



KEY ISSUES

Transport needs in one of Europe's isolated areas.

Wide consultation with users, operators and stakeholders to establish key problems and potential solutions.

Recommendations on funding mechanisms and joint working.

ABOUT DHC

Derek Halden Consultancy staff and associates have leading expertise in transport planning, community development, psychology, transport and accessibility modelling, social inclusion, marketing, environmental assessment, and economic development.

Common to all projects is a commitment to draw from state of the art knowledge to ensure that solutions are soundly based and tailored to the needs of clients.

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A VIABLE FUTURE FOR COMMUNITY TRANSPORT IN NORTH SUTHERLAND

Social Inclusion Partnership funding was used to start many new community transport services in one of Europe's most isolated areas. With the SIP funding due to be phased out DHC was asked to: assess the value of existing transport initiatives; identify further gaps in public and community transport; consider the implications of service withdrawal; examine the scope for sustainable funding; and determine the most appropriate delivery mechanisms.

DHC identified that community transport (CT) had not just deliver additional transport services but assisted with: community capacity building, community involvement and participation, development of local employment opportunities and strengthening of the wider voluntary sector.

In contrast, the role of existing public transport was not as clear, with current services being based more on inherited commitments than a forward looking model of service provision. There was particular scope for the development of more demand responsive services.

The project also identified problems with the CT services which needed to be resolved if the sector was to be able to play a more important role in the future. People were not always able to book trips, awareness of services needed to be improved, and more providers and drivers are needed. Changes were also needed to ensure more sustainable funding mechanisms.

The project suggested a way forward with better co-ordination of public transport, community transport, health, social work and other services to offer a more integrated approach to transport provision. The CT approach offered good value for money and compared well with some public transport services so could potentially play an increased role. Where the capacity to deliver CT cannot be developed, a partnership approach between the community and commercial sectors is likely to be the best way forward.

