

Outer Hebrides Community Transport Study

Task Note 1: Baseline Mapping

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The TAS Partnership Limited
Passenger Transport Specialists

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1.1 Introduction

- 1.1 This study has been commissioned by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar on behalf of the Outer Hebrides Community-Led Local Development Local Action Group (LAG). The LAG partnership body manages the delivery of the local development programme, bringing together a range of public, private and voluntary sector stakeholders to deliver innovative and sustainable community-led projects.
- 1.2 For the scope of this study TAS has agreed with LAG that 'community transport' be given a wide interpretation involving a diversity of modes, and is not restricted to specialist transport services for those of limited mobility.

1.2 Objectives

- 1.2.1 The objectives of the study are as follows:
- a) To undertake a wide-ranging consultation programme encompassing the eleven Comhairle Wards to ascertain
 - ◆ the extent of current public and community transport (CT) provision across all the wards – this process is mainly to enable gaps in provision to be identified, and
 - ◆ the transport and mobility needs of the communities, and
 - b) To identify accessible and sustainable transport and mobility solutions which would serve both residents and visitors, and main locations on each island.

1.3 Our Approach

- 1.3.1 In order to ensure that we have a full and current understanding of passenger transport provision in the Outer Hebrides, this note forms a baseline exercise and involves mapping all of the current provision – both standard public transport and existing CT provision.
- 1.3.2 The note additionally gathers any relevant data that would indicate unmet demand (now and in the future), including census and demographic statistics, and strategic plans relevant to the region.

1.4 Structure of this Note

- 1.4.1 This note presents the baseline data organised as follows:

- Chapter 2: Policy & Strategy position – this chapter provides an overview of how community transport aligns with a range of strategic objectives of a number of agencies;
- Chapter 3: Demographic data – the make-up of the Outer Hebrides population and implications this has for transport provision; and
- Chapter 4: Public bus network – Route and operator details with some analysis of journey times to GP surgeries;
- Chapter 5: Taxi & Private Hire operations – there is a clear need to view the taxi sector as an integral part of the public transport mix in the outer Hebrides;
- Chapter 6: Community transport operations – Comhairle nan Eilean Siar funding of services and description of each CT operator; and
- Chapter 7: Public & Community Transport information – a review of the public-facing web presentation of service availability as perceived by the travelling public.

1.4.2 Following the consideration of overarching policy and demographics, this chapter order first sets out the core public road-based transport provision (buses and taxis) which then makes the function of community transport (as gap filling and enhancement) clearer.

1.5 Acknowledgements

1.5.1 We would like to express our thanks to the following individuals who assisted with this report:

- Mira Byrne (CLLD Coordinator)
- Sarah MacLean (Outer Hebrides Tourism)
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- Murdo MacNeil (Voluntary Action Barra & Vatersay)
- Chris Maclulich (Tagsa Uibhist)
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- Donna Macleannan (Horshader Community Development Trust)
- Annabel Langhorne (Tolsta Community Development Ltd)
- Margaret Morrison (Scalpay Minibus Committee)
- Anne Macleod (Comunn Eachdraidh Nis / Ness Historical Society)
- Sandra Macleod (Carloway Community Council)
- Lois Darley (Uig Community Council)
- Murdo Macritchie (Hebridean Minibus, Ness)
- Iain MacKinnon (Eriskay Community Council).

2.1 Context of Support for Community Transport and Strategic Position – Introduction

- 2.1.1 This chapter provides an awareness of the local policy situation, current national and local authority strategies and development initiatives that relate to community transport provision. The chapter indicates linkages between CT outputs and wider strategic objectives, evidence of which can be used to strengthen the argument for external stakeholder recognition and support.
- 2.1.2 Mapping the strategic position of community transport is useful when engaging with stakeholders who may not be aware of the various ways in which CT services contribute to the strategic objectives of a wider range of public bodies. Even where strategic plans and documents make no mention of CT or of passenger transport in general, it is possible to identify areas where such services would make an impact and indeed, form a vital means of enabling social, economic and environmental objectives to succeed.
- 2.1.3 Despite a great deal of recent scrutiny at Central Government level, there is no national strategy or policy objective that exclusively relates to community transport provision in the UK. Although recognition of the value of CT has grown within the Scottish Government over recent years (with capital funding programmes for vehicles, for example), there is no overarching statutory commitment for CT to be provided or supported. This remains at the discretion of regional transport partnerships, individual local transport authorities and other funding bodies and in consequence the variation in support for CT is significantly greater than that for local bus services.
- 2.1.4 The GB Government's chief engagement with CT over the last couple of years has been DfT's review of the legislative premise of CT's operational licensing, a situation that has been ostensibly resolved in terms of DfT guidance but which is still clouded with inconsistency due to Traffic Commissioner practices. The review has had an indirect benefit of raising awareness of CT at parliamentary level, but if anything it has threatened to constrain and reduce CT operations and so potentially limit its strategic benefits.

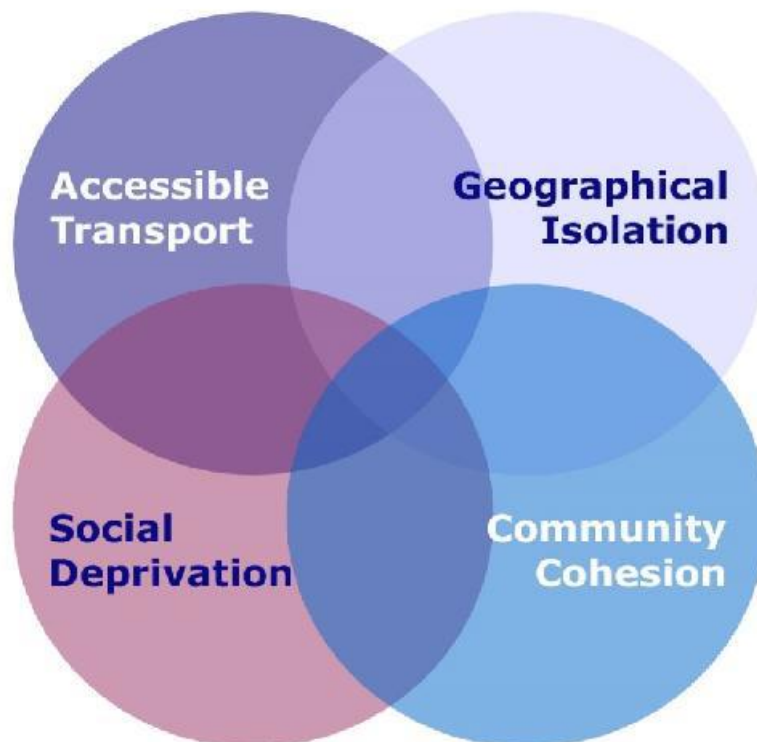
2.2 Strategic Value of Community Transport – General

- 2.2.1 Local authority funding for CT services is made on a discretionary basis, therefore when financial support is provided, this suggests that the various councils recognise the benefit and value of CT to the community and therefore believe it worthy of support. In general, the potential value and impact of CT is in its enhancement of social inclusion, which is a common objective of local authorities with greater or lesser levels of priority. This can be considered in four dimensions:

- **Accessibility** – the provision of transport services to people with disabilities who find it difficult or impossible to use conventional passenger transport. The need for accessible transport is strongly linked to age. Provision might include dial-a-rides, dial-a-buses, social car schemes and so on;
- **Social Deprivation** – the provision of transport to individuals and groups who may be characterised as experiencing social deprivation in some way. This would include minibus travel for people on low incomes, 'wheels to work' services for people without cars who would otherwise be excluded from skills development or jobs market, low cost MPV hire to families on benefits and so on;
- **Geographical Isolation** – the provision of transport services to individuals and groups who are not well served by the conventional passenger transport network. This would include rural services, such as Community Buses or social car schemes, but could also include more remote pockets on urban estates and areas without services at evenings or weekends; and
- **Community Cohesion** – the provision of transport for community and voluntary groups to enable them to function adequately and respond to the needs of the community. This mostly covers the provision of group transport, with or without a driver, in minibuses or larger vehicles.

2.2.2 These four categories overlap to some extent and this is represented graphically in the figure below:

Figure A: Four Key Categories for Community Transport Action



- 2.2.3 We believe that all four dimensions need to be considered as objectives for community transport services and consequent support by state institutions. Indeed, absence of one of the dimensions from either a community transport group's activities or the considerations of the funders would be prima facie evidence of an unbalanced or segregated approach.
- 2.2.4 However, it is recognised that the balance of interest between the four dimensions will vary significantly between:
- geographical locations;
 - individual projects;
 - particular funders and
 - local intermediate agencies.
- 2.2.5 It should be noted that when considering the role of CT on the Outer Hebrides that the distinction between the four dimensions is less critical. The nature of the local demographic (a sparse population dispersed across an area of extreme rurality) and non-directive way in which the Comhairle funds operations means that geographical isolation is the predominant theme for services for individuals and community cohesion relates to the transport provided for organisations.

2.3 Powers and Duties of the Council

- 2.3.1 Transport authorities (local councils) are obliged to take into account the needs of individual residents and communities. The support for (and development of) CT services in Scotland derives from each authority's statutory duty to consider transport and accessibility – for example by reference to s63 Transport Act 1985 and to the relevant parts of the Local Transport Strategy.
- 2.3.2 Under s63(2) of the Transport Act 1985, Scottish councils have a duty:
- a) *to secure the provision of such public passenger transport services as the council consider it appropriate to secure to meet any public transport requirements within their area which would not in their view be met apart from any action taken by them for that purpose; and*
 - b) *to formulate from time to time general policies as to the descriptions of services they propose to secure under paragraph (a) above.*
- 2.3.3 Under s63(6), Scottish councils have the power to take any measures that appear to them to be appropriate for the purpose of or in connection with promoting:

- a) *the availability of public passenger transport services other than subsidised services and the operation of such services; or*
- b) *the convenience of the public (including persons who are elderly or disabled) in using all available public passenger transport services (whether subsidised or not).*

Under s63(8), Scottish councils are under an explicit duty – *in exercising or performing any of their functions under the preceding provisions of this section, to have regard to the transport needs of members of the public who are elderly or disabled.*

2.3.4 Whilst the core of s63 is focused on the bus network it is vital for the council to understand that the definition of the phrase “*public passenger transport services*” was deliberately made much broader than that in s63(10), so that it covers “*all those services on which members of the public rely for getting from place to place, when not relying on private facilities of their own, including school transport*” as well as “*services provided under permits under section 19 of this Act wholly or mainly to meet the needs of members of the public who are elderly or disabled*”.

2.3.5 Taken together this means that the Comhairle is under a duty:

- a) To identify and publish a strategy that assesses passenger transport needs and then identifies which services it considers necessary to support, including community transport services, to meet those needs;
- b) To be explicit in the above as to how this meets the transport needs of people in the Outer Hebrides who are elderly or disabled;

In exercising this function it is also subject to the s149 Public Sector Equality Duty to:

- (1)(a) *eliminate discrimination*
- (1)(b) *advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;*

‘Age’ and ‘disability’ are protected characteristics under the Act.

2.3.6 However, although the above statutory duty requires the Comhairle to take account of the needs of those with some degree of mobility impairment it does allow significant discretion as to what form of transport intervention is appropriate, and how far the authority opts to support it – these are largely determined by local transport strategies and available funds – community transport may be the most appropriate intervention but other approaches may be equally applicable (e.g. taxicard, improved accessibility of local bus and taxi services). There is no requirement on the authority to meet any of its obligations or enact its policies through particular services such as Dial-a-Ride.

Every transport authority is expected to outline its approach to accessibility in its own strategy, and this can also be reflected by the Regional Transport Partnerships.

2.4 UK and Scottish Policy Context

- 2.4.1 Although CT is rarely spotlighted or referenced at a strategic level on a UK-wide basis other than by CTA, by the House of Commons Transport Select Committee Inquiries and occasionally similar examinations by the Department for Transport (DfT), the CT sector impacts on many government objectives and areas of policy. Transport in general, as well as specialist forms of accessible transport, plays a critical role in many activities and social objectives across a number of departments.
- 2.4.2 CT's wide-ranging and valuable remit includes physical health and the active travel agenda, mental wellbeing, social inclusion, defying loneliness and promoting independence. It also encompasses reliable non-emergency patient healthcare-related transport and enables access to adult social care. Some of CT's impacts can be identified across the following areas which have been subject to specific government policy, intervention or support:
- a) Healthcare: attending medical appointments and hospital treatment;
 - b) Physical health and active travel;
 - c) Mental health and wellbeing;
 - d) Supporting carers;
 - e) Promoting equality, social inclusion & independent living for vulnerable and disabled people;
 - f) Improving air quality & reducing emissions and
 - g) Wider economic benefits of multi-modal and accessible transport options.
- 2.4.3 The recent predominant overarching themes of loneliness and dementia prevention overlap with a), b), c), d) and e). These themes are generally developed at local level, although the significance of transport is not always acknowledged.
- 2.4.4 From March 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic required a vast range of special measures to be adopted and latent resources such as CT services have played a significant part of maintaining a support infrastructure, both on an ad-hoc community-derived basis, as well as in some areas forming part of the formal network configured by local authorities and the NHS.
- 2.4.5 The short-term emergency basis of the planning around COVID-19 prevention and containment has yet to fully filter into any longer-term strategic vision –

the focus has been on practical interventions, but the longer-term implications and impacts of the pandemic will doubtless become fully assimilated into future strategic thinking. The CT sector itself will need to reflect and re-examine its role post-COVID, although the sustainability of funds for CT services will be one threat that will need to be addressed, as public sector finances are re-balanced. In practical terms, there has been a general downturn of demand post-COVID which may become a lasting effect.

2.4.6 More recent concerns have centred on the cost of living crisis and the need for vulnerable people to keep warm during the winter months. Whilst the creation of 'warm spaces' and community hubs has been notable, it has often fallen to CT services to enable many people to gain access.

2.4.7 Two other recent initiatives that have been progressed at national level are:

- Apprenticeships – this programme has been used by some CT operators to support staff training initiatives, especially as the acquisition of professional driving qualifications is a recognised training outcome of the programme <https://www.apprenticeships.scot/>
- Social Prescribing – adopted by the NHS over the past few years and now subject to roll out via Public Health Scotland (<https://www.healthscotland.scot/publications/social-prescribing-resources>) and Scottish Social Prescribing Network (<https://www.scottishspn.org.uk/>). It is clear that many 'social prescriptions' require a transport element to succeed for some individuals and CT operators can engage with local advocates (who may not be aware of the role or presence of CT).

2.5 Scottish Government / Transport Scotland

2.5.1 Scottish Government passed the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005, which delegates transport planning and delivery to regional transport partnerships (made up of local authorities). The Act requires the partnerships to determine "how transport in the region will be provided, developed, improved and operated so as to... to enhance social and economic well-being... to promote social inclusion...to encourage equal opportunities and, in particular, the observance of the equal opportunities requirements". These provisions might be fulfilled through support for CT, but CT services are not explicitly required. Delivery is a duty of "constituent councils and other public bodies" (including Health Boards) whose policy on CT may vary (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2005/12/section/5>.) The duty as set out is extremely woolly, however (see <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2005/12/section/8>).

2.5.2 It is worth noting that having the strategy in one place and the budget and duty in another is not necessarily very effective, especially as regards remote rural areas which are separated by sea from each other. For example, critical

strategic transport issues for OH are a) the ferries and b) the air services and neither of these are under either their control or HITRANS' control.

- 2.5.3 The position of Transport Scotland is outlined in the *National Transport Strategy Delivery Plan 2020-2022* which includes a section 'Reduces Inequalities' which emphasises the need for accessibility but does not specifically cite CT operations (see table below). There is no specific Transport Scotland strategy for community transport but CT has been proactively included in various initiatives, such as:
- Network Support Grant (formerly Bus Service Operators Grant) – effectively fuel duty rebate available to s19 and s22 operators. <https://www.transport.gov.scot/public-transport/buses/network-support-grant/>
 - Plugged-in Communities Grant Fund (in partnership with Energy Saving Trust). This made available funds for CT operators to acquire electric minibuses. <https://energysavingtrust.org.uk/grants-and-loans/plugged-communities-grant-fund/>
 - Periodic time-limited funding support such as Public, School and Community Transport COVID-19 Mitigation Fund, which made available £7m to sustain operators through the pandemic. <https://www.transport.gov.scot/news/7-million-to-upgrade-public-school-and-community-transport/>
 - Funding for shared transport schemes aimed at Community Councils (from Collaborative Mobility UK) which could be used for car schemes and car clubs. <https://www.communitycouncils.scot/news/2022/funding-for-shared-transport-schemes>
- 2.5.4 Additionally, the Mobility and Access Committee for Scotland (MACS) has an over-arching role to influence transport accessibility improvements. Transport Scotland funds this advisory panel whose role is to “consider matters about the needs of disabled persons in connection with transport that the committee think are appropriate” and to “advise the Scottish Ministers about those matters that the committee think are appropriate.” <https://www.transport.gov.scot/our-approach/accessible-transport/mobility-and-access-committee-for-scotland-macs/>
- 2.5.5 It is worth observing that although Transport Scotland has an Accessible Travel Policy officer, they do not have a budget allocated to facilitate improvements. Furthermore, Transport Scotland does not have a team that covers Taxi or Private Hire Vehicle policy, which surprisingly would suggest that they do not see that mode as part of the overall passenger transport mix.

2.6 Regional Transport Partnership - HITRANS

2.6.1 Regional transport partnerships (RTPs) were established “to strengthen the planning and delivery of regional transport so that it better serves the needs of people and businesses. The first task of each RTP was to prepare a regional transport strategy. This is supported by a delivery plan where RTPs set out when and how projects and proposals would be delivered. RTPs bring together local authorities and other key regional stakeholders to take a strategic approach to transport in each region of Scotland.”

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/our-approach/strategy/regional-transport-partnerships/> HITRANS covers the Eilean Siar (Western Isles) area (<https://hitrans.org.uk/>) and the current Regional Transport Strategy is detailed in the table below. Consultation is open until May 2023 for the new RTS: (<https://hitrans.org.uk/News/Story/1285>)

2.6.2 HITRANS has historically been well engaged with CT issues – for example in 2011 it commissioned TAS and Derek Halden to deliver a study on the Value of Community Transport, which included Tagasa Uibhist as a case study. Recent projects that have involved CT include:

- Clim-ATIC project - Electric Vehicle (EV) in Cairngorms National Park operated by the Badenoch & Strathspey Community Transport Company;
- MOVE (Mobility Opportunities Valuable to Everybody) - Ferintosh Community Bus pilot service which is a partnership between HITRANS, Stagecoach, The Highland Council, CSI Rossshire and Ferintosh Community Council (supported by Culbokie Community Trust).

2.6.3 HITRANS’ most recent CT-related initiative is “Moove Flexi” (commission from Liftango) “the Demand Responsive Transport App being deployed...to help support the operation, booking and marketing of non-scheduled transport services across the Highlands and Islands”. Western Isles deployment is reported as follows: “Two services on the radar at the moment are the Barra Public Bus and the Benbecula Local service”, but the only service that is currently bookable with the App is the Ferintosh Community Bus. Moove Flexi is also intended to “facilitate integration of the solution with the HITRANS GO-HI MaaS¹ platform”. https://hitrans.org.uk/Documents/Item_11_-_Demand_Responsive_Transport_App_Moove_Flexi_.pdf

2.7 Strategic Mapping

2.7.1 At the time of this research (January - March 2023), all of the policy and strategy documents cited in the table below were ‘current’ despite in some cases having been adopted over 10 years ago. Our assumption is that all documents that are promoted on local authority websites can – in principle –

¹ “Mobility As A Service” – the intent is for this to become a ‘one-stop-shop for accessing all forms of transport and personal mobility through a single App and a single payment system.

be taken as being still valid until they are revised, withdrawn, or replaced. However, in practice this is not always the case, and so this caveat should be accepted for some of the entries in the table. Likewise, there may be other strategies or policies that are not promoted outwardly. In some cases, more recent active policies will have been reflected in the stakeholder interviews included in our consultation report. This table is not definitive but every effort has been made to locate and scrutinise as many relevant documents as possible within the resources constraints of the project tasking.

Table 1: Overview of Strategic & Policy Documents with CT Linkage

Document / Policy / Strategy	Key Aspects	Linkage with CT / Potential Impact or Value of CT
Scottish Government / Transport Scotland		
<p>Transport Policy (2023) https://www.gov.scot/policies/transport-policy/</p>	<p>High level undertaking which includes commitment to “<i>making transport more accessible for older people and disabled people</i>”.</p>	<p>CT is a potent means of achieving transport accessibility.</p>
<p>National Transport Strategy 2 2020-2022 (2020) https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/48839/nts-delivery-plan-2020-2022.pdf</p>	<p>Reducing Inequalities: “<i>Ensure active, public and sustainable travel access to employment, education and training locations; Ensure transport in Scotland is accessible for all; Remove barriers to public transport connectivity and accessibility within Scotland; Minimise the connectivity and cost disadvantages faced by island communities and those in remote rural and rural areas, including safeguarding of lifeline services; Improve sustainable access to healthcare facilities for staff, patients and visitors.</i>”</p>	<p>There is no explicit reference to CT in this strategy. However, CT services would enhance all the objectives noted.</p>
<p>Scotland’s Accessible Travel Framework (2016) https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/scotland-s-accessible-travel-framework-annual-delivery-plan-2021-22/</p>	<p>The purpose of the Framework is to “<i>support disabled people’s rights by removing barriers and improving access to travel; and ensure disabled people are fully involved in work to improve all aspects of travel</i>”.</p> <p>Outcome 1: “<i>more disabled people make successful door-to-door journeys, more often. This outcome is about helping all disabled people use the transport system in its broadest sense, when they want and as often as they want to.</i>”</p> <p>Outcome 2: “<i>disabled people are more involved in the design, development and improvement of transport policies, services and infrastructure. This outcome is about the rights of disabled people to be, and the necessity of disabled people being, involved in all aspects of transport to help show what works for them.</i>”</p>	<p>CT is not referred to in the document, which is aimed at general public transport. It is clear that CT can substantially contribute to Outcome 1 and also in some cases has the potential to contribute to Outcome 2.</p>
<p>National Islands Plan https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-plan-scotlands-islands/pages/7/</p>	<p>“<i>The Scottish Government committed to a £2 million investment fund in the 2018 Programme for Government, which will support the testing of Mobility as a Service (MaaS) concept in Scotland over a three-year period. MaaS aims to provide people with easy, digital access to travel information. This can include technological solutions which personalise travel requirements into single travel app or services allowing unlimited access to multiple transport providers through a monthly user fee.</i>” An example is currently under development by HITRANS.</p>	<p>The Islands Plan is an outcome of the Islands (Scotland) Act 2018.</p> <p>There has been a recent growth deal (a UK initiative) for Orkney,</p>

Document / Policy / Strategy	Key Aspects	Linkage with CT / Potential Impact or Value of CT
	<p>"A range of community transport services were highlighted in the consultation process as providing essential services for island communities. However, transport issues were most frequently mentioned by respondents to the consultation as being a specific challenge of island life. These included both the lack of availability of transport services as well as the cost of transport to and from the island. The need to align timetables when more than one ferry or mode of transport is needed for a journey, the lack of capacity on ferries and the decreasing availability but increasing cost of flights were all mentioned." These are all issues for OH.</p> <p>"The Isle of Hoy Development Trust runs the island's only public transport, the 'Hail and Ride' community bus. Shapinsay Development Trust (SDT) run the out of hours ferry passenger service after the scheduled service has finished, enabling folk to attend events and meetings in Kirkwall or come over to Shapinsay for the evening. The out of hours ferry is also available for private hire at other times by arrangement. SDT also provide electric car and minibus travel on Shapinsay for anyone wishing to get around on the island who don't have a vehicle of their own, or for groups." Examples of community transport provision in similar environments to OH.</p>	<p>Shetland and the Outer Hebrides:</p> <p>https://www.gov.uk/government/news/uk-government-signs-islands-growth-deal-worth-393m and https://www.uhi.ac.uk/en/media/news/islands-growth-deal-signed-for-orkney-shetland-and-the-outer-hebrides-will-release-total-investment-of-393-million.html</p>

Regional Transport Partnership - HITRANS

<p>The Highlands and Islands Regional Transport Strategy 2008-2022 (2017 update)</p> <p>https://hitrans.org.uk/userfiles/file/HITRANS%20Main%20Issues%20Report%2017%20high%20res.pdf</p>	<p>Community transport (and demand responsive transport) is included as part of the overall transport mix in the Delivery Plan items relating to: Capturing Transport in Community Planning; Concessionary fares;</p> <p>2008 and 2014/15 monitoring of the RTS has "evidenced varying trends based on a range of indicators...The availability and nature of community transport options has remained mixed across the region. Community transport can be vital for people in areas without, or with poor, public transport alternatives. Recognising the often piecemeal community transport across the region, there is an opportunity to make great strides in provision."</p> <p>CT is cited with regard the following themes:</p> <p>Community Planning: "Community transport can be vital for people in areas without, or with limited public transport provision. Recognising the often-piecemeal community transport across the region, there is an opportunity to develop this or enhance the commercial demand responsive offer...Those living in</p>	<p>HITRANS have identified the importance of CT and recognise its role as part of the wider inclusivity of the transport network. It is clear, given the isolated rural aspect of much of the HITRANS region, that CT is here seen more a gap-filling service in areas where there is a patchy bus network, rather than as a specialist service for mobility impaired persons.</p>
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Document / Policy / Strategy	Key Aspects	Linkage with CT / Potential Impact or Value of CT
	<p><i>areas without public transport (notably in remote and island communities) and those unable to access conventional bus services are not able to benefit from the unlimited free travel afforded to certain groups elsewhere through the National Concessionary Travel Scheme."</i></p> <p>Promoting efficient business connectivity and imports / exports: <i>"Boosting the role of buses, rail, ferries, community transport and active travel in providing access to employment, for tourism and so enhancing the region's economy."</i></p> <p>Supporting Active & Healthy Communities and the Environment: <i>"Optimising the role of community transport and the third sector in enhancing accessibility and social inclusion."</i></p>	
Comhairle nan Eilean Siar		
<p>Outer Hebrides Local Transport Strategy 2020-2030 (2020) https://cne-siar.gov.uk/media/16033/outer-hebrides-local-transport-strategy-2020-2030-full.pdf</p>	<p>The Local Transport Strategy sets out the Comhairle's policy on transport, presents Transport Planning Objectives and coordinates future priorities through a series of actions and interventions to enhance transport and travel. Key outcomes are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Reduced inequality b) Improved health c) Improved economy d) Improved environment <p><i>"The Outer Hebrides CPP has an aspiration to increase the number of Rural Community Transport Partnerships to promote and provide community-led accessible, affordable and alternative transport services... Community transport variable across the islands and gap in understanding as to whether it is best meeting needs or if individuals or areas are isolated."</i></p> <p>Action 4 of Delivery Plan calls for <i>"Comprehensive review of Community Transport (coordinated with Public Transport) in partnership with communities and a resulting Action Plan... Comhairle to work through the CPP to progress the Community Transport review; working with local communities and building on the success of the Participatory Budgeting exercise to devise Action Plan."</i></p>	<p>The Strategy is clear that CT plays a vital role and needs developing. However it lacks detail as it has identified the need for a CT-specific review to inform outcomes. The need for funding for CT is highlighted but specific funding sources / commitments are lacking.</p>

Document / Policy / Strategy	Key Aspects	Linkage with CT / Potential Impact or Value of CT
	Action 8 of Delivery Plan <i>"Seek additional funding to pilot, pump-prime and develop a flexible and holistic community-focussed approach to Community and Public Transport...Additional and / or innovative funding solutions required to progress with community-focussed approach to the future of a mixed model of public and community transport."</i>	
<p>Policy For Volunteering In The Western Isles (2023)</p> <p>https://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/jobs-training-and-volunteering/volunteering-policy/</p>	<p><i>"The Comhairle recognises the value of the voluntary sector and its vital role in enabling the Comhairle to achieve its vision, values and strategic aims. It believes that the voluntary sector's role is much wider and deeper than simply providing services."</i> The aims of the policy include: <i>"to acknowledge the value and importance of volunteering to the Public Sector Partners and the communities of the Western Isles; actively promote the importance, value and effectiveness of volunteering; make it easier for everyone in the community to volunteer regardless of their age, gender, marital status, race, religion, colour, creed, disability or sexual orientation; apply equal opportunities to volunteering..."</i></p> <p>Volunteer drivers are mentioned in context of Western Isles Health Board, where it is noted that the board <i>"will not be responsible for the vehicle insurance of volunteers driving their own vehicles. Volunteers have a responsibility to inform their insurance companies of their intentions to use their vehicles for voluntary activities."</i></p>	CT is not mentioned specifically although many of the Outer Hebrides community minibus operators are voluntary sector bodies, and utilise volunteers. Hence the policy is very relevant. The mention of the WI Health Board explicitly acknowledges the strategy of recruiting volunteers using their own cars to provide transport to health facilities.
Other Outer Hebrides Agencies		
<p>Community Transport Strategy (Draft) (2020)</p> <p>Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership</p>	<p>The strategy is essentially an overview of the role and benefits of CT, and a description of current service provision. Strategic Objective: <i>"It is important to assess community transport needs within the islands and develop an appropriate solution. To do this, the strategy group feel that it is vital to get the views of the community, to assess what they require from a community transport system. This will then establish an integrated community transport service that meets the needs of communities in the Outer Hebrides."</i></p>	<p>The strategy identifies the need for further consultation and states its outcomes as being an understanding of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ passenger needs regarding evening bus services and community bus services. ■ passenger and community need regarding public and

Document / Policy / Strategy	Key Aspects	Linkage with CT / Potential Impact or Value of CT
		<p>community bus services in Uist and Barra.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ other community requirements such as patient transport, social isolation.
<p>Local Outcomes Improvement Plan 2017-2027 (2017) Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership https://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/media/10307/local-outcome-improvement-plan.pdf</p>	<p>Priority Aim: <i>"The Outer Hebrides retains and attracts people to ensure a sustainable population."</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Outcome: <i>"People are easily connected physically and through technology."</i> ■ Primary Driver: <i>"Our islands are connected with high quality, affordable and reliable broadband, mobile networks and transport connections."</i> ■ Secondary drivers: <i>"Increase the provision of an equitable standard of transport connectivity, internally and externally, at affordable cost for users."</i> ■ Measures: <i>"Increase in innovative community led transport solutions. Increase in efficiency and reduction of costs related to transport developments."</i> <p>Priority Aim: <i>"The islands offer attractive opportunities that improves the quality of life, wellbeing and health for all our people..."</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Outcome: Increase the number of community transport services that improve the quality of life and independence of users. Increase the positive effects not just on the users of transport services, but also on volunteers, the wider community and environment." ■ Primary Driver: <i>"Communities will have access to a range of innovative transport solutions which reduce isolation and increase access to services."</i> ■ Secondary Driver: <i>"Establish a Rural Community Transport Partnerships to drive positive change through the promotion and provision of community led accessible, affordable and alternative transport services. Co-produce transport and training that improves services, the level of community-based activities has a broad range of community support. Identify appropriate areas for volunteering in community transport services and develop suitable volunteering opportunities."</i> 	<p>"Innovative" transport and community transport is accorded a high priority in the plan and the linkages between effective community transport services and a range of social, environmental and economic outcomes is identified.</p>

Document / Policy / Strategy	Key Aspects	Linkage with CT / Potential Impact or Value of CT
	<p><i>Build on the learning from the participatory budgeting exercise in Uist. Improve access to education, training & employment. Increase access to services."</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Measures: <i>"Increased number of community representatives and volunteers trained and available to provide community transport solutions. Increase in alternative forms of local transport and numbers of users. Increased community satisfaction levels relating to transport. Increased numbers of people regularly accessing training and education. Increased use of services by people from remote communities. Reduce carbon emissions."</i> 	
<p>Strategy 2022-25: Health & Wellbeing in our Community (2022) Tagsa Uibhist https://www.tagsa.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/81888-Tagsa-Strategy-for-Printing-A5.pdf</p>	<p>Strategy forms the core mission and vision of Tagsa Uibhist (community-based charity whose aim is to promote health and wellbeing) and sets out <i>"what we hope to achieve in this period as we work collaboratively to improve health and wellbeing in the communities of Benbecula and Uist."</i> The strategy identifies transport deficit as having an impact on Social Isolation; Poverty and Social Exclusion; and Improving Collaboration & Engagement.</p> <p>Tagsa Uibhist's own community transport services form a key part of the action plan: <i>"Tagsa delivers a vital lifeline Community Transport service to assist clients to attend medical appointments, day care, adult learning, and respite, as well as shopping and to access other appointments that they need to attend. This service is available for individuals with support needs and/or mobility difficulties, and who have may not have access to public transport services and who do not have a vehicle or a family member who can provide transport for them. As part of our efforts to respond to the climate emergency, we utilise three zero emission electric vehicles in addition to vehicles adapted for wheelchair users."</i></p> <p>Outcomes 2022-2025 are: <i>"Provide community transport to eligible clients from Eriskay to Berneray; Aim for covering at least 4,000 miles each month in client trips; Increase the number of clients we assist each month to a minimum of 50, with a particular focus on increasing coverage in South Uist and Eriskay; Work closely with the NHS, the Comhairle, Citizen's Advice Bureau to support people to access the most appropriate and affordable transport for their needs; Use zero emission vehicles for all trips unless necessary due to access or distance, with at least 75% of miles to be covered by electric vehicles; Secure funds for two wheelchair accessible electric vehicles; Work as an integral part of Tagsa Uibhist, providing transportation for our projects when helpful and possible."</i></p>	<p>The importance of community transport is recognised in the strategy as an integral means by which health and wellbeing outcomes are achieved, both as a vital provision in itself (providing accessibility, independent living and reducing loneliness) and in ensuring that health and care services are more effective (e.g. bringing people to appointments etc).</p> <p>Whilst the strategy is explicit around service deliver and partnership working, it does not mention sources of financial support or levels of additional funding that may be required to achieve the community transport outcomes as listed.</p>

Document / Policy / Strategy	Key Aspects	Linkage with CT / Potential Impact or Value of CT
<p>Uig Development Plan 2019-2024 (2019) Uig Development Trust</p> <p>https://www.uigdevelopmenttrust.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Uig-Development-Plan-2019-2024_1.pdf</p>	<p>Community Consultation Feedback: <i>"The top suggestions in terms of number of votes were around the requirement for good transport links, both within Uig and to and from town, and the requirement for quality, affordable housing. (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar are currently running a transport retendering process and the results of this should be known July 2019. This may result in an amendment or an addition to the Development Plan but as yet it is difficult to determine the impact a new, or reduced, service will have on the Community.)"</i></p>	<p>Whilst there is no indication that Uig respondents were referring to CT specifically, it is clear that CT could well provide a solution to the issue raised.</p>
<p>Point and Sandwick Trust Community Development Plan 2020-2025 (2021) Point and Sandwick Trust</p> <p>http://www.pointandsandwick.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/PST-Development-Plan-2020-to-2025.pdf</p>	<p>Point and Sandwick Trust is an active charitable organisation that promotes and funds community projects in Point and Sandwick, and the wider Western Isles. The Development Plan contains responses to a survey of community organisations who were grants recipients, a number of whom highlighted transport issues among future challenges as follows: <i>"Cuts to public services e.g. public transport Social Isolation and issues with social exclusion for vulnerable and marginalized groups"; "Threats to public services e.g. public transport" "If public transport becomes insufficient, a dial a ride service might be helpful."</i></p> <p>Identified initiatives that should be supported: <i>"Transportation in the Community - Supporting people to get to groups"; "Encourage social enterprise ie...transport mini buses..."</i></p>	<p>The plan does not identify a specific transport theme but the survey responses show how much CT provision would be beneficial in terms of future spending priorities.</p>
<p>Strategic Plan 2017-2037 (2016) Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn</p> <p>https://www.galsontrust.com/files/ugd/682f71_f94c61f241044838b29a99fcd4c44aa2.pdf</p>	<p>Two of three key priorities are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Elderly care – permanent accommodation, respite care and support services. ■ Tourism – more and better facilities with a focus on unique aspects that provide a different visitor experience. ■ 'Visioning The Future' table cites <i>"enhance transport links"</i> as an activity to achieve strategic outputs. ■ <i>"As always with community development, volunteers will be required to plan, deliver and possibly even manage or operate the facilities or activities involved. The Urras hopes that members of the community will step forward to assist."</i> 	<p>Transport is given only one brief mention but two of the three priorities of the plan would certainly require specific transport interventions to be effective, especially the commitment to supporting older people.</p>
<p>Pairc and Kinloch Community Plan October 2015 – October</p>	<p>Connectivity: <i>"Good connectivity is vital to the sustainability of every community. In Pairc and Kinloch, both the physical and digital connectivity of the area offers varying degrees of challenge. The need to retain connections, such as transport</i></p>	<p>Transport and connectivity (and CT) is recognised amongst the wider aims of</p>

Document / Policy / Strategy	Key Aspects	Linkage with CT / Potential Impact or Value of CT
<p>2020 (2016) Muaitheabhal Community Wind Farm Trust</p> <p>http://muaitheabhal.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/03/PK-FULL-2015-2020.pdf</p>	<p><i>and road infrastructure, are important for a physical connection for members of the community and initiatives such as community transport will play a role in this.</i></p> <p>Aims of the Community Plan include: "An Accessible Community - Retain and improve transport links with the rest of the Outer Hebrides and the wider world."</p> <p>Development area: "Bus Beag – ensuring minibuss provision for the Community."</p>	<p>the plan. It is not clear whether Bus Beag (Small Bus) refers to a specific service or to generic minibuss provision. There are no other references to the former.</p>
<p>Active Hebrides Strategy (2019) Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership</p> <p>https://www.wihb.scot.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/OH-Activity-Strategy-LR-Final.pdf</p>	<p>Inequalities Focus: "<i>Rurality and transport are considered when developing active infrastructure to ensure accessibility to all.</i>"</p>	<p>The focus of an active travel strategy is to promote walking and cycling, among other initiatives, and so use of motor vehicles is down played. The role of public and community transport are valid however in enabling participation from some individuals e.g. those needing transport to places where sporting activities are held etc.</p>

2.8 Conclusions on Strategy / Policy Position

- 2.8.1 The strategic priorities of the Outer Hebrides (taken from a multi-agency perspective) reflect those of many rural communities across Scotland and the UK in general. Plans and strategies provide aspirational goal and targets, whilst specific policies and projects might follow in order to achieve various objectives. However, very often the latter require financial (and other) resources to gain traction, and so it becomes less-assured that long-term objectives can be achieved.
- 2.8.2 The overview of various strategies in the table above indicates a clear role for both enhanced public transport and specifically community-led transport (recognised more explicitly in some documents than others). But how the transport is configured, funded and operated is often outside the scope of individual organisations to grapple with.
- 2.8.3 The predominant themes where community transport would play a significant role in the Outer Hebrides are:
- Transport (General) – the connectivity and accessibility of how individuals and groups can make convenient, affordable and comfortable journeys;
 - Health & Wellbeing – both formal (journeys to healthcare appointments, social care facilities) and informal (enabling social contact, combatting loneliness);
 - Environment – reducing unnecessary mileage, combining journeys and promoting multi-occupancy travel (reducing car use), as well as bringing EVs into the community domain;
 - Strengthening Communities – the ability for individuals in a community to use transport to come together for events and meetings, social gatherings and sports. The ability for specific groups (e.g. older people, youths) to participate with peers in various activities; and
 - Economic Development – effective transport links in general are integral to economic prosperity in an holistic sense. The role CT might play with the visitor / tourism economy is not explicitly reflected in the table and this does remain a challenge but there are examples of CT groups providing services for visitors as well as thinking more broadly about what constitutes a CT service. For example, car clubs open to visitors might reduce the number of vehicles brought onto the islands.

3.1 Population

- 3.1.1 2022 census data is not yet published in detail for the Outer Hebrides and the 2011 figures are now outdated. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has produced estimates, stating: *"The most recent mid-year population estimates (2020) for the Outer Hebrides gives a population of 26,500. This shows a decrease of 0.8% (220 persons) from mid 2019 to mid 2020. This decrease can be attributed to the negative net migration (-40), but is mainly due to the negative 'natural change' of -172. Deaths (375) continued to exceed births (203) over the period. The median age in the islands was estimated to be 49.9 years (Scottish average 42.1 yrs) in June 2020. Over the last ten years (between 2010 and 2020) in the Outer Hebrides there has been a decrease of 1,100 persons (-4.0%)."* <https://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/strategy-performance-and-research/outer-hebrides-factfile/population/overview/>.
- 3.1.2 A longer term prediction to 2043 indicates how the fall in population is set to continue: *"Using 2018 as a base and taking into account key assumptions (mortality, fertility and migration); National Records of Scotland (NRS) predict that the total population of the Outer Hebrides is projected to fall to 22,709 by 2043. This is a projected decline of 16% or 4,021 people between 2018 and 2043. The equivalent figure for Scotland over the same time period is an increase of 2.5%...Over the period 2018 - 2028 the Outer Hebrides will see a 6.1 % decline. The Shetland Islands are expected to see a -0.7% decrease; Orkney a 0.5% increase; and Highland a 0.5% increase."* <https://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/strategy-performance-and-research/outer-hebrides-factfile/population/population-projections/>
- 3.1.3 One area that does impact on public transport planning is the relative age distribution of residents which projects a growing proportion of individuals aged 60 or over. The graphs below indicate the age profile of the OH population compared with Scotland overall (2021 estimates), and how the OH age profile is predicted to change to 2028.

Figure B: Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Age Profile compared to Scotland – 2021 Population Estimates

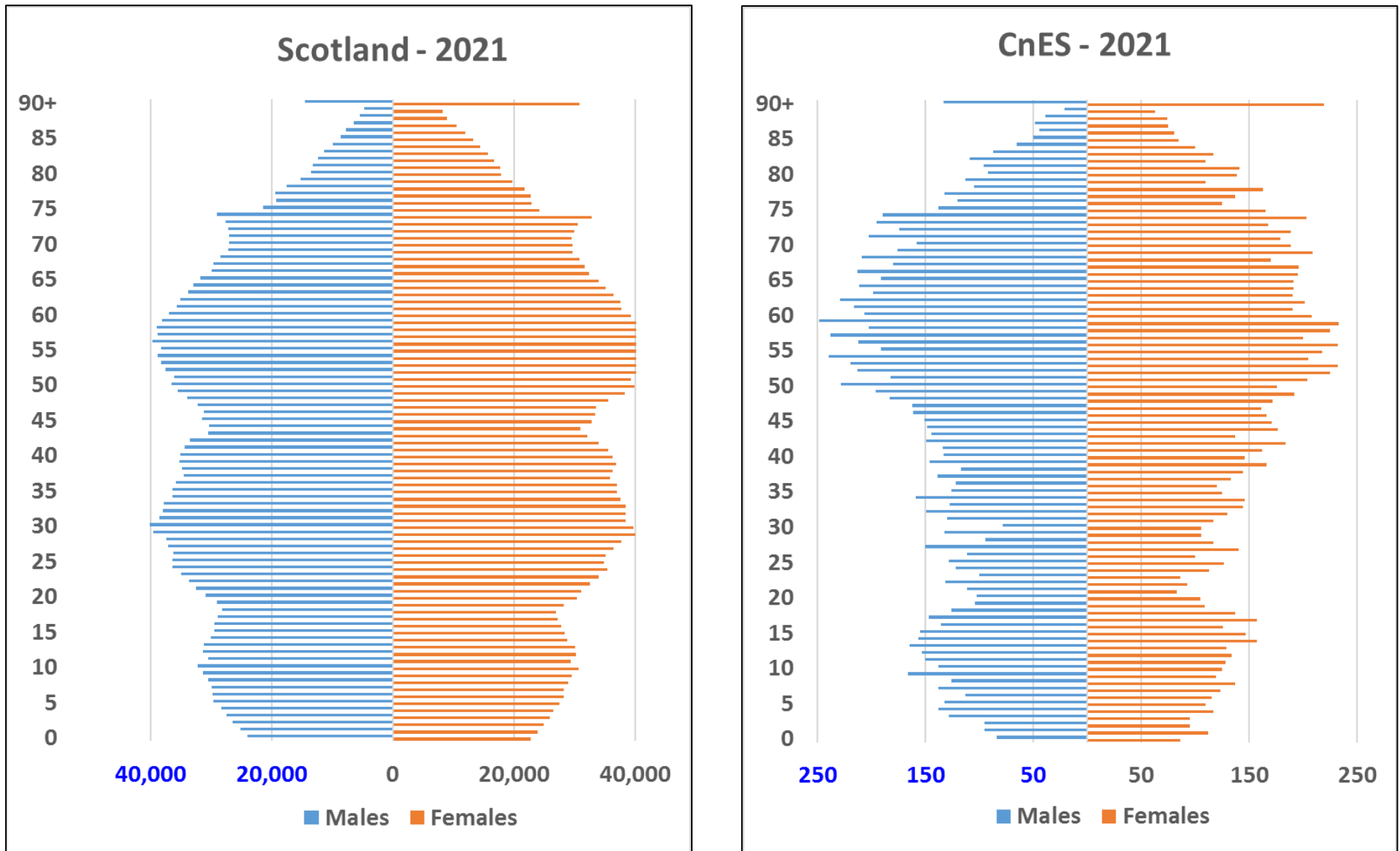
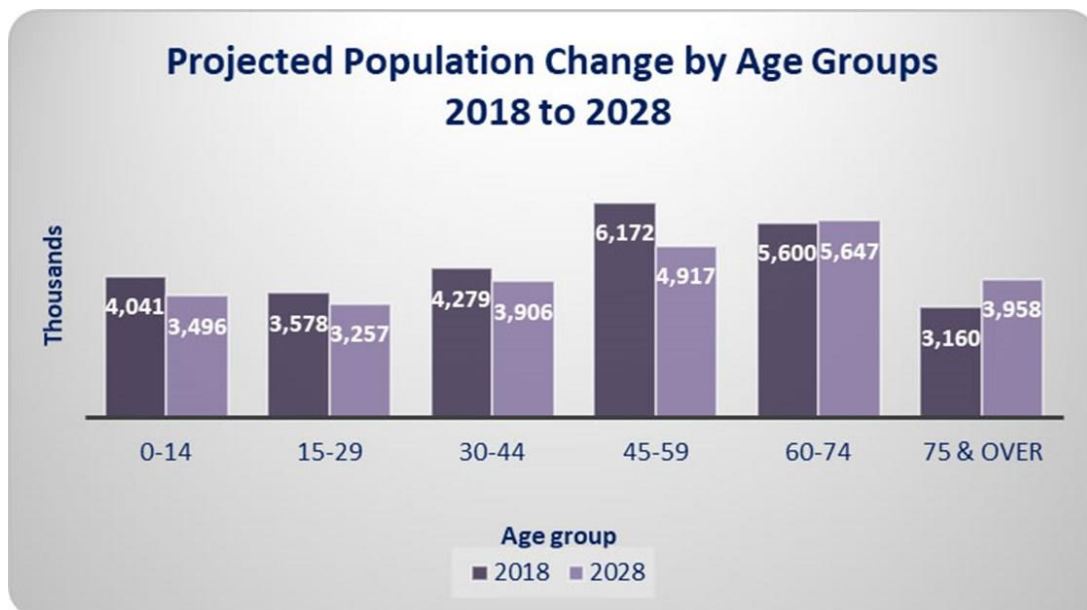


Figure C: Projected Changes to Age Groups to 2028 (Comhairle nan Eilean Siar graph)



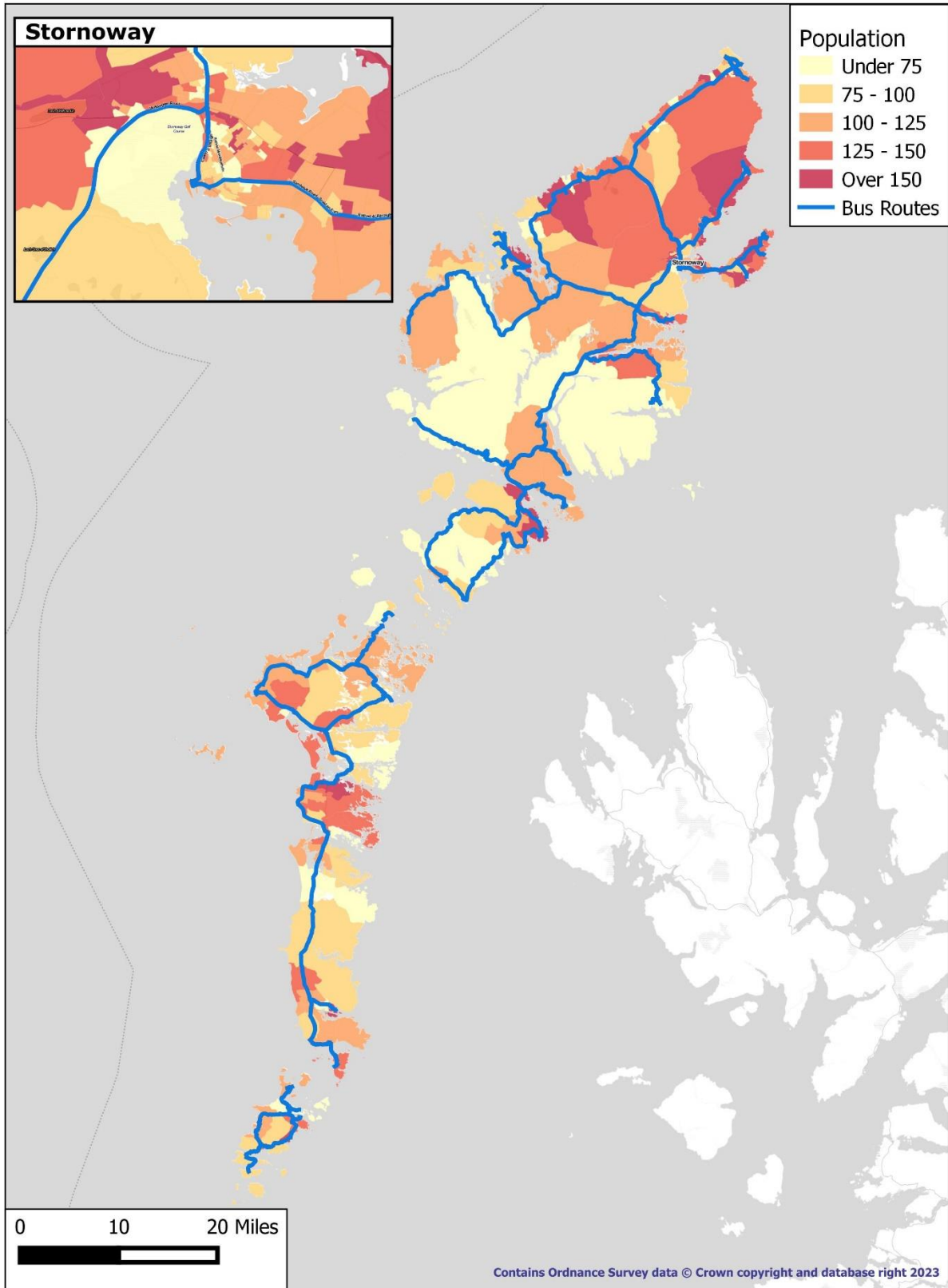
3.1.1 The importance of accessible bus, taxi and CT services becomes more critical when one considers the ageing population in the Outer Hebrides, shown in comparison to Scotland as a whole in Figure B. In Scotland as a whole in 2021, 18.4% of the population is aged 66 or over, and 7.9% is aged 76 or over. By contrast the figures for Comhairle nan Eilean Siar are 25.1% and 11.2% respectively. By 2028, Figure C shows that the proportion of those aged 75+ is predicted to rise to 15.7%. There is a very strong correlation between age and disability, particularly those disabilities that affect mobility.

3.2 Spatial Distribution of Population

3.2.1 The map below indicates the concentrations of residents in zones (from over 150 to under 75) overlaid with the bus network. As mentioned elsewhere, because the Outer Hebrides has a relatively small and dispersed population the data is only available on a grouped basis with the result that the areas mapped are too large for detailed analysis. This situation will improve once the Scotland 2022 Census data is published.

Figure D: Concentration of Population and Bus Network

Outer Hebrides Population



4.1 Introduction

4.1.1 This section covers the public bus routes operating across the isles of Lewis, Harris, North Uist, Benbecula, South Uist, Eriskay and Barra.

4.2 Bus Services

4.2.1 There are currently 32 bus services in the Outer Hebrides (as listed in Table 2), these provide a good network compared to many other rural areas in Britain. These are all tendered services contracted by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar – there are no commercially operated bus services on the islands. As can be seen there are already a good number of journeys per day operating on most routes, although the service does not run or runs at a reduced frequency on Saturdays for many of the routes. Not all journeys on a service follow the same route meaning that some settlements will receive fewer journey opportunities than the stated service frequency might suggest.

Table 2: Outer Hebrides Bus Services and Frequencies

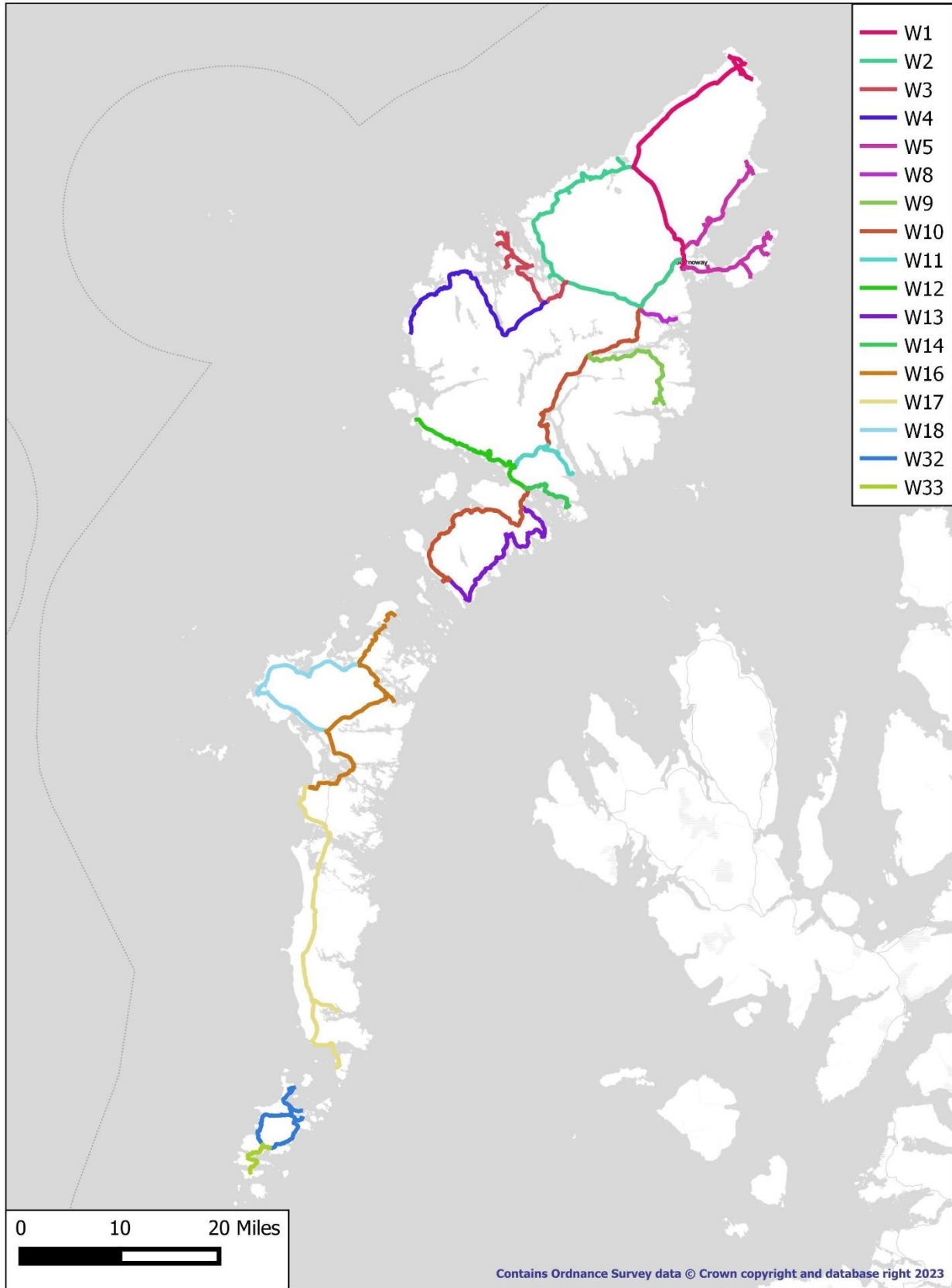
Service	Route	Mon-Fri	Sat	Evening
W1	Stornoway - Barvas - Habost - Ness	5 per day	4 per day	2 per day
W1A (Sch)	Ness (Skigersta) Feeder	6 per day	-	-
W1A (Hol)	Ness (Skigersta) Feeder	4 per day	-	-
W2	Stornoway – WI Hospital - Shawbost	5 per day	4 per day	-
	Shawbost – Carloway – Stornoway	5 per day	4 per day	
	Barvas Jnc – Shawbost - Carloway	-	-	2 per day
W2A	Carloway Local Feeder	5 per day	1 per day	-
W2B	Tolstachaolais Feeder	4 per day	4 per day	-
W3	Garynahine - Kirkbost - Bosta	6 per day	5 per day	-
W4	Stornoway / Garynahine - Timsgarry - Aird Uig	5 per day	4 per day	-
W4	Stornoway / Garynahine - Timsgarry - Brenish	5 per day	2 per day	-
W5	Stornoway - Airport - Garrabost - Bayble	8 per day	8 per day	2 per day
W5	Stornoway - Airport - Garrabost - Aird	7 per day	7 per day	2 per day
W5A	Stornoway - Back - Tolsta	13 per day	13 per day	2 per day
W7	Stornoway Town Service	2 per day	2 per day	-
W8	Stornoway - Leurbost - Ranish	6 per day	5 per day	2 per day
W8A	Grimshader Feeder	5 per day	2 per day	1 per day
W8A	Grimshader - Lochs - Leurbost - Grimshader	3 per week	-	-

Service	Route	Mon-Fri	Sat	Evening
W9	Stornoway / South Lochs - Gravir - Orinsay	5 per day	4 per day	-
W9	Calbost Feeder	4 per day	3 per day	-
W9A	Keose Feeder	3 per day	3 per day	1 per day
W10	Stornoway - Laxy - Tarbert Pier	6 per day	6 per day	1 per day
W10A	Tarbert Pier - Borve - Levenburgh Pier	5/6 per day	5/6 per day	-
	Levenburgh Pier - Rodel (not 'on request')	1 per day	1 per day	
W11 (Sch)	Tarbert Pier - Maaruig - Bowglass - Ardvoulie	1 per day	-	-
W11 (Ho)	Tarbert Pier - Maaruig - Tarbert	2 per day	2 per day	-
W12	Tarbert Pier - Amhuinnshuide - Hushinish	3/4 per day	-	-
W13	Tarbert Pier - Stockinish - Rodel - Leverburgh	5 per day	3 per day	-
W14	Tarbert Pier - Urgha - Scalpay	4 per day	3 per day	-
W15	Borrisdale - Strond - Leverburgh	3 per day	-	-
W16	North Uist Spine Route	5 per day	5 per day	-
W17	South Uist & Eriskay Spine Route	7 per day	6 per day	-
W18	North Uist Circular	7/8 per day	2 per day	-
W19	Benbecula Airport - Ardivchar	4/5 per day	2 per day	1 per day
W19D	East Gerinish & Uiskevagh DRT	4 per week	-	-
W32	Barra Bus Route	5 per day	5 per day	-
W33	Castlebay - Vatersay	3 per day	3 per day	-

4.2.2 The geographical coverage of the core services is shown in Figure E below (excluding Stornoway locals).

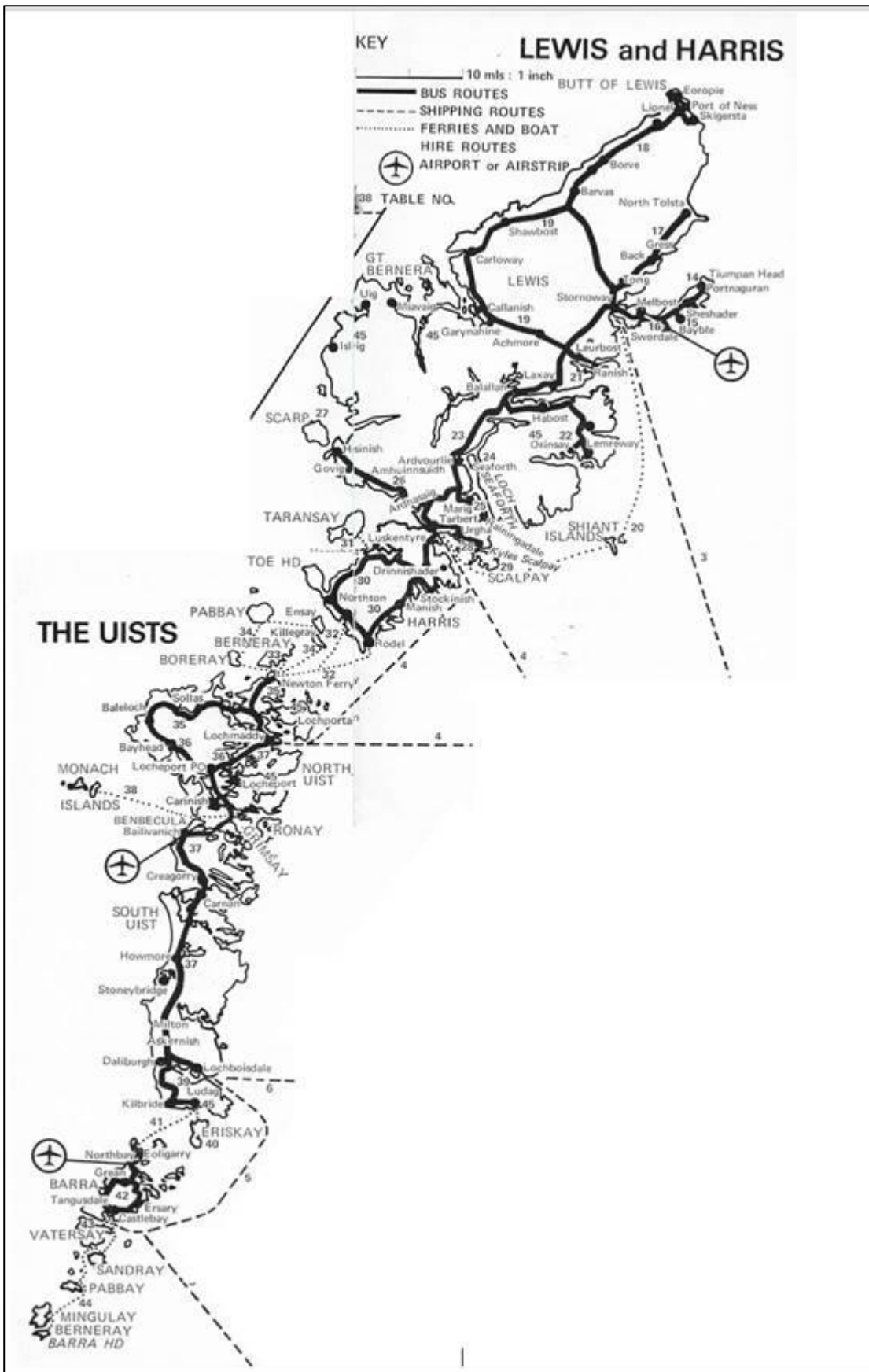
4.2.3 For comparison, we show the position from 1968 which is very similar. This reflects the limited road network and the settlement patterns. In some areas the coverage has improved e.g. Uig, Berneray and Vatersay. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar should be pleased with its ability to maintain the stability of the core network, despite the low population. This stands in stark contrast to deep rural areas in England and Wales.

Figure E: Outer Hebrides Public Bus Services



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Figure F: Western Isles Bus Map from 1968²



² Getting Around in the Highlands and Islands – Book 5 Outer Hebrides, 1968 Source = <https://timetableworld.com/>

4.3 Bus Operators

4.3.1 There are twelve bus operators providing public bus services in the Outer Hebrides, listed in Table 3 below. Some services are jointly run.

Table 3: Bus Operators

Operator	Services
A Macdonald	W2B, W8E, W9, W9A, W11, W14 (Sat), W18
Aurora Trans Co	W32, W33
Bus na Comhairle	W5, W5A, W7
DA Travel	W16, W17, W18
Galson Motors	W2E
Hebridean Minibus	W1A
Hebridean Transport	W2, W2A
Lochs Motor Transport	W1, W1E, W8, W8A, W10, W10A, W12, (W13), W14 (MF)
M Maciver	W2A, W3
P MacIennan	W4
South Harris Coaches	W13, W15
W Macvicar	W19, W19D

4.3.2 Note that the Council operates its own bus company – Bus na Comhairle. This reflects the fact that whereas most Scottish authorities had their powers to operate bus services excluded by s66(1) Transport Act 1985, this did not apply to the Councils for Orkney, Shetland or Western Isles. Those powers have now been reintroduced for other Scottish authorities by s34 Transport (Scotland) Act 2019. In contrast to residual English municipal bus operations, there is no requirement in Scotland for councils to establish wholly-owned, arm’s-length companies to deliver their bus operations.

4.4 Bus Fleet

4.4.1 The fleet used on public bus services in the Outer Hebrides is a mixture of minibuses, low floor buses and accessible coaches. The minibuses tend to see use on feeder services and some of the more rural routes (such as in Figure J and Figure K); low floor buses mainly see use on local and shorter distance service radiating from Stornoway (Figure G), whilst coaches see use on the longer distance trunk routes (Figure H and Figure I).

4.4.2 The uses of coaches is based on the perceived unsuitability of low floor buses in rural areas (although low floor buses are widely used in Orkney and Shetland where the weather and geography are similar). The critical issue, however, is capacity – the integrated (i.e. school bus) journeys require the 53 seats available on a coach, compared to the 42 seats on a low-floor bus. A

policy decision has been taken by the Comhairle to discount access for capacity. This may be economically effective, but it could be argued that the Council needs to mitigate the negative accessibility impact by taking compensatory measures in compliance with their Public Sector Equality Duties under the 2010 Equality Act. The provision of support for a more consistent door to door service for disabled people, as in the form of community transport dial-a-ride services, is a way in which other councils respond to these issues.

Figure G: Bus na Comhairle Low-floor Buses in Stornoway (2018)³



³ Photo © and courtesy of Roger French <https://busandtrainuser.com/2018/09/22/out-in-the-outer-hebrides/> NB some of the routes have changed operators since 2018 but the vehicle types shown are still representative

Figure H: Hebridean Transport Coach on the W10 service (2018)³



Figure I: MacLennan Coaches vehicle on the westside W2 service (2018)³



Figure J: W2 Bus to W3 Minibus Interchange at Garrynahine (2018)³



Figure K: Grenitote Travel Minibus on the W17 to Eriskay (2018)³



- 4.4.3 Whilst the coaches used meet PSVAR accessibility regulation in that there is a wheelchair lift provided either at the front or an additional side door, this does not mean that the coach is accessible to non-wheelchair users with mobility problems. These passengers still have to climb steps from the front door to the seats within the vehicle. Whilst there are now coaches on the market with seats within a low floor area at the front of the coach, these are more expensive than a standard PSVAR coach and are not yet available on the second-hand market.

Figure L: Hebridean Transport Coach showing Wheelchair Access



- 4.4.4 Outside Stornoway, the necessary infrastructure that makes bus use convenient, comfortable and accessible for passengers is largely lacking. Although there are some more modern bus shelters, there are still many examples of the historic 'mushroom' model which only offer partial shelter and prevent waiting passengers from seeing oncoming bus services as well as bus drivers from seeing whether any passengers are waiting.
- 4.4.5 More fundamentally, hard standing is generally lacking and certainly no raised kerbs to facilitate level access. This creates significant practical barriers to any wheelchair users making use of whatever access features do exist on the buses or coaches deployed on the service. Moreover it puts off older ambulant users who, when alighting, have to turn round and come down the steep coach steps backwards and then grope behind with a foot seeking some solid ground onto which they can step. They have difficulty carrying their messages during this manoeuvre so require additional assistance from the driver or other passengers to hand these down to them once off the vehicle. The current arrangements lack dignity for passengers.

Figure M: Bus Shelter on B888 Junction to North Smerclete, South Uist



Figure N: HITRANS Bus Shelter



Figure O: New Style Shelter with Bicycle Parking, Drimsdale side road off A865, South Uist



Figure P: Bus Shelter, Thiarabhagh, A888 Barra



Figure Q: Bus Stop 94727463 North Bay side road from A888, Barra



Figure R: 'Mushroom' bus shelter on side road to Melbost, A857 Lewis Westside



4.5 Public Transport Access to Facilities

4.5.1 It is outside the scope of this study to undertake a full analysis of the access to facilities that is provided by the current bus network. During consultation, access to GP surgeries was mentioned so we examined this briefly using the approach recommended as part of 'accessibility planning'. The maps below indicate:

- the location of GP surgeries against the numbered bus routes, and
- travel times to GP locations in minutes from each bus route.

Note that because of the general sparsity of population in the Outer Hebrides and the format of available data⁴, the analysis in Figure T calculates and shows average journey time figures across quite large geographical areas which makes it impossible to identify local problems in any detail.

4.5.2 What the maps reveal is that in general GP surgeries are sited on or close to bus routes. However, some locations (much of South Uist, for example) are a long way from surgeries so the access by bus takes a long time. Moreover, because of the relative infrequency of bus services in more rural locations, the likelihood of an outward and a return journey fitting neatly around an appointment is very small. Hence access to a GP becomes a problematic journey for some people who do not have access to a car – they either need to call a taxi for one or both legs of the journey, at significant expense, or else rely on a lift from a friend or neighbour.

4.5.3 Helping people to make these journeys to primary and secondary healthcare is the main purpose of most UK social car schemes – where volunteers are formally organised to provide lifts in their own cars and receive expense for doing that.

⁴ This analysis uses data from the geographical access to services domain from the Scottish Indices of Multiple Deprivation 2020. As they explain: "Data zones in rural areas tend to cover a large land area and reflect a more mixed picture of people experiencing different levels of deprivation. This means that SIMD is less helpful at identifying the smaller pockets of deprivation found in more rural areas, compared to the larger pockets found in urban areas."

Figure S: Bus Network and GP Surgeries

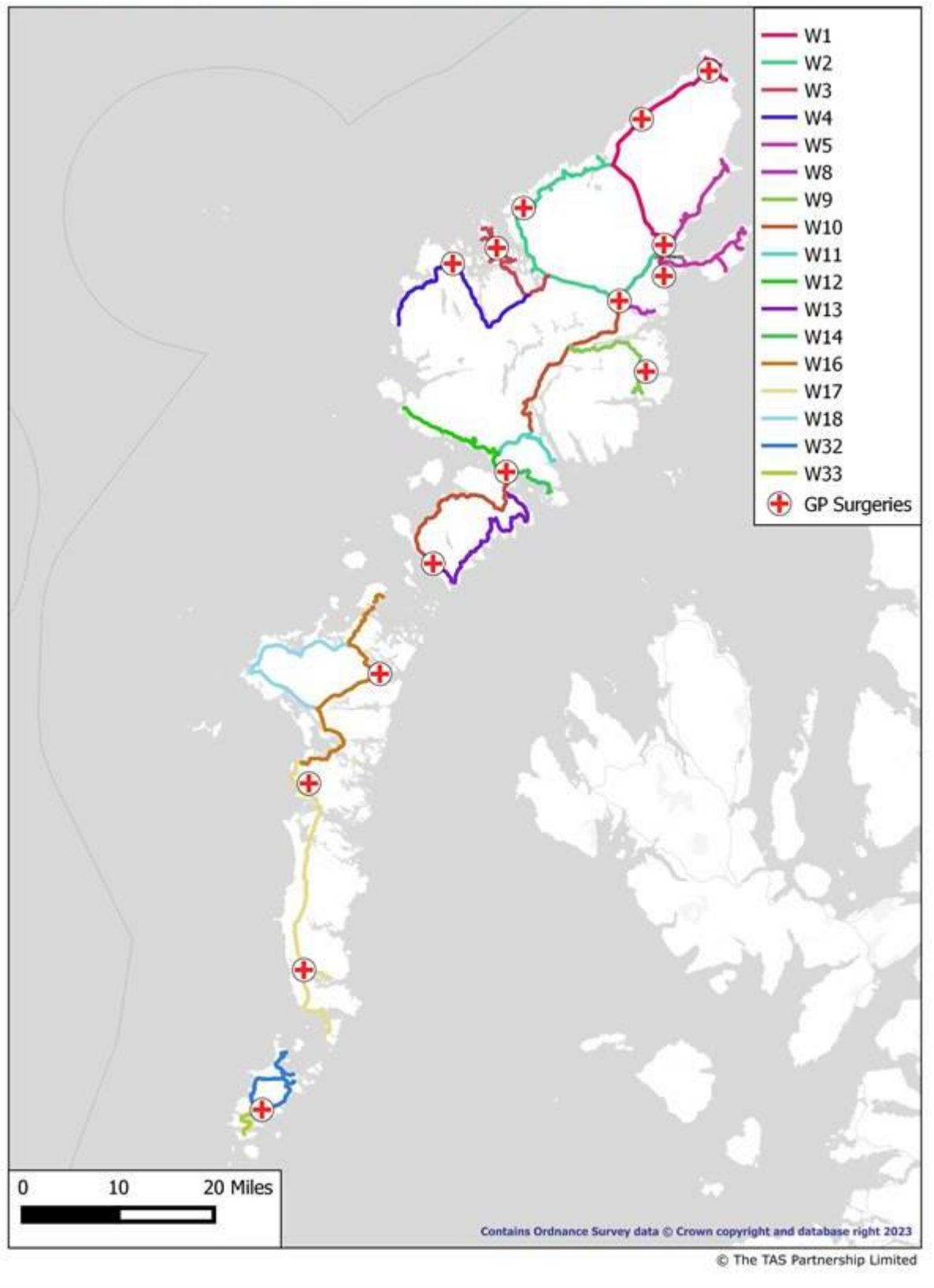
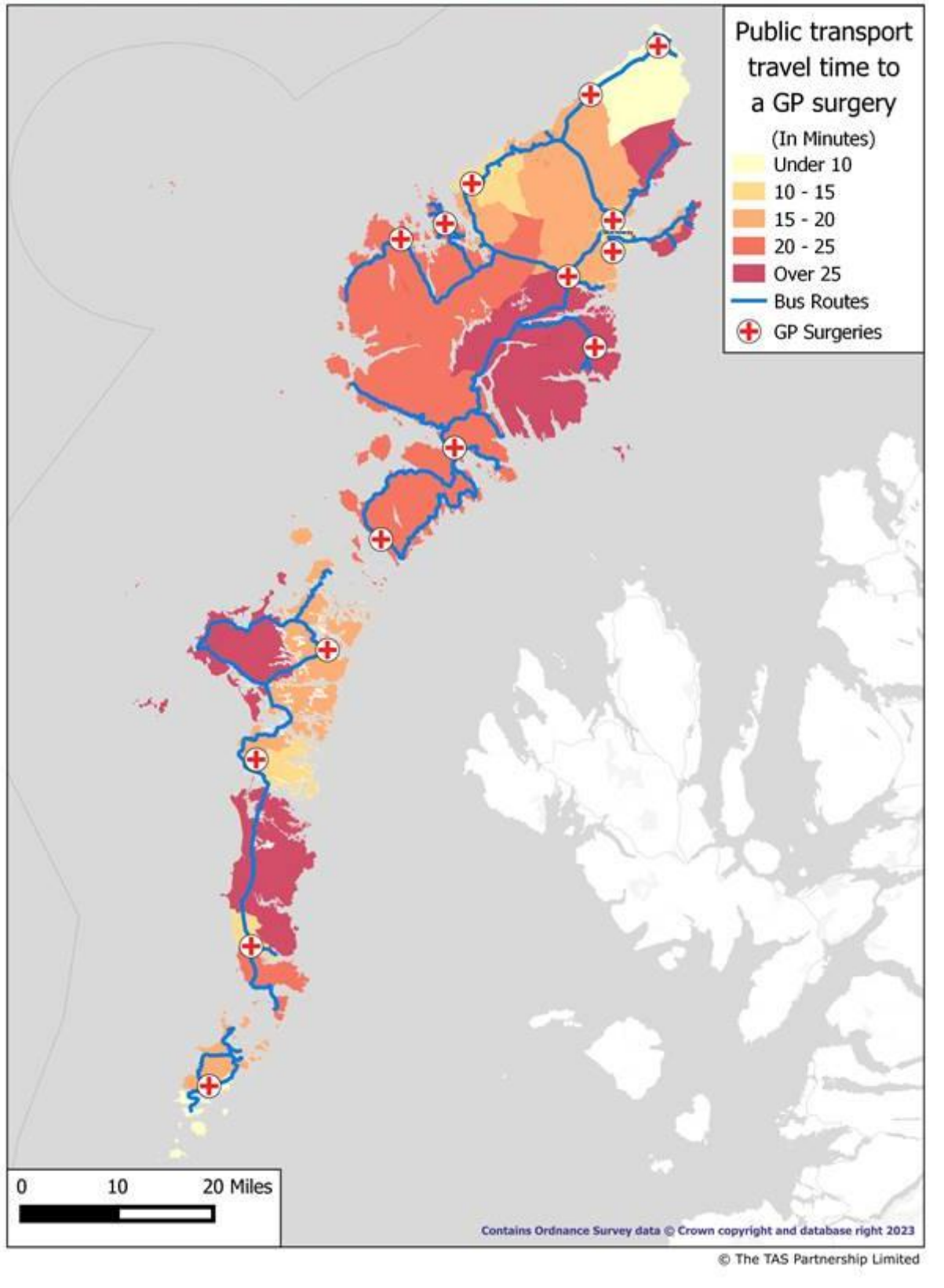


Figure T: Bus network and travel times to GP Surgeries (2020 data)



5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (PHV) form an important part of the public transport network on the Islands. Unlike mainland urban locations, where taxis are often a premium service for those who for whatever reason need a bespoke journey, taxis in rural areas are often the only means of transport at times and / or locations that buses are unavailable. The taxi sector also serves Comhairle nan Eilean Siar in its obligations to provide transport for qualifying school pupils, and for individuals who require social care.
- 5.1.2 There are a number of key distinctions between taxi and private hire operations:
- Taxis can be hired at ranks⁵ and by hailing in the street; by contrast, private hire vehicles must be booked in advance;
 - Taxis must use a taximeter and can only charge the fare on the meter. The meter is set to use a tariff that is laid down by the Comhairle⁶. By contrast, the charge for private hire vehicles is not regulated – it is whatever is agreed between the operator and the passenger at the time of hiring.

5.2 Licensing

- 5.2.1 Taxis and Private Hire Vehicle operations are licensed by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar under the Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982. Whilst Scottish government has responsibility for the overarching legislation, the day to day administration of the licensing regime for taxis and private hire cars is devolved to local authorities. Whilst there are some core statutory requirements, detailed licensing criteria and standards are largely a matter of Comhairle policy. These include:
- A police check & criminal convictions declaration
 - Vehicle check (Certificate of Vehicle Fitness)
 - DVLA Licence check (requires a full driving licence for a minimum period of 12 months and Comhairle nan Eilean Siar considers the severity of any endorsements and convictions)
 - Medical examination (may be required in some cases)
 - Knowledge test (general motoring and local knowledge of the area in which applicant intends to work)

⁵ There is, however, only one designated taxi rank in the entire Council area – on North Beach Street in Stornoway

⁶ The latest Tariff was reviewed and published in October 2022

- Right to work in UK check.

5.2.2 Costs to the applicant are £80 for a new taxi or private hire car driver’s licence and £60 for a renewal.

5.3 Taxi & Private Hire Licence Holders

5.3.1 The table below is based on licensing data as of January 2023:

Table 4: Outer Hebrides Taxi & Private Hire Licences (January 2023)

Type	Vehicle Licences	Proprietors	No Current Vehicle	No Meter	Distribution
Taxi	83 (2 accessible)	69	15	19	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 61 single vehicle operators ■ 5 with two vehicles ■ 3 with four vehicles
PHV	18 (3 accessible)	16	1	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 14 single vehicle operators ■ 2 with two vehicles
TOTAL	101	85	16	19	-

5.3.2 DfT produces taxi licensing statistics for England and Wales which includes a measure of ‘total licensed taxis and PHVs per 1,000 people’ to indicate relative abundance of vehicles on a local authority area basis. Using this measure for the 84 areas in England and Wales classified as ‘Mainly rural’ and ‘Generally rural’, the average number of vehicles is 2.1 per 1,000 people in 2022. The equivalent statistics for Scotland were last updated in 2020, and these indicate an average of 4.37 per 1,000 people but if the main urban city authorities (Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow) are eliminated, the average reduces to 3.24 vehicles. On the same basis, for the Outer Hebrides population of 26,500 (based 2020 estimates by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar⁷) and 101 vehicles, there are 3.81 taxis and PHV per 1,000 residents.

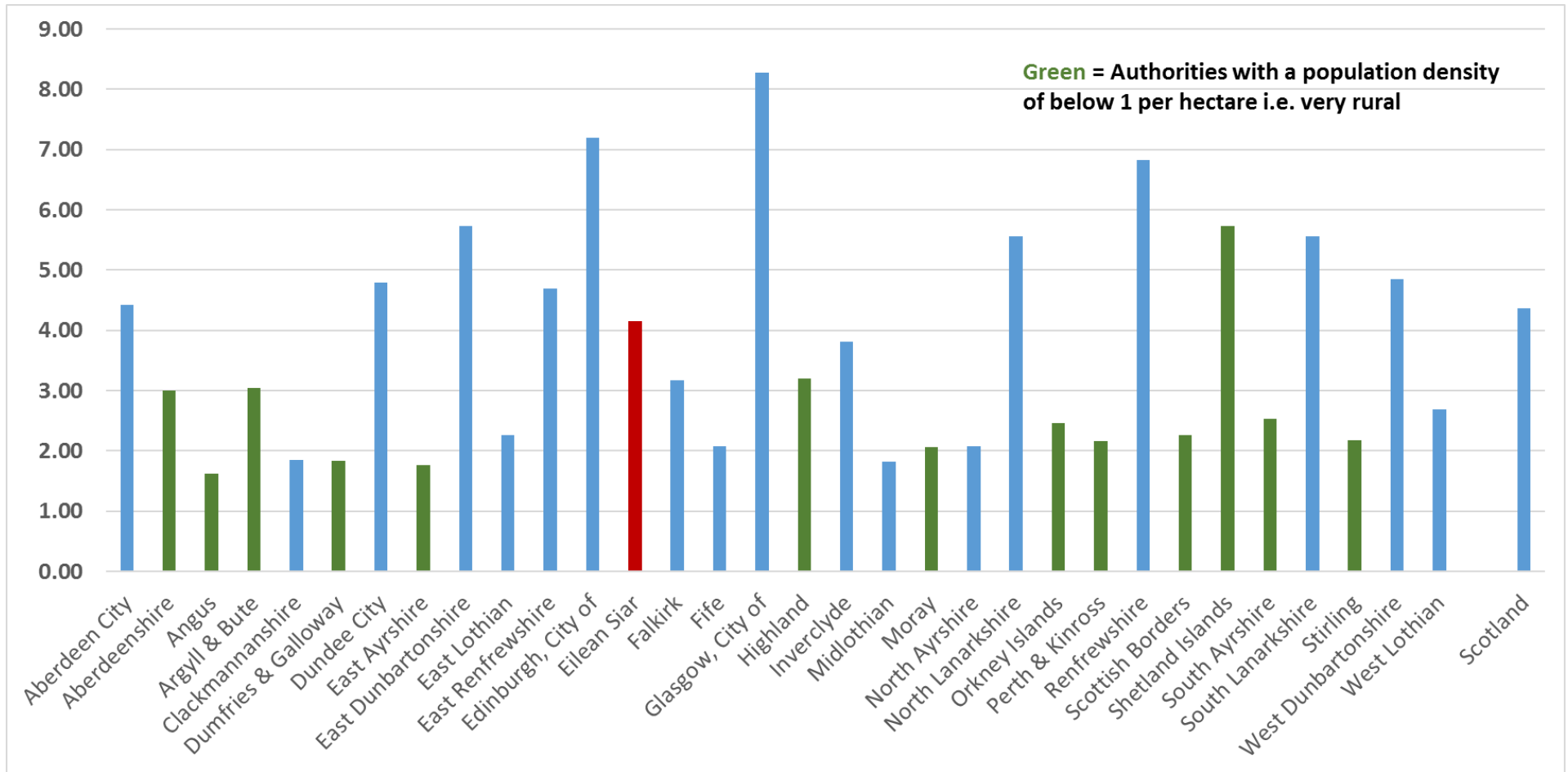
5.3.3 This indicates that the Outer Hebrides is slightly better provided for than the majority of Scottish authorities, and significantly better than those in rural England and Wales. The number of accessible taxis and PHVs on the islands is, however, extremely low at 0.18 per 1,000 people against a Scottish average (again minus Aberdeen, Dundee, Edinburgh and Glasgow) of 0.5. (It should be noted that this measure does not take into account actual vehicle availability to the public as, for example, various proprietors may choose to work differing hours per week, or exclusively concentrate on contract delivery or airport runs etc).

5.3.1 Figure U shows that pre-Covid the number of vehicles (taxis and private hire vehicles) licensed by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar relative to the population was about average for Scotland. However, looking at rural authorities alone

⁷ <https://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/strategy-performance-and-research/outer-hebrides-factfile/population/overview/>

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is the second best served council area, second only to Shetland. Covid had a significant impact on licence numbers with many drivers quitting the trade and transferring to van driving. However, numbers are slowly coming back up and we do not think that Comhairle nan Eilean Siar was affected in a significantly different way from the rest of Scotland. The 'No Current Vehicle' in the Table largely reflects the Covid impact.

Figure U: Scotland 2020 – Licensed Vehicles (Taxis/PHVs) per 1,000 people



5.3.2 However, when it comes to wheelchair accessibility, Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has a relatively very poor provision as shown in Figure V and Figure W. This applies even when one discounts urban authorities – Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has the fifth lowest provision of WAVs per population of all Scottish authorities and only Dumfries & Galloway and South Lanarkshire have a lower proportion of licensed vehicles that are wheelchair accessible.

Figure V: Licensed Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs) per 1,000 people

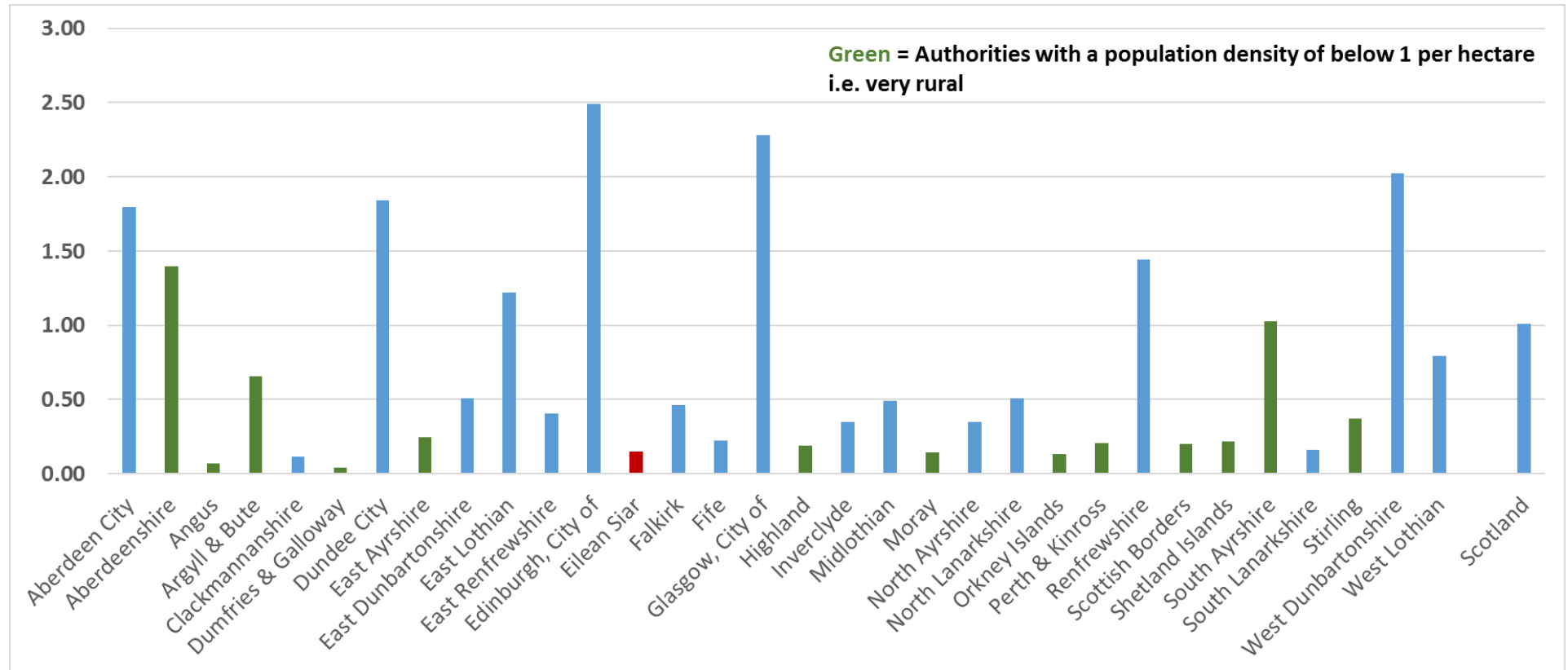
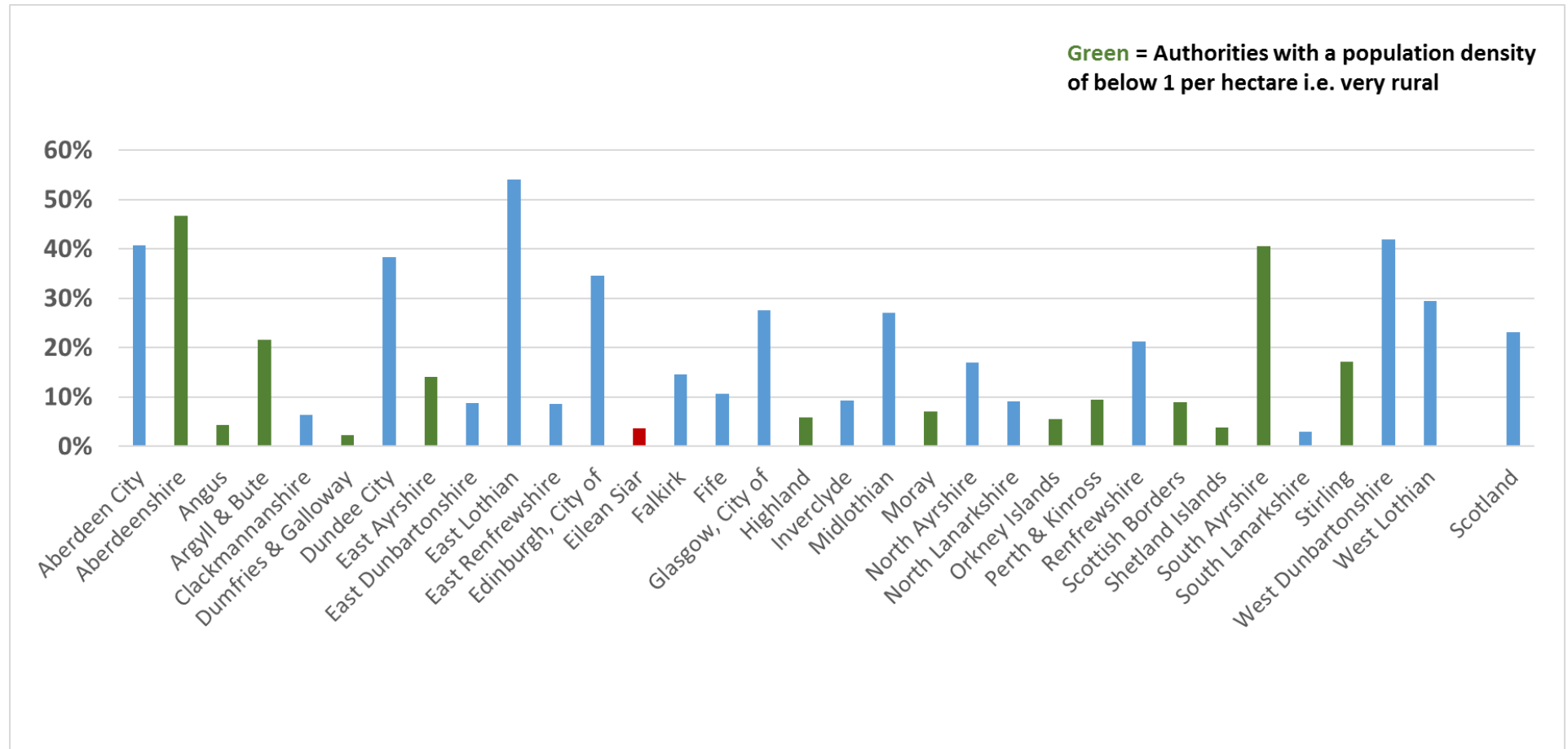


Figure W: Scotland 2020 – Proportion of Licensed Vehicles that are Wheelchair Accessible



- 5.3.3 Combined with the poor accessibility of the public bus services, poor taxi and PHV accessibility has major implications for the need for accessible community transport services to fill the gaps, especially when considered in the light of the ageing population highlighted in the demography chapter above.
- 5.3.4 The maps below indicate the spatial distribution of taxi and PHVs across the Outer Hebrides and isolate in each category:
- Standard vehicles (up to four passenger seats)
 - Wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAV)
 - Multi-Purpose Vehicles (MPV) (up to eight passenger seats)
 - Non operational vehicles.
- 5.3.5 The locations are derived from the base address of each licence holder but do not necessarily indicate the vehicle's area of operation. Note that there are fewer WAVs than shown in Table 4 above because we have excluded a) vehicles not currently in use and b) vehicles that are listed in the Council's section 165 return (a formal annual report under the Equality Act listing the number of WAVs) as vehicles that require wheelchair users to transfer to a seat (but which can carry folded wheelchairs). Our view is that they should not be included in the s165 list. If we are correct this reduces the number of WAVs available down from 5 to 3 which makes the Comhairle's WAV position relative to the rest of Scotland even worse.
- 5.3.6 The maps below demonstrate the paucity of provision in some parts of the area, particularly North Uist, Harris and around Uig. Apart from the difficulty and additional expense that this creates for the local community in these locations, it also impacts on the Comhairle directly in the difficulties that are experienced in commissioning providers for home to school transport and for adult social care purposes. The poor distribution of MPVs adds to this issue.
- 5.3.7 A particular problem is shown for those wheelchair users who are unable to transfer to a vehicle seat. Of the three WAVs we think are available, two are in Stornoway and one in Lochs. There is thus no licensed wheelchair accessible vehicle available for the public to hire in Barra, South Uist, Benbecula, North Uist or Harris, nor on the westside of Lewis. We heard during consultation of a wheelchair user in Breasclete who wanted to attend a Jubilee celebration at the community hall and who had to call out a WAV from Stornoway to undertake what was only a mile return journey at the cost of ca. £40.
- 5.3.8 Until now, whilst there has been government guidance encouraging councils to ensure an adequate provision of WAVs, this has not been mandatory. Amongst other reasons this reflects:
- a) the relative balance between taxis and private hire vehicles - a number of urban authorities require all taxis to be WAVs in order to ensure WAV provision at the ranks and when a vehicle is hailed on street. With only one

rank and with very limited on-street hailing, this isn't relevant to Comhairle nan Eilean Siar – requiring all taxis on the islands to be WAVs would lead to an exodus from taxis to private hire vehicles;

- b) the fact that many disabled people prefer a saloon car or an MPV type vehicle because of the ease of entry for those with difficulties bending;
- c) the significant additional expense in acquiring and operating a WAV;
- d) the fact that in some areas the local transport authority funds a door to door wheelchair accessible dial-a-ride service, generally provided by the community transport sector to meet the need. This provision is currently missing in the Outer Hebrides.

5.3.9 However, the Westminster government consulted last year⁸ on a proposal to introduce a requirement for licensing authorities to develop and maintain an 'Inclusive Service Plan':

All licensing authorities should develop and maintain an Inclusive Service Plan (ISP), either as a standalone document or as an integral element of their Local Transport Plan. The ISP should describe:

- *The demand for accessible services in their area, from wheelchair users and non-wheelchair users, and from people with both visible and less-visible impairments, and an assessment of the extent to which that need is currently being met.*
- *The authority's strategy for making transport more inclusive generally, and specifically in relation to taxi and private hire vehicle provision.*
- *The steps that the authority will take to improve the inclusivity of the taxi and private hire vehicle services it supports, including timescales for their completion.*
- *That the courses or assessments authorities require applicants to undertake are suitable for a range of participants e.g. including older drivers*

5.3.10 Although this is an 'English' document, the legislation under which taxi accessibility is considered is the Equality Act 2010, Part 12 (Disabled Persons Transport), which applies in Scotland. It is under this Act that Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is required to maintain and publicise lists of wheelchair accessible vehicles and is required (s167(7)) to have regard to any guidance the Secretary of State may issue in respect of wheelchair-accessible vehicles. Last year's 'Taxis and Private Hire Vehicles (Disabled Persons) Act 2022' introduced amendments to the EA 2010 which amongst other things put additional duties on drivers to assist disabled people and this applies directly in Scotland.

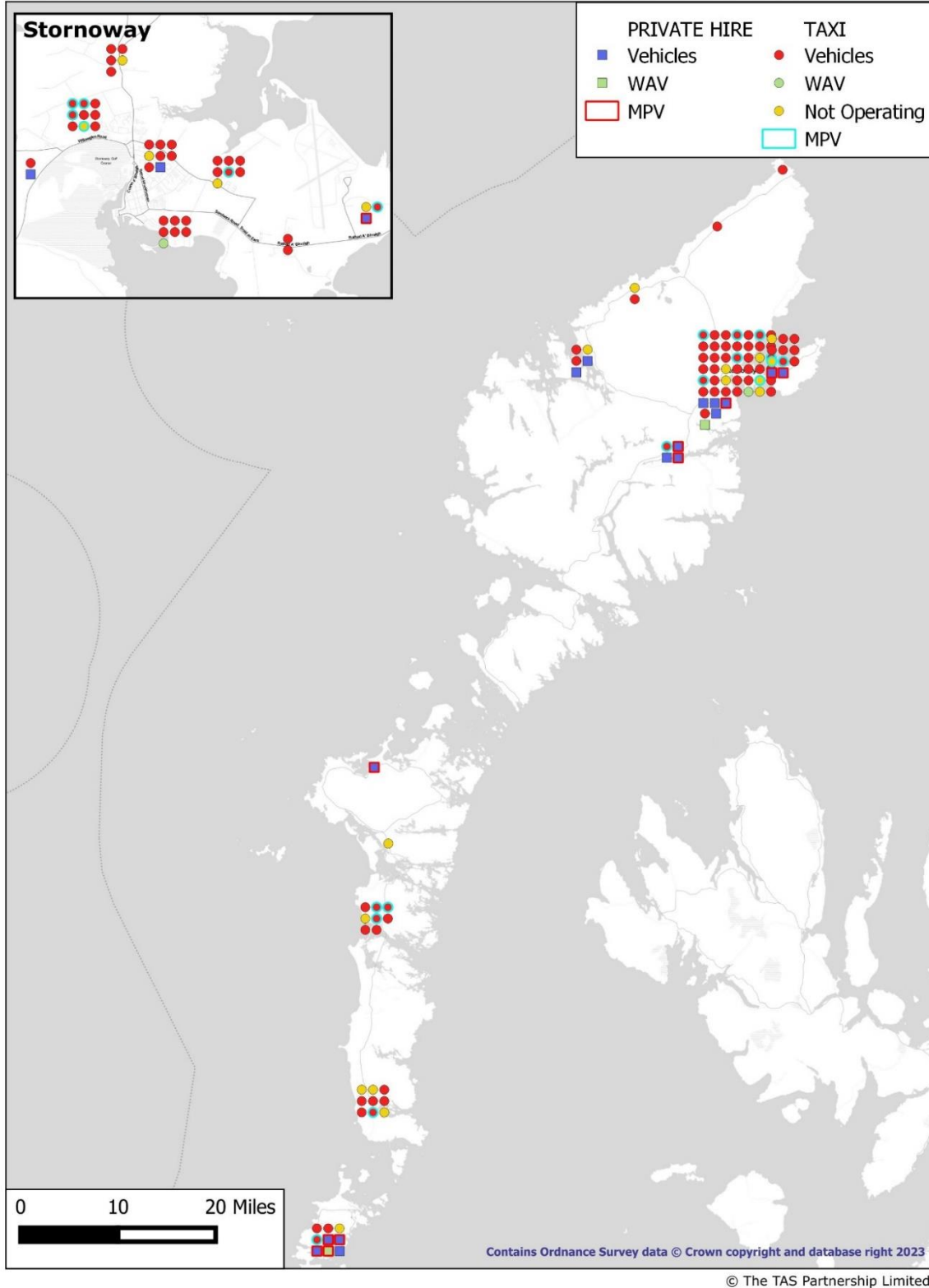
5.3.11 The strong likelihood, therefore, is that Comhairle nan Eilean Siar will need to take action in respect of the inadequate provision of licensed WAVs in its area, either to meet the proposed new duties or to defend itself of a formal

⁸ https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1063053/taxi-and-private-hire-vehicle-licensing-consulting-on-best-practice-guidance-for-licensing-authorities-in-England.pdf

challenge of its failure to meet its s149 EA 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty⁹ in respect of its taxi and private hire licensing function.

Figure X: Taxi & Private Licence Holders by Base Location

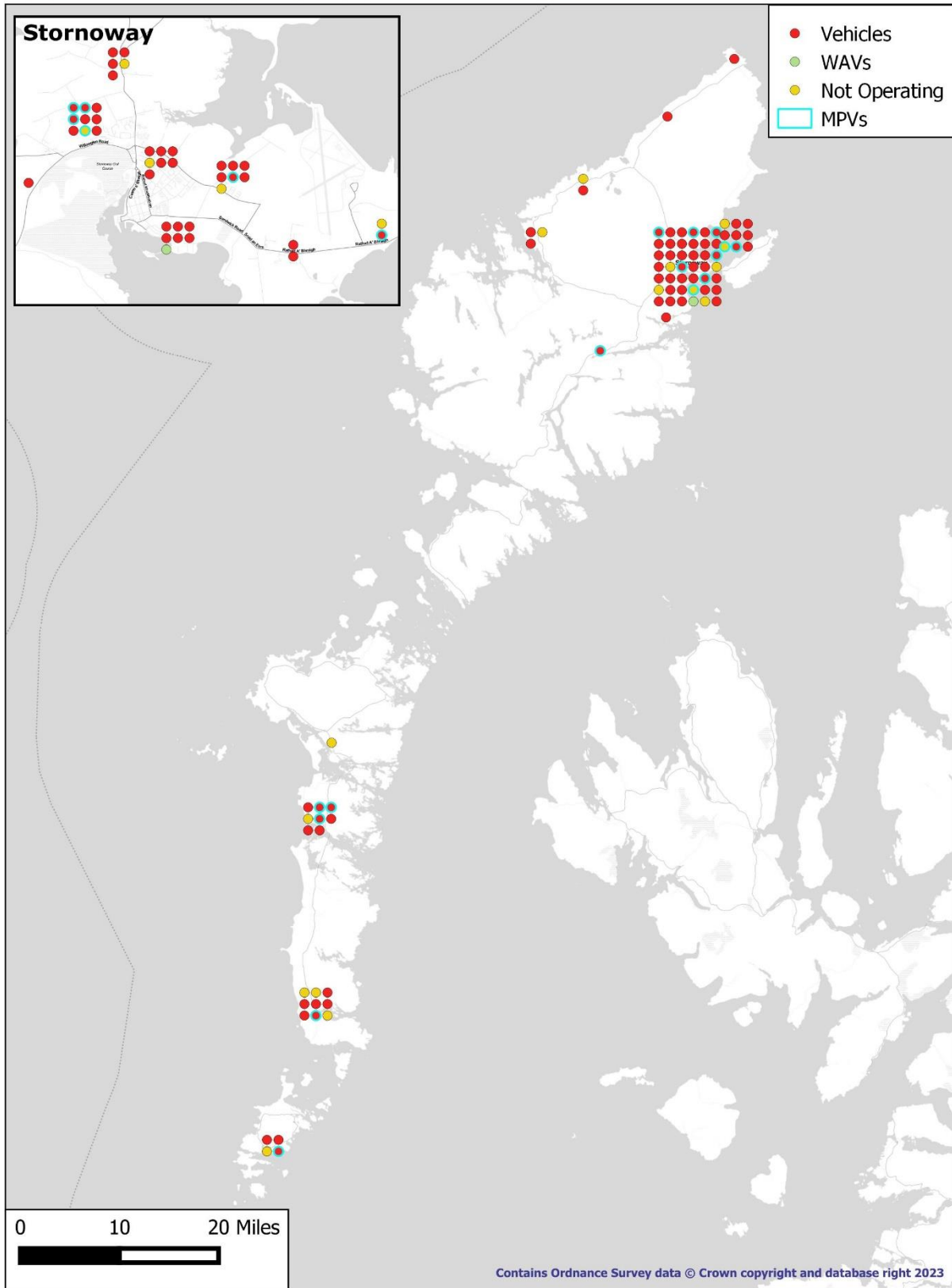
Outer Hebrides Taxi & Private Hire Licence Holders



⁹ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149?view=extent>

Figure Y: Taxi Licence Only Holders by Base Location

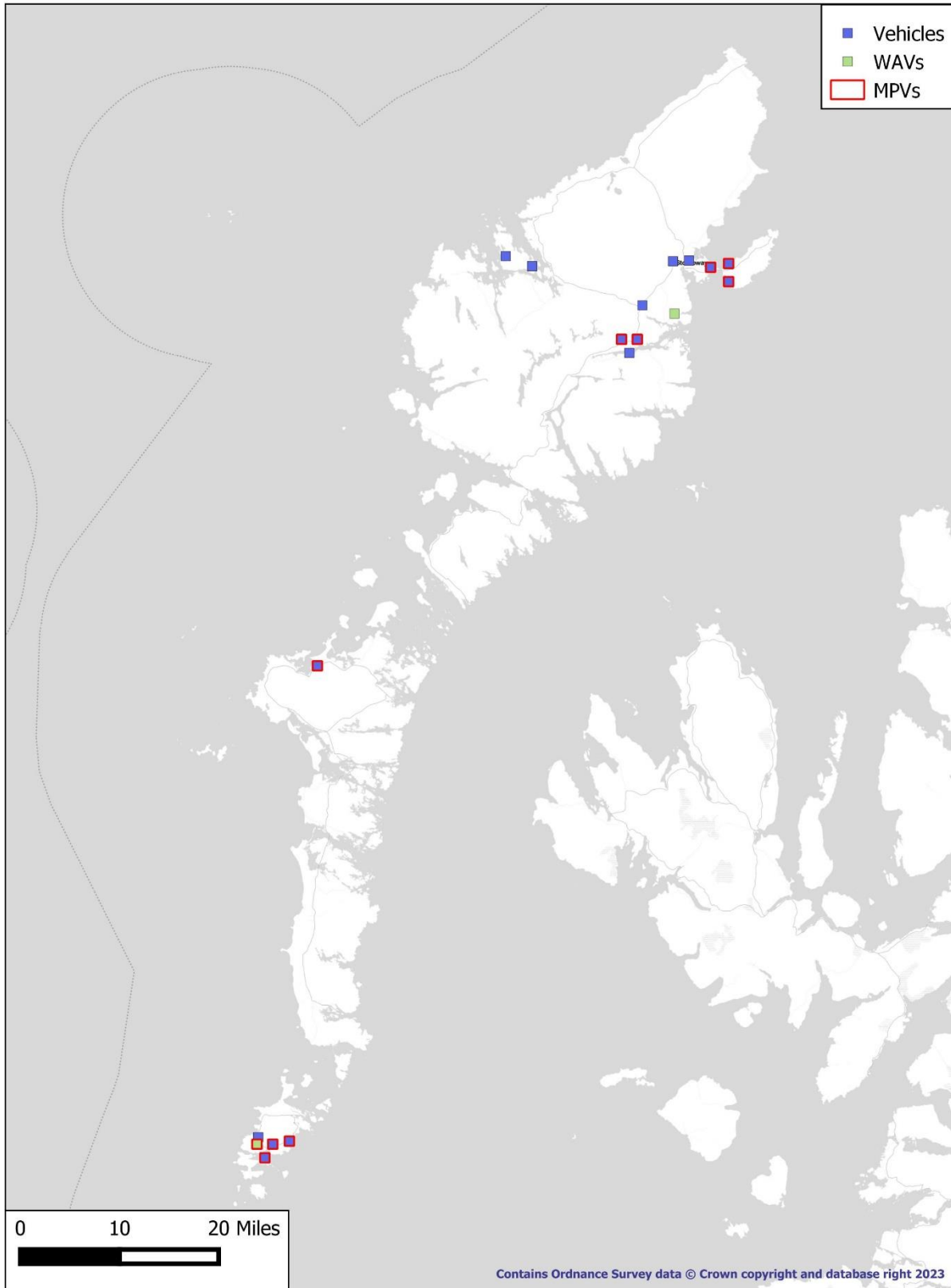
Outer Hebrides Taxi Licence Holders



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Figure Z: Private Hire Vehicles Only by Base Location

Outer Hebrides Private Hire Licence Holders



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5.4 Fare Tariffs

- 5.4.1 Comhairle nan Eilean Siar sets a tariff that taxis must adhere to when charging passengers, as regulated by a meter.

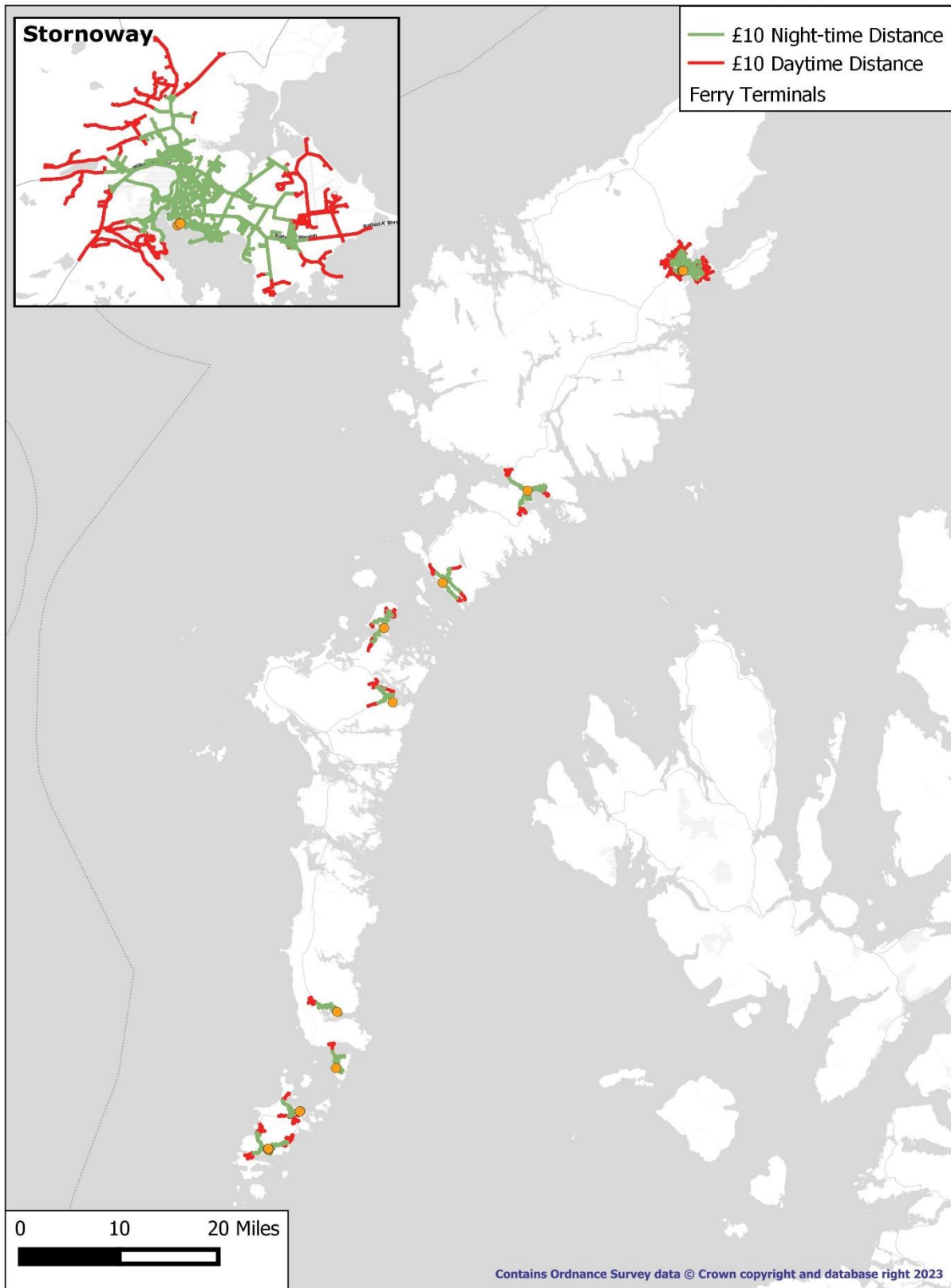
Table 5: Outer Hebrides Taxi Tariffs

Tariff	Conditions
Tariff 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ For the first 1320 yards (3/4 mile) or part thereof: £4.00 ▪ For each additional 440 yards (1/4 mile): £0.60 ▪ For each minute of waiting time or part thereof: £0.45
Tariff 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Surcharge on all rates if hire is between 9pm and 7am from Monday to Thursday: 25% ▪ Surcharge on all rates if hire is between 9pm on Friday and 7am on Monday: 25% ▪ Surcharge on all rates on public holidays determined by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar: 25%
Tariff 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Surcharge on all rates on hiring on 25/26 December and 1/2 January: 50%
Extras	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Cleaning charge (in the event of a passenger fouling the taxi/private hire car): £50 ▪ When carrying 5 or more passengers the normal start off rate will be Tariff 2. ▪ When carrying 5 or more passengers between midnight and 7am Monday to Thursday, between midnight on Friday and 7am on Monday and public holidays including 25 and 26 December and 1 and 2 January, Tariff 3 will apply. ▪ A supplementary booking charge of up to £6.50 may be applied to compensate for the cost of the outward journey for hires which commence 3 miles or more away from the taxi or taxi base (whichever is the nearer) and the customer wishes to travel further away. This charge may only be demanded if the customer is informed of the amount of the charge at the time of booking.

- 5.4.2 Using the tariff data, the map below indicates the distances from the ferry terminals that a £10 journey would allow for under both tariff 1 (daytime) and tariff 2 (night-time) rates.
- 5.4.3 Note that a taxi driver is only compelled to accept an 'immediate' hiring i.e. one where the booking is made at the taxi rank or the taxi is hailed on street. The driver can turn down an advance booking request if, in their view, the supplementary charge of up to £6.50 is inadequate to compensate for the additional mileage (and time) required to deliver a remote journey request. In such circumstances the journey will only be undertaken on a private hire basis where the fare is not subject to the limitations of the tariff but is negotiated between the driver and the customer at the time of booking.

Figure AA: Distance of Journey allowed with £10 Fare from Ferry Terminals

Outer Hebrides Taxi Travel from Ferry Terminals



- 5.4.4 The Outer Hebrides Tariff has traditionally been low, potentially justified on the basis that a low mileage rate can be offset by a longer average journey length. However, we note that in the Private Hire & Taxi Monthly comparison table (February 2023) using the 2 mile fare (Tariff 1) as a metric, Western Isles appear at position 157 out of 345 authorities i.e. midway. There are several Scottish authorities below the Outer Hebrides rate e.g. N Ayrshire, Dumfries & Galloway, as well as above e.g. Midlothian, E Ayrshire, Shetland Isles.
<https://www.phtm.co.uk/taxi-fares-league-tables>

5.5 Innovative models

- 5.5.1 There are no examples in the Outer Hebrides of taxi or private hire services involving themselves in the various shared use models that were created in the Transport Act 1985, including:
- Formal taxi sharing arrangements from or to particular locations (e.g. Airports, Ferry Terminals) with a shared use tariff
 - Taxi-sharing zones designated by the Council
 - Taxibus / Private Hire Bus operation under Special Restricted PSV Operator Licences issued on demand by the Scottish Traffic Commissioner to any taxi or PHV operator who wants to use their vehicle to operate a scheduled bus service, either on their own account or as commissioned by the Council. Such a service can involve a fixed route or various models of demand-responsive service, including a full-scale app-based digital demand responsive transport (DDRT) model.
- 5.5.2 The Comhairle nan Eilean Siar taxi licensing officer does not have a public passenger transport promotional remit and it is not clear that taxis are considered from the point of view of developing an enhanced public transport network.

6.1 Introduction

- 6.1.1 Without any large concentration of population, the Islands of the Outer Hebrides have not developed community transport as a broad coverage para-transit service (i.e. a dial-a-ride service which operates in the same areas as the bus network but which exclusively serves those with limited mobility). Community transport has been a generally local response to gaps in the limited bus network. In some cases this has been funded by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar but not planned in any logical or equitable way by the authority. There are also minibuses that have been acquired by non-profit organisations in specific locations to enable participation in community activities, etc. There is no universal understanding or recognition of the term 'community transport', and there hasn't been a development path to establish voluntary sector organisations that are exclusively transport operators.
- 6.1.2 Despite the geographical challenges posed by the islands and the critical role played by transport in the lives of the inhabitants, the various community minibuses and transport schemes are not well developed in terms of identity, marketing and sustainability. There is no cohesive 'CT sector' and many services have ceased possibly due in part to the lack of effective peer-support. In some cases community minibuses are underused, and there is a general lack of understanding of operational legislation and, at present, no facility to train drivers to MiDAS standard.
- 6.1.3 Overall, CT in the Outer Hebrides is not perceived primarily as an accessible service (i.e. one primarily aimed at individuals who cannot use public buses due to personal mobility constraints) and only Tagsa Uibhist and Voluntary Action Barra & Vatersay view their services as being targeted towards older and disabled residents.
- 6.1.4 In presenting this overview of the available CT services, it has not been possible to visually 'map' the CT operations in the way that the bus network is treated in chapter two, due to lack of data. Much of the CT operation is demand responsive and limited to coverage within a radius from the general location of the operational base of each organisation.

6.2 Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

- 6.2.1 The Comhairle provides funding support for a number of external community transport operators, although its approach to CT development is limited. The council does not operate any community transport services itself, and its in-house fleet (for special Education purposes) does not extend to offering any vehicle or driver resources to the wider community. There is a significant

degree of co-ordination between education and public transport in terms of bus services integrating or dovetailing with mainstream school runs, and some community minibuses are involved with serving schools. However, co-ordination does not extend beyond this to include transport for additional support needs (ASN) education, education requirements other than home to school, social work purposes, community transport or health related transport. The Comhairle does not approach passenger transport management from an integrated or holistic perspective.

6.2.2 Comhairle nan Eilean Siar does recognise CT services in its strategic documents:

- *Outer Hebrides Local Transport Strategy 2020-2030*, and
- *Community Transport Strategy (Draft) (2020)* (The Comhairle being part of the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership, which authored this document)

but these do not offer any detailed policy or procedure around funding support, development, or how CT services might be aligned with the council's own objectives. (These documents were considered in greater detail above in the chapter Policy & Strategy Position).

6.2.3 Current grant allocation is based on historical practice and lacks any rationale or methodology based on need, cost-efficiency or geographical equity. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar allocates a collective community transport budget, which is used to provide grant aid to the following operators:

Table 6: Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Grant Support for Community Transport 2022 / 2023

Organisation	Current Grant	Comment
Tagsa Uibhist	£76,000	Reduced from £89,000 in 2020. Own vehicles
Voluntary Action Barra & Vatersay	£42,000	Own vehicles.
Eriskay Community Council	£9,500	Increased from £7,500 as a one-off to cover an overspend. Vehicle hired from Hebridean Coaches but ECC provides own drivers.
North Lochs Amenity Group	£4,500	Group has own minibus.
Uig Community Council	£2,500	Uig CC invoice on a very ad-hoc basis usually about £600 to £800 three or four times a year. The Comhairle has made available £2-3K in recent years but claims have usually been in the lower end of the scale. Service operated by P. MacLennan
Ness Community Council	£8,000	Service operated by Hebridean Minibus

Organisation	Current Grant	Comment
Shawbost Community Council	Not Claimed	£9,500 was budgeted for.
Carloway Community Council	Not Claimed	£1,500 was budgeted for.

- 6.2.4 This allocation totals £153,500 (including Shawbost and Carloway). The Comhairle original CT budget was £183k. In 2015/16 it had been £224k. Despite the sums of money involved the Comhairle does not specify what service should be provided and the grant provision is not covered by a Service Level Agreement (SLA) or clear understanding of its purpose and parameters. There is no structured reporting system in place, and in some cases Comhairle nan Eilean Siar does not know what service is being provided, or how the fund is being spent. Moreover, it is not clear if there are any specific eligibility criteria for organisations whereby professional standards are demonstrated (e.g. insurance, training, governance, H&S procedures etc.)
- 6.2.5 Regarding the Comhairle reducing allocation, Public Transport Manager Jim Morrison reported: *"When Third Sector Hebrides stopped trading it coincided with a cut in our CT budget so groups only had a 10% cut to what we pay, without that it would have been closer to 30%. Four groups are not currently claiming but all were claiming less than £4k apart from Shawbost who were getting £8K from the Comhairle. I am aware of other groups on Lewis in Tolsta, Back and Horshader (South Shawbost), and in North Uist but none claim any funding from us."*
- 6.2.6 Although Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has provided essential financial support for the CT sector in the Outer Hebrides the various vehicles that operate in the community lack co-ordination, and in some cases, the Comhairle financial support is not critical to their continuation. There is no sense of a unified CT sector, just a succession of (mostly) small operators who have limited awareness of operations outside of their own geographical area.
- 6.2.7 Comhairle nan Eilean Siar takes a passive role towards grant provision – for example, the authority noted that a number of operators did not put in a grant request post-COVID, and despite its position as public transport authority did not explicitly seek to ascertain whether the service should be continued or whether any residents would be left isolated. This is partly a consequence of the authority having no meaningful data around the operations it has funded, and so is unable to gauge any impact when such operations cease. This might in other circumstances be subject to an Equalities Impact Assessment. The operators themselves (though circumstances will vary between them) were not particularly or exclusively engaged with transport activities and were not overly concerned at the financial loss. Most of the services lacked a critical mass of users who might otherwise have lobbied more strongly had they been more numerous.
- 6.2.8 The long-standing grant programme might be expected to be linked to a more coherent policy on CT but Jim Morrison stated that *"we have no policy toward*

new Community Transport projects and are just supporting the historic projects that have survived over the years...There is definitely a desire within the Comhairle to use Community Transport to 'fill the gaps' but we need to be careful that the gaps exist. There have been historic services put in place just because the Community Council, a Councillor or individuals within a community requested them but they were never used. Examples on Public Transport being Linshader near Bernera on W3 route, Cheesebay, Sidinish and Grimsay Loop in North Uist, Uskevagh, Locheynort and Daliburgh Church Loop in Benbecula and South Uist. All were provided with a service at some point over the last 20 years, but all have been deleted as either they served one individual who has maybe passed away or is no longer fit to travel or they were simply never used. Similar situation with late night weekend services in Uig, Bernera Westside and South Lochs...With every budget under pressure, we are definitely moving to a 'use it or lose it' policy with no resources to provide anything that comes with risk or Community inspired innovation."

- 6.2.9 It is noted that Comhairle nan Eilean Siar had intended to undertake a review of CT funding and committee papers from the Transportation and Infrastructure meeting of 23 September 2020 state that: *"a review of the Community Transport funding mechanism is undertaken and a draft Scheme of Administration is brought to the Comhairle in February 2021"*.
- 6.2.10 Comhairle nan Eilean Siar does feel, however, that all the small CT providers (apart from North Lochs) are delivering work that clearly ties in with Council objectives but which cannot be afforded or delivered within the main Public Transport budget alongside other work that is determined on a local basis. At present this is not quantified but the Comhairle is now attempting to capture data from the operations in the form of a quarterly spreadsheet 'Community Transport Fund - Survey 2022-2023' (see below).

Figure BB: Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Community Transport Fund - Survey 2022-2023

Total Mileage recorded for Q1 April to June

Date	Start Location or Village	Diversions from main route between Start and Destination	Destination	Number of Passengers Picked-up	Journey mileage if known	Journey Code

Journey Code Menu - Please create new if not listed	
1	Shopping Trip
2	Return from Shopping Trip
3	Access Essential Services e.g Bank or C.A.B
4	Return from Essential Services
5	Appointment - Hospital
6	Return from appointment - Hospital
7	Appointment - GP Surgery
8	Return from appointment - GP Surgery
9	Nursery Journey - In
10	Nursery Journey - Home
11	Day Care Centre - In
12	Day Care Centre - Return to Home
13	Respite Care In
14	Respite Care Home
15	Adult Learning Centre - In
16	Adult Learning Centre - Home
17	Access to Social Gathering
18	Return from Social Gathering
19	Sports Event Transport - In
20	Sports Event Transport - Home
21	Access to Youth Club - In
22	Access to Youth Club - Home
23	Access to Church Activities - In
24	Access to Church Activities - Home
25	Day Out
26	
27	
28	

6.2.11 The survey is not especially efficient in that it requires a line being entered (seven columns) for each one way run, duplicated if there is more than one journey code to be recorded per run. As none of the CT operators has any bookings or scheduling software, none of the fields can be populated automatically. In practice journey purposes may not be known to the driver (although in some cases the destination will indicate this). As Comhairle nan Eilean Siar is not the exclusive funder of many of the services, the form does not enable its own 'stake' to be differentiated from those of other funders.

6.2.12 The survey fails to capture the following:

- Numbers of separate individuals users that use the service
- Mobility needs of users (e.g. wheelchair user or need for a carer to accompany)
- Fares income
- Operational costs
- Number of different vehicles deployed
- Number of refusals or non-accommodation
- Comments and complaints

all of which would be important in any evaluation or appraisal of the delivery performance.

- 6.2.13 It is not clear what purpose Comhairle nan Eilean Siar has in collecting the data – it would potentially form a partial audit trail to evidence the authority’s investment. Otherwise such data might populate a collective CT impact report, a committee paper on usage of council funds, or be used to inform how grant aid is allocated in the future. However, for any of the above to be meaningful, the data needs to be collected consistently (all operators providing data returns as a condition of grant aid) and structured in a way that captures a wider perspective. The CT operators were not consulted over the format of the survey and have struggled to complete it in this form.

6.3 Voluntary Action Barra & Vatersay

- 6.3.1 Voluntary Action Barra & Vatersay (VABV) is a long-established community support and development agency based in Castlebay. Its activities serve a population of around 1,000 residents. VABV offers a range of services and activities, and functions as an umbrella organisation for local initiatives. Some of these are statutory services in the absence of Council provision in southern isles. VABV also publishes a newspaper.
- 6.3.2 Bus Bharraigh serves a multitude of local needs, including the following:
- Day Care and respite facilities at Cobhair Bharraigh (Mon-Fri)
 - Pensioners shopping club – door-to-door runs to Castlebay
 - Mens’ Club each Friday
 - Various young club runs on Fridays & Saturdays
 - Health appointments and taking clients to other charities
 - Pre-school groups days out
 - Adult learners group gardening
- 6.3.3 VABV services are focused more on older and vulnerable passengers – leisure and sports runs have a lower priority on Barra.

Figure CC: Bus Bharraigh & Day Care Passengers



6.3.4 Vehicles have been upgraded over last 10 years and capital has been available. Current fleet is 2 diesel minibuses, 2 electric minibuses and 1 electric MPV. All drivers and assistants are paid staff (variable hours) and it is not felt that volunteers are available or would be reliable to run the service. There are 4-5 assistants and 3-4 drivers on books. Drivers are mostly older with D1 grandfather rights. Paying for younger drivers to take D1 test was expensive and ended in failure. MiDAS has been the main training standard but the VABV Diver Assessor Trainer (DAT) left, one was used from Tagasa Uibhist until this one left as well. There is therefore no current DAT available to VABV. Council funding is £42k and further ca. £20k is gained from other work (e.g. recharges to Health Board and Social Work). VABV has taken issue with Transport Scotland funding terms that have required 'sustainability' – CT services in deep rural areas cannot be sustainable (i.e. financially self-supporting) without very high fares (taxi equivalent).

Table 7: VABA Vehicle Usage April-December 2022

Journey Purpose	Single Trips (9 months)	Single Trips (annualised estimate)	Mileage (9 months)	Mileage (annualised estimate)	Average Mileage Per Trip
Shopping	468	624	35,456	47,275	6.5 miles
Day Care	1,458	1,944			
Respite Care	79	105			
Adult Learning Centre	2,562	3,416			
Social Gatherings	851	1,135			
Nursery	20	27			
Day Out	20	27			
TOTAL	5,458	7,278			

Figure DD: Bus Bharraigh Fleet at VABV Depot, Castlebay



6.4 Tagsa Uibhist Community Services (Isles of Uist)

6.4.1 Tagsa Uibhist (TU) is a community-based charity whose aim is to promote health and wellbeing in Uist. It offers a range of community support services such as home care, dementia support, community gardening, support for older people and individuals with mental health issues, and community transport (CT). It operates a door-to-door accessible service throughout the Southern Isles (comprising North Uist, Benbecula, South Uist, Eriskay, Grimsay and Berneray). It follows a conventional CT model of a specialist service for eligible individuals to enable clients to attend medical appointments, day care, adult learning, respite, shopping and other appointments. Shopping and pharmacy deliveries can be arranged. There is a useful synergy between the diversity of service provision in providing support for individuals who may require more than one kind of intervention.

6.4.2 Those eligible include:

- individuals with support needs and/or mobility difficulties, and who may not have access to public transport services and who do not have a vehicle or a family member who can provide transport for them;

- students with support needs who are unable to travel to and from school on the school bus, on public transport, and, in addition, do not have access to a vehicle in their immediate family; and
- some families who have difficulties accessing nursery due to lack of a vehicle and public transport.

6.4.3 Users are not charged for the service, but where travel costs are available for medical journeys, TU invoices for the amount claimed from the NHS. Tagasa Uibhist has a policy to not charge as the Comhairle grant covers operation costs (£76k pa). TU raises around £5k in donations (there are collection tins on vehicles) and also claims around £10k from Transport Scotland for Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG)¹⁰.

Figure EE: Tagasa Uibhist EV fleet and chargepoints, Balivanich, Benbecula



¹⁰ BSOG is now transferred to Network Support Grant. It is paid on a mileage basis to operators of registered local bus services and to services operated under s19 Permits carrying elderly or disabled passengers.

Figure FF: Tagsa Uibhist vehicle on South Uist to Benbecula Causeway



6.4.4 Active usage in November 2022 was 92 single trips (56 in North Uist, 24 in Benbecula and 12 in South Uist) – this equates to around 1,000 single trips per year. The service has approx. 50 individual active across the islands, and this has been stable for a number of years. Uist has a declining population and an aging demographic. Users are mostly very elderly croft dwellers who are unable to drive or do not have access to a car.

6.4.5 Tagsa Uibhist resources are:

- 3 x 9 seat EVs (non-accessible)
- 2 x 5 seat accessible Ford Tourneos
- 5 staff members on variable hours contracts (4 drivers, 1 in office)

6.4.6 Vehicles are operated under s19 permits. Staff members are given a high level of training in a range of areas (infection control, protection, mental health awareness). MiDAS used to be used but is no longer active.

6.5 Horshader Community Development Trust (North West Lewis)

6.5.1 Horshader Community Development (HCDT) is a community-owned charitable trust established in May 2005 to plan and run a community wind farm for the benefit of people in South Shawbost, Dalbeag and Dalmore on the west coast

of the Isle of Lewis. The trust operates a minibus: *“The Rural transport service is a door to door service which is not provided through scheduled bus services, on a non-profit basis, enabling members to have access to services and amenities which they would otherwise not be able to access. The minibus is fully wheelchair accessible, equipped with an on-board mounted electric / hydraulic wheelchair lift. The service is available to any member of the Rural Support and Connect project and can be used as a dial a bus. The minibus may occasionally be available for out of hours runs. Out of hours runs are any time outwith the normal office hours, such as evenings or weekends.”*

6.5.2 Hire costs (excluding fuel and VAT) are:

- 1/2 Day with Driver (4hrs) £25.00 (members) / £50.00 (non members)
- Full Day With Driver (8hrs) £50.00 (members) / £100.00 (non-members)

(Data from <https://www.horshader.com/minibus-services>). There is a discount for individuals from the Horshader area (Dalmore, Dalbeag & South Shawbost).

6.5.3 HCDT provide a regular service taking children to and from Shawbost Primary School (not statutorily entitled children i.e. within the 2 mile limit, or those children with ASN). This is a free service used by local parents. They also provide some after-school support.

Figure GG: Horshader Community Development Minibus



6.5.4 They have also been providing a service for Barvas School taking two children with ASN to the swimming pool in Stornoway for therapy sessions. However, the school has now been offered free use of a Council minibus based in Stornoway and they are trying this out. But this involves one of the care staff

driving to Stornoway to pick up the minibus, drive it to Barvas to pick up the children, then driving them to the swimming pool, then reversing the process. It is hard to see how this is cost-effective when staff time and car mileage reimbursement are taken into account.

- 6.5.5 Additionally the vehicle is used by other community organisations, such as the Shinty Team (usually weekends); Neuro Hebrides (now making less use than last year due to cost increase); Clann Latha an De (an older people’s group who are taken free of charge to fortnightly meetings and an annual outing); and the Blasta Lunch Club for over 65’s (also provided free of charge). Carloway Sunshine Club would also use the vehicle but their requirements currently clash with the school run.
- 6.5.6 They have a p/t paid driver – 20 hrs p/w – ca. £12.5k p.a. This is part of a package of funding from the Round One Investing in Communities Fund which, in addition to supporting the minibus service, includes other things such as grass-cutting. However, this funding comes to an end at the end of March. Consequently, they are having to review the viability of maintaining the service – not very hopeful at the moment. The service has been significantly subsidised for years. There is an expectation of low cost provision.
- 6.5.7 The minibus is a 2015 Citroen – maximum 16 passengers, capacity for 2 wheelchair users. They do not have any back up if it breaks down. They used to allow organisations to provide their own driver when borrowing the vehicle but stopped doing this because of damage. They now use their own paid driver on a flexible hours basis. MiDAS is now impossible to obtain. HCDDT agreed to send TAS a snapshot of a typical week’s diary showing what the minibus is used for:

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
27 Feb	28	1 Mar	2	3
08:00 Shawbost School; Shawbost School - Transport to school	08:00 Shawbost School; Shawbost School - Transport to school	08:00 Shawbost School; Shawbost School - Transport to school	08:00 Shawbost School; Shawbost School - Transport to school	08:00 Shawbost School; Shawbost School - Transport to school
15:00 Shawbost School - Transport; Shawbost School - pick up from school to home	14:00 Clann Latha an De; Clann Latha an De	09:30 SK Shawbost to Carloway Medical Centre; Shawbost, hs...	15:00 Shawbost School - Transport; Shawbost School - pick up from school to home	15:00 Shawbost School - Transport; Shawbost School - pick up from school to home
	15:00 Shawbost School - Transport; Shawbost School - pick up from scho...	15:00 Shawbost School - Transport; Shawbost School - pick up from scho...		

6.6 Eriskay Community Council (Isle of Eriskay)

- 6.6.1 Eriskay Community Council (EEC)’s approach to providing for local needs involves the hire of a 9-seat vehicle from Hebridean Coaches (based in South Uist). ECC pays for vehicle hire only and provides its own volunteer drivers and pays for fuel and insurance. The vehicle hire is circa £10,000 per year, and costs are met by a Comhairle grant and use of ECC’s social fund (£1,000 per year). As the service makes no charge to passengers, there is no permit or licence in use. The door-to-door service operates on Tuesday and Thursday for shopping runs, with a church run on Sunday. Additionally, transport can be provided to a recently established warm hub. There is no booking system as such, just a word of mouth network. ECC considers the bus to be very well used, providing a “lifeline” service. Drivers form a first line of response when

calling for passengers who live alone and who may be ill etc. Many passengers appreciate the bus for the social contact that it enables. ECC were not aware of the s19 or s22 permit system which would enable charges to be made without the adoption of a full PSV regime.

6.7 Ness Community Council / Hebridean Minibus (Ness & North Lewis)

6.7.1 Ness Community Council uses its community transport grant to commission a service from the Hebridean Minibus Service, a long-standing small commercial PSV operation which has two non-accessible 16 seat minibuses (one is a backup vehicle) and 1.5 fte drivers. A core part of its work is undertaken for Comhairle nan Eilean Siar under a subcontract to Lochs Motor Transport to provide the W1A Mon-Fri 0730-1900 feeder service from Skigersta to the main W1 between Ness and Stornoway (see previous chapter). Under the contract with NCC, between 1100-1200 (outside of the W1A route) the bus provides journeys for shopping (to two shops), GP surgery and Post Office, and charges a fare of £1.50. These services currently carry 15-20 passengers per week – figures much reduced since the pandemic. GP visits are especially lower than formerly due to the introduction of virtual appointments. Comhairle provides around £6,000 p.a. in support subsidy. The minibus also provides runs for a local social club each Saturday and for football teams. The operator does not feel there is any demand for an accessible vehicle as passengers with mobility constraints use alternative modes (taxi, friends & family cars, etc). The nursery and local services run by Hebridean Minibus supplement the Feeder Bus (Service W1A).

6.8 Uig Community Council (West Lewis)

6.8.1 In 2020 Uig Community Council commissioned a Community Bus service (used for local runs, shopping, surgery, bringing people to community centre) from a Laxay PSV operator, P. MacLennan. This offered runs on Mondays to Langabhat Surgery in Miavaig, and to the Uig Community Shop & Post Office on Fridays. Journeys were pre-booked the night before. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar provides £2,500 grant support.

6.8.2 Uig is 42 miles from Stornoway, which is the nearest supermarket and this has implications for planning. The service covered the winter months from October / November until March each year, and the days varied. The bus service is complicated – involves interchange – that works OK because the operators liaise with each other. But the timings are confusing and sometimes people miss the service at the start.

6.8.3 The Uig community is unique in that it stretches across 25 miles with several sub-settlements (e.g. Primary School / Community Shop). This makes it difficult for people within the community to interact without a car. Bus service

timing is also set by operators providing primary and secondary school runs. It was suggested that operators can claim locally for funding for a demand-responsive bus service for a couple of days a week. The Community Council pays for this.

- 6.8.4 WiFi coverage is poor. Fibre has been extended to Bernera (north of Uig) and they are hoping it may be extended further south. Otherwise they rely on EE (or pay for a satellite connection). There is local interest in Uig Community Council getting their own vehicle.

6.9 North Lochs Amenity Group (East Lewis)

- 6.9.1 North Lochs Amenity Group has had a minibus for around 15 years (replaced periodically). The non-accessible s19 vehicle (16 Seats) is offered for group use in the North Lochs area and is supported by a grant from Comhairle of between £3-5k pa. The usage was by a number of organisations (schools, adults, children, forces, churches, etc.) and pre-COVID was formerly well used but this has reduced since the pandemic. Groups provide their own drivers who are vetted before use. The vehicle is well-maintained but is not actively publicised and is currently used by 4 or 5 local groups. A replacement fund was ongoing and the vehicle was replaced every few years. The current vehicle is from around 2018 and it is proving difficult to build up replacement funds.
- 6.9.2 2020 note in CT strategy: *"Provides community transport for North Lochs area for Scouts, Explorer Scouts, Sgoil nan Loch, Stornoway Angling Association, Golf Club, Volunteer Hebrides, Stornoway Running and Athletics Club, Lewis and Harris Football Association Lochs FC, The Shed Project, Marathon Hebrides, Rugby Club, Silver Darlings, Martin's Memorial Church, North Lochs Historical Society, West Side Fitness and Running Club and BBC Alba."* (Contacted: Sarah McIver). <https://www.northlochs.co.uk/>

6.10 Third Sector Hebrides (Lewis)

- 6.10.1 Third Sector Hebrides is a voluntary sector infrastructure support agency based in Stornoway, with a Lewis-wide remit. It hosts a range of services including Volunteering Hebrides. Third Sector Hebrides had operated vehicles through a trading arm, Staran CIC, but has been inactive for a couple of years (Staran CIC was dissolved in 2021). In the past, they were the third biggest operator (in terms of level of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar grant support) after Tagasa Uibhist and VABV.
- 6.10.2 As of February 2023, the organisation has now secured funding for a minibus and is currently awaiting delivery. In the first instance, they are hoping to use it to enable people to attend Third Sector Hebrides events, but this may be widened out over time. The aim is for an island-wide service. They are hoping the vehicle will also enable them to address some of the wider issues people

face when it comes to accessing transport aside from purely availability. As well as the driver, it is intended that the service will have a passenger assistant available to assist passengers with physical support needs, offer moral support to those with travel anxiety etc. Due to previous experience of minibus operations, they have a good understanding where there are needs and how they may be addressed.

6.11 Back Community Minibus (North East Lewis)

- 6.11.1 This vehicle is operated by Back Football & Recreation Club. *“Thanks to a grant from the Crown Estates Revenue Fund, we now have a brand new 17 seat minibus available to Loch a' Tuath community. This is a great asset to our community and is available for use by all local clubs, voluntary groups and community organisations, not just BFRC. There are 17 seats including the driver's seat. The back two seats can also be removed for disabled access. Groups to have used the minibus so far (aside from BFRC) are both Sgoil a' Bhac and Tong School, Third Sector Hebrides, Loch a' Tuath News and The Shed Project. Groups are required to sign up as a corporate member of BFRC first for insurance purposes. There is no fee to become a member or to use the minibus - instead, we are asking groups to commit to assisting once a year with a community fundraiser event to raise money to cover the insurance, road tax, cleaning and servicing costs. If your group is unable to commit to assisting with a community fundraiser event, then a donation can be made instead to help cover the above costs. Whoever your group's assigned driver(s) is/are, they are required to complete a driver's declaration form before driving the minibus. Drivers must be aged 25-75. Volunteer drivers are not required to have a MIDAS certificate, however, everyone must complete a declaration form in advance of the booking and exclusions may apply in the case of accidents or endorsements.”*

<http://www.backfrc.org.uk/index.php/community-minibus>

6.12 Tolsta Community Development Ltd (North East Lewis)

- 6.12.1 A charity with a trading subsidiary (Tolsta Power Ltd) which owns and operates a community wind turbine, from which profits are distributed to the local community through various grant applications. The charity's objectives are *“to support the social, educational, cultural and environmental wellbeing of residents of Tolsta by the promotion of community development; provision of assistance to people who are disadvantaged by reasons of age, ill health, financial or other; to support the promotion of education, advancement of arts, culture and heritage and the support of recreational activities for the community...As well as providing grant funding, TCDL has purchased assets which are available for use by the community such as a 17 seater minibus...”*

<https://tcdl.co.uk/>

- 6.12.2 A 16 seat accessible minibus was purchased (in 2016?) as a community asset, initially with significant use being made by the local primary school and North Tolsta Youth Club. However, the school subsequently closed (circa 2020) and the minibus has since been underused. A few groups use it, providing their own drivers.
- 6.12.3 The bus was acquired to further the charity’s objective of providing assistance to the people of Tolsta, and this included a policy of not charging for use of the vehicle – hence no permit or PSV licence. TCDL has not been aware of the s19 permit system which would enable non-profit charges to be made. (However, there is a £2,800 “minibus hire” income stream in TCDL 2020 accounts. “Motor vehicle” costs in 2021 were £2,743 and £3,658 in 2020. These might include other TCDL vehicles as well as the minibus.)
- 6.12.4 TCDL had advertised in Feb 2020 for a P/T Minibus Driver/Maintenance Worker. “The applicant must be aged 25 or over for insurance purposes and have D1 entitlement on their driving licence as well as having MiDAS training for the minibus.” The D1 entitlement was not necessarily required and TCDL had been misinformed that the vehicle fell within the full PSV driving licence threshold (possibly as the vehicle has been described as a 17 seater when in fact it has only 16 passenger seats).
- 6.12.5 There is no current staff driver, and TCDL has around 4 volunteers who might be available. They are aware of the lack of MiDAS training availability on the isles. The vehicle is an asset that might be made available more widely but the vehicle must firstly meet the needs of the North Tolsta community, so it is not clear how it could be put to greater use at present.

Figure HH: Tolsta Community Development Minibus



6.13 Scalpay Minibus Committee (Isle of Scalpay)

- 6.13.1 Scalpay Minibus Committee used to run a scheduled bus service for Comhairle nan Eilean Siar under contract, using a Standard National PSV Operator

Licence. However, it gave this up some years ago because of a combination of the administrative load from the regulations and difficulties finding drivers. It surrendered its PSV 'O' licence in 2019. The service was taken over by Lochs Motors.

6.13.2 However, it retained the minibus – a wheelchair accessible Mercedes Sprinter with an EVM body – and now operates it under a s19 Permit. The vehicle is available for hire by the local community on a self-drive basis provided drivers first passed their test before 1997 and preferably with MiDAS.

6.13.3 It used to undertake regular church runs but the Committee had to cease operating that service as they were unable to get people to volunteer to drive. Demand for the minibus has fallen and this continues – linked to depopulation (younger people leaving the Island because they are priced out of the housing market) as well as tourist reduction associated with the chaos of the ferry services over the last few years. Recruiting volunteer drivers is impossible.

6.13.4 The minibus is maintained, serviced, insured, etc. on a continuing basis. The Minibus Committee is a member of the CTA. However, although there are some reserves in the accounts, it is very unlikely that the vehicle will be replaced as it comes to the end of its life. There is not the community energy to fund-raise for it. In any case, one can hire a minibus in Tarbet if necessary.

6.13.5 The Committee has not had any contact with other OH CT groups but would not have had any need for this in any case.

6.13.6 **Figure II: Scalpay Minibus (Streetview, July 2022)**



6.13.7 Check of the MoT records confirms that the vehicle is nearing the end of its life - experiencing corrosion issues. First registered January 2011. The records also suggest the following reduction in annual mileage:

- 2018-19 - 13,466

- 2019-20 - 10,797
- 2020-21 - 2,058 (Covid)
- 2021-22 - 3,035.

6.14 Comunn Eachdraidh Nis / Ness Historical Society

- 6.14.1 CEN records, preserves and promotes the history, language and culture of North Lewis for local and global communities and aims to promote social health and well-being through a range of activities for all ages. It operates a museum and local history gallery, as well as a café and meeting rooms. A number of groups meet at the centre including a luncheon club.
- 6.14.2 CEN is not a current CT operator but has recently been successful in obtaining significant funding from the UK Motability Community Transport Fund. This will cover purchase of an MPV (5 seats + wheelchair space) and a part time driver for 3 years. The need for this vehicle reflects a combination of difficulties that older people experience in making use of the existing North West Lewis bus service (which uses a high floor coach) as well as walking difficulties where people live down side lanes. The intention is to use the vehicle to provide a local service for elderly and disabled people. Recent surveys of their members confirmed that there are a number of individuals who are mostly housebound due to transport difficulties.

Figure JJ: Mercedes Vito WAV – proposed vehicle for CEN



6.15 Former CT Operators

- 6.15.1 Although not strictly relevant to the mapping of the current CT provision in the Outer Hebrides, we note a number of former operations that are no longer in service. Compared to our experience elsewhere in the UK, these are numerous. The significance of detailing former operators is threefold:

- a) It points to a need in the community that may now be going unmet – it is difficult to judge how many of the former journeys have been displaced to other modes, and certainly some members of the community may be struggling due to lack of an appropriate alternative;
- b) It indicates a number of organisations that have experience and potential capacity to operate community minibuses in the future; and
- c) It may raise the issue of whether some organisations took on the operation of a minibus (because funds were available) without considering the implications of being an operator or properly establishing local need – this comment is speculation, however. It is more clear-cut when an organisation closes due to financial or other challenges, but many of the Outer Hebridean organisations have continued with other non-transport functions.

6.15.2 The latter point c) may also relate to the fact that the relationship between Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and CT operators is somewhat distant, and there is little in the way of collaborative partnership working that might nurture and develop services. Information and advice on legal and operational matters is lacking, and in different circumstances some of the defunct operations might have continued. Support might have been provided by either the Comhairle or a forum of CT operators themselves. The Community Transport Association (which has a dedicated Scottish office) is also source of guidance and support.

6.15.3 From Comhairle nan Eilean Siar records, the following organisations have not claimed any funding for transport provision since March 2020, when lockdown measures restricted services:

- Urras Oighreachd Ghabhasainn / Galston Estate Trust (North West Lewis). <https://www.galsontrust.com/about-the-trust>. Comhairle nan Eilean Siar had funded the Trust's CT operation in the past (e.g. £10,000 in 2016).
- Shawbost Community Council (West Lewis) – SCC had a £9.5k Comhairle nan Eilean Siar grant allocated which they used to contract a service from a local PSV operator. However, the Council collapsed but failed to tell the operator, so the service continued until this came to light. The Comhairle had to find the money to pay the operator retrospectively which was difficult because the CT fund is not available to pay commercial operators directly. The service was used by the same 2/3 passengers.
- Carloway Community Council (West Lewis) Carloway Community Council – confirmed no current operations. Had been allocated £1.5k in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar budget used for a couple of door to door shopping runs. *"I can confirm that Carloway Community Council hasn't provided any local transport scheme at any point"* however, the 2020 CT strategy noted that Carloway Community Council had commissioned a Post Office run each Thursday (see below). This does not appear to run any longer.

<i>Carloway Community Council</i>
<i>Services Provided</i>
Provides community transport for Post Office runs once a week on a Thursday from Carloway and Tolsta Chaolais to Post Office in Tolsta Chaolais. Timetable below: 10.20am Dep TC for Carloway 10.40am Dep Carloway for TC Post Office 11.05am Dep TC Post Office for Carloway 11.30am Pick up passengers through TC Village for Post Office 12.00 Noon Dep Post Office and drop off passengers through TC Village
<i>Service Type</i>
Services procured from the local operator
<i>Type of Claim</i>
Claim by letter for Q1 to Q4 listing services provided.

- Leverburgh Village Hall (South West Harris) – pre-COVID this operator was in receipt of a small grant (around £2,500).
- Voluntary Action Training (based in Stornoway) – included in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar Business Directory as offering: “*Training programmes for the unemployed in the community; IT facilities; community transport.*” Now absorbed into Third Sector Hebrides and no longer active in CT.
<http://www.businesshebrides.co.uk/businesses/report/206>

6.15.4 The number of former CT operations is also indicated by Rural Community Transport funding from 2007-2009, which supported:

- Western Isles Disability Sport
- Voluntary Action Lewis (subsequently incorporated into Third Sector Hebrides) and
- Disability Lewis.

7.1 Introduction

- 7.1.1 The availability and quality of information about transport services varies across the UK. This chapter considers the information that is available to the passenger who may be seeking guidance on what services might be running and how they can make a specific journey. We acknowledge that within the various small communities across the islands, local knowledge of services is very often informal and conveyed by word-of-mouth. This is endemic to how local residents function and interact. This practice does not, however, extend to visitors and tourists.
- 7.1.2 The information sources considered here are those found online. It is likely that physical / hard copy transport information is circulated on the islands in the form of posters, leaflets and flyers. Some of the bus stops, for example, include a panel for a timetable but it is not known what proportion of these are kept up to date.

7.2 Information for Residents

Comhairle nan Eilean Siar

- 7.2.1 The Comhairle provides online timetables for those services it tenders, but does not provide a map or any information on services supported by the community councils. The timetables themselves are a mixture of clear and unclear. For instance the timetables for service W1 and W14 has separate sections for Monday – Friday and Saturday, whilst the timetable for W9 is potentially confusing with the mix of certain school day and school holiday journeys all on one timetable. <https://www.cne-siar.gov.uk/roads-travel-and-parking/public-transport/bus-services/bus-services-overview/>

STORNOWAY TO SOUTH LOCHS Operated by A Macdonald ☎ 01851 830327 Valid to 30 March 2023 **W9**
Connecting service W10 to/from Stornoway by Lochs Motor Transport

Days Operated	School day	Monday to Saturday	School day Friday	School day Friday	Monday to Saturday except Schoolday Friday	Schoolday Monday to Thursday	Monday to Saturday	Monday to Thursday on School Holidays & All Fridays / Saturdays	Monday to Saturday
Nicolson Bus Park			14:00			15:45			
Stornoway Bus Stn			14:10		14:10h	15:50		15:55h	18:00
Cameron Terrace			14:25		14:25h	16:05		16:15h	18:15
South Lochs Turn		08:45	14:40		14:40c	16:20		16:30c	18:25
Habost		08:53	14:48		14:48	16:28		16:38y	18:31
Kershader		08:56	14:51		14:51	16:31		16:41y	18:33
Garyvard		08:58	14:54		14:54	16:34		16:44y	18:35
Caversta Turn		08:59	14:55		14:55	16:35		16:45y	18:37r
Eishal Junction		09:00	14:56c	14:56c	14:56c	16:36c	16:36c	16:46yc	16:46c
Cromore	08:30			15:04		15:04y		16:45y	
Marvig	08:45			15:10		15:10y		16:51y	
Calbost	08:50			15:17		15:17y		16:58y	
Gravir	09:00	09:06	15:10		15:10	16:40y		16:50y	r
Lemreway			15:15y		15:15y	16:55y		17:00y	r
Orinsay			15:20y		15:20y	y		y	r

SOUTH LOCHS TO STORNOWAY

Days Operated	Monday to Friday	Monday to Saturday	Monday to Saturday	Monday to Saturday	Monday to Saturday	School day	Monday to Saturday	Monday to Saturday
Orinsay	06:40y		07:25y		09:30y			
Lemreway	06:45y		07:30y		09:35y			
Gravir	06:55		07:35b		09:40	15:30		17:05
Calbost		07:15y		09:20y				
Marvig		07:20y		09:25y				
Cromore		07:30y		09:35y				
Eishal Junction	06:57	07:44c	07:44	09:49c	09:49c	15:34		17:07
Caversta Turn	06:59		07:50	09:55	09:55	15:36		17:09
Garyvard	07:01		07:51	09:56	09:56	15:37		17:10
Kershader	07:03		07:54	09:59	09:59	15:40		17:13
Habost	07:05		07:57	10:02	10:02	15:43		17:16
S Lochs Turn	07:10		08:05d	10:10c	10:10c	15:51	16:55	17:20
Cameron Terrace	07:20		08:25				17:10	17:30
Stornoway Bus Stn	07:40		08:38q			10:45	17:25	17:40

Codes:

- d - change bus school hol & Saturday
- b - change bus on schoolday
- q - via Nicolson schooldays only
- c - connect/transfer
- r - on request
- y - AM journey book by 20:00 previous day & PM journeys 2hrs notice
- h - travel on W10 Tarbert Bus

Some buses only run Schoolday or School Holiday. Holiday dates are:
 14 Oct to 26 Oct 2022
 25 Nov and 28 Nov 2022
 23 Dec 2022 to 04 Jan 2023
 15 Feb to 20 Feb 2023

No Serv 26/27 Dec 2022 or 02/03 Jan 2023

Voluntary Action Barra & Vatersay

7.2.2 Under the 'What We Do' section there is a brief mention of Community Transport. This is expanded in the 'Our Services' section to explain that they provide:

An accessible, door to door transport scheme to meet the needs of community Care organisations, youth clubs youth cafes and evening transport.

7.2.3 This is followed by a more detailed list of the types of journeys they provide. There is however no information regarding how you go about booking the transport or who you can talk to for further information. The 'Contact Us' section is blank and gives no email or phone number.

https://vabv.org.uk/#xl_aboutme



VOLUNTARY ACTION BARRA & VATERSAY

A Member of the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations



ABOUT US

Voluntary Action Barra & Vatersay has a long history beginning in the late 1960's becoming a charity (SC015602) in 1984 and more recently a company limited by guarantee (SC162441) in 1996.

We are committed to developing and delivering activities that contribute to the long term social, economic and environmental vitality of our islands.

We have a board of 9 trustees drawn from our membership which is made up of local individuals from community groups, clubs & public bodies. We currently have 12 members of staff involved in the delivery of our work.

We recognise that we have the potential to tap into a wide range of public and private funding sources including development grants, charity trust donations, lottery funds and private sponsorship.

Our organised costs are kept as low as possible and no profits or dividends are, or can be distributed. This ensures that all funds raised go directly towards developing our future activities.

Barra & Vatersay are the most southerly of the Western Isles. Our islands have a population of approximately 1300 residents. Our economy is largely based on the merchant navy, oil rigs and supply boats, fishing (catching and processing) and crofting.

Tagsa Uibhist Community Services

- 7.2.4 There is a dedicated Community Transport section under 'How we Help' on their website. As well as explaining the geographical reach of the service and the types of journeys provided (e.g. medical appointments, day care, shopping), the website also states that:

This service is available for individuals with support needs and/or mobility difficulties, and who may not have access to public transport services and who do not have a vehicle or a family member who can provide transport for them.

- 7.2.5 The full eligibility criteria are listed further down the website (although it might be useful to state that in the blurb above). Interestingly it also states that:

Tagsa Uibhist's transport service is free of charge unless it is used to transport service users to medical appointments for which they can claim travel costs. In these cases, Tagsa will invoice the user for the same amount that they have claimed.

- 7.2.6 There are no specific contact details given in regards to transport or guidance around how to book; however there is a brief paragraph about client data which is collected and it does state that:

In order to provide a cost effective and efficient service so that we can reach as many service users as possible, Tagsa's Transport Manager is responsible for creating a schedule for the drivers. In creating this schedule, the Transport Manager may need to provide specific times to service users, although if appointment times cannot be moved, then we will aim to be flexible in order to meet the needs of all service users.

7.2.7 General contact information is provided in the page footer as well as there being a specific 'Contact Us' section of the website.

<https://www.tagsa.co.uk/how-we-help/community-transport/>



COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

For many years, Tagsa Uibhist has been providing a highly valued, reliable and safe Community Transport service.

The service operates throughout the Southern Isles - North Uist, Benbecula, South Uist as well as in Eriskay, Grimsay and Berneray to enable clients to attend medical appointments, day care, adult learning, and respite, as well as shopping and to access other appointments that they need to attend. We provide a professional door to door transport service, which is available to those who meet our eligibility criteria.

This service is available for individuals with support needs and/or mobility difficulties, and who have may not have access to public transport services and who do not have a vehicle or a family member who can provide transport for them.

Horshader Community Development Trust

7.2.8 There is a 'Minibus' section under the 'Projects & Services' menu on their website. This covers both the dial-a-ride service and minibus hire. For the former it states that:

The Rural transport service is a door to door service which is not provided through scheduled bus services, on a non-profit basis, enabling members to have access to services and amenities which they would otherwise not be able to access... The service is available to any member of the Rural Support and Connect project and can be used as a dial a bus.

7.2.9 There are then two options for finding out more about being a Rural Support and Connect member. One provides a PDF leaflet which gives more detailed information regarding contact, times of operation and types of trips provided. The second link opens a membership application form PDF.

<https://www.horshader.com/minibus-services>



Minibus Services

The Rural transport service is a door to door service which is not provided through scheduled bus services, on a non-profit basis, enabling members to have access to services and amenities which they would otherwise not be able to access. The minibus is fully wheelchair accessible, equipped with an on-board mounted electric / hydraulic wheelchair lift.

The service is available to any member of the Rural Support and Connect project and can be used as a dial a bus. The minibus may occasionally be available for out of hours runs. Out of hours runs are any time outwith the normal office hours, such as evenings or weekends.

[To find out more about the project, becoming a member and availability of the service click here](#)

[To become a member of the Support and Connect Project click here](#)



The Horshader Minibus parked outside our offices

Other Organisations

- 7.2.10 A number of the Community Councils have a Facebook page which provides information and a degree of interactivity.

7.3 Information for Visitors

Visit Scotland and Visit Outer Hebrides

- 7.3.1 Visit Scotland has very limited information. On the 'travel > getting around Scotland' page there is simply a link to Traveline Scotland. On the 'Destinations > Lewis and Harris' page under 'Getting Around' there is a link to the Visit Outer Hebrides site. <https://www.visitscotland.com/places-to-go/islands/lewis-harris>

TRAVEL TO AND AROUND LEWIS AND HARRIS

Travel tip: Communities in Lewis and Harris follow a strong religious observance on Sundays, meaning that most shops and businesses are closed on that day.

Getting to

Getting around

Bus and coach

The local council provides a good bus service between Mondays and Saturday, connecting Stornoway with many of the island's other settlements.

[Find out more about bus travel in the Outer Hebrides](#) 

- 7.3.2 Visit Outer Hebrides provides a 'getting about > bus' page on its website. This provides a general overview of bus services but no detailed information regarding what services run to where. There is however a link to the bus timetable section of the Comhairle's website.

<https://www.visitouterhebrides.co.uk/planning-your-trip/getting-about/buses>



You are here: Home > Planning Your Trip > Getting About > Buses

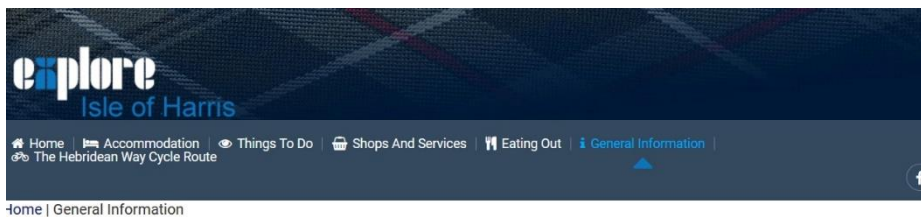
Buses

Visitors wishing to explore the Outer Hebrides by public transport can take advantage of a range of bus routes in the Western Isles.

Explore Harris

- 7.3.3 In the 'General information > get to the Isle of Harris' section there is a brief paragraph on bus services. The commentary on fares being inexpensive is a good marketing point, however the main gist of the paragraph is to send you

to the Comhairle's bus information website. <https://explore-harris.com/general-information/>



General Information



Information about how do you get to the Isle of Harris

The Outer Hebrides are linked to the mainland by ferries sailing the routes from Ullapool to Stornoway, Uig to Tarbert, Uig to Lochmaddy and Oban to Castlebay and Lochboisdale.

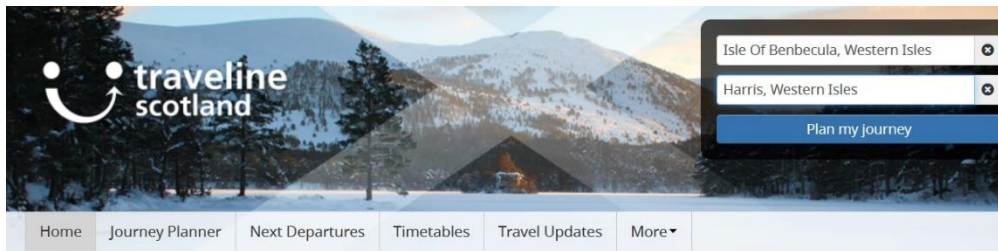
Travel to the Western Isles is either by ferry or by air. [READ MORE](#)

- 7.3.4 The Explore Harris website offers a downloadable guide, which might be expected to contain transport information. However, the current link is simply a one page PDF banner with no actual content (presumably an error). <http://explore-harris.com/general-information/explore-outer-hebrides-guide/>

7.4 Information for Either Resident or Visitor

Traveline Scotland

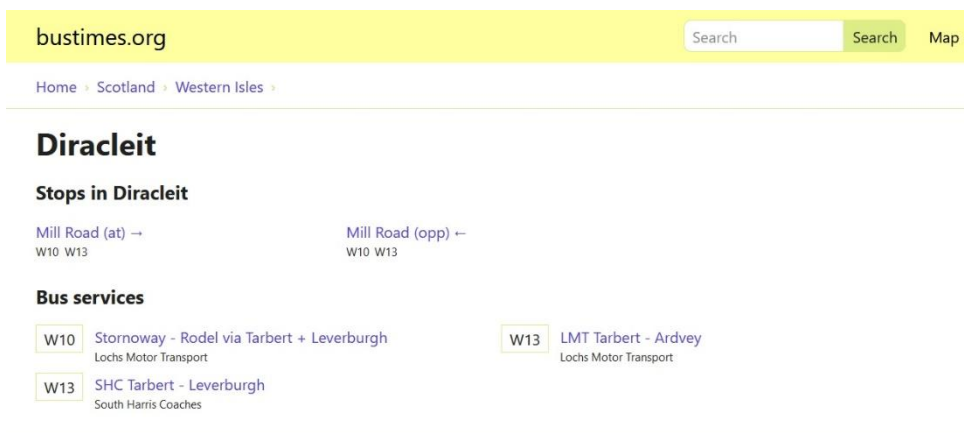
- 7.4.1 Traveline Scotland is the national site for planning journeys by public transport. Using the Journey Planner tool the user can tell it they wish to travel from e.g. Stornoway to Swainbost after 10:00 and it will give them the option of the 11:50 and 14:45 W1 departures from Stornoway.
- 7.4.2 The timetable tool allows the user to search by route number or place. So putting Stornoway Bus Station will list all the routes that serve the bus station. Clicking on W1 will bring up a timetable of remaining departures for the current day alongside a line of route overlaid on Google Maps. A PDF icon allows the download of the full timetable, although this is Traveline's standard format and not as clear as the Comhairle's timetable. <https://www.travelinescotland.com/>



Bustimes.org

7.4.3 This is a privately funded website which translates Open Bus Data feeds into meaningful information. It is not the quickest site to navigate as you have to choose 'Scotland > Western Isles' and then a specific location in the Western Isles before you are given an option of which bus service to view (these are listed at the bottom below a list of bus stops). There is a search function on the home page if you know the route, however a search for W1 will bring up 14 options from throughout Great Britain.

7.4.4 The timetables are day specific so if you are looking on a Tuesday but will be travelling on a Friday, you have to know that you need to change the date at the top in order to get an accurate timetable. The timetable itself is well presented whilst the map is similar in appearance to that on Traveline, with the lines between bus stops not always following the road. Like Traveline both the timetable and map are only as clear as the information provided, so where a service has route variations, the map shows all possible variations at once.
<https://bustimes.org/areas/142>



[Contact](#) · [Data sources](#) · [Cookies](#)

7.5 Conclusion

- 7.5.1 Whilst it is positive that Comhairle nan Eilean Siar provides online bus timetables in an easy to find and navigate website, the format of the timetables is not always clear. It is unsurprising that the main visitor websites link to the aforementioned the Comhairle website as the information is already there; however their main drawback is the lack of a bus network map that also highlights popular tourist destinations. This is compounded by the lack of a tourist friendly 'day rover' bus ticket.
- 7.5.2 There is no set standard for community transport information and it is disappointing that the Comhairle does not list the services provided within the transport section of its website. Whilst some Community Councils do make it clear what transport service they provide / support, who can use it and how to book a journey, others require a Facebook account to see information whilst the remainder provide either incomplete or no information at all. Given that Comhairle nan Eilean Siar ultimately fund most of these services it should either provide the information itself and / or require a set standard of information provision as part of the grant agreement.