

Outer Hebrides Community Transport Study



**A Report to Community-Led Local Development (OH) Local Action Group
10310C**

March 2023

Quality Assurance

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The TAS Partnership Limited
Passenger Transport Specialists

10310C CLLD (OH) LAG Community Transport Study

Section 1: Introduction, Objectives and Approach

Introduction, Objectives and Approach

Introduction

This Report has been commissioned by CLLD (OH) LAG - the Outer Hebrides Local Action Group which manages the Community-Led Local Development Programme for the islands. [[CLLD Facebook Page](#)] The CLLD Programme is the Scottish Government funded successor to the EU's Leader Programme concerned with rural development. The LAG is a cross-agency group representing public, private and third sector organisations.

In preparation for presenting a proposed 2022-23 Outer Hebrides CLLD Programme to Scottish Government, soundings were taken to identify key topics of interest. Passenger transport appeared high on the list of concerns and this study is the result.

The TAS Partnership Ltd is a small, employee-owned consultancy which specialises in public and community transport and which works across the UK. The staff who worked on this report have direct experience of operating, commissioning or governing community transport initiatives. TAS has previously worked for the Comhairle on the bus network on Lewis and Harris.

Objectives

The objectives of the study were as follows:

- A. To undertake a wide-ranging consultation programme encompassing the eleven Comhairle Wards to ascertain:
 - i. 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
 - ii. 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.

Introduction, Objectives and Approach (2)

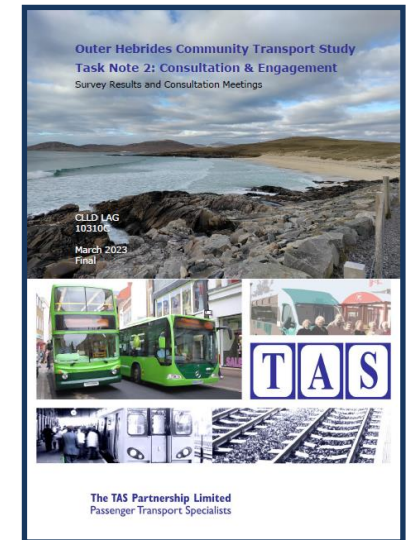
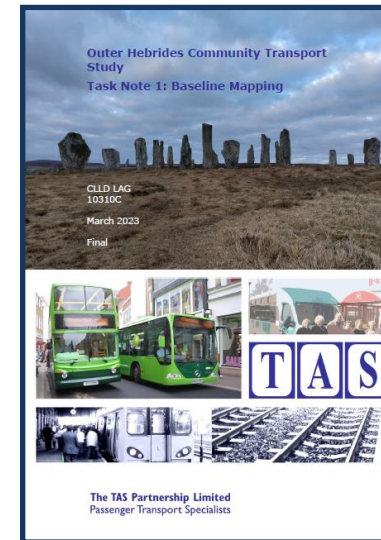
What we did

We have produced two detailed research documents covering:

- The supply of community transport (Task Note 1)
- Demand for community transport (Task Note 2)

This involved:

- Scanning the web and talking to local organisations to identify community or non-profit transport initiatives
- Interviewing the operations identified
- Mapping the provision of public bus services as well as taxi and private hire services
- Creating a study website to publicise the study and to provide background information [[Get About The Hebrides Website](#)]
- Creating a public survey (English / Gaelic) to identify issues people have with current transport arrangements and assess interest in community-led initiatives
- A week's programme of public consultation meetings starting in Barra and working northwards to Ness
- Interviewing key public agencies such as the Comhairle, HITRANS and Transport Scotland



Introduction, Objectives and Approach (3)

What do we mean by 'Community Transport'?

Although the term 'community transport' is in common use, there are wide variations in how it is interpreted. For this study we have taken a broad view – any land-based transport initiative or service which involves local communities in some way in commissioning, managing or resourcing. Despite the known difficulties with the ferry system serving the Outer Hebrides, this was deemed out of scope given the scale of the commission, although there are examples of community-managed ferry services in Scotland. The same applied to air services. The study was not focused on the public bus service, which is 100% commissioned by the Comhairle, nor on commercial coach, taxi and private hire services. However, in order to identify potential gaps in provision, we did investigate these services for scope, scale, accessibility and affordability.

The main services we included in discussions were:

- Bus services commissioned by Community Councils
- Minibus services operated by community bodies
- Car / MPV services operated by community bodies
- Volunteer lift-giving
- Car sharing
- Car clubs
- E-bike sharing

The first four of these were the main focus for the work.

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Section 2: What we found - Baseline

What we found – Baseline Coverage

Coverage

Our Task Note 1 covered the following issues:

- Policy & Strategy position –how community transport aligns with a range of strategic objectives of a number of agencies;
- Demographic data – the make-up of the Outer Hebrides population and implications this has for transport provision; d
- Public bus network – Route and operator details with some analysis of journey times to GP surgeries;
- 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;
- Community transport operations – Comhairle nan Eilean Siar funding of services and description of each CT operator; and
- Public & Community Transport information – a review of the public-facing web presentation of service availability as perceived by the travelling public.

What we found – Policy & Strategy

Community transport has the potential to create value in four key areas:

- Combatting rural isolation;
- Creating more accessible transport options for disabled people;
- Mitigating social deprivation;
- Enhancing community cohesion.

The Comhairle has an explicit legal duty to consider the passenger transport needs of older and disabled people – community transport for this group is included under the Comhairle’s public transport duties. This is also subject to the Comhairle’s Public Sector Equality Duty to advance equality of opportunity.

The OH Local Transport Strategy 2020-30 contains an aspiration to increase the number of Rural Community Transport Partnerships and Delivery Actions (4) for a ‘Comprehensive review of Community Transport’ and (8) to seek additional / innovative funding solutions towards a mixed model of public and community transport. These have not happened, in part due to Covid-19.

The HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy emphasises the importance of community transport to fill service and accessibility gaps in rural areas and concludes that more needs to be done to develop beyond the current piecemeal offer.

The importance of community transport development is recognized in many other plans and strategies such as the Outer Hebrides Community Planning Partnership Local Outcome Improvement Plan 2017-2027, and several local Community Development Plans.

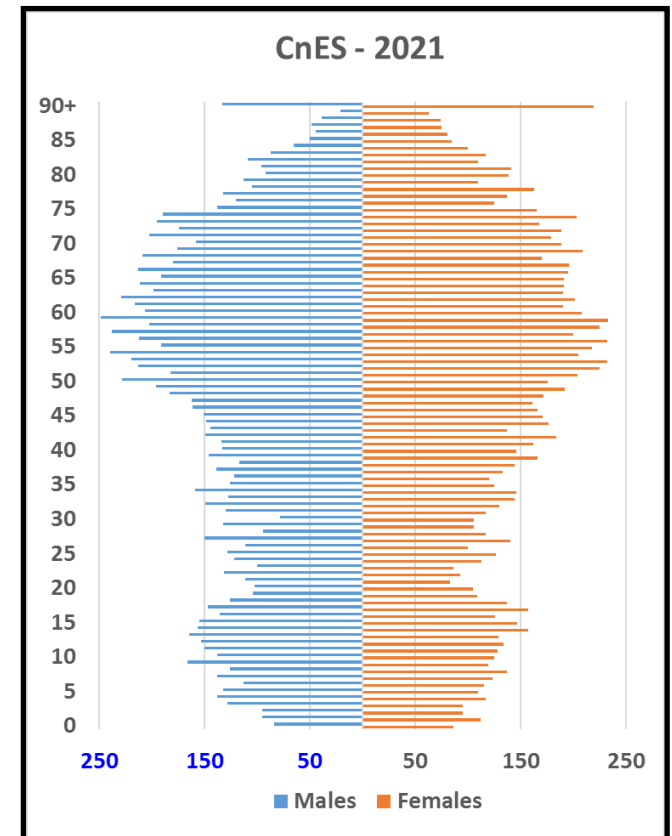
Generally the coverage lacks detail in respect of actual or potential funding and responsibilities for action.

What we found – Demography

Two key issues for passenger transport arise from demographic trends in the Outer Hebrides:

- A continuing fall in the overall population with the 2020 estimate showing 26,500 residents. Over the last ten years (between 2010 and 2020) there has been a decrease of 1,100 persons (-4.0%). The reduction in population makes it increasingly difficult to operate financially sustainable local bus services away from Stornoway
- The growing proportion of the population that is aged over 60. 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 the Outer Hebrides are 25.1% and 11.2% respectively. By 2028, 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. – meaning a greater requirement for accessible door to door services.

Taken together these demographic trends underline the importance of a strategy to mitigate their effects. This will require community-led provision of services that are local, flexible and very accessible – both physically but also in the way they are designed and delivered.



This graph shows just how 'top heavy' the Outer Hebrides population is.

What we found – Public Bus Network

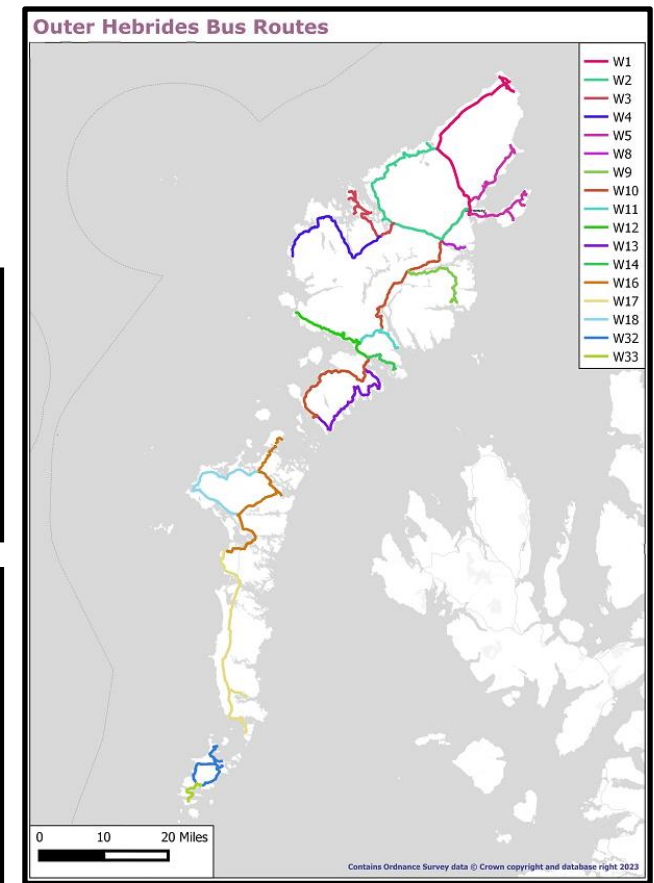
There are no commercially-provided bus services in the Outer Hebrides – all are commissioned or delivered directly by the Comhairle. There are no services on Sundays, a significantly lower frequency on Saturdays and very limited evening coverage. However, given the population size and dispersion, the network is surprisingly good and comparison with the network 50 years ago shows how stable it is.

The bus fleet consists of:

- Low-floor buses, primarily in or around Stornoway
- Minibuses, primarily rural feeders
- High-floor coaches (with lift access for wheelchair users)



The use of coaches reflects peak capacity requirements for school transport, but raises a significant question as to suitability for the ageing population and what mitigation (e.g. door to door dial-a-ride) is or should be provided. This is exacerbated by the poor bus infrastructure (shelters, raised kerbs, etc.) outside Stornoway



A majority of GP surgeries occupy sites close to or directly on bus routes, but because of the relative infrequency of bus services in more rural locations, the likelihood of an outward and a return journey fitting neatly around a GP appointment is very small. Hence access to a GP becomes a problematic journey for some people who do not have access to a car, confirming an issue raised in consultation. Alleviating this problem is a key role for community transport.

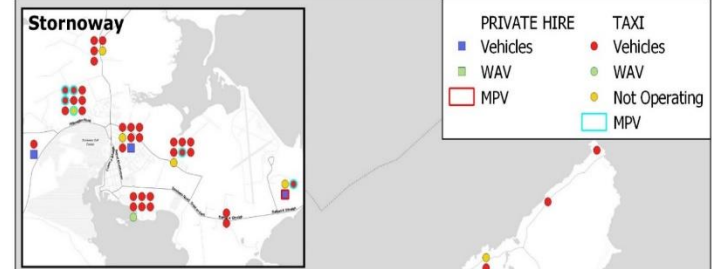
What we found – Taxi & Private Hire Operations

Compared to other Scottish authorities, particularly rural ones, the Outer Hebrides is reasonably well provided with taxi and private hire vehicles (PHVs), although numbers are still below the pre-Covid position. However, there are three significant problems:

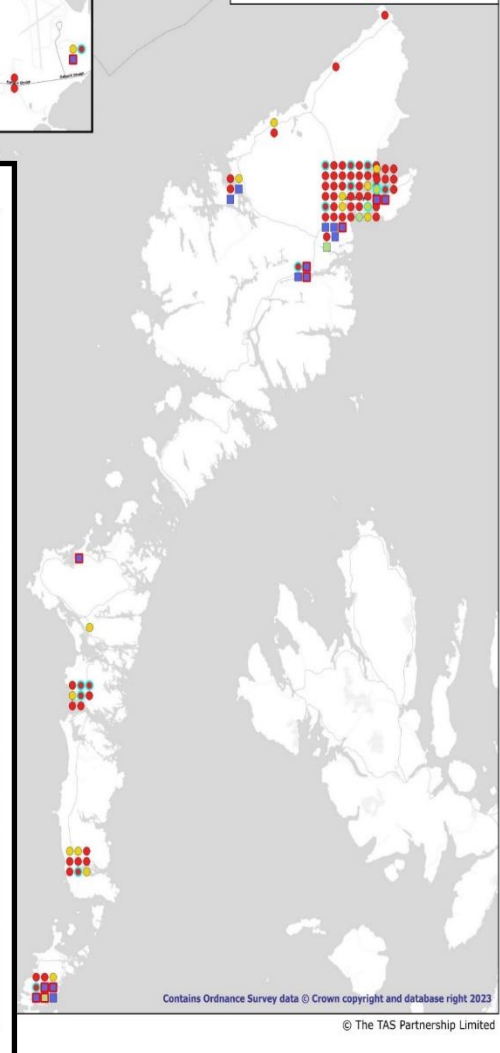
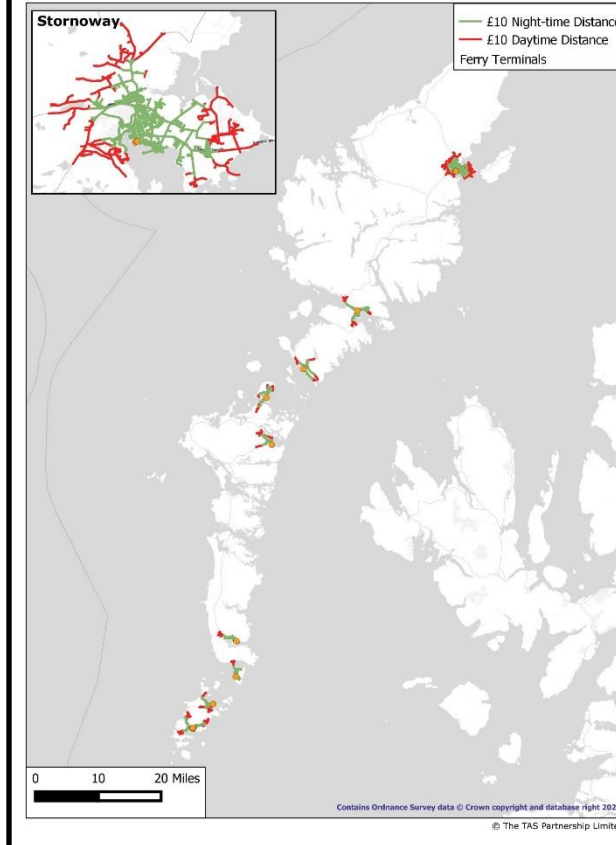
- Coverage – there are gaps in provision – particularly in Harris, North Uist and Uig.
- Wheelchair access – there are only 3 Wheelchair Accessible Vehicles (WAVs) in operation. This is the fifth lowest per capita and the third lowest fleet proportion in Scotland. In our view the Comhairle is open to challenge on whether it is meeting its Public Sector Equality Duty.
- Cost – although the taxi tariff is reasonable (157th out of 345 GB authorities for the cost of a 2 mile journey), the distances involved in many key journeys result in significant expense. The map on the right shows how far a £10 journey takes you from a ferry terminal. This particularly impacts on people living in the west coast of Lewis.

Taxis/PHVs are not considered by the Comhairle as part of the public transport mix and no innovative models have been developed (taxibus, shared taxi zones/ranks/tariffs) that might mitigate the above.

Outer Hebrides Taxi & Private Hire Licence Holders



Outer Hebrides Taxi Travel from Ferry Terminals



What we found – Community Transport (CT) Operations

In recent years the Comhairle has been reducing its funding for community-led transport (£153k [£5.67 per capita] in 2022/23 – down from £224k in 2015/16). Nevertheless, in proportion to the Outer Hebrides population size this is not an unreasonable level of funding e.g. 2021/22 Aberdeenshire CT budget was £394k [£1.48 p.c.; Highland was £359k [£1.51 p.c.]. The funding goes to a mix of operators running their own minibuses and Community Councils commissioning local bus services from commercial operators. The basis for funding is entirely historical – there are no obvious eligibility criteria and no pathway for newly developing initiatives to apply. There are no clear objectives for the funding – determining these falls in part to individual Community Councils but without a framework for needs assessment or priorities. The funding is managed by the Comhairle’s public transport team but with very limited staff time allocated.

Following the demise of STARAN, Third Sector Hebrides’ transport company, two main CT operators remain – Voluntary Action Barra & Vatersay, and Tagsa Uibhist. Beyond them are a number of small community minibus operations not all in receipt of Comhairle funding. There is some voluntary car scheme activity but this is not considered part of CT. In summary, there is no coherent CT sector, little mutual support and no effective means of engaging with the Comhairle on issues. STARAN is just one of a number of service failures in recent years.

Consultation identified a general lack of financially sustainable business models with some CTs not charging for their services. A number of misunderstandings of operational legislation were revealed and there is currently no capacity for new drivers to be trained to the national MiDAS standard. It is clear that there are wide variations in cost-effectiveness.

Nevertheless, the operations that exist are filling gaps in the rural bus network, enabling some disabled people to travel and generally assisting community cohesion by enabling local groups to meet.

The Comhairle committed in 2020 to a review of CT funding and development of a new policy and formal Service Level Agreements.



What we found – Travel Information

The core bus network is primarily publicised through the timetables on the Comhairle’s website. There is a useful overview and the individual timetables are reasonably clear, but:

- The need to cover feeders, schoolday/non-schoolday services and route variations in a single timetable can mean that they are confusing and difficult to interpret;
- There is no information about vehicle accessibility;
- There is no network map nor individual route maps showing bus stop locations;
- Some journeys require an advance telephone request to the operator, requiring the small print to be read;
- There is no mention of the real-time information project (started in Stornoway in 2022);
- There is no coverage of the Community Council commissioned bus services even though these are open to the public and funded by the Comhairle.

In summary, whilst this meets the basic needs of residents, supported by local word-of-mouth knowledge, it is unattractive to the visitors who are an important part of the islands’ economy and unlikely to facilitate their leaving their cars on the mainland. There is no map linking bus routes and times to popular tourist destinations. This is compounded by the lack of a tourist friendly ‘day rover’ bus ticket.

Public information about community-led transport is mostly notable by its absence. Marketing is poor and website information is inconsistent for the larger groups and non-existent for the smaller ones, including some Community Councils. Facebook is the most common platform. Whether services for disabled people are open to visitors with disabilities is unclear.

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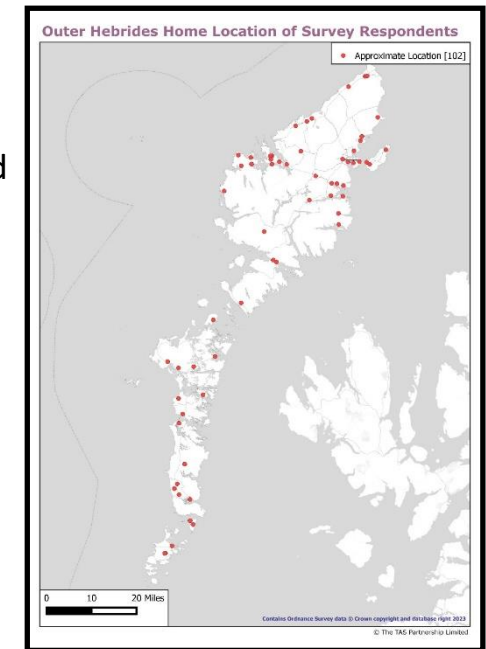
Section 3: What we found – Consultation

What we found – Consultation Coverage

Coverage

Our Task Note 2 covered the following issues:

- A. The online Survey – aimed at individual residents rather than organisations. This hosted on the Getabout-Hebrides website and was completed by 102 respondents spread across the area. It contained a series of structured questions around their habits, preferences and perceptions of travel in the Outer Hebrides.
- B. Stakeholder Meetings – this covered video calls, telephone calls and some face-to-face interviews with:
 - a. Public authorities – Comhairle (Public Transport / Taxi Licensing / Education transport / Social Work); HITRANS; Transport Scotland
 - b. Community-led transport operators
 - c. Third Sector organisations (Cothrom; Volunteer Centre Western isles; Uist CVO)
- C. Community engagement meetings between 27 February and 3 March (in order):
 - a. Voluntary Action Barra & Vatersay (Barra)
 - b. Bùth Bharraigh (Barra)
 - c. Eriskay Community Hall (Eriskay)
 - d. An Caladh, Balivanich (Benbecula)
 - e. Tagsa Uibhist (Benbecula)
 - f. Claddach –Kirkibost (North Uist)
 - g. Seallam! (Harris)
 - h. Uig Community Centre (Lewis)
 - i. Comunn Eachdraidh Nis, Ness (Lewis)
 - j. Galson Estate Trust / Urras Oighreachd Ghabhsainn (Lewis)
 - k. Clan MacQuarrie Community Centre, Borve (Lewis)
 - l. Breascleate Hall (part of Breascleate School) (Lewis)
 - m. Stornoway, Comhairle Council Offices (Lewis)



What we found – Online Survey

In summary:

- Most (60%+) respondents were of working age - very few young people responded;
- Only 18% of respondents were not car users and 12% had some mobility difficulty;
- Household car or van use was predominant (74% daily / weekly); public buses had limited use on a weekly basis (24%+); CT services a modest take up (around 12% weekly / monthly); taxis most likely once a month (14%); receiving a lift from someone on a weekly or monthly basis accounted for 38% of responses;
- The most difficult activities to undertake were:
 - ferry or air connections (58%)
 - recreation or leisure (56%)
 - visiting friends and relatives (52%)
 - health (50%)
 - shopping, banking or post office (47%), and
 - work or education (40%).
- In respect of possible CT initiatives:

	Useful	Likely to attract enough local support
• Voluntary car scheme (formalised lift-giving)	58%	35%
• Community-run local minibus	74%	51%
• Car club (community-run shared car hire)	46%	26%
- Other issues raised:
 - Footpaths, cycleways, wider roads;
 - Need for more/better information about bus services, CT services and taxis/private hire;
 - Better accessibility; Better links to ferries and flights;
 - Community bus services / car-sharing & lift-giving.

What we found – Stakeholder Meetings

Much of the detail from these is included in TN1 and the previous chapter. Views not mentioned elsewhere included:

- Reality of shrinking public-sector budgets – squeeze on Comhairle funding likely to continue
- The need to link community-led transport to the net-zero agenda
- Potential for pilot studies for new models to check feasibility
- Need for evening transport linked to the night-time economy, especially for young people without cars
- There is a low-level Facebook lift-giving group [in contrast to other such groups, this focuses on off-island journeys only]
- Perceived greater difficulty recruiting volunteers – after Covid, many people are ‘volunteered out’
- By contrast, a view from two main intermediate organisations that there is interest in volunteering within a formal lift-giving framework
- Possible use of HITRANS’ GO-HI Smartphone App to CT operators [[Go-Hi Launch Information](#)]
- Difficulty of operating EVs (Electric Vehicles) without a wider availability of charging infrastructure
- The need for decentralised solutions given the dispersed population – single depot model won’t work outside Stornoway
- Lack of specialist transport software (planning, scheduling, record-keeping) in community-led minibus operations hinders reporting
- There is no taxicard provision (system for reduced taxi fares for disabled people who cannot use buses) unlike some other Scottish authorities e.g. Falkirk [[Falkirk Taxicard Information](#)]
- CT schemes avoid taking on work that competes with commercial operators, especially Comhairle contracts; this is understandable but misses opportunities e.g. evening campsite service and the opportunity for more sustainable integrated package funding from the Comhairle
- Comhairle thinks CT should fill in bus network gaps; however, the larger schemes think their focus should be on mobility for vulnerable and disadvantaged passengers.
- CT schemes understand the significant social value of their services (e.g. taking people to ‘warm hubs’) but this is difficult to get across to authorities
- Comhairle manages its transport arrangements in ‘silos’ (public transport / ASN education transport / ASC transport) which prevents an holistic integrated approach – generally found difficult to engage effectively with NHS on transport issues
- Comhairle does not allow community use of its in-house education minibus fleet citing ‘insurance’ and legal ‘barriers’ – unclear these are real
- Comhairle got rid of its Adult Social Care in-house minibus provision which has resulted in service gaps – not fully or affordably replaced

What we found – Community Consultation

The consultation meetings were not scripted and covered any issues that attendees wanted to discuss, provided that some consideration was given to the need for and workability of possible models of community-led transport. The current funding squeeze was highlighted in order to ensure realistic expectations. Lots of discussion about improving bus frequency (rather than extending route coverage); some timetables are no too 'thin' to be relied on/useful; difficulty of non-car users attending evening meetings; need for segregated road provision for cyclists (especially visitors with loaded panniers); acknowledgement that the Comhairle does its best with limited resources (e.g., integrated bus and school transport); extremely high cost of taxi journeys (e.g. to catch ferries).

Selected other issues raised include:

- Lack of an Outer Hebrides Bus Users' Group to represent passengers and seek service improvements;
- Surprising lack of any active Access Group lobbying for improved mobility for disabled people;
- The fact that people don't complain reflects their feeling that this won't do any good rather than satisfaction with existing services;
- Some vehicles in use (buses and community transport) are not properly accessible and therefore not fit for purpose
- CalMac avoids responsibility for commissioning bus/taxi links when their ferries are rerouted or retimed – as if they only serve car users;
- How to resolve the overlap between public transport and community transport e.g. both operate some services on a demand responsive basis, sometimes in same location;
- Need for information about funding models for community-led transport e.g. for Community Councils / Community Land Trusts to consider;
- Older people are less likely to be equipped to make use of smartphone Apps;
- Need a list of wheelchair accessible vehicle operators to allow effective signposting when an operator is unavailable.

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Section 4: Recommendations

Recommendations - Introduction

Introduction

We have grouped the recommendations according to four target groups that might take or share the lead responsibility:

- the Comhairle
- Community transport operators
- the CLLD Local Action Group
- HITRANS

although these are not intended to be exclusive.

We recognise that the ability to deliver the recommendations is dependent upon resources and acknowledge that both staff time and finance is currently under pressure. Nevertheless, some of the recommendations, particularly for the Comhairle, are priority issues. Furthermore, our study identified some issues with poor understanding of and compliance with legislation around community transport, so the recommendations around training sessions are also a priority.

There are funding sources at Scottish and UK level that have the potential to contribute where finance is required. We have highlighted these in the main body of the report.

Recommendations – Comhairle (1)

The Comhairle should:

1. Develop a community transport policy which covers:

- a) Where community transport fits within the overall passenger transport mix;
- b) A system for assessing how particular community transport services contribute towards the Comhairle's wider cross-departmental objectives, including meeting its duties towards elderly and disabled members of the public under s63 Transport Act 1985 and its Public Sector Equality Duties under the Equality Act 2010.

In developing this policy the Comhairle should consult with existing community transport operators and a broad range of public and third sector stakeholders. It is suggested that the policy should consider community transport from five perspectives:

- a. The provision of accessible transport for people unable to make effective use of the core bus service;
 - b. Combatting the impact of geographical isolation;
 - c. Services that mitigate poverty and social disadvantage;
 - d. Services that enhance community cohesion by facilitating the activities of community organisations;
 - e. Contribution towards the country's net-zero target.
2. Maintain a community transport budget managed by the public transport team. Access to this budget should reflect the priorities identified in the new community transport policy and should require formal application on a periodic basis, preferably in line with public bus service contract lengths to allow recipients time to develop their services (i.e. not annual refunding). Those organisations which receive grant support should be required to sign a formal Service Level Agreement which covers:
- The services they will deliver;
 - The safety and quality standards that they will operate to;
 - The periodic reports they will provide to the Comhairle;
 - The approach to dealing with service changes, disputes and other issues.

Recommendations – Comhairle (2)

The Comhairle should:

3. Ensure that there is potential for new service development within the budget, recognising the geographical and accessibility inequities within the current provision of community transport (i.e. it cannot simply maintain the current funding pattern and prevent new applications for funding from being considered against the published criteria).
4. Develop, in conjunction with community transport groups, a periodic reporting format which includes coverage of:
 - a. The passenger trips made in each period;
 - by service type (e.g. dial-a-ride / bus / group);
 - for different passenger groups (e.g. age group / disability / wheelchair user);
 - whether a concession applies;
 - by journey purpose where that can be ascertained;
 - b. Volunteering – time and function;
 - c. Intended developments.

The format should be aligned with any software used for transport management, particularly where this is developed for identifying and assessing the social value of CT services e.g. [[Ealing Community Transport Social Value Toolkit](#)]. Where only generic software is deployed, a standard Excel input / publication form should be developed.

The Comhairle should publish an annual community transport report showing the outputs, outcomes and funding, with a brief commentary.
5. Where the Comhairle supports a service that is open to the general public (e.g. commissioned by a Community Council from a PSV operator or delivered by a community group under a Community Bus Permit), then that service should be included in the public bus information maintained by the Comhairle and also be included in general public transport marketing.

Recommendations – Comhairle (3)

The Comhairle should:

6. Consider whether and how to facilitate community transport's role in respect of:

- i. Adult Social Work transport;
- ii. Home to school transport for pupils/students with additional support needs;
- iii. Public bus services (potentially operated under Community Bus Permits);

In particular, this should consider whether 'packaging' of such services together with the support for community transport services would result in better value for the Comhairle when taken as a whole, as well as creating a more robust funding basis for community transport groups, along with compliance with its duty to consider all expenditure on public passenger transport services holistically under s88(2) Transport Act 1985.

7. Take action to significantly increase the number of wheelchair accessible vehicles (WAVs) that are licensed as taxis or private hire vehicles (PHVs). Mandating the use of WAVs is very unlikely to be feasible so some form of financial stimulus will be required to overcome the additional costs involved. The Comhairle should consider whether incorporating WAV taxis / PHVs into the public bus network (feeder services / demand-responsive transport) under Special restricted PSV 'O' Licences could assist in stimulating WAV provision whilst improving overall accessibility and affordability.

Recommendations – Community Transport operators

Community transport operators should:

1. Establish a social network amongst themselves that will:
 - Facilitate mutual peer support;
 - Develop a system to ensure that MiDAS / PATS training is available to CT operators within the network;
 - Act as a collective voice as the sector 'consultee' for the Comhairle on policy issues;
 - Improve the collective understanding of the legal framework within which CT services operate;
 - Promote community transport services and their value to the public, including, potentially, visitors;
 - Work with organisations that promote and support volunteering to ensure that volunteering opportunities within CT can be taken up.
2. Ensure that they develop business and operating models that take into account:
 - The role of passenger fares and group hire charges in facilitating financial sustainability;
 - The need to deploy accessible vehicles wherever possible;
 - The requirement to minimise the environmental impacts of their operation.
3. Work closely with the Comhairle in the development of a new Outer Hebrides Community Transport policy, together with funding criteria and a reporting framework.
4. Where not already, become active members of the Community Transport Association in order to ensure their knowledge of best practice and of external funding opportunities is kept up to date, as well as creating links to the wider community transport community across Scotland.
5. Maintain records in line with the agreed reporting framework and, in particular, keep records of all journeys that facilitate, directly or indirectly, the maintenance or improvement of an individual's health, so that the way in which community transport benefits the NHS can be more clearly understood.

Recommendations – CLLD (OH) Local Action Group

The CLLD (OH) Local Action Group should:

1. Facilitate the publication of a list of community transport services available in the Outer Hebrides. This would:
 - Include those services which are not available to the general public and therefore (see Comhairle recommendation 5) be publicised elsewhere;
 - Be the primary source of information about transport accessible to people with disabilities, including both residents and visitors – this will be useful for those in signposting roles;
 - Help in the formation of a collective community transport sector.Some means of maintaining the currency of the listing should be built in.
2. Consider providing practical or financial support to facilitate the creation of an Outer Hebrides community transport network. Potential support activities include:
 - An annual CT event to include training and development sessions; this can be linked to publicity for recruitment of volunteers;
 - The provision of specific advice sessions on legal and operating matters, in order to overcome the misunderstandings and compliance failures that were encountered during this study and to open up potential new operating models such as the subsidised taxi supported by the Glenelg and Arnisdale Bus Users Group [[Glenelg Bus User Group Website](#)]; these sessions could be provided remotely and opened up to Community Councils, Community Land Trusts and others;
 - Assistance to enable the recruitment and training development of locally-based Accredited Trainers (DATs) within the MiDAS/PATS system;
3. Explore the potential for a multi-partner (Comhairle, Health, Trust funds, Scottish government grant) funding model that would facilitate the development of volunteer lift-giving services in line with the approach that is common in rural areas elsewhere e.g. the Gairloch Community Car Scheme [[Gairloch Community Car Scheme website](#)]

Recommendations – CLLD (OH) Local Action Group (2)

The CLLD (OH) Local Action Group should:

4. Work with HITRANS to explore the potential for a multi-partner (including CoMoUK and Motability) funding model that would facilitate the development of locally-managed car clubs incorporating wheelchair accessible vehicles. There are many rural community-based car club examples in Scotland, such as Westwheels at Mallaig [[Westwheels website](#)].
5. Investigate the potential for more active consumer representation in respect of public and community transport services, such as a Bus Users Group and/or a specific focus on passenger transport for an Access Group that can undertake access audits of services and infrastructure and provide feedback to the Comhairle.
6. Consider, with HITRANS and the Comhairle, the potential for publishing a digital version of the former “Getting Around the Highlands and Islands by Public Transport” guide. The objective would be to support a modal shift away from cars to public transport in the visitor economy, thus reducing the high season strain on the Islands’ road networks. The success would depend upon the introduction of suitably priced day or multi-day tickets, preferably on a multi-operator basis and facilitated through HITRANS’ GO-HI App [[Go-Hi Mobility in the Highlands Website](#)].

Recommendations – HITRANS

HITRANS should:

1. Work with the Comhairle to explore how its Liftshare model [HiTrans website page for Car Sharing](#) could be promoted to cover longer-distance journeys into Stornoway / Benbecula. Consideration should include the potential for hard-standing parking for lift-sharers at key rural junctions.
2. Consider the potential for a grant initiative to provide Outer Hebrides community transport groups with access to basic transport management software covering individual and group trip management (diaries / map-based GIS), on-line or App-based booking, and reporting capabilities in line with the proposed reporting framework.
3. Work with the Local Action Group to explore the potential for a multi-partner (including CoMoUK and Motability) funding model that would facilitate the development of locally-managed car clubs incorporating wheelchair accessible vehicles. There are many rural community-based car club examples in Scotland, such as Westwheels at Mallaig [Westwheels website](#).
4. Consider, with the Local Action Group and the Comhairle, the potential for publishing a digital version of the former “Getting Around the Highlands and Islands by Public Transport” guide. The objective would be to support a modal shift away from cars to public transport in the visitor economy, thus reducing the high season strain on the Islands’ road networks. The success would depend upon the introduction of suitably priced day or multi-day tickets, preferably on a multi-operator basis and facilitated through HITRANS’ GO-HI App [Go-Hi Mobility in the Highlands Website](#).