



**REPORT TO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE
SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 22 MARCH 2022**

SUBJECT: BUS REVOLUTION OPERATIONAL PLAN REPORT

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND
FINANCE)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee of operational plans in relation to enhanced bus services as part of Moray Growth Deal.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (F) (18) to exercise the function of the Council in relation to public passenger transport under the Transport Act 1985.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that Committee:

- (i) **approve the operational detail of proposed enhancements to bus services set out in this report, subject to Full Business Case approval of the Moray Growth Deal project, in order to apply for necessary regulatory consents; and**
- (ii) **note that as described in para 3.17 the Dial M brand will be replaced by the m.connect brand identity for all Moray Council demand responsive and timetabled services.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Bus Revolution project is part of the Moray Growth Deal and aims to improve public transport connectivity across Moray by providing additional demand responsive transport, improving the ease of use of public transport by the introduction of app based technology, and reducing carbon emissions by the use of fully electric bus vehicles.
- 3.2 The project builds on the existing Dial M demand responsive service, to extend hours of operation, and particularly aims to tackle transport barriers to employment. There will be three key funding phases throughout the 10 year span of the Growth Deal, each giving the opportunity to incrementally expand

service provision, with a long term aim of providing services seven days per week from early morning to late evening.

- 3.3 The Outline Business Case for Bus Revolution was approved in November 2021, with the full Growth Deal being signed in December 2021. The Full Business Case is now being developed for approval by Programme Board, Council, Moray Economic Partnership and government advisers, with full approval anticipated no later than Q3 2022/23.
- 3.4 The project is identified as an early delivery project within the Growth Deal Programme, and on 30 June 2021 Council approved capital expenditure in advance of Full Business Case sign off in order to facilitate that early delivery, which incorporates 6 vehicles – 3 x 16 seater and 3 x 7 seater, given lengthy order lead times.

Regulatory Application Process

- 3.5 In a similar vein, bus services are governed by regulatory permissions through the Traffic Commissioners office, which have a lead in time of 11 weeks to gain consents. With this time frame in mind, this report seeks approval of the operational plans to deliver services using the first phase of funding in advance of the Full Business Case sign off, in order to ensure this regulatory process can be completed timeously. The exact date for commencement of operations is still to be finally determined – potentially as early as August 2022, and within a target of Q3 2022/23. Working backwards from these date ranges means that applications for permits and service registrations may need to be lodged with the Traffic Commissioner as early as May 2022, and no later than August 2022. On this basis, it should still be noted, that the service proposals are still subject to Full Business Case approval or a decision by Council to introduce services at the Council's risk ahead of that approval.

Demand Analysis and Community Engagement

- 3.6 As part of the project development two strands of work have been carried out to inform the service proposals – firstly the mapping and analysis of public transport provision across Moray to identify the areas with the greatest gaps in network provision, and secondly community engagement on public transport priorities and proposals for the expansion of council operated bus services.
- 3.7 The analysis work demonstrates that taking account of both the commercial bus network and the council's bus operations, the greatest gaps are in the Buckie, Keith and Speyside areas.
- 3.8 Community engagement activity has been carried out with the Joint Community Councils of Moray, Moray Forum, Chamber of Commerce, Buckie Locality Plan Group, Speyside Community Council and Tomintoul & Glenlivet Development Trust amongst others. There has been broad support for the enhancement of public transport journey opportunities, acknowledgement that the project has a 10 year life span and takes a phased approach, and support for the proposals set out below.

Proposed Service Enhancements

- 3.9 The proposed service enhancements for Phase 1 of Bus Revolution are summarised as follows:

- Additional demand responsive vehicle covering Buckie / Keith 0630h – 2030h Monday to Friday
- Two additional demand responsive vehicles covering Speyside 0630h – 2030h Monday to Friday
- New circular timetabled service connecting Cullen – Buckie – Keith – Cullen 0525h – 2015h Monday to Friday
- Enhance Aberlour – Knockando – Archiestown – Elgin service from 2 x per week to daily
- Additional DRT pre-0630h and post 1830h subject to demand for workplace transport bookings through local employers

3.10 The heart of the Bus Revolution project is to enhance the provision of demand responsive transport, which is flexible to a dispersed population by using a principle similar to Uber ride sharing – a customer books the service based on their direct journey need and this is accommodated as near to real time as possible. The customer may need to have some flexibility in journey time to get the best journey fit, but it is a means to providing journey opportunities where fixed timetabled routes would not be sustainable. It is an enhancement on the current Dial M operations in that bookings can be made same day, rather than in advance through the use of app based technology. It is worth noting that bookings through the Contact Centre will be retained for those customers who need this facility, but may be able to be same day as they will use the same technology as the app. The additional services set out above provide journey opportunities at times of the day when people are likely to be travelling to work, providing a sustainable and affordable alternative to private car ownership.

3.11 There has been long-standing community aspiration to see the re-introduction of a bus service linking Buckie and Keith. This has been clearly communicated as part of the project’s community engagement activity, in particular that any such service should optimise connections with rail services from Keith railway station. The proposed service is a circular route running anti-clockwise as follows: Cullen – Portknockie – Findochty – Portessie – Buckie – Portgordon – Enzie – Aultmore – Newmill – Keith – Cullen. The indicative timetable is attached as **APPENDIX 1**.

3.12 Putting the existing Dial M provision together with the proposed additional services provides a service provision as follows:

3.13 Buckie – Keith Area

Monday – Friday	Buckie – Keith Service	Demand Responsive
0520 – 0630	Per timetable	0
0630 - 0930	Per timetable	1 x vehicle
0930 – 1430	Per timetable	2 x vehicles
1430 - 2015	Per timetable	1 x vehicle
2015 – 2030	0	1 x vehicle

3.14 Speyside area

Tomintoul – Grantown	One return trip each Wednesday
Tomintoul – Aberlour – Dufftown – Keith	One return trip Tuesday, Thursday, Friday
Aberlour – Knockando – Archiestown – Elgin	One return trip daily
2 x Demand Responsive vehicles	0630 – 0900h Monday – Friday
3 x Demand Responsive vehicles	0900 – 1400h Monday – Friday
2 x Demand Responsive vehicles	1400 – 1630h Monday – Friday
3 x Demand Responsive Vehicles	1630 – 1800h Monday – Friday
2 x Demand Responsive Vehicles	1800 – 2030h Monday - Friday

Branding

- 3.15 Committee is also asked to note that to support the promotion of the existing and additional services going forward, the m.connect brand developed through a HITRANS funded project will replace the Dial M identity. As well as providing a fresh and modern brand image, it also removes the focus away from bookings made on the phone to the Contact Centre by removing the 'Dial' reference. The brand comprehensively sits within the council's brand identity, and is flexible to promote different aspects of connectivity and public transport.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

The proposals, which fit within the inclusive economic growth principles of the Growth Deal support the council's priority for a growing and diverse economy, as well as supporting health and wellbeing through access to services.

(b) Policy and Legal

The proposed amendments fit within the Scottish Government's transport policy priorities, and the objectives established in Moray's Growth Deal. Bus services operated by the council are regulated through s19 and s22 permits and registration of services with the Traffic Commissioner. Future services may utilise the powers in the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 which allow use of O Licensed operations, however, this statutory power has still to be enabled. Both s19 & s22 and O Licensed operations still require registration of local bus services, and the Traffic Commissioner holds the regulatory role in all these regards.

(c) Financial implications

The financial implications of the service enhancements are to be set out as part of the full financial and commercial case sections of the project's Full Business Case for Council and Scottish Government approval.

(d) Risk Implications

The principal commercial and reputational risks are to be evaluated as part of the Full Business Case, however, it should be noted that there are risks specific to this report around timely applications to the Traffic Commissioner for bus service registrations. Subject to approval of the recommendations in this report officers will time the service registration applications around progress with approval of the Full Business Case and will maintain dialogue with the Traffic Commissioner's office to ensure these processes are aligned. There are reputational risks around service development that is not in line with community expectations, and this has been mitigated by the community engagement activity already carried out, which will continue throughout the project.

(e) Staffing Implications

The implementation of the additional services will require the recruitment of additional drivers/additional driver hours which is accounted for in the financial case for Bus Revolution and will be subject to Council approval.

(f) Property

There are property implications in the wider project relating to the siting of electric vehicle chargers for the bus vehicles. There is a dedicated workstream involving property services and other teams to ensure the appropriate siting of charging infrastructure within existing council property assets and in public areas.

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

The project aims to reduce inequalities through the provision of accessible and affordable transport options, particularly tackling barriers to employment. A full Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out as part of the project.

(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts

The vehicles procured for the project are fully electric in line with specific objectives to reduce carbon emissions. The Outline and Full Business Cases for the project incorporate a comprehensive carbon statement.

(i) Consultations

The Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), Head of Environmental and Commercial Services, Legal Services Manager, Principal Accountant (P Connor), Community Support Unit Manager, Equalities Officer and Committee Services Officer (L Rowan) have been consulted and their comments incorporated into this report.

5. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 This report seeks approval of the proposed operational plans for Phase 1 of Bus Revolution in order to ensure timely registration of services with the Traffic Commissioner as part of the overall project timescales and governance arrangements and subject to Full Business Case approval.**

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Background Papers:
Ref: SPMAN-524642768-706