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**REPORT TO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE  
SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 5 NOVEMBER 2019**

**SUBJECT: BUS SERVICES**

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

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

1.1 To inform the Committee of the current position of the Green Bus Fund and North Sea Interreg G -Patra scheme funded electric bus service linking Aberlour and Forres and to seek approval to expand the service range and timetable.

1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III (F) (18) of the Council's Scheme of Administration relating to the function of the Council in relation to public passenger transport provided through Moray Council's Dial a Bus network.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

**2.1 It is recommended that Committee:-**

- i) approve the proposal to increase the number of journeys linking Aberlour and Forres; and**
- ii) approve a number of additional journeys between Forbeshill, Forres Medical Centre and Forres Town Centre.**

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 On 31 October 2017 this Committee granted authority to work with HiTrans using funds from both the Green Bus Fund and the North Sea Interreg funded project G-PaTRA to purchase a low carbon vehicle, install additional charging facilities and fund both staff and suitable service marketing for 3 years. (Para 9 of the minute refers).

3.2 The purpose of the G-PaTRA scheme is to stimulate establishment and application of green transport solutions in rural areas. In so doing, the aspiration is to reconcile the competing challenges of reducing carbon emissions and tackling social isolation through enhancing personal mobility.

Prior to G-PaTRA, the majority of green transport services have been piloted in urban areas, on short local routes which do not challenge the technology in the manner required to establish the viability of carbon neutral vehicles in deeply rural areas.

- 3.3 Rural transport in Moray, as in many parts of the country, cannot easily sustain a strong network of scheduled bus services. The Council has successfully operated off peak demand responsive services across the areas of Moray not served by Stagecoach Bluebird's commercial scheduled network using buses provided largely for statutory school provision and adult day services. This has proved to be a successful model for meeting many of the area's rural transport needs in the off peak but does not stimulate any modal shift in transport to and from the workplace, covering what we have traditionally regarded as peak hour services.
- 3.4 Through G-PaTRA and the Green Bus Fund, the Council purchased a fully electric accessible midibus and has trialled a route between Aberlour and Forres, serving Archiestown, Knockando, Dallas and Rafford which commenced in January. Initially this service has provided one journey into Forres for 0830 and returning at 1715 as per the G-Patra funding arrangement. The service has successfully proved the vehicle's ability to handle the more challenging terrain and longer journey and with this degree of operational comfort, there is justification in using the vehicle more intensively whilst allowing time for access to a charging facility.
- 3.5 It is proposed to introduce additional services using the electric bus. These services would be outwith the scope of the G-PaTRA funding, and would be operated purely at the discretion of the Council in line with the rest of the Council's DialM provision. The two areas for enhancement are off-peak provision on the 369 Forres to Aberlour route (section 4 of this report) and the introduction of a Forres town service (section 5 of this report).

#### **4. FORRES TO ABERLOUR**

- 4.1 As the current timetable is a peak hour link from Speyside to Forres, there is no opportunity to travel towards Aberlour from Forres and the communities along the corridor. It is proposed to offer an off peak return journey to Aberlour from Forres, leaving Forres at 1110 and Aberlour at 1420. This will allow customers two hours in Aberlour for shopping and social purposes and will be attractive to both residents and tourists like. There will also be time for the bus to be rapid charged. The timetable in full is shown in **Appendix 1**.
- 4.2 Providing an enhanced service on this corridor will assist in tackling social isolation and offer improved connectivity throughout a lengthy rural corridor, both key aims of the Council's Corporate Plan 2018 – 2023. The major communities on the corridor have only very limited access to shopping and leisure facilities and the provision of an off peak service to Aberlour will go some way to offsetting this concern whilst supporting local businesses in Aberlour.
- 4.3 The increased use of the electric bus on the enhanced service provides a low carbon alternative to private car transport supporting the Council's Climate Emergency Declaration of June 2019 and the ensuing target to become

carbon neutral by 2030. The electric bus credential allows the Council to claim back the maximum rate of bus service operator grant currently offered by Transport Scotland.

## **5. NEW SERVICE PROVISION : FORRES TO FORBESHILL**

5.1 The Forbeshill area of Forres has been without a scheduled bus service since the commercially provided bus service was withdrawn in May 2017. Forbeshill residents have access to the authority's dial a bus service but this does not meet every need and the consensus heard through various forums is that they wish to have access to a scheduled bus service.

5.2 There is scope within the proposal above for the additional use of the electric bus to provide five return journeys between Forres town centre, Forbeshill, and Forres medical centre. These journeys are available at 0835, 0925, 1025, 1525, 1625 from Forres town centre. The provision will not meet every expectation but does offer additional travel choices and links to both town centre and medical centre for Forbeshill which are currently not enjoyed. The timetable in full is shown in **Appendix 1**.

## **6. BUSINESS CASE**

The projected income and costs are set out in the table below. The predicted farebox income is based on similar off-peak operations by Dial M services around Moray. The daily costs are based on the incremental costs over and above the G-PaTRA project operating costs which are EU funded.

<b>Income Annualised</b>		<b>Cost Annualised</b>	
<b>Farebox</b>	<b>£22300.00</b>	<b>Staff Cost</b>	<b>£31940.00</b>
<b>Bus Service Operator Grant</b>	<b>£13820.00</b>	<b>Electricity Costs</b>	<b>£3825.00</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>£36120.00</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>£35765.00</b>

## **7. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

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

The proposals assist in supporting the Moray 2023 (Ten Year Plan) through offering fully accessible public transport to the widest possible area of Moray. Within the Plan, the Moray Economic Partnership identifies Transportation as one of five key areas of action.

### **(b) Policy and Legal**

Based on current legislation, the service will be operated by Moray Council using a Section 22 permit which allows the provision of a community based bus service on a not for profit basis, open to all members of the public.

**(c) Financial implications**

The service is predicted to be cost neutral, based on similar services operated across Moray by the Council. Routine monitoring will be carried out, and should there be any emerging financial risk this will be reported to this Committee. The service performance will be brought back to this Committee for review after a year of operation as has been the case for other service introductions.

**(d) Risk Implications**

There are risks around community reliance developed over the period of the service being trialled if it cannot be sustained or an alternative provided.

**(e) Staffing Implications**

An additional driver will be required to be recruited and this has been factored into the funding.

**(f) Property**

There are no property implications arising from this report.

**(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact**

There are no specific equalities matters. However both the enhancement of the service between Forres and Aberlour and the communities on that corridor and the increased access to Forbeshill will assist in tackling social isolation and improve connectivity in these areas.

**(h) Consultations**

Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), Legal Services Manager, Principal Accountant (P Connor), Committee Services Officer (T Sutherland) and Equalities Officer have all been consulted and their comments incorporated into this report.

**8. CONCLUSION**

- 8.1 The enhanced service offers new links across rural Speyside into Aberlour and within Forres to and from Forbeshill. This will support the aspiration of the Moray 2023 (Ten Year Plan) by increasing accessible public transport options to the widest possible area of Moray.**
- 8.2 The enhanced service offers the Council the opportunity to further demonstrate the viability of a low carbon electric vehicle in a rural environment in line with the Scottish Government's aspiration to eliminate fossil fuel vehicle use by 2050 and eliminate the sale of new fossil fuel vehicles by 2032.**

Author of Report: Donald MacRae, Public Transport Manager

Background Papers:

Ref: