The Highland Council

Agenda Item	**12**
Report No	**ECI/45/26**

Committee: **Economy and Infrastructure**

Date: **12 November 2026**

Report Title: **Community Transport Grants 2027-2030: Award Recommendations and Strategic Context**

Report By: **Assistant Chief Executive - Place**

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report outlines the assessment process undertaken in accordance with the Council's approved Community Transport Grant methodology and presents the outcome of the evaluation process for applications received under the 2027-2030 grant programme. The report summarises the assessment findings and makes recommendations for Members' consideration in relation to the allocation of available grant funding.

1.2 The report further highlights the strategic value of Community Transport within the Highland transport network. While community transport has often been perceived as peripheral to mainstream transport provision, experience across Highland demonstrates that it has long served a foundational role in enabling access to services, sustaining community connectivity and addressing transport disadvantage. The grant programme therefore represents more than a funding mechanism; it provides insight into an important and evolving sector and presents an opportunity to consider how community transport can be supported, developed and integrated strategically alongside other elements of the transport network to meet current and future transport challenges.

2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:-

i. **Approve** the grant award recommendations as set out in Table 1, Paragraph 6.4 with awards proposed to 34 Community Transport groups, including seven new grant recipient organisations;

ii. **Note** that the previously separate allocation for training and repairs has been incorporated into the main Community Transport Grant programme, with the £7,000 allocation redistributed through the recommended grant awards. In light of alternative training funding opportunities and existing arrangements for repair and maintenance costs, this approach enables greater direct support for Community Transport service delivery while remaining within the approved budget allocation;

iii. **Note** the established and increasingly significant role of Community Transport in enabling connectivity, accessibility and community resilience across Highland, and recognise the opportunities arising from its continued development and integration within the wider transport network; and

iv. **Note** the strategic observations arising from the grant assessment process and their potential to inform the future development of a Community Transport Strategy for Highland, reflecting the direction set out within the Public Transport Strategy approved by the Economy and Infrastructure Committee in May 2026.

3 Implications

3.1 **Resource** – The recommendations can be accommodated within the existing Community Transport budget.

3.2 **Legal** – Grant award letters will be issued to successful Community Transport organisations, outlining conditions of award, and Service Level Agreements detailing the requirements of ongoing grant support will follow.

3.3 **Risk** - Community Transport services provide essential connectivity for many communities and individuals across Highland, enabling access to healthcare, employment, education, shopping and social opportunities. Failure to approve the recommendations within this report would impact directly on the ability of organisations to sustain services, with consequent implications for accessibility, connectivity, community resilience and access to connecting transport services.

Reduced Community Transport provision may also place additional demand on other transport services and Council-supported interventions, potentially resulting in increased pressures on areas of transport expenditure where costs and service requirements can be more difficult to manage. Community Transport often represents a cost-effective and community-led approach to addressing local transport needs, and replacement provision may be more expensive and less responsive to local circumstances.

3.4 **Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people)** – There are no direct Health and Safety implications arising from the recommendations contained within this report. Community Transport operators remain responsible for complying with all relevant transport safety, vehicle maintenance and operational requirements. Where Community Transport organisations operate Highland Council owned or leased vehicles, they are also required to comply with relevant Highland Council policies and procedures.

3.5 **Gaelic** – Community Transport services support participation in a wide range of community activities across Highland, including Gaelic language and cultural events. A number of Community Transport providers also benefit from the involvement of Gaelic-speaking volunteers. The continued sustainability of these services can therefore contribute positively to the accessibility and resilience of Gaelic communities and activities.

4 Impacts

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3 Integrated Impact Assessment - Summary

4.3.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment screening was undertaken on 7 October 2026. The conclusions have been subject to the relevant Manager Review and Approval.

4.3.2 The Screening process has concluded that there are potential positive impacts in a number of areas. It was concluded that a full Integrated Impact Assessment is not required. Members are asked to consider the summary within **Appendix 1** to support the decision-making process.

4.3.3

Impact Assessment Area	**Conclusion of Screening**
Equality	• Children and Young People – Potential positive impact • Children affected by disability – Potential positive impact • Older adults –Potential positive impact
Socio-economic	Potential positive impact
Human Rights	No impact
Children's Rights and Well-being	Potential positive impact
Island and Mainland Rural	Potential positive impact
Climate Change	Potential positive impact
Data Rights	No impact

5 Background and Current Arrangements

5.1 Community Transport has long been a vital component of connectivity across Highland, supporting access to essential services and opportunities. While often viewed as complementary to mainstream public transport, experience demonstrates that it forms an established and essential part of the transport network in many communities. The increasing recognition of this role presents opportunities to support, develop and integrate Community Transport more strategically within a resilient and connected Highland transport system.

5.2 Community Transport provision in Highland continues to evolve in response to changing transport needs, policy priorities and opportunities for partnership working. While the sector has traditionally been associated with community-led transport solutions such as volunteer car schemes, community minibus operations and accessible transport services, its role has expanded significantly in recent years.

Community Transport organisations are increasingly recognised as important partners in the delivery of transport outcomes across Highland. In addition to providing traditional Community Transport services, a number of organisations now play a role in the delivery of home-to-school transport, demand-responsive public transport services and other contracted transport operations. This reflects both the capability of the sector and its increasing integration within the wider transport network.

The sector is also contributing to the development of new approaches to transport delivery through partnership working with public sector bodies and service providers. Emerging work involving Highland Council, NHS Highland and Community Transport operators to support renal transport services demonstrates the potential for Community Transport organisations to contribute to broader transport and accessibility objectives through collaborative service delivery.

At the same time, the wider transport landscape continues to change. Increased patronage arising from the introduction of the £2 fare cap has strengthened the viability and attractiveness of a number of long-distance bus services, particularly on routes where the value of the fare discount is greatest. However, many communities continue to experience limited local transport options, increasing the importance of effective connections between local journeys and the wider transport network.

Looking ahead, Community Transport organisations may also have an increasingly important role to play in the delivery of future transport services. The Council is expected to review and retender home-to-school transport arrangements during the period covered by this grant programme. Maintaining a resilient and sustainable Community Transport sector through grant support helps preserve transport capacity, local knowledge and operational capability within communities, ensuring that organisations are well placed to contribute to future transport delivery opportunities where appropriate.

In this context, Community Transport is increasingly supporting "first-mile/last-mile" connectivity, helping people access bus, rail, ferry, healthcare and other essential services. As a result, Community Transport is often fulfilling a role that extends beyond individual service provision, helping to connect and integrate different elements of the transport system. The grant assessment process highlights the extent to which Community Transport organisations are acting not only as service providers, but as a vital component of a connected and resilient transport network across Highland.

Recent developments also demonstrate a growing recognition of the role Community Transport can play in supporting network resilience and addressing gaps in provision. Opportunities are increasingly being identified to reinvest resources arising from wider transport service changes into Community Transport, enabling flexible and community-led solutions that maximise the value derived from available transport funding while responding directly to local transport needs. The Black Isle provides a recent example of how Community Transport is increasingly being considered as part of a wider transport ecosystem. Following changes to local transport provision, opportunities have been identified to redirect resources towards Community Transport initiatives capable of addressing local accessibility and connectivity needs. This reflects a growing recognition that Community Transport can play an important role in maximising the value derived from available transport funding while supporting locally tailored transport solutions.

5.3 Community Transport organisations continue to operate within an increasingly challenging environment. Rising costs associated with fuel, vehicle operation, maintenance, insurance and regulatory compliance continue to place pressure on organisations of all sizes, while wider economic uncertainty has created additional challenges for longer-term planning and sustainability.

The sector also faces ongoing challenges in relation to volunteer recruitment and retention. Many Community Transport services rely upon volunteers to undertake driving, coordination, governance and administrative roles. While volunteer commitment remains a defining strength of the sector, many organisations report increasing difficulty in recruiting and retaining volunteers, particularly in rural and remote areas.

Access to training and skills development can present further challenges, with organisations often operating with limited administrative capacity alongside increasing operational and regulatory requirements. Fleet replacement remains a significant concern for many providers, particularly where services rely upon specialist or accessible vehicles. The Community Transport Grant programme supports revenue expenditure only and is therefore unable to directly address capital investment requirements associated with vehicle replacement and renewal. The availability of complementary funding opportunities, including the Plugged-in Communities Grant Fund, is therefore particularly welcome, providing Community Transport organisations with opportunities to modernise fleets, explore low-emission transport solutions and strengthen longer-term operational resilience.

At the same time, demand for Community Transport services continues to grow. Community Transport organisations are increasingly expected to support a wide range of transport and accessibility challenges, including access to healthcare, education, employment, community activities and connections to the wider transport network. While this reflects the trusted and established role of Community Transport within communities, it can place considerable demands upon staff, volunteers and organisational resources.

These challenges highlight both the pressures currently facing the sector and the extent to which Community Transport has become embedded within the wider transport landscape. As its role continues to evolve, consideration will be required as to how Community Transport organisations can be supported to remain resilient, sustainable and capable of responding to future transport needs across Highland.

6 2027-2030 Community Transport Grant Applications

6.1 A total of 34 applications were received for the 2027-2030 Community Transport Grant programme. Applications were received from both established and emerging Community Transport providers representing a diverse range of operating models and transport services across Highland. Seven applications were submitted by organisations not funded through the previous grant programme, reflecting continued development and evolution within the sector. This includes Communities in Motion CT (CiMCT), which has applied in its own right, having previously been represented through Ferintosh Community Council.

The total funding requested for 2027/28 was £936,504.71, significantly exceeding the available annual budget of £498,000. The quality of applications received and the value of the services they represent meant that demand substantially exceeded the funding available, requiring careful consideration of how finite resources could be allocated fairly and effectively across the sector.

The funding recommendations presented in this report therefore seek to allocate the available resources as effectively and equitably as possible, balancing support for established services with opportunities for new and emerging provision.

6.2 Applications were assessed in accordance with the Council's approved Community Transport Grant assessment methodology as detailed within **Appendix 2**. The methodology was developed for the 2024-2027 grant programme and has been retained for the 2027-2030 funding cycle, reflecting its effectiveness in providing a consistent, transparent and evidence-based approach to grant assessment.
To support a robust and balanced evaluation process, each application was independently assessed by three officers. This approach enables applications to be considered from multiple perspectives, with scores subsequently reviewed and averaged to provide an overall assessment outcome.

The assessment methodology applies weighted scoring across five key criteria:-

- Social Benefit (40%)
- Project Impact Maximisation (20%)
- Support for Council Programme Priorities (15%)
- Financial Resilience (15%)
- Innovation (10%)

The weighted criteria are designed to recognise not only the scale and quality of Community Transport activity being delivered, but also the wider social, economic and community benefits arising from that activity. Following independent evaluation, scores were averaged and used to inform funding recommendations.

6.3 Collectively, Community Transport organisations support a broad range of transport activities and operating models, reflecting differing local needs, geography and community circumstances. Activities represented within the grant programme include volunteer car schemes, community minibus operations, Section 19 and Section 22 permit services, accessible transport, community-led demand responsive transport, healthcare transport, and services supporting access to shopping, education, employment and social opportunities.

Applications further demonstrate how Community Transport has evolved in response to local circumstances, resulting in complementary services operating alongside one another. In some areas, provision increasingly resembles an interconnected ecosystem, with different organisations and services providing overlapping but distinct forms of support. This creates resilience within local transport networks and opportunities for collaboration, referral and shared solutions to transport challenges.

South West Ross Community Car Scheme (SWRCCS) provides a particularly strong example. During the previous funding cycle, two separately funded pilot initiatives were established alongside the organisation's existing volunteer car scheme and have since become embedded within its wider service offer. Through the coordination of community minibus hire, operation of a dedicated community car service and continued delivery of its volunteer car scheme, SWRCCS is able to respond flexibly to a diverse range of transport needs across a large rural and remote area. This illustrates how Community Transport organisations can develop complementary services that strengthen local transport resilience and better meet the differing needs of communities.

The diversity of activity represented through applications highlights the importance of Community Transport not only in addressing specific transport needs, but also as a flexible and responsive component of wider community infrastructure.

6.4 The recommended grant awards are presented in the table below (and in more detail alongside commentary within **Appendix 3**) and reflect the outcome of the assessment process undertaken in accordance with the approved Community Transport Grant methodology. The figures shown represent the recommended award for 2027/28, being the first year of the three-year funding cycle.

In developing the recommendations, officers have assumed the continued application of inflationary uplifts during 2028/29 and 2029/30 to reflect cost increases affecting transport providers. Any future uplift would be informed by relevant Office for National Statistics Consumer Price Index (CPI) data and remain subject to the availability of funding and the Council's annual budget-setting process.

As outlined in Recommendations (ii), the previously separate allocation of £7,000 for training and repairs has been incorporated into the main grant programme and redistributed through the recommended awards. This approach maximises the resources available to support Community Transport service delivery while remaining within the approved budget allocation.

The recommendations presented are fully funded from within the existing Community Transport Grant budget. This provides an important degree of certainty and stability for funded organisations at a time when transport providers continue to face cost pressures associated with fuel, vehicle operation, maintenance and wider economic uncertainty.

The grant programme forms one element of the Council's wider support for Community Transport. Officer engagement with funded organisations will continue throughout the funding period, including identifying and facilitating access to additional funding opportunities where appropriate. This may include support through developer contributions, funding associated with service changes, and other external funding sources that can assist organisations to develop services, strengthen resilience and respond to local transport needs.

Organisation	Amount Requested, 2027/2028	Recommended Annual Award, 2027/2028
Applecross Community Company	£7,580.00	£7,500.00
Badenoch & Strathspey Community ConnXions (BSCX)	£40,000.00	£35,000.00
Beauly and District Care Project	£2,500.00	£2,000.00
Boleskine Community Care	£18,232.00	£4,500.00
Caithness Voluntary Group	£60,000.00	£43,500.00
Care Lochaber	£57,843.00	£42,000.00
Communities in Motion CT (CiMCT)	£14,449.00	£12,500.00
Community Support and Information, Ross-Shire	£52,650.00	£5,000.00
Connect Assynt LTD	£10,000.00	£9,000.00
Creich Croick & Kincardine District Day Care Association	£57,220.00	£7,500.00
Dornoch Area Community Interest Company	£10,000.00	£7,500.00
FarrGoes	£44,576.00	£27,500.00
Fox & Friends	£22,400.00	£10,000.00
Gairloch Community Car Scheme	£39,662.00	£34,500.00
Garve & District Development Company (TG&DDC)	£123,506.71	£17,500.00
Glenelg & Arnisdale Bus User Group (BUG)	£10,750.00	£9,500.00
Go Golspie Development Trust	£19,048.00	£14,500.00
GRO	£57,632.00	£5,000.00
Helmsdale Community Transport	£3,000.00	£2,500.00
Highlife Highland (Sunart Centre)	£12,000.00	£8,500.00
Lairg Community Association	£13,336.00	£10,000.00
Lochaber Action on Disability	£17,290.00	£12,000.00
Nairn Community Transport	£9,500.00	£6,500.00
Partnerships for Wellbeing	£30,000.00	£23,500.00
Shopmobility Highland	£25,000.00	£17,500.00
Sleat Community Trust	£7,955.00	£7,000.00
South Lochaber Community Company	£11,062.00	£2,500.00
South West Ross Community Car Scheme	£55,000.00	£43,500.00
Stratherrick and Foyers Community Trust	£7,500.00	£2,500.00
Strathnairn Community Access & Transport Association	£10,653.00	£7,500.00
Transport for Tongue Limited	£52,580.00	£37,000.00
Tykes	£13,150.00	£5,000.00
Urram	£7,930.00	£7,000.00
Wheels in Nairnshire	£12,500.00	£11,000.00
TOTAL	**£936,504.71**	**£498,000**

6.5 The recommendations presented in the table above have been developed within the constraints of the available budget and reflect the outcome of the assessment process alongside wider considerations relating to sustainability, value and service delivery. While many applications sought funding levels in excess of those available through the programme, officers have sought to allocate the available resources as fairly and effectively as possible across the sector.

In developing the recommendations, consideration was given not only to the quality of applications received, but also to the scale and scope of Community Transport activity being delivered, the extent of transport need being addressed, organisational capacity, financial position, and the availability of alternative sources of income or support. Funding recommendations should therefore be considered in the context of the overall assessment of each organisation rather than as a direct reflection of application quality alone.

While assessment scores formed an important component of the evaluation process, funding recommendations also took account of wider factors including organisational scale, financial position and access to alternative funding opportunities.

The recommendations seek, where possible, to provide continuity and stability for established Community Transport services while also recognising opportunities to support innovation, service development and the growth of Community Transport provision in areas of identified need. The approach aims to balance the sustainability of existing services with the need to encourage new and emerging opportunities that contribute to accessibility, connectivity and community resilience across Highland.

With applications seeking £936,504.71 against an available budget of £498,000, officers were required to undertake significant prioritisation and compromise; available funding represented only 53.2% of the value of applications received. While it has not been possible to fund all applications at their requested level, officers are satisfied that the recommendations represent a fair and proportionate allocation of the resources available and provide the best overall support for Community Transport provision within the funding available.

6.6 The assessment process has also highlighted that not all Community Transport organisations are equally positioned to access grant funding. Emerging organisations and groups at earlier stages of development may face challenges in securing support through a three-year grant cycle, despite demonstrating potential to contribute to local transport objectives. Consideration may therefore be required as part of future strategic development of the sector to ensure funding mechanisms remain accessible, flexible and responsive to emerging opportunities.

7 Strategic Observations

7.1 The grant application process provides valuable insight into the current role and future opportunities for Community Transport across Highland. While operating models vary significantly between organisations and communities, several common themes emerged through the assessment process, with implications beyond the grants themselves.

7.2 The distribution of recommended awards highlights an important characteristic of Community Transport provision in Highland: it develops incrementally and organically in response to local community capacity, leadership and need. As a result, provision is not uniform across Highland. Whilst some areas are served by well-established organisations delivering a wide range of services, other communities continue to experience significant gaps.

Particular challenges remain in Skye, North West Sutherland and parts of the Ullapool area. In North West Sutherland, the closure of North West Community Bus Association, previously recognised as an exemplar of rural Community Transport provision, has created a significant gap for which there is currently no immediate replacement. These examples demonstrate that strengthening Community Transport coverage across Highland may require not only ongoing support for established providers but also targeted efforts to stimulate and develop provision in underserved areas.

7.3 The assessment process demonstrates that Community Transport is not simply a collection of local initiatives, but an established and valued component of transport provision across Highland. Community Transport services collectively support accessibility, connectivity and community resilience across a diverse range of communities. As network reviews are undertaken and budget savings actively sought, it is vital that the sector's flexibility, commitment and willingness to respond to local need are recognised. At the same time, increasing reliance on Community Transport must be balanced with a realistic understanding of organisational capacity, ensuring that services remain resilient and sustainable into the future.

7.4 Community Transport has always been important, quietly and profoundly transformational, particularly for those who rely upon it most. Yet we are at a point of growing recognition that the sector is foundational and integral to the Highland transport network rather than peripheral to it. The opportunity now is to better understand, meaningfully support and realise the full potential of Community Transport and the organisations delivering these services as part of an increasingly connected, accessible and resilient transport system for Highland.

Designation:	Assistant Chief Executive - Place
Date:	8 October 2026
Author:	Laura Carpenter, Senior Transport Officer (Network and Community)
Background Papers:	None
Appendices:	Appendix 1 – Integrated Impact Assessment Appendix 2 – Methodology for the Evaluation of Community Transport Grant Applications Appendix 3 – Community Transport Gran Recommendations and Scores

Integrated Impact Assessment Screening

About proposal

What does this proposal relate to? Service plan or programme

Proposal name: Community Transport Grants, 2027-2030

High level summary of the proposal: This programme represents the continuity of Community Transport grant support by Highland Council, which is a vital component of facilitating transport provision with a particular benefit to those who would otherwise experience transport poverty and a lack of meaningful connection to community life. This programme is budgeted within Highland Council's Public and School Transport budget, and this proposal manages to stay within the budget allocated for Community Transport grant provision.

Who may be affected by the proposal? Community Transport benefits all Highland Council residents either directly or indirectly, through the enabling of community connections for those who might not otherwise be able to engage with others due to transport poverty. Groups who benefit from Community Transport in particular are those who are elderly, experience learning disabilities or impairments, have mobility challenges, youngsters requiring access to after-school activities (outwith statutory home-to-school transport). But what we see broadly is a benefit for communities overall - removing barriers to access for those who experience them, enables connections between everyone.

Start date of proposal:

End date of proposal:

Does this proposal result in a change or impact to one or more Council service? No

Does this relate to an existing proposal? Yes

Provide details of the existing proposal: Ongoing provision of grant support to Community Transport organisations throughout Highland Council's area.

Author details

Name: Laura Carpenter

Job title: Senior Transport Officer (Network & Community)

Email address: Laura.Carpenter@highland.gov.uk

Service: Place

Responsible officer details

Name: Neil Young

Job title: Public Transport Manager

Email address: Neil.Young@highland.gov.uk

Sign off date: 2026-10-07

Equalities, poverty, and human rights

Protected characteristics

Select what impact the proposal will have on the following protected characteristics:

Sex: No impact

Age: Positive

Disability: Positive

Religion or belief: No impact

Race: No impact

Sexual orientation: No impact

Gender reassignment: No impact

Pregnancy and maternity: No impact

Marriage and civil partnership: No impact

Protected characteristics impact details: For anyone who has protected characteristics, community transport represents a resource that does not carry the same challenges that public transport can present - accessibility is at the heart of community transport, which helps the elderly, those with mobility impairments or other challenges that impact on ability to use public transport, and other groups who might otherwise face exclusion from traditional modes of transport.

Poverty and socio-economic

What impact is the proposal likely to have on the following?

Prospects and opportunities: Positive

Places: Positive

Financial: Positive

Poverty and socio-economic impact details: Support for community transport is particularly valuable for those who experience poverty, transport poverty and face challenges arising from socio-economic status. The cost of personal transport, traditional public transport, and taxis can be out of reach, but community transport is a more holistic approach that can more flexibly provide

solutions within budget and give options where they may not otherwise be options.

Human rights

Which of the below human rights will be affected by this proposal? No human rights will be affected

What impact do you consider this proposal to have on the human rights of people? No impact

Human rights impact details: There is no particular direct impact on human rights, though indirect benefits may include facilitating the Articles and Protocols listed by facilitating access which may not otherwise exist.

Equalities, poverty and human rights screening assessment

What impact do you think there will be to equalities, poverty and human rights? Positive impact

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

Children's rights and wellbeing

What likely impact will the proposal have on children and young people? Some community transport organisations specifically serve the needs of children and young people. This is a clear and positive benefit of this proposal.

Which of the below children's rights will be affected by the proposal? You are working in the best interests of the child (Article 3)

Explain how the children's rights selected above will be affected: Children and young people - particularly in remote and rural communities - may not otherwise be able to access community life outwith school, without services offered by community transport organisations. This is a profound benefit of CT and enables participation which genuinely might not otherwise happen, particularly for children from families who suffer transport poverty and poverty outright.

Children's rights and wellbeing screening assessment

What impact do you think there will be to children's rights and wellbeing? Positive impact

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

Data protection

Will your proposal involve processing personal data? No

Data protection screening assessment

What change will there be to the way personal data is processed? No personal data will be

processed

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

Island and mainland rural communities

Does your proposal impact island and mainland rural communities? Yes

Could people in island and mainland rural communities be affected differently? No

Have any negative impacts been identified? No

Island and mainland rural communities screening assessment

What impact do you think there will be to island and mainland rural communities? No difference

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

Climate change

Does the proposal involve activities that could impact on greenhouse gas emissions (CO2e)? Yes

Does the proposal have the potential to affect the environment, wildlife or biodiversity? No

Does the proposal have the potential to influence resilience to extreme weather or changing climate? Yes

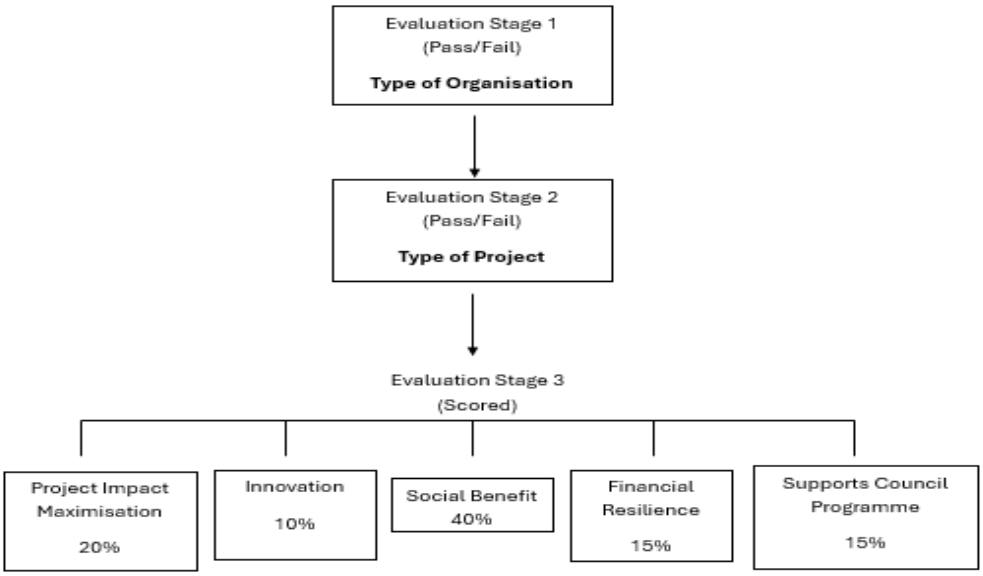
Provide information regarding your selection above: Increasingly, many CT groups - including in remote and rural areas - are utilising hybrid or electric vehicles in delivery of community transport services. As a result, there is an additional benefit to influencing resilience in a changing climate. Also group travel minimises the number of vehicles on the road, which is beneficial to our environment and infrastructure.

Climate change screening assessment

Have you identified potential impact for any of the areas above or marked any as not known? Yes

Is a Full Impact Assessment required? No

APPENDIX 2: METHODOLOGY FOR THE EVALUATION OF COMMUNITY TRANSPORT GRANT APPLICATIONS



Evaluation Stage 1

Evaluation Criteria

Type of Organisation:

- Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation
- Company Limited by Guarantee
- Organisation in the process of securing either of the above

At this stage, any application from a group or organisation which has a legal status which includes making a profit or fails to fall into one of the three categories listed above will be excluded.

Applications which satisfy the requirements at this stage will move on to Stages 2 and 3.

Evaluation Stage 2

Evaluation Criteria

Type of Project

At this stage, evaluators will note the nature of the group or organisation's project(s). No score will be assigned at this evaluation stage, but it will be recorded for reference and potentially refinement of Evaluation Stage 3.

APPENDIX 2: METHODOLOGY FOR THE EVALUATION OF COMMUNITY TRANSPORT GRANT APPLICATIONS

Any project which falls within a broad definition of Community Transport and has transport provision as its main focus will move on for further consideration at Stage 3.

Evaluation Stage 3

Evaluation Criteria

The principal and associated criteria which will be applied in evaluating applications will be:

Social Benefit: Benefit to the community or specific group within the community

a. Demonstrate no or very limited appropriate public transport in proposed project operating area, and/or that any existing transport does not meet the needs being targeted by the project.
b. Type of support being introduced to the community against proof of need – range of people who will benefit and what community requirements will be served.
c. Flexibility of operating periods.
d. Use of accessible vehicles (describing extent of accommodating features).

Project impact maximisation: clarity of plans and goals, effective engagement with stakeholders

a. A clear plan for how the applicant/project will engage with the target client groups and the broader community.
b. A clear plan for how the applicant/project will engage with other bodies, agencies and groups to boost impact.
c. Clear identification of activity, milestone (that is, key progress indicators) and target factors.

Alignment with and support of The Council Programme and Corporate Plan
Our Future Highland 2022-2027 - Our Programme - Highland Council

a. Demonstrating how the project proposal will progress The Highland Council equality aims of promoting a fairer, inclusive Highland.
b. Demonstrating how the project proposal will attract more people to make the Highlands their home and younger residents to stay here.
c. Demonstrating how the project proposal will help older citizens to live longer independent lives in their communities.

Financial resilience

a. Other sources of funding being available to create and sustain the project and activity during the funding period.

b. The ability to continue financially beyond 31st March 2030 should the project not secure future funding from The Highland Council after this date.
c. Financial details – both expenditure and income – which demonstrate an understanding of realistic costings and variables.

Innovation

We are seeking applications for projects that demonstrate an innovative spirit: this could fall into one of the defined categories below, or it may be something completely new and unanticipated. No group/organisation or project will be excluded for failing to demonstrate innovation, but points will be awarded for applications that effectively and convincingly demonstrate innovation and the ability of the organisation to carry this out.

In particular, we will be looking at the following criteria:

a. Environmentally beneficial features; 'green' initiatives and long-term sustainability
b. Outreach to disadvantaged groups within the community whose transport needs have not previously been addressed
c. Creative partnership working arrangements with the Council and/or other organisations

Criteria Weighting

Each application will be assessed by using the following weighting:

Award Evaluation Criteria	**Weighting**
Social Benefit: benefit to the community or specific group within the community	40%
Project Impact Maximisation: Clarity of plans and goals	20%
Promoting a fairer, more inclusive Highland	15%
Financial Resilience	15%
Innovation	10%

Application scoring

Each application will be scored using the following marking approach:

Classification	**Score**
Exceptional – meets the criterion exactly as specified	5
Excellent – very strongly meets the criterion, with only minor weaknesses	4
Good – meets the criterion with some weaknesses	3
Fair –meets the criterion in part but with significant weaknesses	2
Poor – mostly fails to meet the criterion	1
Fail – fails to meet the criterion	0

APPENDIX 3: COMMUNITY TRANSPORT GRANT AWARD RECOMMENDATIONS, 2027-2030

Applicant Organisation	Social Benefit Score - 40%	Project Impact Maximisation Score - 20%	Supports Council Programme Score - 15%	Financial Resilience Score - 15%	Innovation Score - 10%	Weighted Stage 3 Evaluation Score	Key Assessment Comments	Amount Requested, Year 1 (2027/2028)	Recommended Grant Award, Year 1 (2027/2028)
Applecross Community Company	4.67	4.33	4.33	4.67	4.33	**4.52**	Dynamic organisation, new to Community Transport grant funding in the 2024-2027 cycle. Demonstrated strong development since joining the programme and identified opportunities to further strengthen integration with local transport provision. Existing activities have already improved connectivity and established a foundation for future growth.	**£7,580.00**	**£7,500.00**
Badenoch & Strathspey Community ConnXions (BSCX)	4.67	4.67	5.00	4.67	4.67	**4.72**	High-performing organisation demonstrating strong leadership within the sector. The organisation continues to expand its role in addressing transport needs across Badenoch and Strathspey and is increasingly recognised for its innovative approach to service development. In addition to local delivery, the organisation provides support and guidance to emerging groups elsewhere in Highland and beyond. Opportunities exist to supplement grant funding through other income sources, building on an already well-diversified funding model.	**£40,000.00**	**£35,000.00**
Beauly and District Care Project	4.00	3.33	3.33	3.00	2.33	**3.45**	Provides an essential service that delivers significant benefits for local users. Although operating on a relatively small scale, the organisation demonstrates competence, clarity of purpose and effective delivery, maintaining a service that is both sustainable and responsive to community need.	**£2,500.00**	**£2,000.00**

APPENDIX 3: COMMUNITY TRANSPORT GRANT AWARD RECOMMENDATIONS, 2027-2030

Applicant Organisation	Social Benefit Score - 40%	Project Impact Maximisation Score - 20%	Supports Council Programme Score - 15%	Financial Resilience Score - 15%	Innovation Score - 10%	Weighted Stage 3 Evaluation Score	Key Assessment Comments	Amount Requested, Year 1 (2027/2028)	Recommended Grant Award, Year 1 (2027/2028)
Boleskine Community Care	4.00	3.33	4.33	2.33	3.00	**3.57**	Provides an essential volunteer car scheme that enables access to services and supports connectivity for vulnerable users. The organisation continues to face operational challenges, and the application did not clearly demonstrate how a significant increase in funding would be delivered effectively. The recommended award recognises the value of the service but reflects the need for continued development and support.	**£18,232.00**	**£4,500.00**
Caithness Voluntary Group	5.00	4.00	5.00	3.67	4.67	**4.57**	High-performing organisation demonstrating strong leadership, effective management and delivery at significant scale. The organisation has adopted a proactive approach to funding diversification, including securing Council contract opportunities alongside grant funding. The recommended award reflects the quality of the application, while recognising both alternative funding opportunities and the limitations of the available budget.	**£60,000.00**	**£43,500.00**
Care Lochaber	4.33	4.00	4.67	4.00	4.00	**4.23**	Provides an extensive volunteer car scheme across a large and geographically diverse area, demonstrating effective coordination and strong service delivery. The organisation submitted a high-quality application and has a proven track record of delivering community transport outcomes. The recommended award reflects budget constraints, and opportunities to secure additional funding will continue to be explored.	**£57,843.00**	**£42,000.00**

APPENDIX 3: COMMUNITY TRANSPORT GRANT AWARD RECOMMENDATIONS, 2027-2030

Applicant Organisation	Social Benefit Score - 40%	Project Impact Maximisation Score - 20%	Supports Council Programme Score - 15%	Financial Resilience Score - 15%	Innovation Score - 10%	Weighted Stage 3 Evaluation Score	Key Assessment Comments	Amount Requested, Year 1 (2027/2028)	Recommended Grant Award, Year 1 (2027/2028)
Communities in Motion CT (CiMCT)	5.00	4.67	5.00	3.00	5.00	**4.63**	The organisation has demonstrated substantial growth since becoming eligible for Community Transport grant funding and is now an established component of transport provision across the Black Isle. Service delivery includes Wee Bus operations, home-to-school transport provision and the exploration of new opportunities to improve community connectivity. A strong track record of delivery demonstrates that competence is well matched to ambition.	**£14,449.00**	**£12,500.00**
Community Support and Information, Ross-Shire	2.67	2.00	2.67	0.67	2.00	**2.17**	Whilst the application was not among the stronger submissions received and did not present a sufficiently evidenced case for the level of funding requested, assessment identified ongoing delivery of community transport services. The recommended award reflects both the importance of this provision and its current scale relative to other applications.	**£52,650.00**	**£5,000.00**
Connect Assynt LTD	4.67	4.67	4.67	3.33	4.33	**4.43**	Operating within a challenging and remote rural area, the organisation provides an important local transport service and has matured considerably in recent years. The assessment recognised both the value of current service delivery and opportunities for further development, including the exploration of additional transport activities and income streams. The organisation is clearly rooted within its community and demonstrates a strong understanding of local transport needs.	**£10,000.00**	**£9,000.00**

APPENDIX 3: COMMUNITY TRANSPORT GRANT AWARD RECOMMENDATIONS, 2027-2030

Applicant Organisation	Social Benefit Score - 40%	Project Impact Maximisation Score - 20%	Supports Council Programme Score - 15%	Financial Resilience Score - 15%	Innovation Score - 10%	Weighted Stage 3 Evaluation Score	Key Assessment Comments	Amount Requested, Year 1 (2027/2028)	Recommended Grant Award, Year 1 (2027/2028)
Creich Croick & Kincardine District Day Care Association	4.33	3.33	4.33	2.33	3.33	**3.73**	The organisation delivers a valued service and demonstrates a strong commitment to supporting vulnerable members of the community. Transport provision forms an important part of this offer, enabling access to services and reducing isolation. The assessment concluded that the current application placed greater emphasis on care and wellbeing outcomes than on the future development of community transport services, and the recommended award reflects this balance. In the longer term, improvements to the wider transport network and local connectivity are likely to enhance resilience and accessibility for the organisation and its service users.	**£57,220.00**	**£7,500.00**
Dornoch Area Community Interest Company	5.00	3.67	4.33	3.00	4.33	**4.27**	Dynamic and developing organisation demonstrating a thoughtful approach to service delivery. The organisation shows a strong capacity to learn from experience, adapt to changing circumstances and recognise current operational limitations. Despite being a relatively new Community Transport provider, it demonstrates notable organisational maturity and strong potential for future growth.	**£10,000.00**	**£7,500.00**
FarrGoes	4.67	4.67	4.67	3.33	4.33	**4.43**	The organisation has demonstrated impressive initiative in developing transport services to address an identified local need. The application presented a clear and credible vision for future sustainability, including the exploration of alternative funding models intended to reduce reliance on grant funding over time. Ambition is balanced by a realistic understanding of organisational capacity, providing confidence in the organisation's ability to continue developing and delivering successful services.	**£44,576.00**	**£27,500.00**

APPENDIX 3: COMMUNITY TRANSPORT GRANT AWARD RECOMMENDATIONS, 2027-2030

Applicant Organisation	Social Benefit Score - 40%	Project Impact Maximisation Score - 20%	Supports Council Programme Score - 15%	Financial Resilience Score - 15%	Innovation Score - 10%	Weighted Stage 3 Evaluation Score	Key Assessment Comments	Amount Requested, Year 1 (2027/2028)	Recommended Grant Award, Year 1 (2027/2028)
Fox & Friends	4.33	3.33	4.33	2.67	4.00	**3.85**	A dynamic community organisation which has identified transport barriers affecting local residents and proposed a practical and proportionate solution. While still at an early stage of Community Transport delivery, the organisation demonstrates significant potential for future development. The recommended award supports the next stage of this work, with opportunities existing for wider collaboration, service development and the exploration of additional funding sources to maximise impact within the area.	**£22,400.00**	**£10,000.00**
Gairloch Community Car Scheme	4.00	4.33	4.00	3.67	4.00	**4.02**	Provides a highly valued service that makes an essential contribution to community connectivity. The organisation demonstrates consistent and effective delivery, with a strong focus on meeting the needs of service users. While opportunities exist to further develop strategic planning and innovation, the application reflects a well-established organisation delivering significant impact through dependable and high-quality services.	**£39,662.00**	**£34,500.00**
Garve & District Development Company (TG&DDC)	4.00	3.33	4.67	2.67	4.67	**3.83**	The organisation submitted an ambitious application, setting out a vision for significant future growth and expanded service provision. While the assessment recognised the potential of the organisation and the opportunities presented, a number of proposed activities remain dependent on funding sources and contracts that have not yet been secured. The recommended award supports continued development and reasonable growth while encouraging progression on a sustainable and evidence-based basis.	**£123,506.71**	**£17,500.00**

APPENDIX 3: COMMUNITY TRANSPORT GRANT AWARD RECOMMENDATIONS, 2027-2030

Applicant Organisation	Social Benefit Score - 40%	Project Impact Maximisation Score - 20%	Supports Council Programme Score - 15%	Financial Resilience Score - 15%	Innovation Score - 10%	Weighted Stage 3 Evaluation Score	Key Assessment Comments	Amount Requested, Year 1 (2027/2028)	Recommended Grant Award, Year 1 (2027/2028)
Glenelg & Arnisdale Bus User Group (BUG)	4.67	3.67	4.33	3.33	3.67	**4.12**	Provides a pragmatic and locally appropriate solution to transport challenges within a particularly remote area. Rather than delivering transport services directly, the organisation enables access through the coordination and support of existing provision, ensuring that communities remain connected despite limited transport options. While the approach is not easily scalable, it responds effectively to local circumstances and delivers clear benefits for residents.	**£10,750.00**	**£9,500.00**
Go Golspie Development Trust	5.00	4.67	4.33	3.67	4.67	**4.60**	A mature organisation delivering a transport service that has become an integral part of community life. The application demonstrates the significant role that community transport can play in supporting wider community outcomes and local connectivity. While transport forms part of a broader community-focused approach, it remains central to the organisation's delivery model. The organisation demonstrates strong impact relative to the level of funding requested and represents good value within the programme.	**£19,048.00**	**£14,500.00**
GRO	3.33	2.33	3.33	2.33	3.33	**2.98**	An encouraging application from a new organisation seeking to address identified transport challenges within its community. While the proposal would benefit from further development and a clearer focus on transport outcomes, the assessment recognised both the potential community benefit and the opportunities presented by the project. The recommended award reflects a proportionate level of support, recognising that the organisation remains at an early stage of development while demonstrating promise for future growth.	**£57,632.00**	**£5,000.00**

APPENDIX 3: COMMUNITY TRANSPORT GRANT AWARD RECOMMENDATIONS, 2027-2030

Applicant Organisation	Social Benefit Score - 40%	Project Impact Maximisation Score - 20%	Supports Council Programme Score - 15%	Financial Resilience Score - 15%	Innovation Score - 10%	Weighted Stage 3 Evaluation Score	Key Assessment Comments	Amount Requested, Year 1 (2027/2028)	Recommended Grant Award, Year 1 (2027/2028)
Helmsdale Community Transport	4.33	3.33	4.00	3.67	2.67	**3.82**	A well-established and valued community asset delivering an important local service. The organisation demonstrates a clear commitment to maintaining continuity of provision and meeting existing community needs. While the application identifies limited plans for growth or service development, the continued delivery of a reliable and valued service remains an important outcome in its own right.	**£3,000.00**	**£2,500.00**
Highlife Highland (Sunart Centre)	4.33	4.00	4.33	3.67	3.00	**4.03**	Provides essential transport support that enables rural young people to participate in opportunities that would otherwise be inaccessible. The service delivers meaningful and lasting benefits despite operating at a relatively modest scale, and continues to address a clear need within remote communities.	**£12,000.00**	**£8,500.00**
Lairg Community Association	4.00	3.67	4.00	3.33	4.00	**3.83**	The organisation has identified and responded to a clear transport need within an area where public transport options are limited. While operating as a wider community organisation, the transport activities proposed appear well rooted in local circumstances and community priorities. The application demonstrates a practical and locally focused approach to improving connectivity and access, with potential for further development over time.	**£13,336.00**	**£10,000.00**
Lochaber Action on Disability	4.67	4.00	4.33	4.33	3.67	**4.33**	A well-established and highly valued accessible transport provider delivering significant community benefit. The organisation's service delivery, reach and impact are stronger than was fully conveyed through the application, with the assessment recognising a substantial and important contribution to local transport provision.	**£17,290.00**	**£12,000.00**

APPENDIX 3: COMMUNITY TRANSPORT GRANT AWARD RECOMMENDATIONS, 2027-2030

Applicant Organisation	Social Benefit Score - 40%	Project Impact Maximisation Score - 20%	Supports Council Programme Score - 15%	Financial Resilience Score - 15%	Innovation Score - 10%	Weighted Stage 3 Evaluation Score	Key Assessment Comments	Amount Requested, Year 1 (2027/2028)	Recommended Grant Award, Year 1 (2027/2028)
Nairn Community Transport	4.33	4.33	4.67	3.00	3.33	**4.08**	A valued and well-established organisation delivering an important local service. The application demonstrated continued commitment to meeting existing transport needs, although opportunities remain to further develop partnerships and explore future service evolution. The recommended award reflects the value of current provision and the potential for greater integration within the wider transport network.	**£9,500.00**	**£6,500.00**
Partnerships for Wellbeing	5.00	4.67	5.00	4.00	4.33	**4.72**	Provides a vital accessible transport service addressing gaps in transport provision that are not adequately met through conventional services. The organisation demonstrates strong delivery, significant community impact and a clear understanding of user needs. Operating at the limits of current capacity, the service continues to play an important role in ensuring access, connectivity and inclusion for people who might otherwise face substantial transport barriers.	**£30,000.00**	**£23,500.00**
Shopmobility Highland	4.33	4.67	4.67	3.33	3.33	**4.20**	A highly valued accessible transport provider delivering significant benefits for individuals facing transport barriers. The organisation demonstrates exceptional clarity of purpose, with a strong focus on inclusion, independence and participation. The assessment recognised both the quality of current service delivery and the potential of further developments in supported mobility.	**£25,000.00**	**£17,500.00**
Sleat Community Trust	4.67	4.00	4.33	3.00	4.00	**4.17**	A successful community transport initiative that has become an established and valued part of local life in Sleat. The organisation continues to deliver an effective and well-used service, with current priorities focused on sustaining existing provision rather than significant growth or expansion. The recommended award recognises the ongoing value of this important community asset.	**£7,955.00**	**£7,000.00**

APPENDIX 3: COMMUNITY TRANSPORT GRANT AWARD RECOMMENDATIONS, 2027-2030

Applicant Organisation	Social Benefit Score - 40%	Project Impact Maximisation Score - 20%	Supports Council Programme Score - 15%	Financial Resilience Score - 15%	Innovation Score - 10%	Weighted Stage 3 Evaluation Score	Key Assessment Comments	Amount Requested, Year 1 (2027/2028)	Recommended Grant Award, Year 1 (2027/2028)
South Lochaber Community Company	4.33	3.33	4.00	1.67	2.33	**3.48**	A worthwhile rural transport provider delivering important connectivity benefits within its local area. While the service remains valued by the community, the assessment identified opportunities to strengthen organisational sustainability and future planning. The recommended award reflects confidence in the value of the current service while recognising the importance of establishing a resilient foundation for future delivery. The assessment recognised the importance of ongoing investment in fleet renewal as a key factor in supporting the future development of the service.	**£11,062.00**	**£2,500.00**
South West Ross Community Car Scheme	5.00	5.00	4.67	4.33	4.67	**4.82**	A mature, highly effective and evidence-led Community Transport organisation demonstrating exceptional understanding of local transport need. The organisation has developed a sophisticated and interconnected range of services, continually evolving its transport offer in response to identified community requirements. A strong culture of evaluation and continuous improvement provides clear evidence that service development is both effective and impactful. The application represents an outstanding example of Community Transport delivery, strategic thinking and community responsiveness.	**£55,000.00**	**£43,500.00**
Stratherrick and Foyers Community Trust	3.67	4.00	4.33	4.33	3.33	**3.90**	A valued Community Transport provider delivering important local benefits through the operation of an established community minibus service. The assessment recognised the organisation's contribution to local connectivity, while also identifying opportunities for greater collaboration and future development. The recommended award reflects the organisation's ability to sustain current service delivery, supported by previous investment in vehicle provision.	**£7,500.00**	**£2,500.00**

APPENDIX 3: COMMUNITY TRANSPORT GRANT AWARD RECOMMENDATIONS, 2027-2030

Applicant Organisation	Social Benefit Score - 40%	Project Impact Maximisation Score - 20%	Supports Council Programme Score - 15%	Financial Resilience Score - 15%	Innovation Score - 10%	Weighted Stage 3 Evaluation Score	Key Assessment Comments	Amount Requested, Year 1 (2027/2028)	Recommended Grant Award, Year 1 (2027/2028)
Strathnairn Community Access and Transport Assciation	5.00	4.00	4.33	3.67	4.00	**4.40**	A mature and well-established community-owned transport provider delivering valued and practical benefits to local residents. The organisation has successfully embedded itself within local life and continues to meet identified transport needs through reliable and effective service delivery. The recommended award reflects the ongoing value of a trusted and sustainable community transport service.	**£10,653.00**	**£7,500.00**
Transport for Tongue Limited	5.00	5.00	4.67	3.67	5.00	**4.75**	A mature and highly effective rural transport service providing essential connectivity across a remote and sparsely populated area. The organisation has developed a diversified range of services which respond to the differing needs of communities across North Sutherland. Opportunities exist to further strengthen collaboration, referral pathways and volunteer development alongside other community transport initiatives, helping to build a more joined-up and resilient transport network for the area.	**£52,580.00**	**£37,000.00**
Tykes	3.67	3.33	4.33	2.33	3.00	**3.43**	A worthwhile project delivering significant wellbeing and social inclusion benefits for young carers and their families across rural Sutherland. Transport enables access to services, activities and support that might otherwise be inaccessible due to geography and limited transport options. While the assessment recognised the value and impact of the project, transport provision supports a wider programme of activity rather than operating as a dedicated community transport service, and the recommendation reflects this distinction.	**£13,150.00**	**£5,000.00**

APPENDIX 3: COMMUNITY TRANSPORT GRANT AWARD RECOMMENDATIONS, 2027-2030

Applicant Organisation	Social Benefit Score - 40%	Project Impact Maximisation Score - 20%	Supports Council Programme Score - 15%	Financial Resilience Score - 15%	Innovation Score - 10%	Weighted Stage 3 Evaluation Score	Key Assessment Comments	Amount Requested, Year 1 (2027/2028)	Recommended Grant Award, Year 1 (2027/2028)
Urram	4.67	4.33	4.67	4.33	4.00	**4.48**	A community-led transport service that has developed steadily and sustainably in response to identified local need within one of Highland's most remote peninsular communities. The organisation demonstrates a thoughtful and measured approach to growth, with service development closely aligned to community demand and local circumstances. The assessment recognised both the strength of current delivery and the potential to further build on this success, with the recommended award supporting the continuation of an already effective and well-rooted transport service.	**£7,930.00**	**£7,000.00**
Wheels in Nairnshire	5.00	4.67	4.67	4.33	5.00	**4.78**	A highly effective and evidence-led community transport organisation with a proven ability to identify unmet needs and develop practical solutions. The organisation demonstrates strong service delivery, continual improvement and a clear commitment to using evidence and experience to shape future development. The recommended award reflects both the quality of current provision and confidence in the organisation's ability to respond to future transport challenges.	**£12,500.00**	**£11,000.00**
TOTALS								**£936,504.71**	**£498,000.00**