

Autumn/Winter 2025

Community Transport Newsletter

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Message from the Team

Highland Council's Transport Team are delighted to present this first issue of our Community Transport newsletter. It has taken shape with contributions from Highland CT organisations, for which we are so thankful.

Suggestions, comments – any sort of feedback, really! – are much appreciated, and we will look to improve and refine through subsequent editions.

Thank you for reading, and, regardless of your role within the realm of CT, thank you profoundly for your contributions to facilitating these precious connections within a challenging landscape.

What's On: Recent Events



CT Day, Highland Council Headquarters, 13 August

At a glance:

CT Day – 13 August

CTA Conference – 11 September

Members' Briefing – 30 September

CTA Highland Network – 30 October

In depth:

MEMBERS' BRIEFING – 30 SEPTEMBER

A briefing session for councillors was held on 30 September to inform them of the Community Transport seminar held on 13 August. A short presentation was given outlining CT provision in Highland, and a report was given on the CTA Scotland Conference held in Inverness on 11 September.

There was a good deal of interest from the councillors present. Officers gave replies to Members' questions on the following topics:

- The involvement of NHS in the August seminar was very encouraging, and NHS are involved with the Council and HiTrans in a project to set up a new CT project in Dunvegan.
- Provision of Council vehicles is part of the support for some CT projects, and work has begun on enabling wider use of minibuses based at schools, with a pilot in Wick.
- Skills Development Scotland are being approached regarding D1 training, and a member of the transport team has qualified as a MiDAS trainer.
- The CTA are promoting use of a Social Value Toolkit, and Highland Council want to encourage this as well to all Highland CT groups. A previous study specific to the Badenoch & Strathspey area has shown a social benefit of £13 being achieved for every £1 spent; being able to quantify the value of CT is so important in advocating for funding and support.
- Work is being done to expand operational areas and support new projects where possible, including specific areas raised by some Members. This can include connections with scheduled buses or trains.
- Work is being done on alternative-fuelled larger vehicles. There are already some electric MPVs in operation.

What's On: Upcoming Events

Community Transport Seminar (Highland Council-led event) – Lairg Community Centre – 3 December

Highland Network (CTA-led) – Microsoft Teams – 21 January

Spotlight on Volunteers

In each issue we will be featuring at least one amazing volunteer – for this edition, that focus is on **Ann Henderson**, who is a longtime volunteer with **Partnerships for Wellbeing**. She goes above and beyond in her care and kindness: a big round of applause and appreciation for Ann! 😊

You can learn more about her and the work that Partnerships for Wellbeing do in the Inverness area by accessing a wonderful video at this link:

<https://www.facebook.com/share/v/1Dm6xB4MBy/>



Ann Henderson, Partnerships for Wellbeing volunteer

If you would like to nominate someone who is really making a difference, let us know! We will be happy to feature them in upcoming issues of the newsletter.

Community Transport in Focus

Care Lochaber: NHS Team of the Month

Congratulations to Care Lochaber for being awarded the NHS Team of the Month award for August 2025!



Allison Kane and Laura McKenzie, Care Lochaber

Their award cited the following:

"The Community Car Scheme provides an invaluable service to patients in Lochaber and to the wider community. It plays a vital role in supporting individuals who are often older, living with mobility challenges or long-term health conditions, or who are geographically isolated and unable to access public transport.

Thanks to this service, users are able to attend health appointments, social events, go shopping, and visit friends – helping to reduce isolation and improve quality of life.

A heartfelt thank you goes to Allison and Laura, along with your team of volunteer drivers, for your unwavering commitment and compassion. You are incredibly helpful to some of the most vulnerable people in our community.

Your team is truly wonderful – your dedication shines through in everything you do. Your team are an invaluable resource, and we are deeply grateful for the difference you make every day."

South West Ross Community Car Scheme: Transport Access Grants

South West Ross Community Car Scheme (SWRCCS) was lucky enough to access funding from the Highland Council to set up a 3-year pilot project called Transport Access Grant (TAG) to provide funding to pay for transport for local groups.

The TAG scheme stemmed from a feasibility study that concluded that a large minibus was not viable in the area as it would be left unused for a majority of the time. However, there was a need for occasional transport for local groups to access cultural, sporting or educational events from this remote area. There were some local companies who may be able to provide transport for these, but the costs were often out of reach of the small and often informal local groups. In this way a grant programme would help them access funds to cover the costs of such valuable journeys. To date local groups such as the local primary school, knit and natter group and others have been able to go to swimming lessons, concerts at Eden Court and wool workshops through accessing grants and 4 local companies have benefitted.



SWRCCS 8-seater provided by Highland Council

In the meantime, the Highland Council leased an 8-seater vehicle for SWRCCS similar to vehicles that have been provided to other CT organisations in the area, including Applecross Community Company and Garve & District Development

Company. The vehicle is used by local groups such as NTS Scotland for Wellbeing Walks, a local book group to get to the screen machine and a whist group to link in with games in Lochcarron.

Demand for the use of the vehicle has grown, but what has really ensured lots of use has been the TAG grants being used in conjunction with the 8-seater hire. So, local groups have been able to hire the vehicle at the same time as accessing the TAG scheme to cover the costs. Not only does this mean greater use of the vehicle, but it also means that SWRCCS has become relevant to residents of SW Ross that previously had little connection. Groups have been able to access after school swimming, football and shinty training, Gaelic cultural events and more. Shildaig Primary School has also been able to get to outdoor activity days with the

Woodland Trust, swimming lessons, joint educational days with neighbouring schools and more, enhancing the educational experience of the children in this remote school.

So, although the 8-seater vehicle is a valuable resource for this remote area by itself, the combination of the TAG scheme and the vehicle provides a lifeline to ensure that local people of all ages don't miss out on being able to get to all kinds of events

and activities that they would normally be unable to take part in. The success of these pilot projects is yet to be fully evaluated, but initial findings suggest that it would be beneficial to be able to continue with the grant provision as well as getting an additional vehicle for Lochcarron in the near future as well as providing some wheelchair accessible transport for the area.



Peter Fenton, SWRCCS, September CTA Conference

Peter Fenton, SWRCCS

Have Your Say!

To ensure that content remains relevant, interesting and useful, we are so keen to include **your** input as much as possible. Please let us know what you think, and what information would be most. Don't be shy: what binds us all is our interest in and passion for Community Transport, which by its very nature is about **community** – so we are delighted to hear from you and for this newsletter to reflect all your diverse voices, experiences and contributions. 😊