



COMMUNITY TRANSPORT OPTIONS FOR CONTIN, GARVE, MARYBANK AND STRATHPEFFER

Scoping of
Feasible Options
22 June 2020

GAPS IN TRANSPORT PROVISION IDENTIFIED BY THE COMMUNITY

Limited choices of travel options - Local people who do not have access to a private car have identified gaps in their ability to find affordable travel options to reach work, make return trips from shops and services in Dingwall and Inverness, access nursery/school/college/after school activities, leisure, health centres and hospitals, and meet with friends and family

Growing concerns about safe, personalised approaches – In order to have the confidence to travel, particularly for older people in the context of the covid-19 crisis, travellers need more certainty when planning and booking trips that the journey they are planning is right for them

Going Greener – The transport choices available must be set on a clear path to deliver lower emissions

KEY ELEMENTS OF TRANSPORT SERVICE DELIVERY

Scheduled transport

- Where larger numbers of people wish to travel at a particular time of day for a journey it can be viable for a scheduled bus service to run
- Scheduled services usually delivered using bus or minibus but also potentially using taxis and cars

Demand responsive transport

- Best for low and highly spatially scattered demand where only one or two people wish to travel at a particular time of day and their trips cannot be made at another time or by scheduled bus services
- Delivered by bus/minibus/taxi/private hire or community car
- Booked by phone, website or mobile app.

Extending the coverage of services under the national concessionary travel scheme

- Concessionary passes can be used on registered scheduled services
- Where timetables of operation for demand responsive services are registered concessionary passes can be used

CURRENT TIMES AND COSTS*

	Bus & train times		Bus/ train	Taxi	Community car
	Outbound	Inbound	Cost (£) – single (return)		
Garve-Dingwall	09:39; 15:29	10:56; 17:20; 17:54	4:80 (6:90)	30	6:50
Garve-Inverness	09:39; 15:29; 18:29	10:56; 16:10; 17:20; 17:54	11.50 (14.40)	50	12
Contin-Dingwall	07:15; 09:45; 10:46; 16:52	06:20; 08:30; 15:55; 17:20	2:80 (5:20)	19	3.50
Contin-Inverness	07:15; 09:45; 10:46; 16:52; 18:38	06:20; 08:30; 15:55; 16:10; 17:20	5:90 (6.20)	40	12
Strathpeffer-Dingwall	07:25; 09:58; 09:53; 12:58; 14:58; 17:14; 18:29	06:20; 08:30; 09:55; 11:55; 13:55; 15:55; 17:20	2:20 (4.00)	15	2:50
Strathpeffer-Inverness	07:25; 09:58; 09:53; 12:58; 14:58; 17:14; 18:29	06:20; 08:30; 09:55; 11:55; 13:55; 15:55; 17:20	5.90 (6.20)	40	12

*Note that for clarity not every service variation by day of the week is shown nor every fare option

WHAT IS THE LEVEL OF DEMAND?

Transport supply and demand are closely linked. People with more travel opportunities make more trips. High quality public transport encourages more public transport use by:

- Increasing the number of trips by public transport from the people most dependent on public transport
- Encouraging those with a choice of travel option to choose public transport more often.

Based on the population age profile and car ownership levels the demand for public transport trips in the Garve, Contin, and Strathpeffer communities and surrounding areas would be expected to be at least 25 people per day and up to about 250 people per day depending on the quality and availability of the service.

- Based on current bus fare levels including concessionary travel income the daily revenue available to run services associated with this level of demand would be between £90 and £900.
- When Stagecoach reduced bus service frequency and coverage they report that they lost an average of only one off peak passenger per day.

Additional travel demand of between 10 and 50 passengers per day should be achievable if new popular gap filling services are developed

SHORT TERM POSSIBILITIES TO CLOSE GAPS IN SERVICES

Scheduled services - To close gaps in the Monday to Saturday* scheduled services three times of day may be able to support viable levels of demand as follows:

- 1. Dingwall 8:00/Strathpeffer 8:15/ Contin 8:25/Strathpeffer 8:40/Dingwall 8:55
- 2. Dingwall 11:00/Strathpeffer 11:15/ Contin 11:25/bookable trips up to a further 10 minutes outbound and then back to Contin 11:45/Strathpeffer 11:55/Dingwall 12:10
- 3. Dingwall 14:00/Strathpeffer 14:15/ Contin 14:25/bookable trips up to a further 10 minutes outbound and then back to Contin 14:45/Strathpeffer 14:55/Dingwall 15:10

This would give Strathpeffer approximately a 1hr frequency service, Contin approximately a 2 hour frequency service and Garve/Marybank 2 extra journey time possibilities.

Demand responsive services - All other times of day trips can be serviced more efficiently using booked cars and taxis.

- Ross-shire Voluntary action (RVA) already deliver a community car scheme to the area. Action can start immediately amongst community networks to promote wider use of these services which are booked at least 24 hours in advance.

Ticketing – Tickets issued for community services would be accepted on Stagecoach buses and vice versa so that outbound and return journeys could be made using different operators

* Three services are also potentially possible for a Sunday but times of operation and levels of demand are not clear

HOW MUCH WOULD THIS COST TO RUN

The maximum level of provision that might be viable initially would require income of the order of £700 to £1000 per week. This is about half the cost of restoring the old 27 bus timetable yet could deliver a more reliable approach to service delivery with potential for growth

Operator delivery costs would then be as follows:

- Three return bus services from Dingwall could be delivered by a minibus operator (perhaps RVA or perhaps a private operator) for between £100 and £150 per day.
- The RVA community car scheme covers its costs for providing each trip so no operating budget is needed*. Users simply pay the drivers (who use their own cars) a rate of £0.45 per mile.

The strong local network of community groups could support and promote community based services by recommending them to members and service users (e.g. of medical centre users, nurseries, shops, hotels, care homes and other service providers) helping to keep marketing costs for transport operators to minimum

*The cost of the overheads for booking and managing the trips is currently managed within RVA core funding which are not expected to change as a result of this small expansion. However this can be reviewed if demand increases substantially.

RAISING THE FUNDING

The community groups will have a major role to play in supporting fundraising. To ensure that the new services have enough money to get started, local people could be encouraged to contribute to a crowdfunding call*. Once sufficient funding had been raised to demonstrate viability, the commissioning of the services could start. This may be best managed using a partnership agreement to set out roles and responsibilities of all parties.

Some local organisations and businesses are currently reported to be paying taxi fares for staff who have struggled with travel under the lower bus frequencies. If these employers were to pledge a monthly donation towards the service in excess of the ticket purchases by their staff they could save money relative to taxi fares and support the new services.

Should there be a residual gap in the funding required during the establishment stage then there are many funding sources for social projects that could help to provide bridging funding, each with their own criteria and application procedures. For long term viability it would need to be clear why a willingness to pay could be expected to build up over time that could not be captured at launch. External funds might usefully also be associated with one off costs such as upgrading to greener technologies or introducing more responsive customer booking interfaces.

*People who have contributed money could be issued by transport operator with single journey tickets equivalent to their donation once services are running. Potential users could be asked to make contributions equivalent to the fare for their first 10 trips

KEY STEPS TO ESTABLISH THE NEW SERVICES

1. **Publish scoping report ideas** - Use these proposals as a basis for discussion with local people about the detailed times, costs and routes they would use and the frequency of trip making. Hold discussion groups in local venues and online in early July
2. **Engage with the community on these ideas** - Using these community inputs to the design finalise operational proposals and publish these in late July.
3. **Bus group decide how to take plans forward** - Commissioning could be the responsibility of a new Garve/Contin/Marybank and Strathpeffer Community bus group with one of the constituent community groups (yet to be determined which) entering into contracts with operators on behalf of the group. Partnership agreements will be needed to set out the terms of working within the group and with transport operators.
4. **Fundraising and service specification** - Start fundraising in late July for the services to test support within the community. Finalise specifications based on what is affordable
5. **Implementation** - Complete procurement and statutory processes and when these are completed commence implementation perhaps as early as September

ONGOING DEVELOPMENT TOWARDS LONG TERM GOALS

Emissions

- Continued modification of services should seek to improve vehicle utilisation and increasingly low carbon vehicles to reduce emissions. The short term proposals are a positive step to deliver on both these aims but further incremental changes can be made over time.
- Making better use of the local electric car fleet through the community car scheme is a starting point and opportunities could be taken to procure scheduled services that use an electric minibus as soon as possible. Windfarm funding may be particularly suitable when supporting the business cases for such change.

Safer and more personalised

- Customer relationships managed through ticket purchase and booking systems can be used to ensure all journeys are safe and appropriate for the traveller, taking account of their personal needs and preferences, and making recommendations. This requires constant feedback including recording which scheduled services were used by each traveller.
- Booking systems for demand responsive travel have the potential to be much slicker than phoning in advance – app based systems are increasingly common.

NEXT STEPS

Consult with local communities to identify the popularity of the ideas presented in this scoping report

To support this consultation, hold local meetings in July in Strathpeffer, Contin and Garve helping to develop the service proposals in discussion with potential users and to encourage feedback on likely service usage

Review consultation findings and complete draft delivery plan and draft partnership agreements to develop and sustain the services