the governing document e.g. constitution, articles of association. You can also add a web link to your social media here.
Section 3: Who this project is for?	
Q5	Which area of the Western Isles is your application for? Please Give Details of all boundaries. If possible attach a map.
Q6	Please provide evidence of need for this project. If you would like help with demonstrating evidence of need please contact the Transport Office on 01851 822 661 or email jim-morrison@cne-siar.gov.uk we will do what we can to help.
<input type="checkbox"/> Survey / research	<input type="checkbox"/> Facebook / website / social media
<input type="checkbox"/> National policy	<input type="checkbox"/> Meeting minutes
<input type="checkbox"/> Community-led Action Plan	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
Please give details:	

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Q7	Does the proposed activity specifically target any of the following? Please select as required. Note: You will be asked to report on this at the end of the project.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Ethnic minority	<input type="checkbox"/> Low income	
<input type="checkbox"/> LGBTQ+	<input type="checkbox"/> Disability	
<input type="checkbox"/> Young people (up to 24 years)	<input type="checkbox"/> Older people (over 60 years)	
<input type="checkbox"/> General community		

Section 4: Key information about your project.

Q8	If applicable, is your organisation compliant with the Vulnerable Groups (Scotland) Act 2007? Protecting Vulnerable Groups (PVG) scheme - mygov.scot <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No If your organisation works with children, young people or vulnerable adults then a safeguarding policy is a required to be eligible for this grant.	
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Q10	Partnership working: are you working with any other community groups or organisation to deliver this project? <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No	
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If yes, please provide further details including what money is being contributed and / or what benefit this will bring?		
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FINANCE SECTION

Section 7: Finance – activities and costs.	
Q13	Tell us how much money you need to fund the project you are applying for. Please provide a breakdown.
Item / activity	Amount
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	
7.	
8.	
9.	
10.	
A.	Total amount requested in this application.
B.	How much of this project are you funding from your existing group resources?
C.	How much is coming from other Funders / Sponsors?
D.	Total cost of project. $D = A + B + C$

Section 7: Finance – activities and costs.

Q11 **What are your unrestricted cash reserves? Please detail for each bank account held.** Restricted reserves are monies given by grant or donation for a specific purpose, which cannot be used for other activities. All other funding should be classed as unrestricted reserves.

1.	Bank A/C	
2.	Bank A/C	
3.	Bank A/C	

Q12 **Does your organisation receive any funding from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar or have any pending applications with the Council?** This includes Service Level Agreements.
 Yes No

Q13 **Is your project reliant on any other funding?** Yes No

If Yes, please provide the source of other funding and the status of any applications.

Source and purpose	Status	
	<input type="checkbox"/> Secured	<input type="checkbox"/> Pending
	<input type="checkbox"/> Secured	<input type="checkbox"/> Pending
	<input type="checkbox"/> Secured	<input type="checkbox"/> Pending

Q14 **How will the project continue in the future?** Is this a standalone project or are there plans in place to continue? If so, please tell us how this will be funded?

Please provide details:

Section 7: Finance – activities and costs.	
Q15	Please tell us your bank details. Please provide details of the account any funding award would be paid to. This must be noted here as we cannot copy these details from your bank statement.
Account name	
Sort code (6 digits)	
Account number (8 digits)	
Building society roll number (if applicable)	
Q16	Details of independent examiner of accounts. A signed copy of the most recent audited or independently examined accounts must be submitted - see checklist on page 6. Please give the contact details for the examiner below.
Name:	
Address:	
Q17	Your signature. Must be the main contact as stated in Section 1.
<p>I confirm that to the best of my knowledge and belief, all replies given on this application are true and accurate. I understand that the supporting information may be requested at any stage of this application.</p> <p>(*this question must be completed)</p> <p>Signature: Date:</p> <p>(electronic signature acceptable)</p>	
Q18	Assessment contact availability
<p>As part of the assessment process a member of the Comhairle Transport team will contact the person noted at Section 1 to clarify any issues with the application.</p> <p>Please provide an indication of the preferred times and days, between Monday and Friday, for us to make contact. We will do our best to accommodate the days and times specified.</p>	
Q19	Preferred format for assessment contact.
Phone Call <input type="checkbox"/> Microsoft Teams Video Call <input type="checkbox"/>	

Declaration

Q20	Another person from your organisation must sign below. This must not be the main contact as mentioned in Section 1 Question 1.	
I confirm that I am authorised to sign this declaration on behalf of the applicant. To the best of my knowledge and belief all information provided in this application is true and accurate.		
Role / post held in organisation		
Name		
Address		
	Postal town	Postcode
Telephone number		
Email <i>(*this question must be completed)</i>		
Signature <i>(*this question must be completed)</i> (electronic signature acceptable)		Date:

Thank you for your time in applying and considering this fund for your project.

Please e-mail your application form with all required documents (see checklist on page 6) to:

freebus@cne-siar.gov.uk

Or Post to:

**Jim Morrison
Transport Office
Comhairle Nan Eilean Siar
Sandwick Road
Stornoway
Isle of Lewis
HS1 2BW**

You will be contacted by a Community Development Officer as part of the assessment process.

If you have not heard from an officer within 3 weeks of the closing date, please contact us at

If your project is successful we may ask to share photographs of your project on our website and we will contact you regarding this. We may also ask about evidence of the success of your project from your social media.