

Report of
West Mainland Area Transport Forum

Focusing on the topic of
Timing of Internal Transport and Integration with
Other Transport Services

Consultation with young people, Walls Primary and Kalliness Residents
still to be included



July 2008

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1) Background

It is important that the various modes of transport within Shetland are provided to meet the needs of individuals and communities as best they can. In order to assist, Area Transport Forums have been set up across the Isles. They provide an opportunity for users and possible future users to influence the way transport is provided in their area.

A forum covers each of the following areas: South, Central, West, Lerwick and Bressay, North Mainland, North Isles & Whalsay and Skerries.

Every six months a different topic will be open for discussion, and, in time will include opportunities for walking and cycling, as well as the internal bus, ferry and air services.

There are no guarantees that this process will lead to an increase in the services provided, but it will assist in ensuring that the services provided are appropriate. Hearing the views of users and potential users helps create a better understanding of what aspects of public transport work and which areas need improving. Any external transport issues raised will be recorded and passed on to the recently formed Shetland External Transport Forum, where users are able to discuss issues with the main external transport providers.

2) Methodology

The initial meeting for the West Mainland area was held on 03 June 2008 at 6.30pm in Bixter Hall. The topic for discussion at this meeting was the timing of internal transport and integration with other transport services.

2.1) Pre-Meeting Consultation and Research

In preparation for the public meeting, letters of invite were sent to various interested groups in the area, these included:

- Businesses with an interest in public transport, such as shops and visitor centres;
- Community groups, such as Community Councils and school Pupil Councils;
- Service providers, such as schools and health centres; and
- Transport operators in the West Mainland.

These letters detailed the purpose of Area Transport Forums, the date and venue of the first meeting and the topic to be discussed. In addition to the letters a number of posters advertising the meeting were sent out to be put on display in public places such as shops, post offices and health centres.

To give people an opportunity to respond to the issues prior to the public meeting a number of questionnaire postcards were included with the posters to be put on display. The postcards were postage paid and had four questions covering issues of public transport timetabling for people to fill out and return, the questions were:

- Please provide examples of opportunities that you and the wider community can access using the public transport services in your area;
- Please provide examples of current transport that meets needs, explaining why;
- Please provide any examples of opportunities that you and the wider community are unable to access using the public transport services; and
- Please provide any examples of where transport services in the area could be improved. There are no guarantees that this will lead to an increase in services provided, but it will assist in ensuring that the services provided are appropriate.

People were also invited to respond to the issues via email or letter.

Some further consultation was done with Care Centre staff in the West Mainland, who raised a number of issues on public transport in the area.

All information gathered through postcards and emails was collated (see Appendix A) along with information previously heard during the Regional Transport Strategy consultation relevant to the issues to be discussed.

2.2) Community Meeting

The community meeting, held at Bixter Hall, ran from 6.30pm to about 8.00pm and was attended by 16 people. A list of attendees is included in Appendix B.

Councillor Frank Robertson welcomed everyone to the meeting. Transport Services Manager, Ken Duerden, gave an overview of the purpose of Area Transport Forums and the issues to be covered at the meeting. Also in attendance were Councillor Florence Grains, Councillor Gary Robinson, Transport Strategy Officer Emma Perring and Transport Services Graduate Placement Sean Tulloch.

Two tables were set up with a number of materials to assist with discussions. These were:

- Copies of bus and ferry timetables for the West Mainland;
- Maps of the West Mainland area;
- Information sheets with findings from the pre-meeting consultation; and
- Wider Issues cards for attendees to record thoughts and suggestions on issues less relevant to the evening's topic.

Four key questions were outlined to help guide the discussion:

- What do you use transport services for?
- What services are important?
- How well are they working?
- What needs to be changed or improved?

The format for discussion was:

- The attendees were asked to divide themselves into groups and sit at each of the tables to discuss their assigned topic;
- A facilitator sat with each group to help guide discussion and record issues raised on flip charts;
- The discussions lasted 45 minutes and covered the topics outlined by the four key questions;
- After rounding off discussions there was a brief overview of the key themes raised; and
- Finally attendees were given an opportunity to comment on the information recorded on the flip charts.

3) Results

Results from the pre-meeting consultation included:

- Of the 170 questionnaire postcards sent out, 6 were returned;
- A number of issues were raised by Care Centre staff in Walls; and
- 1 email was received from an individual.

Results from the public meeting included:

- 16 people attended the meeting and engaged in a 45 minute discussion session (see Appendix B for a full list of attendees);
- 1 postcard was filled out with thoughts on wider transport issues; and
- 6 comments were made on how to improve Area Transport Forums

4) Findings

A number of key issues were raised in both the pre-meeting consultation and the discussion sessions at the public meeting. A full write up of findings from the pre-meeting consultation is included in Appendix A, while those from the public meeting are included in Appendix C. Some of the main points raised included:

What services are important?

- Services in the mornings and early evenings are important for commuters working in Lerwick and are frequently well used;
- Shopper services are essential for people living in remote areas without a local shop;
- Bus connections with ferries to the Outer Isles;
- A service on Sunday evenings that transports school children to the AHS Hostel is useful for the public as well, as it is the only bus available on Sundays.

How well are they working?

- There is concern that buses are not being used efficiently;
 - Some are running empty on morning positioning runs;
 - Others are being delayed while waiting to connect with other services;
 - Express buses are not utilising full capacity due to a reluctance to pick up passengers from other areas;
 - Some feel the 1805 bus to Lerwick wastes time travelling via Scalloway, although others feel it is a valuable connection;
- There is a lack of connections between different areas in the West Mainland, particularly for making bus connections in Bixter;
- Bus connections for the Foula ferry work quite well although there is a two hour wait in the morning;
- It is felt that a lack of bus connections with Papa Stour is damaging tourism on the island;
- There is split opinion on the effectiveness of dial-a-ride services;
 - Some feel they are of limited use and the day ahead booking system is an issue;
 - Others feel they are effective and well used by tourists in the summer;
 - Some feel that an increase in use of private transport is limiting usage of dial-a-ride services;
 - The dial-a-ride taxi from Lerwick to Tingwall airport for flights to the Outer Isles is felt to be good;
- Connections with services to other areas in Shetland are limited, particularly for catching flights at Sumburgh;
- There are no real connections with NorthLink arrivals or departures; and
- The 2230 bus from Lerwick to Walls is too late for younger children attending leisure events in town but also too early for adults going out in town.

What needs to be changed or improved?

- Several suggestions were made to improve efficiency of current services between the West Mainland and Lerwick;
 - Morning buses on positioning runs to Walls could pick up NorthLink passengers from Holmsgarth;
 - The 0700 service from Walls to Lerwick could travel via Scalloway;
 - Daytime services could travel via Scalloway as there is a feeling that the Scalloway service is under-used;
 - Service arriving in Lerwick at 1415 could be moved back to 1400 to connect with a South Mainland bus to Sumburgh;
 - The 1535 bus from Lerwick to Aith could make a return trip to Lerwick via Walls;
 - The 1705 service from Lerwick could be a little later as it is too early for many people finishing work at 1700;
- Transport could be better organised for access to Health Centres;
 - Foula and Papa Stour ferry connections should accommodate the different Surgery opening days;
 - Better links are needed to Bixter and Scalloway Health Centres;
- Shopper services could be more frequent and possibly be expanded to include medical appointments;
- A number of issues were raised concerning feeder services;
 - More frequent feeders to and from areas in the West Mainland are needed to connect with buses to and from Lerwick in the daytime;
 - More feeder connections are needed for the Papa Stour ferry;
 - New housing developments in some areas could increase demand for feeder services in the near future;
- Some suggestions were made for introducing new services;
 - Daytime services could be introduced on Wednesdays as there is on other days;
 - Later evening services are needed between Lerwick and Walls, particularly with the new cinema/music venue being built;
 - There is a need for services between different areas in the West Mainland, particularly in the evening for people attending leisure activities; and
- Suggested to look into options for further utilising other transport services, such as school buses and community minibuses, for public use.

In terms of wider transport issues, the following points were raised:

- Suggested timetable changes could be tested on a trial basis;
- Better advertisement is needed on some services such as feeders and shopper services;
- Why can't young people use fare discount cards?
- Bus fares should be examined as some journeys are more expensive than others despite being a shorter distance;
- There is a perception that some drivers could do more to assist younger children on the bus and ensure their security;
- Better provision of parking along the main road could encourage a park and ride style of travel;
- The buses currently in use are designed for short distance city journeys and not really appropriate for many areas of Shetland;

- It is felt that bus shelters are cold, draughty and in need of improvement;
- Current buses have very limited space for carrying passengers luggage or transporting freight; and
- There is a feeling that it is important to support local community operators.

5) Conclusions

A number of main points can be drawn from the information gathered in this report and will be used in future planning of transport services. Presently the bus service appears to be most widely used by people travelling to work and accessing shops in Lerwick. Some of the issues raised show how the current timetable could be altered to better serve these demands and also extend the service to cover other demands such as access to healthcare and leisure activities. A summary of these points includes:

- Look into options for improving routing of services and using buses on positioning runs to utilise their full capacity;
- Ensuring shopper and feeder services are frequent and accessible to maintain the sustainability of remote communities;
- Consider options for improving healthcare access;
- Examine ways of improving connections to external transport at Holmsgarth and Sumburgh; and
- Consider introducing new evening services to allow access to leisure activities in Lerwick and areas throughout the West Mainland.

In terms of improvements on future Area Transport Forums a number of issues have been raised and will be considered, these include:

- Rethink the distribution of the questionnaire postcards as there was a poor return rate on this occasion despite the high number sent out;
- Consider engaging in more face to face consultation with businesses and community groups as these types of meetings often produce valuable information; and
- Consider ways to better advertise the public meetings, such as posters in bus shelters and adverts in the Shetland Times.

APPENDIX A: Findings from Pre-Meeting Research & Consultation

General Comments

Within the Transport Strategy there were a number of issues raised about bus services in the West Mainland:

- Public transport between Westside and Lerwick is adequate and shouldn't be reduced;
- Noted that there is a lot of time wasted driving around Lerwick itself;
- There is a placing run in the morning when the bus operates but is "not in service", maybe this could be changed so it can pick people up;
- Public transport for the Westside is considerably poorer in the evening;
- A feeder service that takes people from Sandness to the Lerwick bus does not operate as a return service;
- It's felt there should be more dial-a-ride services in the area like the one linking to the Papa Stour ferry;
- Westside has a good public transport system for a rural area with three buses per day;
- Buses are used by a wide variety of people, the 0700 bus from Walls to Lerwick is particularly useful for apprentices;
- More services may be needed as private transport becomes more expensive and population is aging;
- Dial-a-ride services in the area are well used and are useful for tourists in the summer;
- The dial-a-ride service from Lerwick to Tingwall airport is believed to be very good;
- The bus service from Walls to Lerwick works reasonably well for Foula residents, although there is a 2 hour wait in the morning;
- The ferry crew is flexible and considerate as they will wait for passenger or goods if the bus is late on route to the terminal;
- Felt to be easy enough to get from Papa Stour ferry in West Burrafirth to Lerwick using the dial-a-ride community taxi;
 - Current service is good but there's a need for a more regular service;
 - Increase of people taking private cars from Papa Stour direct to Lerwick is reducing usage of dial-a-ride service and may threaten it's future, causing trouble for those who don't have cars;
- Possibly integrate passenger services to Papa Stour ferry with other existing services such as the grocery van from the Viking or the post bus;
- Lack of transport from Lerwick to West Burrafirth is damaging Papa Stour tourism;
 - Estimated in 2005 Papa Stour hostel lost 22 bookings as a result; and
- Of the 16 weekly sailings between Papa Stour and Mainland only 5 connect with bus services.

Care Centre Staff:

- Buses in the morning travel out to Walls empty while on positioning runs. Could these not pick people up while on route?

- The staggered shift system at the care centre makes it difficult for planning bus times as staff start and finish at different times;
- School buses could be utilised more for public services;
- Care centre has their own bus which could maybe be used more for some other services but this would be limited as it is required in the event of fire evacuations at the centre;
- The shopper service on Fridays could perhaps be extended to better accommodate surgery appointments;
- There is a lack of transport in the evenings for young people. This would need to be improved, particularly when Mareel opens;
- Transport provision from Aith to the surgery in Bixter is needed as its not possible with the current services; and
- The lack of services to and from Aith during the day also make it difficult for young people to arrange confidential medical appointments.

Individuals:

- Buses from Walls to Lerwick at 0700 and 0755 are good for workers getting to jobs in the town;
- Lack of buses during the day on Wednesday. Current services only cover times for people commuting to and from work;
- The bus fare between Bridge of Walls and Walls is £2 for a return trip. An equivalent 2 miles each way journey in Lerwick would only be £1. As there is not shop in Bridge of Walls it's a frequently used service;
- Only one small bus per week on Saturdays that leaves Lerwick after 5pm;
- There is a demand for feeder services to and from Aith and East Burrafirth to connect with all the services between Walls and Lerwick. Currently the only connections are for 0800 and 1710, which is a long day in town for anyone who isn't working;
- People can get into Lerwick by bus at night for leisure activities but there is no return transport. A service from Lerwick at 9pm or 10pm would improve this;
- Lack of evening buses also limit job opportunities as shift workers would have no transport home if they didn't drive;
- Shopping bus services are good for senior citizens; and
- Bus times could be better arranged for people in rural areas attending health services in both Bixter and Lerwick. Currently people would have to wait long periods of time if relying on the bus.

APPENDIX B: List of Meeting Attendees

Name
K. Willis
Chris Robertson
Kay Wiseman
Hazel Tindall
T. Tindall
Sue Beer
Jane Beer
Rachel Beer
Lynne Miller
Councillor Florence Grains
Councillor Frank Robertson
Councillor Gary Robinson
Chloe Miller
A & K Transport
P.W Isbister
John Priest

APPENDIX C: Findings from Public Meeting Discussions

Key Questions

What services are important?

How well are they working?

What needs to be changed or improved?

What services are important?

- The 0700 service from Walls is moderately used and valuable for people getting to work in Lerwick at 0800;
- The 0755 service from Walls to Lerwick is very well used;
- Shopper services are essential for people living in remote areas without a local shop;
- 1705 service is important for people getting home from work and is well used;
- A service on Sunday evenings that transports school children to the AHS Hostel is useful for the public as well;
 - There is some concern that a lack of children from the area staying in the hostel will lead to the service being taken away;

How well are they working?

- Buses in the morning from Walls are good for workers going to Lerwick but they run empty on positioning runs to Walls;
- The 0755 service often has to wait about 10 minutes in Bixter to transfer school children to another bus;
- The Aith express bus is reluctant to take Weisdale passengers
- Dial-a-ride services are of limited use;
 - System of having to book the night before is inconvenient, particularly for tourists;
 - Felt that drivers also lose time if the service is poorly used as they could have been doing something else but had to be available in the event of a booking;
- There are very limited connections with South Mainland buses for flights from Sumburgh;
 - There is one connection per day but frequent flight delays make this hard to rely on;
- There are no real connections with NorthLink arrivals or departures;
- There is split opinion over the 1805 bus to Lerwick going via Scalloway;
 - Some feel this means too long a journey on an uncomfortable bus;
 - Others feel the connection to areas other than Lerwick is valuable;
- The 2230 bus from Lerwick to Walls is too late for younger children attending leisure events in town but also too early for adults going out in town;

What needs to be changed or improved?

- Morning buses going empty on positioning runs to Walls could be used to transport people from Lerwick out to the Westside;
 - Possibly pick up NorthLink passengers from Holmsgarth?

- The 0700 service is important but moderately used;
 - Could this service maybe travel via Scalloway to increase usage and add another connection?
- Further connections with Scalloway were suggested;
 - There is a feeling that Scalloway services during the daytime are under-used and could benefit from integration with Westside buses;
 - If timed properly, this could also greatly improve access to the Scalloway surgery;
- Surgery connections are an issue for people all over the West Mainland and the Outer Isles;
 - Transport from Foula and Papa Stour ferries could be better arranged to accommodate the variation in Surgery opening days throughout the Westside;
 - Better connections with Scalloway are needed for people in areas such as Whiteness, Weisdale and Tingwall;
 - Perhaps a dial-a-ride service to the Scalloway surgery would work or a twice weekly surgery in the available location in Weisdale could be introduced;
- The bus arriving in Lerwick from Walls at 1415 misses a South Mainland bus connection, and thus a flight from Sumburgh, by 15 minutes;
 - This bus used to arrive at 1400 to make the connection, perhaps could be moved back?
 - Noted that the service was moved to current time for a Foula ferry connection;
- Wednesday service needs improvement during the daytime;
 - Why can't it be the same as other weekdays?
- Shopper services could be better organised and more frequent;
 - Sandness & Walls shopper is only once a month, which is a long wait considering Sandness has no local shop;
 - The shopper service from Cott via Weisdale is good but could be made a weekly service rather than every second Tuesday;
 - There is confusion over whether or not people in certain areas are entitled to use some services;
- Feeder services are scattered and need some improvement;
 - Morning services need feeders from Gruting, Skeld, Aith and East & West Burrafirth;
 - Most days there are five services from Walls per day but many remote areas have only one feeder connection per day;
 - The 1230 bus from Lerwick would particularly benefit from feeder connections;
 - The Aith feeder service currently varies according to school holidays, but some feel it should be made a standard service;
 - There could be demand for a feeder for Cott as there are new houses being built in the area;
- The 1535 bus from Lerwick to Aith could make a return journey to Lerwick via Walls for children attending after school activities;
- The 1705 bus from Lerwick is a little early for people finishing work;
 - More services around 1800 and 2000 could solve this;
 - 1705 is good as it goes around town but could also maybe include Tescos and Clickimin?

- The lack of evening services needs improvement;
 - There is an evening service from Walls to Lerwick at 1805 but nothing back;
 - Perhaps a once or twice weekly service from Lerwick at around 2130 could be useful for films/eating out;
 - Buses between areas within the West Mainland in the evening would be good for young children attending the leisure centre and other activities, even one service a week would go a long way;
 - A late evening weekend service from Lerwick at around 0030 would be good for people attending later events in town;
- Expanded use of community minibuses could improve access to leisure facilities within the West Mainland;
 - Could be issues with licences;

Wider Issues

- Suggested timetable changes could be tested on a trial basis;
- The published timetables need some improvement as there is a feeling that some services are not being properly advertised, particularly some feeder and shopper services;
- Why can't young people use fare discount cards?
- Bus fares should be examined as some journeys are more expensive than others despite being a shorter distance;
 - Fares from one area of the Westside to another are often more expensive than an equivalent journey in Lerwick;
 - Fare from Aith to AHS is £2.60 while Bixter to AHS is only £1.90
 - Short journeys within rural areas could be made free, while longer journeys such as to Lerwick could still have fares
- There is a perception that some drivers could do more to assist younger children on the bus and ensure their security;
- Better provision of parking along the main road could encourage a park and ride style of travel;
- The buses currently in use are designed for short distance city journeys and not really appropriate for many areas of Shetland;
- It is felt that bus shelters are cold, draughty and in need of improvement;
- Also current buses have very limited space for carrying passengers luggage or transporting freight;
- There is a feeling that it is important to support local community operators;

How can we make Area Transport Forums work better?

- Better advertisement is needed on buses, in bus shelters and in the papers, possibly a flier in the Shetland Times;
- More face to face consultation with community groups such as residents associations and primary school pupils;
- Send postcards to Shetland Housing Complex;