

Bus Revolution

What are Moray's challenges?

To enhance inclusive growth and tackle inequality by removing barriers to employment and access to services in an environmentally sustainable manner.

It is an integral part of a whole-system approach to inclusive growth, providing the physical infrastructure to connect people to quality jobs as per the Inclusive Growth Commission's recommendations. There is substantial evidence that 'those lacking the resources and transport options required for being able to move become deprived from interacting with the opportunities offered by society'. This is through the effects of those who have financial resources moving to areas that are 'resource rich' meaning that jobs, services and transport provision become detached from lower income households (spatial mismatch and entrapment). Further it is compounded by the social exclusion that transport deprivation creates.

In rural communities the accessibility and connectivity challenges are exacerbated – the Department for Transport's White Paper in 2011 stated '20% of our population lives in rural areas where there are higher levels of car dependence (including for lower income households) coupled with a lower availability of public transport'. Household expenditure on transport is approximately 1/3 higher in rural areas than urban areas.

As commercial bus routes are not viable for many parts of Moray the Council set up Dial M for Moray, which is our award-winning accessible door-to-door bus service for those unable to use existing forms of transport, or who do not have a regular scheduled bus service. This service is for everyone, regardless of age or disability. Unfortunately at present routes are still limited, with service provision only available when vehicles are not being used for other local authority purposes (school and social care transport) and demand far exceeding supply in many areas.

The recent community engagement online survey identified Public Transport as one of the key areas people would most like to see improved in Moray, and this statistic was reinforced by students at the local college, who took part in workshops relating to their post-college plans, where issues with rural transport were cited as causing difficulties in job accessibility and studying locally..

The Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, which is designed to help make Scotland's transport network cleaner, smarter and more accessible than ever before, and the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 mean that we need to do something radical to change the reliance on private cars in our rural areas and drive down carbon emissions by increasing the availability of greener travel solutions.

How will we meet these challenges?

By building on the existing innovative on-demand bus services to provide comprehensive and cohesive public transport links tailored to the region's largely rural economy, but also to convert the extended fleet to non-fossil fuel vehicles.

The purpose is not to compete with scheduled services but to fill the gaps in provision in rural areas and to encourage more people to use public transport rather than use private cars in line with the Scottish Government priority to reduce carbon emissions.

To meet this need the Bus Revolution was identified as a project within the Growth Deal with three clear aims:

1. Increase the number of people using public transport to get to and from rural areas to places of work, education, etc.
2. Reduce the environmental impact of transport in the area
3. Reduce the number of people facing transport barriers to employment, education or recreation.

Who is involved?

In order to develop the Outline Business Case a stakeholder analysis was undertaken to identify the key groups and individuals to form a project board to direct this work. The board consists of representatives from Moray Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Moray Chamber of Commerce, Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS), and Walkers Shortbread Ltd.

How did we identify the solution?

A benefits identification and mapping workshop was held in May 2020 to serve three purposes;

- to align stakeholder views and ensure that everyone was working to the same aim;
- to identify inputs, activities, outputs, outcomes and impacts to enable the logic model to be developed;
- to identify the key benefits to be measured in order to demonstrate success.

Following on from these a number of options appraisal workshops were undertaken with a wider range of stakeholders to identify the options to be appraised during the economic case.

The results of economic appraisal were considered by the board who made the final decision on the preferred option in October 2020.

What is the solution?

The Bus Revolution project proposes to:

- Increase the fleet of vehicles to enable bus services to operate an on-demand service 4am to midnight (Mon-Sat) and 7am to 10pm (Sun) for anyone travelling to or from the Moray area, and upgrade the fleet quality in line with

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the brand development set out below – including consideration of facilities such as on board Wi-Fi

- Provide a flexible demand responsive service, operating when and where needed in an easy to use way
- Innovate to create app based technology that will allow real time journey bookings ‘uber’ style
- Embrace low carbon technology, ideally with fully electric vehicles to provide an environmentally sustainable service
- Build on the existing brand identity of Dial M to create an engaging and responsive public transport identity for all customer groups, and use intelligence led marketing to generate business and communicate with customers
- Have excellent customer service at the heart of the operation
- Retain the current customer base which has a large proportion of elderly customers, but use the above principles to target the youth and working populations of Moray to provide a real rural alternative to the private car

The project has 2 key elements:

1. The development of an “uber-style” app to enable customers to track the position of buses and book journeys within a reasonable response time (max. 1 hour).



2. An investment in quality green fleet (electric buses), to increase the flexibility and hours of operation of on-demand bus provision across Moray, with additional facilities such as on board Wi-Fi, charging facilities etc.



How much will it cost?

The project is currently estimated to cost £4.3 million. This covers the capital investment required to set-up operational systems, branding and marketing, the purchase of electric vehicles, and provision of charging infrastructure.

How will it be delivered?

Implementation will be phased, with existing vehicles being replaced / rebranded in line with fleet renewal programme. This will allow lessons learned from each phased implementation to be applied to planning of forthcoming phases and maximise the impact of the project.

It is intended to create a bus partnership with other providers in the area to ensure comprehensive coverage and a seamless service from the customer's perspective. This partnership will recognise the existing timetabled 'fixed links' in the bus network, and provide additional timetabled fixed links to create a skeleton structure, around which flexible demand responsive services will operate.

The development of new technology will allow a customer to plan a door-to-door journey, even if this involves changing from one bus service to another, so that the network can operate as efficiently as possible.

How will the benefits accrue?

By increasing the number of passengers on local buses the number of journeys by private vehicle will reduce. This will result in savings in carbon emissions as the new fleet will be non-polluting.

Longer operating hours (including peak hours) will increase mobility and access to work, education and recreation for all residents regardless of economic status, geography, age or ability. This will also contribute to reducing social isolation.

Is it financially sustainable?

The financial case projections were prepared on the basis that costs were estimated at the highest level and benefits generally understated to ensure that results were realistic and achievable.

Discussions are ongoing with some of the larger employers in the area regarding workplace transport partnerships and potential for season ticket employee benefits.

An online survey is currently gathering residents' views on the proposals: early indications are that a significant percentage (40%) of respondents would be interested in using the service on a regular basis.

How does the project fit in the strategic landscape?

The project is in line with growth strategies guidance and will enable the delivery of a number of key regional growth priorities including:

- Industrial Strategy
- Scotland's Economic Strategy
- Moray Economic Strategy
- Local Outcomes Improvement Plan

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- The Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 which is designed to help make Scotland's transport network cleaner, smarter and more accessible than ever before - aiming to empower local authorities and establish consistent standards in order to tackle current and future challenges, while delivering a more responsive and sustainable transport system for everyone in Scotland.
- Protecting Scotland's Future: the Government's Programme for Scotland 2019-2020 "Rural Scotland makes a vital contribution to our national economy. We know that more young people want to stay in the areas where they grew up, but we need to do more to stem rural depopulation and attract more people to live and work in rural and island communities."
- Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019 with Moray Council leading by example to provide green bus services and encourage residents to migrate from private car use.

What else is happening in the region?

In general scheduled bus services have been in decline regionally and nationally for a number of years and public satisfaction with local transport has decreased mainly due to the lack of service in many areas.

What else needs to be done?

The following work has been identified to be completed nearer to any potential project start date and as part of full business case development.

- Online public survey results to be analysed, and data from the survey used for implementation planning.
- Discussion with larger employers in the area to look at partnership arrangements for workplace travel, included the potential use of season tickets as employee benefits.
- Early notification to suppliers of potential procurement activity to ensure no delays in lead times for vehicle provision.
- Establish local bus partnership.

What has been the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic?

Along with the rest of the world the project will be affected by the global coronavirus pandemic. The full business case will detail specific mitigations to address the situation during the delivery phase but current considerations include;

- Impacts on customer confidence, travelling on public transport
- Potential for changed ways of working altering the need for travel

In order to address these issues the full business case will detail specific marketing to ensure it addresses the issue of customer confidence and a follow-up survey will be conducted to ascertain the impact on demand.

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Design work for vehicles will also take account of issues identified during the Covid-19 outbreak and include contingency arrangements where possible to account for any future pandemics of this nature.

What are the implications of Brexit for the project?

There is a limit to what can be done at the moment on Brexit. Uncertainty around the potential deal and the consequential effects on sectors, regions and communities make practical intervention to prepare businesses and communities difficult at the moment.

However the situation will be monitored and considerations will include:

- effects on visitor economy
- international supply chain disruption
- the impact on EU migrant workforce.

Again mitigation will be considered in future iterations of the business case and opportunities arising will also be explored.