COMMUNITY TRANSPORT INQUIRY
VOLUNTARY ACTION BARRA AND VATERSTAY
WRITTEN SUBMISSION

Introduction

Since April 2001 Voluntary Action Barra and Vatersay has received funding through the Rural Community Transport Initiative to provide Community Transport services on the islands of Barra and Vatersay. Our ageing population sits at about 1100 residents.

With two accessible minibuses in operation, the Community Transport Scheme, operated by Voluntary Action Barra & Vatersay, (VABV), continues to meet the ever increasing demand for our community transport services. Providing transport on a daily basis to organisations such as Cobhair Bharraigh, Barra Day Care and Garadh a Bagh a Tuath, we also deliver a service to pensioners for shopping and for the pensioners’ club not to mention a wide range of youth services including Youth Clubs, Youth Cafes and Youth Councils.

Increasing requirements to provide not only trained drivers but trained passenger assistants for all services throughout the day and evenings has resulted in a considerable increase in staff numbers, in increasing costs for fuel and wages for the project. This has to be kept under review to ensure that the project remains viable.

Looking to the near future when our two vehicles will require to be replaced, then some consideration has to be given to leasing rather than purchase of vehicles. Capital outlay for vehicles is considerable and grant assistance for minibuses is increasingly difficult to obtain. Our vehicles at the moment are 9 years old and 6 years old. Further investigation is to be undertaken into the leasing option for the future.

Evening transport for Barra Youth Café, Youth clubs and social events enable young people from all corners of the island to participate in evening events and clubs. Thanks are due to private coach enterprises who provides additional capacity for the Youth café and evening events when required and also is so willing to step in and provide backup vehicles when on or other of our own vehicles is out of action.

Support funding for the Community Transport project now is the responsibility of Comhairle nan Eilean Siar and funding for the community transport scheme has been continued until March 2014 albeit at a reduced council rate due to budgetary constraints.

Listed below is some detail of the services we provide to some of our community organisations who depend on our valuable transport services.
List of Clients

1. Cobhair Bharraigh
2. Barra Day Centre - Garadh a Bhagh a Tuath - Adult Learners
3. Day Care
4. Youth Cafe - Youth Club
5. Pensioners Shopping
6. Pensioners Club
7. Men’s Club Mixed
8. Ability Swimming
9. Community Events

1. Cobhair Bharraigh
   http://www.isleofbarra.com/cobhairbharraigh.htm

The main aim of the organisation is to provide support services which enable people within our community to remain in their own homes for as long as possible, working in partnership with statutory agencies, families and carers to deliver a person centred care service for their clients.

Cobhair Bharraigh provides essential care for people with dementia, frail elderly and other clients of all ages with care needs. Day-care provision, transport and home support are available with the aim of enabling clients to remain in their own homes for as long as possible, where possible. They work in partnership with Crossroads Scotland and Alzheimer Scotland, delivering four day-care sessions each week from 10.30am to 3pm, and work in conjunction with Voluntary Action Barra and Vatersay Community Transport Project which delivers a door to door escorted service from clients homes to the Cobhair Bharraigh Day Care Centre. They also provide Home Support as a core service.

Holiday respite and 24 hour emergency care services are delivered on request and are demand led.

Carers are a major focus for the organisation which provides support to carers, advising them of their rights, giving them respite from their caring duties and organising Carers Evenings where they are given information and support and have an opportunity to relax. They have a representative on the Carers Strategy Working Group which is a sub Group of the Community Health and Social Care Partnership for the Western Isles.

2. Barra Day Centre - Garadh a Bhagh a Tuath & Adult Learners
   http://www.garadh.org
Barra Day Centre is registered to provide a day care service to a maximum of 16 adults with learning disabilities, physical impairment and mental health problems.

The service is provided by Comhairle nan Eilean Siar for each weekday.

The service provides an excellent range of activities at both sites used for meaningful tasks.

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday are spent in the garden centre know as Garadh a Bagh a Tuath.

Wednesdays and Fridays are spent in the Day Care Centre where the service administration operates from a dedicated room in a shared building owned by the Lews Castle College.

All the Clients are picked up at home by Bus Bharraigh and dropped off at the various locations and then picked up and returned home at the end of the day.

3. Day Care

Bus Bharraigh also supports and operates a transport service on behalf of the St. Brendan’s Hospital. We carry on average 2 clients once or twice a week, from their home to the hospital and back in order that they can receive specialist medical treatment. The NHS are billed directly for this.

4. Youth Club and Youth Cafe

Bus Bharraigh operates weekly to carry Barra and Vatersay’s youth to their various clubs and Cafe’s. Around 27 kids are carried from their homes and back.

5. Pensioners Shopping

The Pensioners shopping has been operating for a long number of years and at no charge to the individual. The service is run in between our other core services once a week on the main shopping days. Both vehicles are used and about 20 clients are picked up at their homes and dropped off.

6. Pensioners Club

The Pensioners Club is also supported once a week, where clients are picked up at their homes and transported to Castlebay and back.

7. Men’s Club

The Men’s Club is also supported once a week. This is a new club that is aimed at getting men out of the house allowing them to meet socially.

8. Mixed Ability Swimmers Club
This club is supported by Bus Bharraigh and meet at various times of the year.

9. Community Events

Bus Bharraigh is available for general hire for community based events such as Barra Fest, Barrathon, evening fund raising etc.. The normal charge is 70p per mile.

Conclusions

The Community Transport Service operated by Voluntary Action Barra and Vatersay is a vital lifeline that brings the community on Barra and Vatersay closer to their Service Providers.

On an island where the public service bus transport is very limited and is not available in the evenings, the continuation of the community transport service is both essential and crucial.

Every year, Bus Bharraigh covers almost 30,000 miles and carries around 7 thousand passengers.

These are significant figures when set against an island that has a circular road 13.5 miles long and a population of just over 1,100 people.

From an economic development point of view, Bus Bharraigh employs around 8 staff and invests in local services for fuel, repairs, transport etc..

Testimonials from Cobhair Bharraigh and Garadh are also enclosed.

On an isolated island where there is no public transport provision on the island after 5pm each night and none on a Sunday, there is a real vacuum in terms of residents travelling to either community services or to meet business needs.

Most ferries arrive on Barra from the mainland after 8pm and those passengers on foot have no means other that one of two taxis to get to their destination.

If we had the ability to access funding to improve our capital infrastructure and increase access to community transport, the benefits would be widespread in social and economic terms.

The Third Sector should be allowed to explore opportunity in this area, working with NHS and Local Authority bodies and while some opportunities can be made possible through change funds etc.. the current procedures are slow and cumbersome.
As an organisation we are looking to plan Community Transport demand and opportunity over the next five to ten years. We intend to work with the community and meet with organisations, private enterprise and public bodies to make sure we are in place to deliver for the people on these islands. We would welcome the committee’s support to do this.

Eoin MacNeil
Development Manager
Voluntary Action Barra and Vatersay
18 April 2013

Finance

Enclosed are a range of figures outlining the Community Transport income and expenditure and a copy of VAV’s latest accounts are also attached.

INCOME

April 2012 – 7th November 2012

- CNES Grants £30,363.76
- Invoices £11,435.20
- Other £ 372.50
- TOTAL £42,171.46

EXPENDITURE

April 2012 – 7th November 2012

- Payroll £31,416.57
- Running Costs £14,785.10
- Other £ 609.15
- TOTAL £46,870.82

Differential -£4,639.36
With regards the recent budget consultations carried out by CNES, we would like to comment on the effect that removal of the service provided by Bus Bharraigh would have on our service.

We operate a Daycare service four days a week for elderly people on Barra and Vatersay. At the moment we have 25 regular Daycare users, many of whom are the most vulnerable people in our community. Old people who live alone, who are vulnerable due to isolation, exclusion, frailty or depression, those who are ill, or long-term unwell, and people suffering from dementia have a better quality of life, maintain essential life skills, and live longer, healthier lives as a direct result of accessing our services. The support we provide to service users and family carers with regards Daycare provision is vital.

At present we can provide a comprehensive Daycare package which includes transporting services users to and from the Daycare Centre using the Bus Bharraigh Community Transport Scheme. Having no such service would have a devastating effect on the service we currently provide.

Without this specialised transport, many of our services users would not be able to access our services. As a result of this, the lunchtime Home Care visits provided by CNES would need to be increased, as service users would be at home all day. In addition to this, our services are preventative in terms of healthcare needs, as we have regular visits from Health Professionals. This ensures ongoing conditions can be monitored, and deterioration is identified at an early stage, thereby reducing emergency hospital admissions. Family carers are presently supported by our organisation, and many are able to remain economically active as a result of us providing Daycare to the person they look after.
The direct effect on our service, the quality of lives of our services users, and the support provided to carers, in addition to the knock-on effect on the social and healthcare services would be almost immeasurable should the service provided to our organisation by Bus Bharraigh be reduced.

Yours sincerely,
Fiona MacDonald
Acting Service Manager