COMMUNITY TRANSPORT INQUIRY
TAGSA UIBHIST
WRITTEN SUBMISSION

How Can Community Transport systems be improved?
Can it be improved, where it works well?

Community Transport, do we need a more strategic approach?

Community Transport excels in the following: -

Staff are very well trained to carry out the work that they do for Community Transport which will not be the same for some public transport providers.

Training in Care, Moving and Handling, wheelchair, MIDAS, First Aid, CPC, to name but a few.

Staff also attend awareness sessions, health issues, illness, wellbeing and this is all part of the Healthy Working Lives programmes. Tagsa Uibhist is the first organisation in the Western Isles to achieve Gold Award with Healthy Working Lives.

Demand responsive transport:-

The main priority would be to make sure that having Community Transport in area’s is a requirement by Scottish Government that all local Authorities have to adhere too (ring fencing). Considering the work that Community Transport carries out and that they meet the needs of our most vulnerable people in our society today. We provide a service to some of the most rural communities within our Islands, which are not covered by public transport.

The saving that is achieved by using Community Transport by Local Authorities has to be recognised. Community transport has always been value for money for the Local Authority by providing a high valued and competitive rate service. (Ref: Value of Community Transport Economic Analysis carried out in Aug 2011 in conjunction with TAS)

Are you seeing a growing demand for Community Transport provision? Due to an ageing population as people are living longer there will always be a requirement for this service.

Western Isles information from Census 2011 – outputs Prospectus November 2012 - CNES

The population continues to age but it varies across the different island areas. The percentage of people 65 and over by island area is as follows:

South Uist 22%
Benbecula 13%
North Uist  27%

The Outer Hebrides has the second highest number of pensioner households (93%) banded 0-5 in National Home Energy Rating (NHER).

In 2010 (Western Isles) the percentage of 45-64 yrs was 30% and the projected increase by 31% by 2020 and the projected increase by 27% by 2035

65-84 yrs 2010 = 19% and the projected increase by 23% by 2020 and the projected increase by 30% by 2035

85+ yrs 2010 = 3% and the projected increase by 4% by 2020 and the projected increase by 7% by 2035.

Do your local NHS bodies work closely with community transport providers?

Very little contact considering the amount of assistance/work we give the NHS by bringing a lot of people to medical appointments which they may otherwise have missed. We are a preventative service by getting these people the help they need; otherwise it would be more cost to NHS if they had to be admitted to hospital because they had been unable to attend appointments.

We attend a Healthcare Transport Group meeting every 3 months and it has not moved forward since the time we started to attend. We are asked each year for the same information and this is partly due to changes of personnel who have no idea what Community Transport is or how it is supporting the NHS without any funding input.

Change Fund has set up a pilot project for hospital discharge only. Again this took some time to filter to the local hospitals that the service was available and it is not mentioned on letters sent out to patients that Community Transport service is available. This was brought up at the last Healthcare Transport group meeting and we hope that it was noted and that action will be taken.

Tagsa Uibhist has done so far one presentation to our local surgery, to give them an update on what we provide. We hope to bring this to the local hospital and other surgeries but so far have found it difficult to arrange dates.

How do you access non-emergency patient transport?

More advertising by NHS that Community Transport is an alternative means of transport for people with appointments.

More awareness by NHS staff that such a service is available and how they can contact them.

We attend so many meeting but it still doesn’t seem to make any difference to moving this forward. Everyone thinks is great having such a service but they don’t advertise or push it forward so that it is adopted.

Has your community transport group experienced funding difficulties?
Tagsa Uibhist had been advised in October 2012 that the funding from CNES (local Authority) would be discontinued in the next budget. We fought a hard battle along with our service users and managed to secure funding for the next 2 years with a 2.5% cut each year.

It is very difficult to get continuation funding for the service that we provide. You are required to re-invent yourself but that is difficult as studies/questionnaires etc show that continuation of the existing service is what is needed to best service the communities.

After the two years we are not sure what the Local Authority will do. We are hoping to have more partnership working with the Council.

It has to be taken into account that we have 8 shopping service routes, which without Community Transport the Council would have to put on public transport buses, that would have to be accessible for people with mobility and disabilities and to my knowledge the Council do not have fully accessible buses in the Islands.

Another major difficulty is finding money to replace ageing vehicles.

**Do you think that Community Transport should fall within concessionary fare schemes?**

Yes because our service users wouldn’t have to pay for our service. Mostly all our clients are elderly.

How sustainable are concessionary fare scheme due to the amount already been paid out which is considerably higher than had previously been expected. (Ref: Robert Black: Free public services need ‘revisiting’ – BBC news Scotland 5/10/12)

**Some letters from service users when our service was to be discontinued by the Council, sent to the Chief Executive:**

**Lady in Hacklett, South Uist** – I am writing to express my worry at the possible discontinuation for Community Transport here in Uist. This will mean we will no longer be able to turn to Tagsa Uibhist for the help so many of us badly need.

Tagsa have helped me for the last 7 years to go to the doctor and nurses at the surgery, to the dentist, the optician, the dietician and very shortly to the hospital...

I am very handicapped and not at all well and so Tagsa is also very helpful in getting me down my steps and in and out of the car with my zimmer.

Last April my previous home help head to leave me and I just could not manage at all well on my own. So I contacted Tagsa and very quickly they found me an excellent home help who I am sure will stay with me for years.

There are so many people here who are elderly and rely on Tagsa for transport as I do and also to be taken to the shops, bank and post office (How else could they get their pensions etc?). There are people I know who are taken to spend the day in 1 of our 2 care homes or else to have respite care there.
Lady in Hosta, North Uist – I am rendered speechless on hearing the news that Tasga Uibhist transport was about to cease operating. As an octogenarian and one who is on medication for high blood pressure, Tagsa Uibhist is a lifeline for me.

The office staff, bus drivers and escorts provide a superb service for senior citizens in their pleasant, thoughtful manner. What a blow it will be if we are deprived of this wonderful service!

My home is a distance from the main road so the public bus service is not suitable for me.

Lady in Balranald, North Uist – I started on the Tagsa bus four years ago. My house is a long distance from the main road, as the driver knows and the local bus is no use to me at the age of 90 years and with failing eye sight. I am registered blind.

They look after me on the bus and with all the help and kindness of the escort and drivers taking me to the shops and even getting my shopping for me. They also make it possible for me to go to the bank and to the post office. Then they bring me safely home and help me with my shopping into the house.

Evergreen, Berneray (Social group) – Living in Berneray we see the group not merely as a social gathering but as a way of looking after each other and fostering community spirit. The accessible transport service provided by Tagsa Uibhist, allows us to organise activities around the needs of our group members.

Tagsa Uibhist also provide a reliable shopping bus service each week to a number of residence in Berneray as this is the only accessible transport available to them.

Gentleman, Carinish, North Uist – Why do we need Tagsa? – we are mostly elderly and now have reduced physical health.

Shopping Bus – The Tagsa staff call for us at our house. No need to stand outside in rain or wind. They make sure we are secured in the bus with the seat belts (Safety measure). The bus calls at the Balivanich post office and bank. Tagsa staff give assistance where required (remember the two Peggy’s are over 90). The bus also stops at a convenient “comfort” zone for those who require the Toilet.

Shopping at MacLennan’s & Creagorry Co-op– the Tagsa staff assist all users, especially those with sight or other problems and also look out for the bargains. All this is over and above minimum requirements. At the check out the staff load the shopping into the bags and carry the bags into the bus.

On the homeward journey the bus call at Tagsa – East Camp for a cup of tea.

Tagsa service – “SECOND TO NONE”

What if No Tagsa? – Users would be dependent on Taxis costing £20 round trip ..... bear in mind this is before anything is spend on shopping......taxi drivers are more likely to wait in their cab thus giving no shopping help to users...

TAGSA UIBHIST
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