

Transport Programme - Sutherland Community Questionnaire

Introduction

These are very difficult times for public services as we continue to be in a period of austerity. The grant Highland Council receives continues to reduce in real terms. This means that the Council's annual cash grant is not expected to increase over the next 4 years, but we continue to face increasing costs and demands for public services. In order to balance its finances the Council must continue to make reductions in the services it currently provides.

Over the past 5 years Highland Council has made over £77.7 million of cuts including some through efficiency savings. This includes a large reduction in senior and middle management posts and changes in the way we deliver services. Due to the current situation with the Council's reduction of income in real terms, the budget gap is currently £56 million.

Although the demand from the public for a good service is still the same, it is impossible for the Council to continue to deliver these services in the same way or at the same level as before. Despite a range of options for further cuts and efficiency savings the Council is likely to be 10-15% smaller by 2019 than it currently is. This will mean a reduction in the number of staff we employ, the number of buildings we use and this will impact upon ALL services across the organisation.

The need to reduce spending will impact upon Highland Council's current level of expenditure on the transport services it supports. Across the Highland area the Council spends £15.003 million annually on providing mainstream home-to-school, public and dial-a-bus transport services. The target is to reduce this level of spending by £2.246 million.

In Sutherland £1.678 million is spent by Highland Council on providing mainstream home-to-school, public and dial-a-bus transport services. This spending supports the majority of bus services which operate in Sutherland. This level of funding support must be reduced by £252,236. Whilst Highland Council will seek to provide services as well as possible, the need to reduce expenditure will require consideration of the transport priorities for the area.

A questionnaire is available for individual members of the public to complete and this is accessible at www.surveymonkey.com/s/TransportProgrammePublic. This questionnaire, however, seeks your organisation's views on the current bus service provision in Sutherland and how it may be altered to reflect the still substantial, but lower level of funding which will be available.

Three public meetings will be held to discuss future transport provision within the context of the financial constraints facing Highland Council. These will take place on:

- Tuesday 17th March, 1-3pm, Durness Village Hall
- Tuesday 17th March, 7-9pm, Assynt Centre, Lochinver
- Tuesday 24th March, 1-3pm, Bettyhill Village Hall
- Tuesday 24th March, 7-9pm, Fountain Road Hall, Golspie

If you have any initial questions on this survey, please contact the Highland Council Policy Unit at policy6@highland.gov.uk

Any information we receive from you will be treated in the strictest confidence and will not be used for any purposes other than this research.

This questionnaire will close at 5pm on the 30th March.

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Your details

***1. Name of organisation**

***2. Name of principal contact**

3. email

***4. Tel No.**

Section 2. Potential impact of changes in level of service

The Highland Council supports the provision of a number of public and dial-a-bus services in Sutherland. These are listed below. Please describe what impact a change in the bus service provision – that is, a reduction in frequency or withdrawal – would have on your organisation and possibly the wider community.

Services.

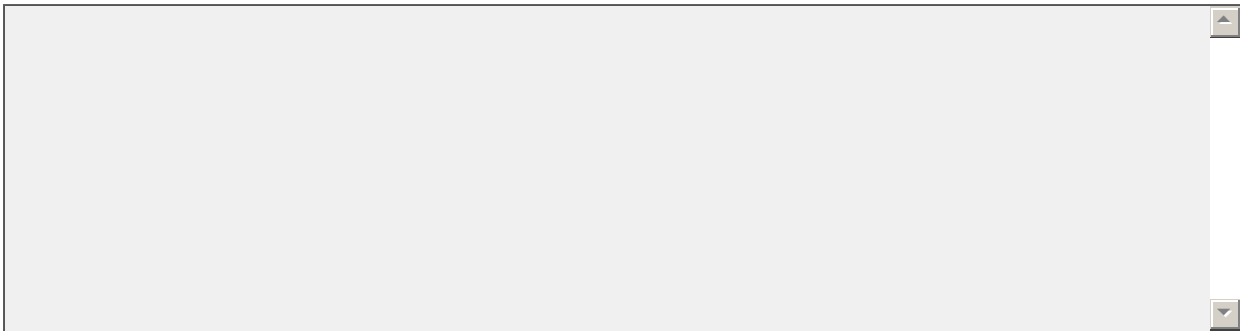
- Durness –Thurso (The Durness Bus)
- Durness – Lairg (The Durness Bus)
- Durness – Inverness (The Durness Bus)
- Tongue - Thurso (Stagecoach)
- Inverness – Durness bike bus (D&E Coaches)
- Drumbeg - Ullapool (Highland Translink)
- Drumbeg - Lochinver (Highland Translink)
- Lairg - Helmsdale (MacLeod's Coaches)
- Kinlochbervie Dial-A-Bus (Allan Bruce)
- Assynt Dial-A-Bus (Lochinver Taxi)
- Dornoch Area Dial-A-Bus (MacKay's Taxis)
- Ardgay/Lairg Dial-A-Bus (MacLeod's Coaches)
- North Sutherland Dial-A-Bus (Ormlie Taxis)
- Durness Area Dial-A-Bus (D. J. Mackay)

5. Impact of a reduction in the frequency of services

6. Impact of a withdrawal of a service

Section 2. Potential impact of changes in level of service (cont.)

7. The Highland Council also supports a number of school bus services in Sutherland. These cost Highland Council £1.3million per year to provide (two-thirds of the £1.3m is spent on school-only bus services and and the other one-third is for mixed school-public use). Does your organisation have views on how these school transport services might be delivered for a lower cost?



8. Does your organisation consider that there is anything that prevents or discourages members of your community from using the bus services available in Sutherland?

Yes

No

***9. What does your organisation think would therefore encourage members of your community to use these bus services more?**

***10. Is there any activity that members of your community are prevented from doing or service you cannot access because of a lack of public transport?**

Yes

No

***11. Please provide details**

Section 4. Mobility and sensory impairment measures

***12. Does your organisation know of any bus services which are difficult to use for disabled or elderly passengers who may have, for example, mobility difficulties, sensory impairments or learning disabilities?**

Yes

No

13. Which services are these and why is it difficult for people to use them?

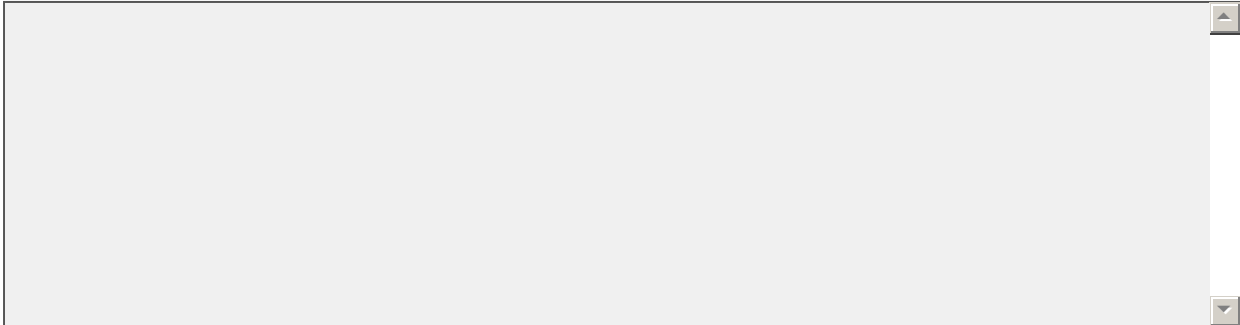
Section 5. Looking forward for the next 5 years

The Highland Council supports, as listed in previous questions, a number of public and dial-a-bus services in Sutherland. These cost Highland Council £800k to provide (45% of the £800k is spent on dedicated public bus services and 55% supports mixed public-schools use).

*** 14. Will the current services meet the needs of Sutherland over the next 5 years?**

- Yes
- No
- Do not know

15. Does your organisation have views on how they can be delivered more cost effectively?



16. In that case, and bearing in mind that the Highland Council has a lower budget for expending on transport service over the next 5 years, what does your organisation think should change - in terms of what should be provided and how it should be provided?



Thank you

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire. Your response will provide valuable input to the Transport Programme.