



EVENING BUS SERVICES

Report by Head of Municipal Services

PURPOSE

- 1.1 The purpose of the Report is to consider options for alternative provision of evening bus services in Broadbay and Westside areas of Lewis.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 The current seven-year contracts for school and public bus services in Lewis and Harris were awarded in October 2019. Although the operator designed contract for Ness and North Lochs included the provision of evening bus services, Broadbay and Westside evening bus service were not part of this contract and have been operating on an ad hoc basis since 2019.
- 2.2 The total cost of operating these services is £130k per annum.
- 2.3 A review of Community Transport carried out by TAS Ltd has not identified any potential community transport-based solution to these services.
- 2.4 As Broadbay and Westside evening bus services are non-statutory and are not part of a long-term contract, it is therefore proposed that the continuation of these services are considered as part of the current budget savings process. The current budget provision only extends to the end of March 2024.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Comhairle:
 - (a) note the Report; and
 - (b) agree to consider the continuation the Broadbay and Westside public bus evening services as part of the budget savings process.

Contact Officer: David Macleod, Head of Municipal Services

Appendix:

Background Papers: Evening Bus Services – Lewis and Harris 20 September 2023

IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The following implications are applicable in terms of the Report.

Resource Implications	Implications/None
Financial	The costs of providing the current level of evening bus services have only been budgeted for to the end of March 2024.
Legal	None
Staffing	None
Assets and Property	None
Strategic Implications	Implications/None
Risk	Withdrawal of evening bus services without adequate replacement is likely to result in loss of employment for people without access to other means of transport.
Equalities	Access to public transport provides a means of travel for those who do not have access to a car.
Corporate Strategy	Transport and connectivity, economy, and jobs are important elements of the Corporate Strategy
Environmental Impact	None
Consultation	None

BACKGROUND

- 5.1 Broadbay and Westside evening bus services are not part of the main operator designed contract and have been operating on a on a rolling month to month basis since 2019.
- 5.2 The Comhairle agreed to continue the Broadbay and Westside evening services with a view to exploring alternative solutions, including an option to extend Community Transport as a potential solution.
- 5.3 Bus na Comhairle operate the Broadbay Evening Services to Back and Tolsta on the W5a Route and to Bayble and Portnaguran on the W5 route.
- 5.4 Galson Motors operate the Westside connections to the Ness evening service.
- 5.5 The review currently being carried out by TAS Ltd has not identified any interest from community transport providers to take on scheduled services. Community minibuses are primarily used for localised community activities and events, with volunteer drivers. There was no interest in extending into the areas of transport provision currently being carried out by commercial bus operators.
- 5.6 Passenger numbers remain similar to previous reporting, with most of the passengers using these services on a regular basis being evening workers, who may not have any other means of transport to get to or from their place of work.
- 5.7 The introduction of free travel for under 22s has resulted in a small increase in passenger numbers.
- 5.8 As with all public bus services in the Western Isles, these services do not operate commercially and require subsidy. The current cost of operating evening bus services is circa £42k for the Westside service and circa £44k for each of the Broadbay routes, to Point or Tolsta. A total of £130k per annum.