



# SRITC (CIC) MANIFESTO 2026-2031

## WHO WE ARE

The Scottish Rural and Islands Transport Community (SRITC CIC) was established in 2017 and incorporated as a Community Interest Company (CIC) in 2021. SRITC (CIC) has over 600 members across 19 countries with a mission to create a space to share insights, collaborate and support members in addressing rural and island transport and mobility challenges.

## OUR ASKS OF THE NEW GOVERNMENT

1. Adopt a Rural & Islands Mobility Plan
2. Improve Access to Health & Social Care Transport Services
3. Expand Sustainable Travel Options to Popular Visitor Destinations
4. Protect & Invest in Rural Bus Services
5. Create a Fair Transition to Electric Vehicles
6. Improve Lifeline Ferry Services

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## Adopt a Rural & Islands Mobility Plan (RIMP)



Current national frameworks and strategies for improving transport services across Scotland do not account for the unique mobility challenges and experiences of the people who live in Scotland's rural and island communities.

### We're calling on MSPs and the next Scottish Government to:

- Recognise and formally adopt SRITC's Rural and Islands Mobility Plan (RIMP) framework.
- Ensure that the RIMP framework is used by Local Action Groups and Local Authorities when developing local transport plans.
- Ensure that the RIMP framework is used to support the completion of rural and island community impact assessments.



### Why It's Needed

1. Current urban centric transport planning frameworks embed socio-economic deprivation in rural & island communities.
2. Rural proofed services improve the economic and social health of rural and island communities.
3. Rural proofed services increase economic and social return on investment.

"It is paramount that the rural and island mobility plan (RIMP) forms part of the rural proofing process for transport. RIMP has been designed by multiple stakeholders, from communities to government representatives, located inside and outside of Scotland.

Over 5 years, the knowledge and experiences shared by over 1500 people has been invaluable in producing this plan. It should be incorporated at all levels of government to ensure an inclusive approach is taken to rural and island transport."

**Jenny Milne, Founder, SRITC**

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## Improve Access to Health & Social Care Transport Services



Where you live should never determine the quality or availability of healthcare. People in rural and island communities must be able to access scheduled and emergency healthcare appointments on a fair and timely basis.

### We're calling on MSPs and the next Scottish Government to:

- Greater levels of collaboration between NHS Trusts, Local Authorities, rural and island communities, and trusted transport and technology service providers.
- Enforce NHS Boards' statutory duty to work with community transport on non-emergency patient transport under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019.
- Guarantee door-to-door journeys that embed transport in social prescribing pathways.

### Why It's Needed

1. Transport problems are among the most commonly reported reasons for missed GP appointments, particularly among elderly people in rural areas.
2. Longer distances to health facilities can result in rural residents experiencing 'distance decay', where service use decreases with increasing distance.
3. Access to health and social care is a growing cost of living pressure, especially for people living in rural areas.



"We spoke to 131 members of the public in the Banff area, Aberdeenshire. Around a third reported that where they live impacts their transport options, and almost one in five said they had previously missed a healthcare appointment due to transport difficulties. Common issues raised included infrequent and unreliable bus services, buses not turning up, and the need to take multiple buses to reach hospital appointments.

**Jill Smith, Advanced Public Health Coordinator, Aberdeenshire Health & Social Care Partnership**

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## Expand Sustainable Travel Options to Popular Visitor Destinations



In 2024, there were nearly 4 million visits to rural and island areas generating £1,5 billion in revenues for the Scottish economy ([Visit Scotland 2024 research](#)). With up to 80% of visits made by car, urgent action is needed to increase the use of sustainable transport and reduce pressure on local infrastructure, businesses and the natural environment.

### We're calling on MSPs and the next Scottish Government to:

- Encourage Local authorities to ring-fence a portion (minimum 10%) of the visitor levy funding for new, innovative and sustainable transport services in and around communities, supporting both visitors and residents.
- Ask Local Authorities to collaborate with community stakeholders to ensure there is clear engagement and planning on how revenues raised from new and existing transport services are spent.
- Fund permanent seasonal shuttle networks for hotspot corridors and . Introduce "park once" systems using peripheral parking and onward transport.



A radical change is needed to generate more sustainable trips to popular visitor locations. Better cooperation and aligned goals are needed for tourism and transport stakeholders, and stronger policy for sustainable rural leisure travel. This includes investments in more integration between buses and trains and support for existing community services.

**Dr Nicholas Davies, Senior Lecturer in Tourism and Events, Glasgow Caledonian University**

### Why It's Needed

1. Across Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park, car-based travel is projected to rise [by 40% by 2037](#) without intervention
2. Visitor travel to and from National Parks the Park is the single biggest source of carbon emissions.
3. Local Authority annual budgets to maintain, repair and expand road and parking infrastructure is increasing unsustainably.

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## Protect & Invest in Rural Bus Services



Across rural and island communities there continues to be a lack of accessible, affordable, and reliable scheduled bus services. Every bus service axed or timetable reduced embeds car dependency and transport poverty. This increases social isolation, poor health and reduces access to employment or volunteering opportunities.

### We're calling on MSPs and the next Scottish Government to

- Buses must be scheduled to align with the travel needs of rural people to reduce car dependency, social isolation, and economic inactivity
- Socially and economically necessary bus routes must be protected and must be viewed through a social value lens.
- Buses must support the needs of multiple users, including tourists, the elderly, the disabled and those travelling with dogs.

### Why It's Needed

1. Cuts to rural and island bus services increase levels of car dependency.
2. Lack of affordable, accessible and reliable rural and island bus services increases levels of social isolation, deprivation, and reduce access to employment opportunities.
3. Enable more people with disabilities to confidently use rural and island bus services.

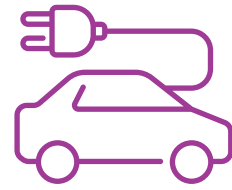


"Cutting a rural bus services doesn't just remove a route — it cuts people off from jobs, healthcare, and community life. If we're serious about tackling isolation and supporting rural economies, we must protect and invest in bus services that people can rely on. Therefore, they need statutory ring-fenced funding which would allow local authorities and RTP's to deliver these vital services."

**Greig MacKay, Director for Scotland, Bus Users UK**

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## Create a Fair Transition to Electric Vehicles



For many rural and island households, car use is not a lifestyle choice but a necessity. A fair and equitable transition to EVs means reducing the upfront barriers to ownership & charging, making sure local garages have the skills and equipment to maintain and repair them, and expanding practical alternatives to private ownership for people who need occasional vehicle access but cannot justify the cost of owning an EV.

### We're calling on MSPs and the next Scottish Government to:

- Mandate policymakers to work in close partnership with community organisations and transport providers in rural and island areas to deliver a fair and practical transition to electric vehicles.
- Expand targeted financial support to help lower-income households, small businesses and island and rural communities buy or lease EVs and install charging.
- Launch a Rural EV Garage Skills Programme to help independent garages, colleges and training providers in rural and island Scotland invest in technician training, equipment and accreditation.



### Why It's Needed

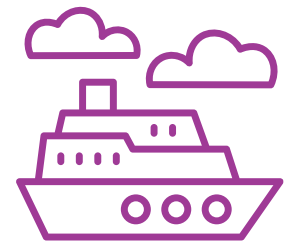
1. Levels of single and multi-car ownership are significantly higher in rural v large urban areas ([89% v 61%](#)).
2. Garages and forecourts are essential to the resilience of rural and island communities.
3. Car clubs can let people experience EVs first-hand without the significant purchase commitments.

"For rural and island communities, mobility is about access, not lifestyle choice. Community car clubs are a vital part of a fair transition to EVs, offering practical, low carbon transport without the costs of private ownership. Car clubs that include Voluntary Driver Schemes can reach even more people by supporting non drivers, while local charging and skilled local garages help make shared EVs viable, inclusive and rooted in the community."

**Susan Ross, eCo Car Club**

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## Improve Lifeline Ferry Services



Scotland's lifeline ferry services must be treated as essential public infrastructure, not a secondary transport issue. For island residents, ferries are not optional: when services fail, communities lose access to jobs, healthcare, education, supplies, and tourism income. Persistent disruption undermines economic resilience, social wellbeing and trust that Scotland's islands are being treated fairly.

### We're calling on MSPs and the next Scottish Government to:

- Commit that community impact assessments are completed before major changes to ferry services are made.
- Accelerate the integration of ferry, rail and bus journeys through-ticketing and shared journey-planning platforms.
- Adopt universal design standards for new vessels and terminals to remove access and usability barriers for people with disabilities.



### Why It's Needed

1. Post pandemic, passenger & vehicles traffic volumes are increasing but reliability is decreasing.
2. Overall cancellation rates across CHFS routes have risen from 1.9% in 2012 to 6.6% in 2022 ([Transport Scotland](#))
3. Maintenance and repair costs are rising sharply. CHFS vessel maintenance and repair costs rose from £14.1 million in 2016-17 to £24.9 million in 2023-24

"A reliable ferry service is a lifeline for Arran, and indeed any island community. It ensures residents can access vital healthcare, attend essential appointments, and enables the steady flow of goods, services, and visitors that drive Arran's local economy. By having a dependable ferry service we strengthen economic growth, improve quality of life, and help sustain and grow our island population".

**Sheila Gilmore, CEO, Visit Arran**

# Contact SRITC



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**The Scottish**  
Rural & Islands  
Transport Community

A Community Interest Company