

Transport Information Summary – Wards 7 & 8 – Cromarty Firth, and Tain and Easter Ross

1. Information for the Alness, Invergordon and Tain Associated School Group areas, excluding Ardgay and Edderton.
2. Most buses in the area operate commercially, but Seaboard and Portmahomack depend on contract services funded by The Highland Council. Services to the west of Tain (i.e. the Lairg - Tain route and school transport contracts in that area) were retendered as part of the Sutherland retendering exercise, for commencement in October 2015.
3. The Highland Council's overall spending in the area for school and public bus services is £1million. The sum spent on public bus services and those services which are a mix of public/school transport is £354,000.
4. Significant public transport contracts include:
 - Tain – Seaboard
 - Tain – Portmahomack
 - Tain area subsidised taxi
 - Ardross subsidised taxi
5. Issues are:
 - Many services – commercial as well as tendered – are built around school transport needs
 - Tain area subsidised taxi funded through developer contributions
 - High cost and low usage of Ardross subsidised taxi (2.7 passengers per day)
 - Sustainability of contracts given budget pressures
 - Commercial withdrawal of Evanton – Dingwall announced by Stagecoach for November
 - Access to University of the Highlands and Islands
 - Cromarty – Nigg ferry also being retendered
6. It is intended to have new contracts in place on 1 January 2017. Key steps in the process are:
 - Member consultation
 - Community consultation
 - Supplier Briefings and Public Contracts Scotland tender/auction training
 - Routes and specifications development
 - Tender phase
 - Highland Council Committee and Project Partner approvals
 - Award process
 - Contract implementation