

# **SPOTLIGHT ON RURAL & ISLANDS TRANSPORT**

## **Response to NTS2 Consultation**

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**The Scottish**  
Rural & Islands  
Transport Community

A Community Interest Company

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# Acknowledgements

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Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba  
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# Executive Summary

## Background

This report supports the delivery of Scotland's National Transport Strategy 2 (NTS2) which sets out Scotland's vision for transport and priorities for the next 20 years. The four priorities are:



As part of its ongoing consultation process with communities, The Scottish Government commissioned the Scottish Rural and Island Transport Community (SRITC) to gather evidence from rural and island stakeholders across Scotland. This included small community groups, larger transport operators, local authorities, Regional Transport Partnerships and technology solution providers.

SRITC performs a unique role within Scotland's transport ecosystem because we are the only organisation able to convene, consult and communicate the collective needs of all these stakeholders.

In an environment where the voices of many groups are competing for the attention of the Scottish Government,

the evidence presented in this report provides a valuable overview of the themes that are of most concern and the actions that need to be taken to ensure the NTS2 delivery plan creates positive outcomes for rural and island communities across all four priority areas.

Further information on SRITC is set-out in section 1 and the timeline of our development in Appendix 2.

The consultation process that SRITC has undertaken coincided with 2 important social and economic macro events. Socially, a loosening of the regulations and guidance put in place to control the spread of COVID-19, and economically, a sharp increase in the cost of living driven by a combination of national and international shocks.

The impact of these events at a local level are reflected in the insights that have emerged from the consultation process. Transportation plays a critical role in supporting the health and wellbeing of rural and island communities across Scotland so uncertainties about its future accessibility and affordability weigh heavily on the minds of residents and businesses.

These concerns are compounded by the continuing shift in demographics within their communities. With fewer young, working age people willing to live rurally, the burden is placed on the middle and older age population to support themselves and each other.

This becomes a practical issue when there aren't enough people willing or able to drive the private and publicly owned vehicles needed to access employment, health and social services.

The effects of climate change are also being felt in meaningful ways. This includes more frequent and intense storms that disrupt ferry sailings and cut off power leaving residents unable to live and work normally, and soil erosion that leads to landslides blocking the roads and rail tracks that are the only means of accessing many rural locations.

Identifying the extent to which different communities of stakeholders share the same concerns and to what degree is a key facet of the consultation process. This recognises that islanders face different transport challenges compared to mainlanders while at the same time often relying on the same local authority and transport operator(s) to deliver services.

## Methodology

In section 2, the methodologies underpinning this consultation process are explained in detail. In summary, across 3 facilitated workshops, stakeholders representing all of the aforementioned groups were asked to discuss how well key NTS2 deliverables would enable the communities they represent to achieve the following objectives:

- Remove barriers to accessing employment opportunities
- Remove barriers to starting and growing rurally located businesses.
- Remove barriers to accessing goods and services.

- Reduce inequalities.
- Address the impacts of vehicle generated emissions.

To achieve these outcomes, a number of established design thinking techniques were employed. These ensured a structured process was used to explore how transport services are currently experienced by different types of people and how they shape their day-to-day behaviours.

At the conclusion of the workshops, emerging insights were used as the stimulus for developing user personas and travel journey maps that bring to life the wide range of transport needs among those who live in rural communities. These insights were also used to uncover recurring themes that demand most attention from a policy development perspective.

These themes are summarised below and discussed in greater detail in section 3 of this report.

Through further examination of these themes, a clearer understanding has emerged of the gaps between the interventions proposed in NTS2 and the needs of rural and island communities. The 6 "asks" presented in section 5 outline the steps that need to be taken in order to close these gaps.

## Findings

From the evidence collected across all 3 workshops, seven cross-cutting themes were identified, each of which materially affect individual travel choices and lifestyles. These are explored in detail in section 3.



While all 7 themes are applicable to larger urban communities, their relevance to those living in less densely populated areas is particularly profound given the socio-demographic and socio-economic challenges they are facing.

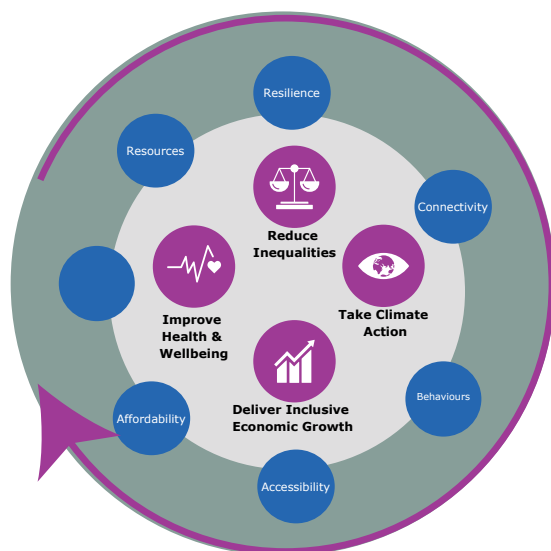


Diagram 1

As figure 1 highlights, these themes are also key pillars supporting the delivery of the NTS2 strategy and its four primary goals. A strategy that recognises the different needs of Scotland's cities, towns, remote and rural areas and islands.

While initial steps outlined within this strategy were broadly welcomed by workshop participants, there remains an overriding concern that they lack prescription, primarily because the strategy does not sufficiently diagnose the symptoms specific to rural and island communities that require attention.

These symptoms can be found within each of the 7 themes and are explained in more detail in section 3. From a strategic planning perspective, the most pressing issues that need to be addressed can be summarised as follows:



## Taking Climate Action

- There is a limited understanding of how the 7 themes influence demand for car journeys in rural and island communities.
- A lack of confidence in the reliability of buses to get people in rural and island communities to local and regional destinations is reinforcing a mindset that using a car is their only option and increasing vehicle miles.
- The affordability of the Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) is increasing levels of carbon emissions on Scotland's islands as it encourages more tourists to travel to them by car.
- Closures to local services such as village churches, libraries and medical centres are increasing the number of journeys made by car as this is the only means of reaching the nearest alternatives. This reinforces the very behaviour that NTS2 is trying to change.
- There is no clear strategy to support the rollout of public EV charge points across rural and island communities. Specifically, the identification of their optimal location so that they are easily accessible to all.



## Reducing Inequalities

- A lack of access to shared transport services in rural and island communities is constraining the use of free and concessionary travel passes including the Under 22 Free Bus Scheme.

- The operation of community transport services depends on the commitment of a dwindling number of volunteer resources who tend to be elderly.
- The lack of rural community hubs where local people can meet, work, socialise and connect to sustainable modes of transport is a key barrier to reducing social isolation.
- Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services aren't fully addressing the accessibility needs of travellers with mobility issues. Specifically, they don't all offer door-step pick up and not all buses are fully equipped to support wheelchair users.
- The current car booking systems across Scotland's ferry network favour infrequent travellers who can book well ahead of their journey. With access to deck space on many ferries at a premium, this discriminates against local people and businesses who travel more frequently at short notice to the mainland.
- The impact of time poverty on social and economic equality is poorly understood among policy makers. Time poverty is the amount of work or social time that needs to be sacrificed in order to travel to and from a location using private or public transport.



### **Deliver Inclusive Economic Growth**

- The lack of reliable and accessible public transport services is making it increasingly difficult for rural employers to recruit and retain staff which discourages them from developing the new products and services which drive economic growth.

- The increasing unreliability of ferries across Caledonian MacBrayne's west coast network is severely damaging island economies. Local tourism businesses are losing vital revenues while manufacturing, agriculture and trades businesses struggle to move freight on and off their island. The forthcoming Islands Connectivity Plan (ICP) must clearly set-out how these issues will be addressed.
- It's unclear how rural and island communities will benefit from the investments in innovation that are presented within the NTS2 strategy. In particular, more clarity is required on how young people within these communities will access the vocational aspects of these programmes without significant amounts of travel.



### **Improve Health & Wellbeing**

- The weighting of funding for active travel programmes in rural areas doesn't take full account of the distances and terrain that new paths and trails will need to be built on in order to support the behaviour changes needed to encourage more people to walk, wheel or cycle in these areas.
- The success of school focused interventions such as WOW, the walk to school challenge, will be limited in rural and island areas until more accessible pedestrian infrastructure is in place.

- The B & C category roads that characterise rural and island communities are becoming increasingly dangerous as they are shared by more vehicles of different sizes and become less resilient due to traffic and climate change related wear and tear.
- The impacts of macro trends such as COVID-19, digitisation and automation on the travel behaviours of rural and island communities is poorly understood.

## Conclusions

The insights gained through this consultation process enable some specific conclusions to be made with respect to the issues that cut across all 4 of the core NTS2 goals and are of most concern to rural and island stakeholders tasked with translating national policies into local plans. Section 4 provides a more detailed overview of the following conclusions.

### Policy Development

Operator interventions implemented at a national level are increasing rather than removing friction because there is limited or no opportunity to flex them at a local level.

### Collaboration

There is a lack of cohesive collaboration across Government departments on developing “rural proofed” policies that are central to Scotland achieving its long-term social, economic and environmental goals.

### Leadership

Across all modes of transport, there is a lack of opportunity for local transport leaders within rural and island communities to participate on the boards and working groups of regional and national bodies.

### Funding

Current grant funding programmes designed to advance the aims of NTS2 within rural and island communities don’t fully consider the barriers to accessing this funding and the challenges in demonstrating its impact. Barriers include resource constraints, knowledge gaps and the timescales within which projects are expected to deliver measurable results.

### Innovation

Greater levels of innovation need to be catalysed within rural communities if Scotland is to successfully decarbonise its transport systems and improve social and economic health and wellbeing. This is becoming increasingly urgent given the impacts of COVID and the cost of living crisis on people’s quality of life.

### Data

Relative to more densely populated areas in Scotland, access to localised geospatial data is a challenge in most rural and island communities. Further investment in the technologies and resources that facilitate the collection, analysis, visualisation and sharing of this data are required in order to achieve all four NTS2 goals.



## Education & Skills

To successfully implement and embed positive changes within their communities, greater emphasis must be placed on education and skills development programmes that empower local people with the knowledge and tools to shape the future direction of transportation within their communities so that it fits with the wider decarbonisation of their local energy systems.

## Actions – The 6 Asks

The conclusions emerging from this consultation process naturally lead to a small number of “asks” that the stakeholders participating in the workshop have for national transport policy developers within the Scottish Government.

These “asks” are interrelated, strategic in nature and if supported will bring much greater focus to the work that needs to be done to “level up” and decarbonise rural and island communities. Each of the asks below are expanded upon in section 5.



Diagram 2

## Ask 1 – Development of an Integrated Rural & Islands Mobility Plan

This would be a national plan instigated and administered by the Scottish Government, and informed by the key stakeholders representing rural and island communities across Scotland. The plan would address all of the 7 thematic areas outlined in this report and sit within the National Transport Strategy.

## Ask 2 – Development of a Rural and Island Transport Innovation Fund

Significant additional investments in transport innovation programmes and projects across Scotland’s rural and island communities are urgently needed to ensure that they are able to compete on a level playing field with urban areas. A ring-fenced Rural and Island Transport Innovation Fund for smaller-scale, community-led projects will help to catalyse “bottom up” innovations.

## Ask 3 – Formation of a Rural & Islands Transport Government Working Group

This should be an inter-departmental group composed of representatives from Scottish Government departments that influence the formation of multi-modal rural transport policies. This includes transport, economic development, environmental/sustainability, spatial planning, and digital infrastructure planning.

#### **Ask 4 – Development of a Rural & Islands Transport Procurement Framework**

The framework will address the unique social, environmental and economic challenges associated with the delivery of sustainable transport projects across rural and island communities. These include active travel, EV Charging and Ride-Sharing. Its design would require suppliers to provide evidence of their understanding of these challenges and specificity within their proposals on how they will tackle them.

Developing a framework specific to these locations is important because of their distinct geospatial and geo-demographic attributes of which relatively little is openly available and accessible today which stifles innovation.

#### **Ask 5 – Development of a Sustainable Rural Transport STEM challenge**

A national sustainable transport STEM challenge aimed at young people across Scotland's rural and island communities would harness their first hand experiences of how transport services limit their social and economic mobility and catalyse the creation of science-based ideas that help to resolve these issues. The challenges would tackle real and pressing issues in their community including active travel, last mile deliveries and ride-sharing.

#### **Ask 6 – Development of a Rural & Islands Open Data Framework**

This framework mirrors those that are emerging in urban environments and will stimulate innovation and address an urgent need to develop better insights on the health of transport services and infrastructure within rural and island locations.

# Preface

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## **The Scottish Rural & Islands Transport Community**

The Scottish Rural and Islands Transport Community (SRITC) was founded in 2018 and was incorporated as a Social Enterprise (Community Interest Company) in June 2021. We're a collective voice for rural and island communities and businesses. We aim to help shape future transport provision in our rural areas through facilitating knowledge and best practice exchange that supports the development of innovative solutions to key transport challenges.

We're uniquely placed to lead this work because we are the only organisation that connects and supports rural and islands transport stakeholders at all levels of society, from individuals and local community groups through to national Government bodies.

Our vision is for rural and island communities to be fully empowered to deliver transport services that are available when needed, affordable, accessible and sustainable.

While rural transport is our main focus, our work extends to the sectors that are dependent on transport services including healthcare, tourism, and freight.

## **Scotland's Rural & Islands Transport Landscape**

Rural Scotland accounts for 98% of the land mass in Scotland but only 17% of the population of 5.46 million in 2019 (1).

The million or so people who live in remote rural (6% of population) or accessible rural (11% of population) areas of Scotland are widely dispersed. From a mobility standpoint, this can often make it challenging to access reliable and affordable transport service.

In keeping with many Western countries, Scotland has an ageing population. This is most noticeable in rural areas which have higher proportions of people aged 45, and even higher percentages aged over 65 compared to urban areas. Of equal concern, there is also a lower proportion of people aged between 16 and 44 living in Scotland's rural and island communities. This long term trend of outward migration is driven by a desire to access further education, better employment and housing opportunities.

The most significant transport issues facing rural and island communities in Scotland are reasonably well understood. Namely, the availability, accessibility and reliability of public transport services, lack of investment in road and rail and ferry infrastructure and the impact of COVID-19 on travel behaviours.

However, an important aspect that is often overlooked and under-explored is the externalities that arise as a consequence of these issues. Most notably, social isolation, time-poverty, employee retention and recruitment, and business failures.



## **NTS2 Stakeholder Consultation Process**

This consultation process that we've undertaken addresses an urgent need to better understand the different characteristics, behaviours and outlooks of the people who live, work and visit rural and island communities across Scotland. Prescribing policy interventions that don't take account of these differences risks further marginalising and dislocating these communities and reinforcing the very travel behaviours that need to change for Scotland to achieve its objective of reducing car kilometres by 20% by 2030.

Through 3 structured stakeholder engagement workshops, the challenges facing different groups of rural and island stakeholders have been mapped against the 4 major NTS2 priorities. This has produced 7 thematic areas that are most consequential with respect to the development of future transport policies that align with the Scottish Government's overarching objective of making a Just Transition to Net Zero.

We've welcomed the opportunity to inform the development of the NTS2 delivery plan and will outline in more detail in the following pages the key findings that have emerged from our stakeholder engagement process.

# Methodology

## Workshop Design

The 3 workshops were designed to develop a more granular and vivid picture of the lived experiences of the people who live, work, study and visit rural and island communities, and the organisations responsible for planning and delivering transport services.

To achieve this outcome we followed best practice design thinking principles using a “Double Diamond” framework. This framework provides a structured process to explore and prioritise complex challenges, and identify solutions and recommendations.

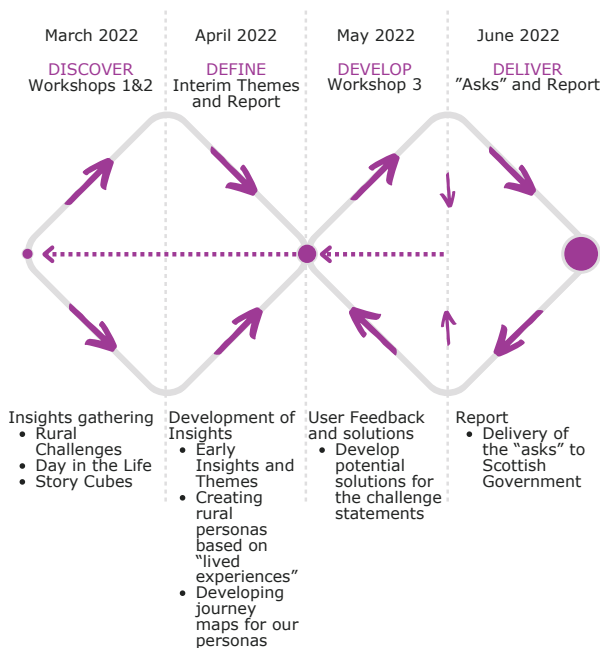


Diagram 3

As outlined in Diagram 3, the Double Diamond consists of 4 stages. During the first 2 stages, Discovery & Definition, participants in Workshops 1 and 2 were tasked with fully defining and expressing the challenges that different segments of rural communities

face when trying to access and use different modes of transport. Thereafter, the common themes related to these challenges were identified and described.

Participants attending the third and final workshop were invited to review and discuss the fitness for purpose of the NTS2 framework through the lens of rural communities, and then validate and further develop the themes identified in the previous workshops. This facilitating the completion of stage 3 of the design process.

This report completes the fourth and final stage of the design process. Namely, presenting the requirements (or asks) that have emerged from the stakeholder consultation that we've completed.

## Workshop Facilitation

To maximise interaction within each of the workshops we employed some co-creation tools. The first being a digital whiteboard called Padlet that captures stories related to a "day in the life" of each participant, and the second being "story cubes" that stimulate discussion, debate and ideation related to specific mobility challenges.

### "Day In the Life" Exercise

Each participant was tasked with reflecting on what a typical day in their life looked like and the role that transport played in it.

Through the words that they wrote and the pictures they uploaded to Padlet, the similarities and differences in their travel experiences became clearer.

## “Story Cube” Exercise

A story cube is a simple framework that is used to remove many of the typical barriers that block co-creation and ideation. Story cubes anchored to the following mobility challenges were created in advance of each workshop.

- **Socio-Demographic Challenge** – The challenge of accessing and using transport based on age, physical abilities, employment, relationship and family status.
- **Modal Challenge** – The challenge of accessing and using a specific mode of transport.
- **Destination Challenge** – The challenge of travelling to a specific destination using public transport.

Participants were divided into small breakout groups and tasked with rolling the story cubes to identify a socio-demographic, modal and destination challenge that they would discuss. For example, a student who needs to get the bus to travel to college.

With support from the breakout group facilitator and note-taker, participants explored the emotional, physical, social and financial impacts of these challenges on the day-to-day life of the people who live and work in different rural settings.

The real value of this exercise emerged through the “ah hah” moments, when a less understood and appreciated issue was highlighted. An example being the emotional stress that unreliable ferry

services have on the elderly members of island communities who often need to travel to the mainland at short notice to attend hospital appointments.



Image 1

## Workshop Analysis

After each workshop had concluded, insights related to the challenges discussed were consolidated and used as the stimulus for developing user personas and travel journey maps that visualise the wide range of transport needs among those who live in rural communities. These insights were also used to uncover the recurring themes that demand most attention from a policy development perspective.

All 12 user personas are available to view in Appendix 4. These represent adults from all parts of the socio-demographic spectrum including students, single parents, wheelchair users, shift workers and volunteer drivers. Each persona tells a story about how intertwined their life is with local transport services, and how acutely they are affected when these services aren't accessible or affordable.





## Emily

### THE SOCIAL STUDENT

Emily is 19 and lives with her parents and three siblings in Drumnadrochit. Studies at Scottish School of Forestry campus of Inverness College UHI and works at weekends at an outdoor activity shop.

#### EMILY'S TRAVEL STORY

I get the bus into Inverness most four days a week to go to University and part time job. On Sundays I rely on someone to drive me there and back because the bus does not run. The under-22 concession card is great as I don't have to think about the cost.

I'm learning to drive but lessons are expensive and there is a long waiting list for tests. I will need a car when I qualify as a forester but hopefully my job will provide me with a car as I otherwise I won't be able to afford one.

#### EMILY'S TRAVEL CHALLENGES

##### • BEFORE TRAVEL

Being aware of the bus timetable for attending lectures, seminars and part-time job. Liaising with Mum and Dad if I need them to taxi me.

##### • DURING TRAVEL

The bus is infrequent so my timings are pretty set. Sometimes have long waits for services as it does not match my lectures or work.

##### • AFTER TRAVEL

My social life is limited to when Mum and Dad can pick me up in Inverness. I often feel I am missing out but money is tight.

#### EMILY'S TYPICAL JOBS-TO-BE-DONE

When I get the bus to college  
I want to get there quickly  
So I can get on with my studies for the day.

When I go out with friends  
I want to later bus services  
So I can be independent and flexible.

When I go to work  
I want to have more flexibility with bus services  
So I can work more hours and pay for driving lessons.

To complement the user personas and further illustrate the travel experiences of different types of people in rural & island communities, we created user journey maps which describe their behaviours and feelings before, during and after a journey made using one or more modes of public transport.

The journey maps presented in Appendix 5 provide compelling evidence of the stress that is often associated when depending on buses, ferries and trains or trying to walk, cycle or wheel on roads that aren't designed for active travel.

Through the workshops and our wider consultations, a recurring theme was how much time, effort and money people will devote to finding ways of mitigating the risks created by unreliable transport services.

For islanders travelling to or from mainland appointments or flights from overseas destinations, this often means booking a BnB or hotel on the mainland just in case the ferry doesn't sail. For those living in a remote rural mainland location and dependent on the bus, it can mean checking with a family member or friend if they can give them a lift if the bus is cancelled or is running late.

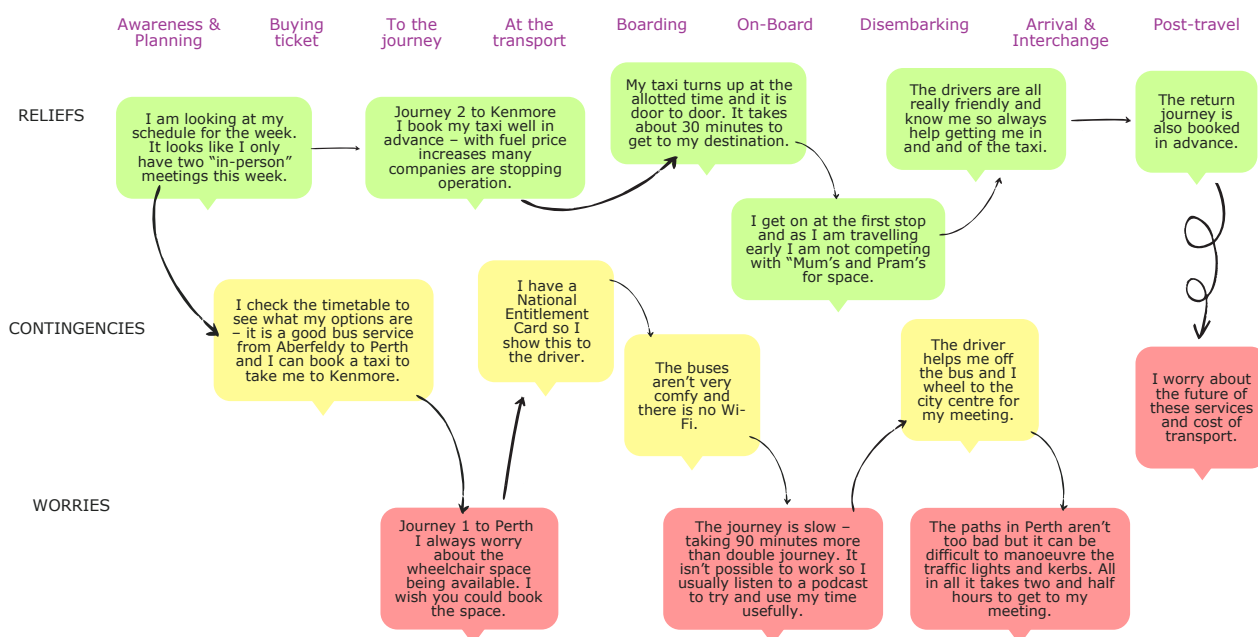
## Finlay's Weekly Journey



### Finlay

#### THE WHEELCHAIR COMMUTER

Trained as an accountant and was active in water sports until an accident five-years ago that damaged his spine. He works as an advisor for the local business enterprise in Perth and Kinross. He works from home but also travels in the region from his home in Aberfeldy. He lives with his husband who is also his carer and their adopted son, Angus.



# Findings

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From our analysis of the outcomes from the workshops we discovered seven recurring themes that materially affect the ability of people to confidently travel to and from Scotland's rural and island communities using sustainable modes of private and public transport.

## Theme 1 – Reliability

The social and economic wellbeing of Scotland's rural and island communities is dependent on the provision of reliable transport services. Failure to do so creates a negative ripple effect across these communities.

Economically, employers find it harder to recruit and retain staff which makes it harder for them to develop new products and services which drive their growth which in turn stifles the performance of the local economy.

Socially, the people who live miles away from village and town centres and are dependent on public transport become isolated from the rest of their community. This especially being the case for elderly people living on their own. Social isolation dramatically increases the risks of mental and physical illness which then places more strain on a healthcare system that is already creaking.

As the following examples from the workshops illustrate, the lack of reliable transport services are experienced in different ways depending on whether someone lives on an island or in a rural mainland community.

## Rural Mainland Communities

In many rural mainland communities the bus is the only viable alternative to using a privately owned car for regular trips. However, workshop participants made it clear that they have limited confidence in the reliability of scheduled bus services, particularly if, as is often the case, their journey requires them to catch 2 or more buses. Doubts were also expressed about whether Demand Responsive Transport Services (DRT) will be more reliable in the long term.

The impacts of this unreliability and uncertainty should not be underestimated. For the people who have access to a private car, it embeds existing travel behaviours and notwithstanding the increasing cost of fuel and gradual switch to EV's, makes it harder to achieve the 20% reduction in car miles that the Government aspires to.

For the people who don't have access to a car, the consequences can be even more profound. Their ability to travel independently becomes much harder, increasing the risks of social isolation, particularly among the elderly community and all of the mental health issues that come with it.

Moreover, for the rapidly increasing number of people with short or long term health issues, unreliable bus services in mainland rural communities massively compromise their ability to attend scheduled GP and hospital appointments.



Given the backlog of patients that many hospitals are dealing with, rescheduling an appointment can often mean a wait of many months.

While trying to find a lift in a car from a family member or friend can be an option for some, a last resort can often mean paying for a private taxi which is a cost that is becoming less affordable to the many people dealing with the cost of living crisis.

### Island Communities

“

“Ferries need to be reliable and also fit-for-purpose. More engagement and consultation is required with island communities - and again those in charge need to live on islands, so have no real idea of the overall impact. Unreliability of ferries affects everything - supplies, services, residents accessing appointments and work, visitors coming to spend in the economy and therefore support community facilities such as cafes and swimming, etc.”

ISLAND RESIDENT

”

This statement was made by a participant in the first workshop who lives and works on the Isle of Arran. It emphasises the pivotal role that the ferry service plays in the life of every single islander and now, more than ever, it's the first thing that islanders will talk about when they meet each other.

For generations, islanders have politely tolerated disruptions to ferry services. It's part and parcel of living on an island. Until recently, these disruptions were fairly predictable. During the winter, the occasional sailing would be cancelled ahead of storms arriving. Now and again a ferry would break down, requiring another to be redeployed.

However, islanders, especially on the west coast routes served by Caledonian MacBrayne, are currently experiencing two unwelcome trends that together are breaking their confidence in the long term reliability of the ferry services.

The first notable trend is the increasing number of sailings that are being cancelled due to weather related events. There was a feeling among workshop participants that this could be related to the frequency and strength of storms, and higher tides linked to climate change. However, there was a nagging suspicion that the current ferry Captains who make the final decision on whether to sail are less risk inclined than their predecessors, perhaps due to a greater focus on passenger and livestock health and safety.

The second trend that is causing islanders even greater concern is the growing number of mechanical faults that result in service cancellations at short notice.

**Key Point:** The root cause of this trend is well documented. The average age of ferries serving the west coast of Scotland is 24 years with many of the larger vessels that serve the busiest routes even older. With an expected lifespan of 25 years there is an urgent need to replace these ferries.

If the mechanical reliability of the existing fleet of ferries doesn't improve in the short term, or there are further delays to the delivery of new vessels, then the ripple effects will be widespread.

Tourists will think twice before deciding to visit one or more islands; business owners who see their trade dwindling may make the reluctant decision to sell up and move to the mainland; those who are considering starting one will consider it too risky; finally, it will create more anxiety among elderly and vulnerable residents, who need to have confidence that they can get to a hospital on time. Further outward migration from our islands runs counter to the ambitions set out in NTS2 of reducing inequalities and growing local economies.

While the representatives from island community groups who participated in the workshops were pragmatic in recognising that there is no magic wand that will fix these reliability issues, their biggest frustration is the continuing disconnect between those who plan and implement policies and those who are the recipients of them.

**Key Point:** Within and across all of the islands that are experiencing the consequences of the weather and mechanical related disruptions to sailings, there are many people with a wealth of relevant knowledge, wisdom and experience who aren't being fully consulted and involved in the decision making process.

“

“There must be members on the Boards of bodies like CMAL, CalMac, and Transport Scotland Ferries Unit etc who are resident on the Islands. The fundamental understanding of what the service represents to the communities they serve.”

WORKSHOP 1 PARTICIPANT

”

The appointment of representatives from these island communities onto the boards of the publicly owned organisations who own, operate and administer these lifeline ferries would be seen as a small but important step in building an environment of mutual trust and collaboration needed to deliver a long-term strategy that resolves these reliability issues.

## Theme 2 – Connectivity

Connecting rural and island inhabitants to the places that offer the opportunities and support needed at different stages of life is a prerequisite to reducing inequalities, improving health & wellbeing, and growing Scotland's economy.

However, doing so in an environmentally and economically sustainable way poses significant challenges for the policy makers and operators of shared transport services (buses, trains, ferries and shared cars), and the developers and maintainers of active travel networks.

Addressing these issues must start with recognising the diversity of connectivity challenges that are frequently encountered, their underlying reasons and the travel behaviours they reinforce.

### Shared Transport Connectivity Challenges

As the journey maps that emerged from the workshops vividly illustrate, travelling by shared transport requires a considerable amount of preparation and contingency planning.

Through their own personal stories, workshop participants confirmed the pain that is often experienced when trying to use a combination of buses, trains, ferries and cars to make longer journeys.

“

“There are bus services in some of my area but they’re not necessarily frequent. Some are on a train route but not all stations are linked with all services. There are no local taxis so most people end up travelling by private car.”

WORKSHOP 1 PARTICIPANT

”

The possibility of simply hopping on a bus or train that drops them in close proximity to their destination is alien to those who through choice or necessity use public transport. This is true for those who live in rural communities or those who want to visit them.

For example, a resident of Skye planning a short break to visit family in Glasgow must try to navigate between bus, ferry and train timetables and fares in order to determine the quickest and cheapest route, and then hope that all of these services run on time on the day of the journey otherwise they can be stranded for hours.

A lack of confidence in these connections between shared transport services reinforces the very behaviours that must change if Scotland is to achieve its climate goals. Specifically, reducing the number of private car journeys, particularly those without any passengers.

However, among the young residents of rural communities the motivation to travel more sustainably to larger towns and cities for study, work and leisure purposes is compromised by this lack of integration and connectivity. Their engagement and use of the Free Bus Travel Scheme introduced in early 2022 will continue to take second place to learning to drive. In spite of the costs, the latter offers them convenience, certainty, and freedom from depending on lifts from parents.

### Active Travel Connectivity Challenges

Across all 3 workshops, there was universal agreement on the need to encourage more people to walk, cycle and wheel on a regular basis. Nonetheless, the availability of safe routes to do so remains limited, especially between rural hamlets and villages

“

“Many villages and their surrounding areas don’t have the infrastructure to support active travel.”

WORKSHOP 2 PARTICIPANT

”

As bicycle and wheeling technology continue to develop and active travel becomes attractive to a larger number of people, the importance of constructing supporting infrastructure that enables journeys to be made safely and conveniently will only increase.



However, compared to urban areas, the distances and terrain between rural communities reduce returns on investment in bike paths and lanes when standard business case metrics are applied. **Put simply, low population densities make it much harder to justify constructing new cycle lanes as they won't be used frequently by enough people.**

Resolving this issue requires planners and policy makers to recognise that the techniques and standards which have been created to ensure the safe construction of cycle path networks within urban environments aren't transferable to rural.

Failure to do so is significantly delaying the deliverability of new cycle paths that do not demonstrate "value for money" and hence will always miss the "affordability" measurement in outline business cases.

An alternative approach to investment planning that prioritises the contribution of innovation and local circular supply chains can help to unlock value that would otherwise be overlooked.

An example of this bolder approach being adopted can be found within CivTech 7 (2), the latest round of open innovation challenges issued by Scotland's public and third sector organisations.

Challenge 4 (3) sponsored by South of Scotland Enterprise Agency (SOSE) and CENSIS, Scotland's Innovation Centre for sensing, imaging and Internet of Things (IoT), tasks the innovation community with demonstrating how digital technologies coupled with novel construction techniques using waste products

from local suppliers can stimulate demand for cycling infrastructure and support the South of Scotland's rural communities.

Involving local people and businesses in the entire lifecycle of active travel infrastructure, from consultation through planning, design, delivery and maintenance significantly increases the probability of achieving the behaviour changes needed to make walking, cycling and wheeling the activity of choice for the majority of shorter car journeys.

## **Digital/Online Connectivity**

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was no great surprise that when workshop participants were asked to describe their typical working day, many highlighted that working and meeting from home using Zoom & MS Teams meetings was a regular feature.

This confirms how digital connectivity is changing how we live and work, removing the need to travel as often by car or public transport. To those who live and work there, good quality digital connectivity in rural areas is essential to ensuring that they are able to compete on a level playing field with their urban peers.

Compete means having equal access to opportunities, resources and services that would otherwise be out of reach. This includes jobs, education, medical care and social services.

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As Theme 4 will expand on, these opportunities are only available to those with access to reliable broadband connections (fixed and mobile), and the knowledge and skills to use relevant digital tools.

The reality of travel in 2022 is that a smartphone, 4G connection and journey apps have become a necessity in order to plan, navigate and complete a trip using any mode of transport.

However, this not only excludes many elderly and vulnerable people but anyone who happens to find themselves in an area where a 4G connection isn't available. In spite of the strides in recent years that have been taken to fill in 4G blackspots, many still remain and present an obstacle to resolving the inequalities set out in NTS2.

**Key Point:** The success of innovations related to Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) that aim to increase access to shared transport services, and Mobility as a Service (MaaS) that integrates them, rests on the availability of a high speed digital connectivity network across all parts of rural Scotland.

In an environment where many businesses are prioritising online customer support, a failure to deliver this network risks further isolating residents within rural communities, pushing more to relocate closer to places where there are more reliable and dependable travel options.

### **Analogue/Offline Connectivity (Helplines & Ticket Offices)**

While opportunities to connect digitally to the services offered by transport operators provides convenience to many travellers, the value of being able to speak to a real human being on the phone or in-person cannot be understated.

While all of the transport operators who participated in the workshops offer a telephone customer helpline, the operational costs that can be saved by pushing people online threatens their longevity.

Cold business logic may push operators to cut the hours that helplines and manned ticket offices are open for, and ultimately close them completely. However, the clear message emerging from the workshops is that the social consequences will be significant.

Indeed, it was stressed that even today calling a helpline instead of going online is often an exercise in futility, especially when outdoors on the move. Success requires several "stars to align" including: the support line being open (many close after 6pm); being in a location with good mobile coverage; not being placed in a long queue; and successfully connecting with a customer support agent who is actually able to provide meaningful assistance.

The lack of manned ticket offices at rural train stations and bus shelters further compounds the challenge of getting travel support when you most need it, particularly for the many elderly people who depend on them.

“

“There is no manned ticket office at our local train station so older people struggle to use the ticket machines or buy online.”

WORKSHOP 1 PARTICIPANT

”

Research undertaken by Disability Equality Scotland on assistance for travel by bus (for the week beginning 6 December 2021) included a question about passenger assistance at bus stations (a question suggested by Transport Scotland). **Answers indicated that although 89% required passenger assistance, almost no one (4%) received it.**

As more technology service providers step into the rural mobility space and develop solutions that digitally connect timetables, tickets and vehicles on behalf of Local Authorities and other transport operators, **they cannot lose sight of the people of all ages who will, from time to time, prefer to speak to someone because they need help or simply want to hear the sound of someone else's voice as they are lonely.**

The Department for Transport's (DfT) "Tackling loneliness with transport fund" (4) that was launched at the end of 2021, provides an example of a practical initiative that tackles the growing issue of loneliness in rural communities.

While not exclusively aimed at rural communities and limited to Local Authorities based in England & Wales, it's produced some noteworthy winning proposals. This includes Age UK who have been awarded a grant of £546,000 to set-up and trial a national scheme that will use travelling companions to help older people access and use a range of transport options.

Stakeholders from across Scotland's transport community should pay close attention to the outcomes of these projects as they will provide case studies on the steps that can be taken to design rural mobility solutions that solve not only functional travel challenges but also the emotional ones that currently contribute to feelings of marginalisation and isolation.

“

“Often rural policy is developed by agencies such as the National Park Authority - with many of the staff such as the access team living in the urban centres such as Glasgow - so needs to be built on resident and visitor needs from a rural perspective.”

WORKSHOP 1 PARTICIPANT

”

## Theme 3 – Behaviours

For centrally planned behaviour change policies linked to the four NTS2 goals to succeed, an appreciation of the local environments in which they will be implemented is needed.

While these policies are intended to nudge people away from behaviours such as car driving and towards ride sharing and active travel, workshop participants stressed the importance of investing time in understanding the underlying reasons behind the behaviours within rural communities that have developed organically without “top down” interventions.

This recognises that if a “carrot or stick” intervention needs to be offered to change a behaviour, it’s more likely to work if it’s relatable and seen to have originated from within the community that it’s targeted at. This speaks to the importance of involving local people in the design of modal change interventions.

The unintended consequences that emerge from a lack of engagement with local people can be regularly observed.

This includes well-intended interventions such as the Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) which has succeeded in encouraging more tourists to bring their car or campervan to islands on the west coast but in doing so increased the volume of traffic and carbon emissions on the islands. This runs counter to the Scottish Government’s objective of creating 6 carbon neutral islands by 2040 (5) including Great Cumbrae which experiences some of the highest of all levels of island tourism in Scotland.

**Key Point:** the closure of a village church, library or medical centre that was within easy walking or cycling distance from home can lead to an increase in car journeys as people need to travel further to find the closest alternative.

This may only be a few miles but every journey adds more carbon emissions. Moreover, for those without a car, it decreases opportunities to engage with other members of their community.

A more climate friendly and socially positive behaviour found in many rural communities is informal car sharing where locals coordinate lifts via social media, phone and word of mouth. The origins of this long-standing practice are rooted in the lack of an alternative way of travelling to and from home, and a strong sense of community spirit. The student from Arran arriving back on the island to discover that there are no buses to take him home can often hitch a lift with someone he’s bumped into coming off the ferry.

Irrespective of whether behaviours develop organically or through top-down interventions, the consensus within the workshops was of the need to develop a clearer understanding of people's motivations for using or not using different modes of transport.

“

“We need better data on people and what motivates them. Many transport related decisions are made based on numbers of people using a service with the assumption that low use = no need for service.”

WORKSHOP 3 PARTICIPANT

”



This quote confirms that from a transport provision standpoint, potentially life-changing decisions can be made based on a generic set of quantitative metrics that can present a misleading picture of travel behaviours. The root cause of low bus patronage in rural areas is often not a lack of demand but a lack of accessibility or affordability.

The impact of macro trends such as COVID-19, digitisation and automation on travel behaviours is also deserving of further research so that the consequences can be quantified and qualified.

## Theme 4 – Accessibility

To form a better understanding of the challenges associated with using different modes of transport, workshop participants used the previously described story cubes as a stimulus for considering the temporal, spatial and form factor dimensions of accessibility.

The temporal dimension addresses the challenge of accessing a private, public or community operated vehicle at a particular time of day while the spatial dimension examines the role that location plays. Finally, vehicle accessibility considers how well equipped specific types of vehicles are to support the travel needs of different users. This includes able-bodied users and users with physical or mental disabilities.

“

“The negative impacts of travel programmes that are flagged in Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) are not always addressed prior to implementation meaning they go ahead knowing they will have a negative impact on groups who share protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010.”

WORKSHOP 3 PARTICIPANT

”

## Temporal Accessibility

The starting point for workshop discussions on the time dimension of vehicle accessibility was its relationship with quality of life and economic growth, 2 of the NTS2 goals.

Extensive studies have examined the impact on wellbeing where access to transport is limited at different times of day. Their conclusions confirm that it contributes to social isolation and reduces the economic health of individuals and communities. However, as outlined when discussing behaviours, less understood is how recent macro environmental and technology events are changing temporal demand for transport in rural communities.

When participants across all 3 workshops shared stories of their working day, Zoom & MS Teams meetings were a recurring theme. This confirming the wider change in working practices. While some of these participants lived in more urbanised locations, many others were located in the sort of rural locations that are poorly served by public transport.

It should be stressed that in spite of the best efforts that were made to secure a true representation of the demographics of typical rural communities at the workshops, this in practice was unrealistic given time and budget.

Nonetheless, those who did participate in the workshops were speaking on behalf of people from across the socio-demographic spectrum within rural and island communities. From shift workers to students and the elderly, they revealed that digital tools such as Zoom are not a viable solution to a shortage of scheduled public transport.

**Key Point: Irrespective of whether it's getting to work at 6am, college at 9am or the doctors surgery at 2pm, without access to a car it's impossible to be confident that you can leave home in time, to arrive at your destination on time.**

As theme 5 will expand on, the precipitous price of fuel is also making car journeys less viable which, for a growing number of people, essentially cuts off any means of travel apart from walking and cycling which isn't an option for those with disabilities and medical conditions.

Suggestions on short and longer-term solutions to these "time-place" challenges from workshop participants were forthcoming, ranging from smarter management and utilisation of existing fleets of vehicles to more investment in Demand Responsive Transport services.

“

“Provide options for community vehicles which are managed centrally (so little admin locally) but can be used for shared travel in rural areas (i.e. shopping coordination).”

WORKSHOP 3 PARTICIPANT

”

For largely contractual reasons, across rural communities, there are cars and minibuses that lie unused for many hours of the day and night. These are hours when people within these communities need to travel for work, leisure or medical reasons and through lack of an alternative, will use a car.

“

“Community Transport is not community transport but often just to serve specific council contracts between a school and home or ferry and home. We have no taxi service on the island or any form of transport that is available on request to get around for other purposes than school and ferry.”

WORKSHOP 1 PARTICIPANT

”

**Key Point: Meaningful climate actions that reduce the number of car journeys must consider how spare fleet capacity can be utilised. Having one minibus that is already paid for carrying four passengers is better environmentally and socially than four individual car journeys with no passengers.**

Making better use of existing capacity is a key pillar of NTS2's goal of delivering inclusive economic growth. The task of coordinating this spare capacity in a way that mitigates the need for solo car journeys requires close collaboration between Local Authorities, Community Transport Operators and the technology companies developing Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services.

Outside of the traditional pre-book "dial a ride" DRT services offered by many Local Authorities, within the workshops there were varying levels of awareness of the online "data driven" DRT pilots taking place across Scotland. This includes one recently introduced by HiTrans in partnership with US based start-up The Routing Company.

While there were strong levels of advocacy within the workshops for these new innovations in DRT, evidence of their longer term viability has still to emerge. Not only do they need to work on a temporal basis, they must demonstrate that they can operate spatially and be physically accessible to all.

Furthermore, financially, they must be able to operate on a sustainable basis beyond their initial period of grant funding otherwise climate-friendly travel change behaviours that have started to embed themselves will rapidly evaporate.

### **Spatial Accessibility**

With 6% of Scotland's population (6) living in areas classed as remote (7) or very remote, and constituting 70% of the country's land area, the challenge of supporting widely dispersed communities

that may only be made up of a few dozen people is considerable.

The highest levels of car ownership (per 1000 people) are found in remote rural regions including Aberdeenshire, The Highlands & Orkney. How to loosen dependency on the car in these locations, even if it's an electric one, sparked much debate in the workshops.

It was highlighted that the financial and operational limitations of "for profit" DRT services will be tested when the distance between the people who would want to use the service increases beyond a few miles, which will be the case in these remote communities.

Suggestions to try and overcome this issue included investing in highly localised car-share and car-pool schemes where existing vehicles are more fully utilised. This isn't a new idea as the practice of car-sharing within rural communities is well established although less utilised in recent decades as cars have become affordable to more people.

“

"Closed loop car shares or other car-pool options would probably be more reliable options in a rural/island community."

WORKSHOP 3 PARTICIPANT

”

Revitalising this behaviour may become more achievable in the future if the overall cost of living continues to increase and pushes more people in rural and island communities to make better utilisation of their car given its significant contribution to their outgoings.

Enabled by digital connectivity and supporting platforms, closed loop car-sharing and pooling schemes can create a “win win” for these communities. It provides a new source of income for car owners who are paid for use of their car and a means of transport to the people who need to use the car.

Examples of this solution in practice in a remote community include a professional who works from home most of the day and makes their car available to a near neighbour who needs to travel to the village for a doctor's appointment.

It was recognised within the workshops that this solution won't be accessible to everyone including those who don't or can't drive, which is common in most of these communities. Therefore, the availability of volunteer drivers or drivers who are paid a small sum to drive on behalf of others will be necessary.

### **Vehicle & Infrastructure Accessibility**

To facilitate discussion on how well equipped different types of vehicles are to support the travel needs of different types of users, and the quality of supporting infrastructure such as pavements and cycle lanes, participants used the story cubes as the catalyst for discussion.

Users were categorised as those with or without a physical or mental disability. The Equality Act (2010) defines disability as follows: "A person has a disability if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities."

### **Vehicle Accessibility**

With walking and wheeling sitting at the top of The Scottish Government's sustainable transport hierarchy followed by cycling, the adoption and use of these travel modes by a larger percentage of the population is the fastest path to decarbonising the transport network.

However, for many people living in or visiting rural and island communities, cycling, wheeling or walking with a pram, buggy or heavy luggage isn't a viable means of travelling to their final destination due to the length of the trips.

Encouraging more people to start their journey by bike, wheelchair or on foot and connect to a bus, train or other form of shared transport necessitates the availability of suitably equipped vehicles.

“

“Rural transport needs to be fit-for-purpose. The buses should be able to take wheelchairs, bikes, luggage, buggies etc if needed. More adaptable and smaller buses are needed.”

WORKSHOP 1 PARTICIPANT

”

While this request has been made by many people on many occasions over many years, the evidence from the workshops is that very little has changed. While there are examples of community transport operators who have secured funding to purchase fully accessible minibuses, there are considerably more ageing vehicles that are too big and only able to serve able-bodied passengers who don't have a bike or wheelchair with them.

“

“There needs to be acknowledgement that for many disabled people, their car is their mobility aid and as such they need access to places and spaces.”

WORKSHOP 3 PARTICIPANT

”

What was left unsaid in this statement is that due to poorly equipped buses, the car is also the most accessible and convenient mobility aid for able-bodied people pushing or carrying something.

Cracking the car dependency culture in rural communities while reducing inequalities can only be achieved if bold steps are taken to design a shared transport experience where the vehicles offer not only equivalent convenience but also suitable access and on-board facilities.

**Key Point:** A possible starting point could be to evaluate the costs/benefits of converting existing vehicles as part of an overall retrofit from internal combustion engines to battery electric .

This addresses a reality that to reduce transport emissions at the pace needed to reach net zero by 2045, budget constrained transport operators will need to convert some of their existing fleet of vehicles to electric along with the purchase of new electric vehicles.

### Infrastructure Accessibility

The general consensus from participants across all 3 workshops was that in comparison to more populous urban locations, rural and island communities are poorly served with respect to all forms of transport infrastructure, including those serving cars, cyclists and wheelers.

It was further highlighted that from a policy standpoint, there needs to be clearer distinctions between the infrastructure needs of rural communities and island communities. While sharing some common characteristics, there are many more unique ones. This includes differences in road types (B v C Roads), the intersection with forestry estates and the distances between hamlets and villages.

These differences matter because adoption of active travel in these communities will only happen through the prescription of budgets that are based on “bottom up” analysis and planning. Without this approach, the results will be an assortment of roads, lanes and paths that fail to connect people with places, safely and conveniently.



When prompted to share words and phrases that immediately came to mind when thinking about rural transport infrastructure, the following emerged.

- Disjointed
- Non existent
- In-accessible
- Dangerous
- Poorly implemented
- Rarely used

**Key Point:** The impact of the growing number of tourists using rural and island road networks was highlighted as an area that is under-represented in NTS2. Specifically, the consequences of many different types of motorised and pedal powered vehicles sharing narrow roads that are often in a poor state of repair.

“

“Ebikes make active travel more practical in rural areas but it needs better infrastructure so cyclists can travel more safely.”

WORKSHOP 3 PARTICIPANT

”

The separation of drivers from cyclists on these roads carries even greater importance than in urban areas due to the speed at which motorised vehicles will be travelling outside of village centres.

For less able, and confident walkers and wheelchair users, the sparsity of accessible and usable pavements that connect from their home to a bus stop or train station will continue to push them towards the car.

For abled bodied people, it's quicker and safer to get a lift in a car to the bus stop even if it's a short distance away. For wheelchair users their options are limited. Use a car (either their own one or a taxi) to make the entire journey or stay at home. Choosing the former, means spending extra money that many don't have. Choosing the latter increases social isolation.

“

“Walking, as the most common form of active travel (even from home to the bus stop), is under valued/under reported and pedestrian infrastructure can be a major barrier to active travel and switching modes”.

WORKSHOP 3 PARTICIPANT

”

**Key Point:** Effectively designed and operated Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services have the potential to remedy part of this inaccessibility challenge as they can pick up passengers up outside their home. However, what DRT can't solve, and only infrastructure can, is the desire to walk or wheel for health and wellbeing benefits.

No-one involved in the workshops was under the illusion that resolving these issues will be straightforward. Outwith budget constraints, local planning approval, competing interests (land owners versus residents) and political will, were mentioned as significant obstacles.

There were, however, some constructive suggestions put forward that would, if supported, help to address these obstacles.

## **Data Collection, Analysis & Sharing**

The collection and sharing of more granular digital data on rural and island road networks and land in their proximity will help to build a stronger evidence base that supports the planning and budgeting of new active travel routes.

The sort of data that would need to be collected includes vehicle type, road surface defects, roadside verges and ditches, pavements and passing places.

The work to start collecting and analysing this data is already taking place in the village of Balquhiddar in Stirlingshire. Via the CivTech 6 programme, Digiflec, a Scottish technology start-up, has partnered with Stirling Council and Forestry & Land Scotland to create a “digital twin” of the local road infrastructure.

This offers planners a real-time view on how and when the roads are being used by different types of vehicles, their current state of repair, and the most effective way of modifying the roads to safely support cyclists and appease concerned stakeholders.

The success of this project offers the possibility of transferring the insights and technology to other rural communities faced with the same challenges.

## **Rural Specific Construction Standards & Techniques**

As outlined earlier in this report under the Connectivity theme, it should be recognised within NTS2 that the standards and techniques used to

construct active travel paths in urban areas aren't directly transferable to rural areas.

There are several important nuances linked to land access, the most appropriate construction materials, the intersection with landowners and forest estates, and the longer stretches of cycle paths that are needed to connect villages together.

Collaboration between local and central stakeholders would provide the foundations for creating a rural and island proofed set of standards and techniques that would accelerate the construction of new paths and also involve more local suppliers in the process which stimulates rural economies.

## **Theme 5 – Affordability**

While theme 4 discussed accessibility from a temporal, spatial and infrastructure standpoint, the insights gathered through all 3 workshops highlighted that for NTS2 to achieve its stated aim, policy makers must have a better understanding of the affordability of different modes of transport across rural and island communities.

Across the period of March to May 2022 when the workshops took place, the cost of living crisis was beginning to bite hard across Scotland's rural and island communities.

A perfect storm of record home energy, petrol/diesel and food prices were pushing more households in rural and island communities to make difficult choices about what purchases to prioritise.

With access to a car for work or medical reasons being a necessity for many of these households, the option of driving less to save money isn't open to them.

Research undertaken by the Scottish Government in recent years to support the formation of NTS2 and STPR2 including the Islands Community Impact Assessment has confirmed that the cost of rural transport is much higher -relative to mean incomes - than the rest of Scotland.

Fuel prices are a major contributing factor as they can be as much as 20 pence per litre higher than average national prices due to the extra cost of transporting it to remote rural and island communities.

Decarbonising transport while simultaneously reducing inequalities, improving health and wellbeing, and delivering inclusive economic growth can only be achieved through addressing and correcting the limitations of regional or nationwide price-led interventions when applied to rural and island communities. These include:

- Free bus travel for anyone under 22
- Concessionary bus travel for the over 60's and disabled
- The Road Equivalent Tariff (RET)
- Free travel on west coast ferries for 16-18 year olds
- Free travel on west coast ferries for older and disabled national entitlement card holders

Within rural and island communities, the success of these interventions in achieving their underlying objective will continue to be limited because they don't fully consider

the challenges faced in accessing and using them, and the frequency with which they need to be used to make a meaningful difference.

### Accessing Free or Concessionary Transport Services

“

“It needs to be acknowledged that concessionary travel only works where public transport is available.”

WORKSHOP 3 PARTICIPANT

”

This statement provides a concise summary of why the take-up of schemes targeted at young and older people in rural and island communities is often less than their peers in urban areas. Offering reduced price or free travel on buses, trains or ferries is only of value if they are available when you need them and easy to access.

Very often this isn't the case and the final “Islands Plan Survey” report (8) published in July 2021 confirms that less than a third of islanders use buses more than once per year and less than half agree that local buses are available when needed. While there are significant variations between islands, the results confirm the obstacles that prevent more islanders taking advantage of national schemes. The picture will be similar in mainland rural communities.

## **Free bus travel for anyone under 22**

While only recently launched, the early signs are that the introduction of free bus travel for people under 22 years old is struggling to gain traction in rural areas.

Early reporting released by the Scottish Government indicates that in Local Authority areas comprising many rural communities, less than a quarter of those eligible have been issued with a free pass.

It's expected that through awareness building activities more young people in rural and island communities will apply for a pass in the coming months. However, proactive engagement within these communities will be needed to confirm the root cause if take-up levels remain low in the longer term.

Failing to engage on a regular basis and remedy the issues preventing take-up will reinforce the belief among young people that the only efficient way to travel within their communities is by car.

## **Free & concessionary travel for the over the 60's and disabled**

At a national level people of pension age tend to make greater use of public transport due to financial constraints and physical or mental health challenges. This behaviour is also reflected in rural communities.

However, for the growing number of pensioners who live alone, experience mobility issues and can't easily reach their nearest bus stop, concessionary bus travel passes will be out of their reach.

Moreover, if the bus is the first leg in a journey that includes a ferry or train, it also excludes them from these schemes.

## **Using Free or Concessionary Transport Services**

For those who can overcome these accessibility challenges, the appeal of free or subsidised travel schemes can be limited by their perceived value relative to the frequency with which trips need to be made, and the point of origin and destination.

## **Island Communities**

While welcome, an offer to young islanders aged 16-18 of 2 free tickets per year is of limited value if they travel on a frequent basis for work or leisure purposes and cannot rely on parents or other family members to fund their trips.

Stakeholders representing island communities highlighted that for many people, especially younger ones, the ferry performs the same role as a bus on the mainland. In other words it enables them to get part or all of the way to where they need to get to when they need to get there.

This recognises a gradual shift in travel behaviours that's taking place among islanders. While they continue to accept the compromises that need to be made when living on an island, they are becoming less tolerant of the growing number of issues outside of their control that prevent them from accessing mainland services that others take for granted on a day-to-day basis.

Key Point: The attraction and ultimate feasibility of living on an island whether young or old will continue to decline until travel schemes offer a level of support that reflects the current and future levels of ferry usage among local people and businesses, and the real financial costs associated with this usage.

“

“Introduce ‘Islander tariffs’ (including tariffs for businesses servicing islands) that recognise that ferry travel for holiday is a luxury whereas for islanders it is part of everyday life which impacts greatly on cost of living.”

WORKSHOP 3 PARTICIPANT

”

The idea of re-introducing a frequent traveller scheme for islanders of all ages and occupations reflects a feeling that its successor, the Road Equivalent Tariff (RET) is aimed primarily at tourists who can afford to visit on an occasional basis and have more certainty over when they’ll visit.

In contrast, islanders and the mainland businesses who serve the islands, travel more frequently, with less certainty over when, while incurring significantly more costs when they do.

With the launch of Caledonian MacBrayne’s new digital ticketing and reservation system scheduled for October 2022, more flexible features should be leveraged to ensure that a range of new discounted/concessionary fares are offered to those who travel frequently on foot or by car.

Key Point: The value of this “innovation” would be measured not just in quantitative terms but qualitatively as well.

Quantitatively, it would help to address the cost of living challenges facing islanders. Qualitatively it would generate a small but important increase in positive relationships between islanders, Caledonian MacBrayne and the Scottish Government.

## Rural Mainland Communities

Even in rural mainland communities, the frequency of use of free or concessionary bus passes will be dictated by time and distance factors. If it’s perceived that the length of journeys and time to complete them is prohibitive, then the passes are much less likely to be used. The barrier isn’t price, it’s the inconvenience of using a bus relative to driving.

Outside of free and concessionary travel schemes, there was a consensus among workshop participants that more thought needs to be given to travel propositions that encourage more working age people in the 23-59 segment to use shared transport services.

Changes in behaviours cemented by COVID-19 mean a growing number of rurally located professional workers are dividing their working week between their home and an office location. Trips to the office are now planned less around a fixed time each week and more around when they need to attend meetings.



“

“Flexible travel tickets that fit with changing working behaviours (i.e. hybrid working) could help to stimulate demand for shared transport.”

WORKSHOP 3 PARTICIPANT

”

Traditional fixed bus timetables and standard fares don't offer the sort of flexibility that would persuade them to use a bus on a regular basis. However, Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services could do, especially if they are underpinned by a ticketing proposition that reflects the fact that users will travel frequently (2-3 times per week) but unpredictably (different times each day).

Achieving the dual outcomes of inclusive economic growth and sustainable travel requires bold and innovative thinking that results in the creation of smart travel and ticketing propositions that break the stranglehold that the car has in rural and island communities.

“

“Mobility credits could be used to allow rural citizens to access transport innovation without great financial risk.”

WORKSHOP 3 PARTICIPANT

”

This stranglehold is already loosening as the cost of living crisis forces more people to reduce the use of their fossil fuel car and search for a viable alternative. While the minority may be able to afford an electric car that has lower running costs, the majority will look towards shared mobility options.

This opens a window of opportunity for stakeholders across Scotland's transport community to collaborate on the development of fair, flexible and affordable shared transport solutions that demonstrate a long-term commitment to supporting rural and island communities to make a Just Transition to a net zero emissions future.

## Theme 6 – Time

Whether it's going to the shops in the nearest village, an appointment at the hospital or the daily commute to work or study, travelling takes longer when you live in a rural or island community. While the financial costs of longer trips by car, bus, ferry or train are well understood, the associated time costs receive less attention.

In the context of rural mobility, travel time can simply be thought of as the amount of time that needs to be traded in order to complete a journey. The longer the journey, the more time that is being traded. Trading more time for travel creates time poverty which is experienced through less time with family, friends, pursuing hobbies and being productive at work.

Having access to a car either as the driver or passenger can mitigate the impacts of time poverty because it's the fastest way of completing a trip when you live rurally.

However, as repeatedly highlighted in this report, this isn't an option for all. Furthermore, it's not the answer to reducing vehicle kilometres by 20% by 2030.

As highlighted in theme 2, digital connectivity technologies are helping to remove some of the shopping, work and medical trips that would otherwise have been made by car or public transport, and enable those who live rurally to reclaim this lost time.

However, technology alone cannot remove the time poverty trap that many people find themselves in. There remain many everyday activities that can only be fulfilled by travelling to meet someone(s) or do something using some form of vehicle.

**Key Point:** To motivate wider and more frequent use of private and public shared transport services across rural Scotland, greater consideration must be given to how the time as well as financial poverty can be reduced.

The development of rural community hubs that provide a place closer to home where people can work, socialise, pick up shopping, receive medical care and connect with public transport services. It's a model that is proving to work well in villages such as Tomatin in Invernesshire, and is worthy of further investment.

Travel-related time poverty isn't distributed equally and experienced in the same ways across Scotland's rural and island communities as the insights that emerged from the workshops confirmed.

## Island Communities

Representatives from island communities highlighted that for those in employment or self-employment, time poverty is most acutely experienced when they need to make weekday trips to the mainland.

This often means shortening their working day to catch a scheduled sailing or disrupting it when inclement weather or mechanical issues mean their only option is to travel on a re-arranged service. Shortened working days mean reduced productivity which over the longer term impacts economic growth and social wellbeing.

**Key Point:** While living and working on one of Scotland's islands can have many attractions, the trade off for those who need to travel to the mainland on an occasional or frequent basis is sacrificing valuable time at work or with family and friends.

As islanders become increasingly concerned over the reliability of their ferry service, more are reluctantly building contingencies into their travel plans. This includes pre-booking hotels or BnBs on the mainland in case they're unable to return to the island as they planned.

## Rural Mainland Communities

In rural communities a similar picture emerged from the workshops. Even without the need to depend on a ferry, for those living in remote mainland communities, their working days are shortened when trips to Scotland's cities or larger towns are required. Hours need to be sacrificed to travel by car and even days if a bus or train connection is required.

While it's easy to dismiss time poverty as a cost of choosing to live in a rural location, the reality today is that many of the longer trips that inflict time poverty are a result of the closure of local services. Without the availability of a post office, doctors surgery, church or community centre close to home, residents are forced to make longer journeys (often by car).

For the residents of island and mainland rural communities, the concept of a "20 minute neighbourhood" seems misplaced when they look at the current health of their own community and the continuing curtailment of the local services that are vital to their wellbeing.

## Theme 7 – Resources

### People (Paid & Unpaid Supporters)

The success with which local people without access to a car can travel within their rural community rests on a shrinking number of volunteers, many of whom are elderly and becoming less able to offer support. This was a sentiment shared by several workshop participants. This issue is compounded by rising fuel costs and a scarcity of replacement parts for buses and minibuses.

“

“Bus companies are facing the challenge of managing driver shortages, higher fuel costs + scarcity of vehicle parts. Additional funding is needed.”

WORKSHOP 3 PARTICIPANT

”

Without additional funding, it's the most vulnerable members of rural communities who are most affected.

- People who are dependent on volunteers to drive to their home to deliver food or medical supplies.
- People who require assistance to board a minibus outside their home
- The children who want to attend after school activities but don't have a parent to pick them up afterwards.

Without volunteers to drive the minibuses and offer support to these vulnerable people, the bonds that tie rural communities together are weakened and inequalities strengthened.

Furthermore, the seeds of the innovations needed to solve these issues are often planted by volunteers within rural communities who have first hand experience of them. It's through their passion and energy that actions are taken and improvements made. As the population of rural and island communities simultaneously decline and age, the pressure on the remaining smaller group of paid and unpaid workers to provide travel support will intensify.

Addressing this pressing issue doesn't only require more direct funding to support community transport operators but also investment in education programmes within rural communities. By building awareness of the critical role that community transport plays in supporting vulnerable people in their community and helping to tackle climate change, more people may be motivated to volunteer some of their time through a renewed sense of community spirit.

## People (Decision Makers)

A big frustration shared across the workshops was the physical distance between the constituents within rural communities - those suffering the consequences of a lack of investment in rural transport - and the central decision makers responsible for addressing them.

While this is a long-standing frustration, it's growing markedly stronger due to the urgency with which local transport issues need to be tackled in order to improve health and wellbeing and reduce inequalities.

At the heart of this frustration is a belief that in spite of decision makers within Government being willing to engage and listen to local people, this happens fleetingly and often from a distance. This embeds the suspicion that these decision makers don't have their best interests at heart.

Only when there is a willingness among decision makers to spend more time within the rural communities that they have responsibility for will they understand the intended and unintended consequences of their actions.

## Digital Assets

To achieve all four of the NTS2 primary goals, greater emphasis needs to be placed on empowering local people with the digital skills, tools and support needed to find and develop solutions to the rural mobility challenges they're experiencing.

This gets to the heart of why so many locals within these communities are so frustrated with the pace at which meaningful changes are taking place. Their experience of living within their community means they know what changes are needed and how they can best be made. However, the people responsible for funding and implementing these changes are disconnected from these lived experiences and don't work with the level of urgency that's expected.

Across all 3 workshops a frequently shared sentiment among participants was the difficulty in easily finding the data and information that would help to increase their knowledge about the resources available to support the development of local mobility solutions.

These resources include case studies, white papers, past projects, research papers and funding.

There was broad agreement that there needs to be more investment in collecting, analysing and sharing localised data to facilitate the development of robust business cases that support requests for further investment in rural transport services and supporting infrastructure.

While participants recognised that revenue challenges are constraining Local Authorities from investing in the resources and systems needed to facilitate these outcomes, failing to do so further jeopardises the overarching objectives set out in NTS2.

The most immediate and urgent issue that needs to be tackled is the lack of an open access online centralised repository where planners within Local Authorities and leaders within rural communities can easily access the data and resources critical to accelerating innovation. Today, valuable time is devoted to seeking out this data via online searches, emails and phone calls that could be better invested in other activities.

Where the data can be found, it's often only meaningful to the small number of people who have the skills to be able to interpret and analyse it. People who are more likely to work within Local Authorities, Central Government & Transport Consultancies.

It was also highlighted that where valuable data has been centralised online via publicly funded EU & UK rural mobility programmes, it often becomes inaccessible when funding runs out.

**Key Point:** On behalf of rural and island communities, SRITC has tentatively started to address this knowledge share challenge by organising and delivering regular online webinars and creating a weekly newsletter.

However, these don't deliver the long-term support that rural stakeholders across Scotland are asking for. Therefore, more funding is needed to develop an online knowledge sharing platform targeted specifically at them.

“

“We need to use data and dashboards to optimise all available transport resources - vehicles, drivers, volunteers - public, community, health board, voluntary sector, non essential ambulance, etc etc.”

WORKSHOP 3 PARTICIPANT

”

## Funding

Quantifying how much funding is needed to achieve the rural mobility outcomes discussed within the workshops is outside of the scope of this report. However, some initial recommendations can be put forward with respect to where the funding that's released via NTS2 and STPR2 should be prioritised to achieve the biggest return on investment.

Firstly, the development of a **Rural and Island Transport Innovation Fund** targeted at smaller-scale, community-led projects will help to catalyse the grass roots innovations needed to reduce inequalities and accelerate the decarbonisation of transport within rural communities.

Projects of this nature can already be found across rural Scotland. For example, Community Energy Scotland (CES) has led a number of active travel projects in the Outer Hebrides. Nonetheless, the creation of a programme dedicated to innovation in rural transport and structured so that funds are distributed across different regions would bring greater focus and higher levels of engagement.



The suggestion of linking this fund to the Scottish Government's Carbon Neutral Islands programme merits further exploration.

There was a sense of realism within the workshops that all of the changes needed to improve rural and island transport cannot be funded from the public purse. Businesses of all sizes within the private sector have to play their part as well.

While direct investments of funding from larger businesses will be needed to deliver larger scale rural mobility innovation projects, there is also an opportunity for local SMEs to indirectly provide support by creating more demand for the new mobility services that emerge from these projects.

Simplifying public sector procurement frameworks will help more local SMEs to bid for and secure more of the budgets allocated to sustainable transport projects targeted at the community they operate in. With more money staying within their local economy, more is available to invest in recruiting employees and attracting the customers who'll use the new mobility services. This includes DRT and cycle paths.

# Conclusions

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The insights gained through this consultation process enable some specific conclusions to be made with respect to the issues that cut across all 4 of the core NTS2 goals and are of most concern to rural and island stakeholders tasked with translating national policies into local plans.

## Policy Development

At the national level, rural and island stakeholders have little confidence that policy makers fully appreciate the distinctions between the delivery and experience of transport services in urban and rural communities. This manifests itself in nationwide or operator-wide interventions that increase friction rather than remove it because there is no flexibility at a local level.

## Collaboration

There is a lack of cohesive collaboration across Government departments on developing “rural proofed” policies that are central to Scotland achieving its long-term social, economic and environmental goals. Rural transport policies need to be better aligned with planning, housing, education and and social.

## Leadership

Across all modes of transport, there is a lack of opportunity for local transport leaders within rural and island communities to participate on the boards and working groups of regional and national bodies.

Greater representation will ensure that the needs of the people that they represent are fully communicated and actioned on. In other words rural and island communities have a fair “share of voice” around the table where decisions are made.

## Funding

Current grant funding programmes, designed to advance the aims of NTS2 within rural and island communities, don’t fully consider the barriers to accessing this funding and the challenges in demonstrating its impact. Barriers include resource constraints, knowledge gaps and the timescales within which projects are expected to deliver measurable results. Funding bodies should be more aware of and sensitive to these barriers and adjust their evaluation criteria accordingly.

## Innovation

Greater levels of innovation need to be catalysed within rural communities if Scotland is to successfully decarbonise its transport systems and improve social and economic health and wellbeing. This is becoming increasingly urgent given the impacts of COVID and the cost of living crisis on people’s quality of life.

While the large scale innovation programmes outlined in the NTS Delivery Plan (2022-23) will contribute significantly to climate change mitigation, their benefits won’t fully reveal themselves for many years.

Support that yields greater levels of “bottom up” micro scale transport innovations are also needed to ensure that the people and businesses within rural and island communities see positive changes taking place on a regular basis.

## **Data**

Relative to more densely populated areas in Scotland, access to localised geospatial data is a challenge in most rural and island communities. Further investment in the technologies and resources that facilitate the collection, analysis, visualisation and sharing of this data are required in order to achieve all four NTS2 goals.

## **Education & Skills**

To successfully implement and embed positive changes within their communities, greater emphasis must be placed on education and skills development programmes. These programmes would be designed to empower local people with the knowledge and tools to shape the future direction of transportation within their communities so that it fits with the wider decarbonisation of their local energy systems.

# The 6 Asks

The conclusions emerging from this consultation process naturally lead to a small number of “asks” that the stakeholders participating in the workshop have for national transport policy developers within the Scottish Government. These “asks” are interrelated and strategic in nature. This means that if they aren’t already, they need to be a core part of NTS2 and or STPR2.



Diagram 2

## Ask 1 – An Integrated Rural & Islands Mobility Plan

This would be a national plan instigated and administered by the Scottish Government, and informed by the key stakeholders representing rural and island communities across Scotland. The plan would address all of the 7 thematic areas outlined in this report and sit within the National Transport Strategy.

Currently, transport plans for rural and island communities are subsumed within wider Regional Transport Partnership (RTP) strategies. This provides a fragmented picture of the issues that need to be addressed and dilutes the impact of policies that are delivered.

## Ask 2 – A Rural and Island Transport Innovation Fund

Significant additional investments in transport innovation programmes and projects across Scotland’s rural and island communities are urgently needed to ensure that they are able to compete on a level playing field with urban areas. A ring-fenced Rural and Island Transport Innovation Fund for smaller-scale, community-led projects will help to catalyse “bottom up” innovations.

This corrects the current market-driven approach that is currently used to fund innovation pilots which favours urban areas and fails to provide an equilibrium for national economic development.

## Ask 3 – A Rural & Islands Transport Leadership Group

This should be an inter-departmental group composed of representatives from Scottish Government departments that influence the formation of multi-modal rural transport policies. This includes transport, economic development, environmental/sustainability, spatial planning, and digital infrastructure planning.

The primary objective of this group is ensuring that rural transport challenges are considered holistically and future policies and interventions are “rural proofed”.

#### **Ask 4 – A Rural & Islands Transport Procurement Framework**

The framework will address the unique social, environmental and economic challenges associated with the delivery of sustainable transport projects across rural and island communities. These include active travel, EV Charging and Ride-Sharing, Its design would require suppliers to provide evidence of their understanding of these challenges and specificity within their proposals on how they will tackle them.

This procurement framework would support the delivery of those aspects of NTS2 that target rural and island communities including the Islands Connectivity Plan (ICP) and the Carbon Neutral Islands programme. It would also encourage more local businesses and community groups to bid for and secure work related to these projects boosting their local economies.

In parallel to the development of this procurement framework, national skills development programmes would support local businesses in training their employees so they have the expertise to deliver projects targeted at the areas that they live and work in.

#### **Ask 5 – A Sustainable Rural Transport STEM challenge**

A national sustainable transport STEM challenge aimed at young people across Scotland’s rural and island communities would harness their first hand experiences of how transport services limit their social and economic mobility and catalyse the creation of science-based ideas that help to resolve these issues. These ideas would tackle real and pressing challenges in their community including active travel, last mile deliveries and ride-sharing.

These young people deserve the opportunity to participate in the design of the transport systems that will support them as they grow older and their energy, intellect and imagination are valuable assets and need to be nurtured.

#### **Ask 6 – A Rural & Islands Open Data Framework**

This framework mirrors those that are emerging in urban environments and will stimulate innovation and address an urgent need to develop better insights on the health of transport services and infrastructure within rural and island locations. Developing a framework specific to these locations is important because of their distinct geospatial and geo-demographic attributes of which relatively little is openly available and accessible today.

A lack of openness makes it harder for planners and innovators to build the business cases required to access the funds that facilitate the delivery of sustainable transport projects.



# Appendices

## Appendix 1 – Workshop Participant Profiles



**WORKSHOP 1**  
Community groups



**WORKSHOP 2**  
Transport providers

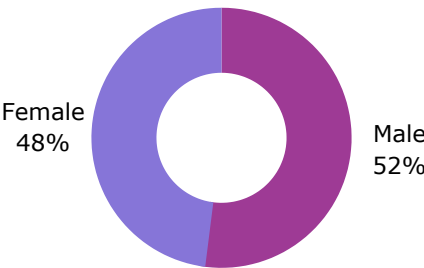


**WORKSHOP 3**  
Strategy & Policy Developers

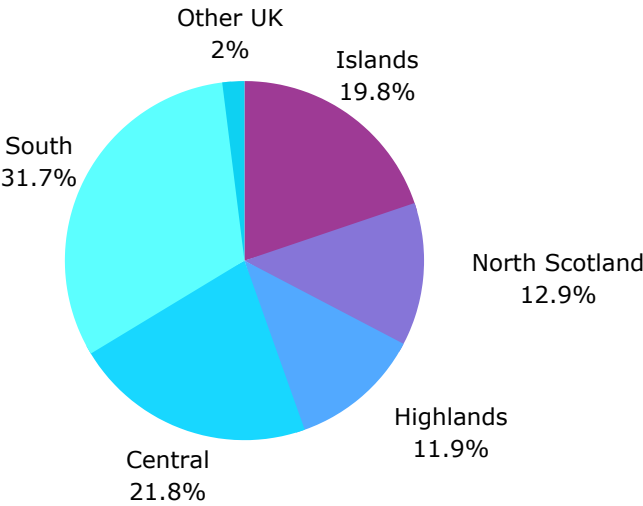
### ALL ATTENDEES

72

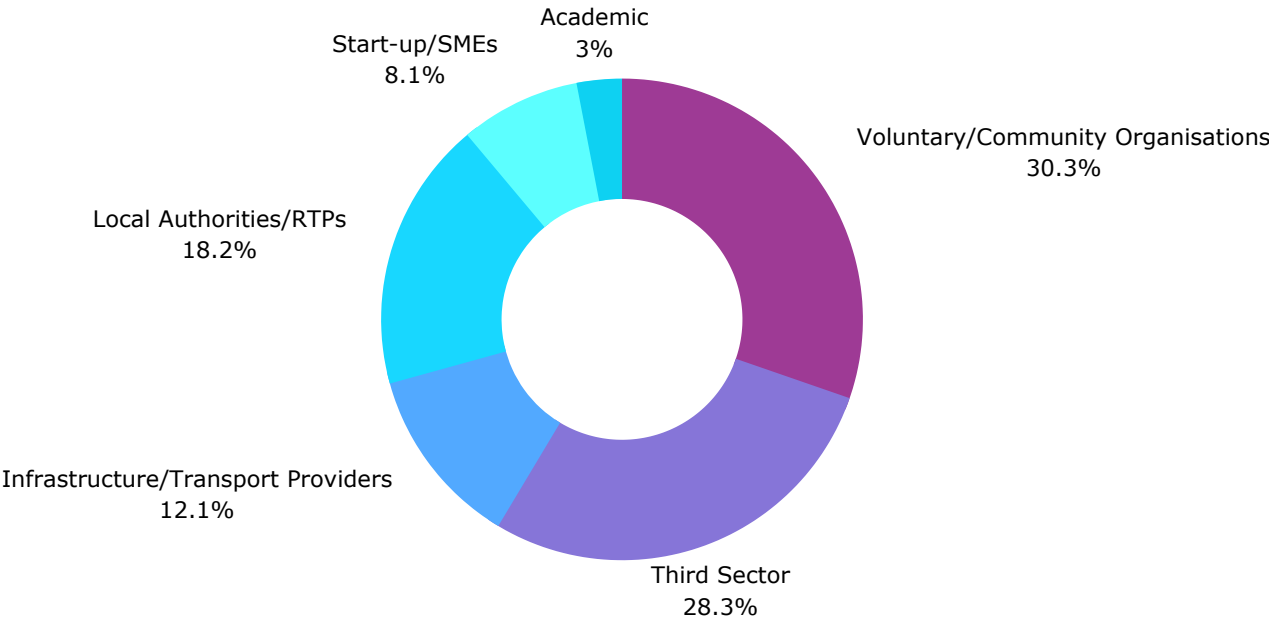
### GENDER



### GEOGRAPHY



### TYPE OF ORGANISATION



## Appendix 2 – Workshop Participant Details

We would like to thank the following individuals and organisations for volunteering to take part in the consultation process.

### Workshop 1 – Community Groups

Abi Betney - Home Energy Scotland  
Sam Bourne - Arran Ferry Action Group  
Kieron Brogan - Sanday Development Trust  
Ewan Bush - Best of Garve  
Vicky Davidson - Scottish Borders Council  
Emma Duncan - Home Energy Scotland  
Hilary English - Marr Area Partnership  
Graham Fraser - Association of Cairngorms Communities  
Sheila Gilmore - Visit Arran  
Ken Gordon - Zero Carbon Daviot  
Joan Lawrie - Thurso Community Development Trust  
Stuart Masson - Huntley Development Trust  
Andy Nielson - South Skye Cycles  
Ronna Park - Arran Community & Voluntary Service  
Jim Riach - Loch Lomond National Park  
Michael Seaward - Home Energy Scotland  
Colin Spence - Alford Car Transport Service  
Fiona Thompson - Mind Scotland  
David Watson - Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust  
Kate Wills - Lochaber Environmental Group  
John - South Ayrshire Community Transport

## Workshop 2 – Transport Service Providers

Juliana Amaral - Berwickshire Association for Voluntary Service

Tony Archer - Co-Wheels

Kris Bevan - Northlink Ferries

Diane Budziosz - East Lothian Council DRT

Steve Cassidy - Fuse Mobility

Dan Cathcart - Scottish Borders Council DRT

Siobhan Eke - Liftshare

Suzanne Forup - Cycling UK

Grant Gordon - Scottish Borders DRT

Morag Haddow - East Lothian Active Travel

Catherine Hall - Network Rail

Jennifer Montgomery - Moray Council DRT

Gordon Muir - The Rural Development Trust

Margaret Roy - Perth & Kinross Council

Sally Spaven - Community Rail Partnership

Keith Stark - Hiya Car

Michael Wilmot - Helmsdale Station CIC

Beth Woodall - Sustrans

## Workshop 3 – Strategy & Policy Developers

Andy Anderson - Scottish Borders Council

Cameron Anson - Scottish Government

Robina Barton - ZetTrans

Josey Coombey - Dumfries & Galloway Council

Moray Fraser - Perth & Kinross Council

David Gray - Robert Gordon University

Anna Herriman - SesTrans

Katherine Hudson - Poverty & Inequality Commission

David Kelly - Community Transport Association

Elaine MacGregor - Scottish Government

Rachael Murphy - Como UK

Kate Pangbourne - University of Leeds

Natasha Pawlukiewicz - Aberdeenshire Council

Ranald Robertson - HiTrans

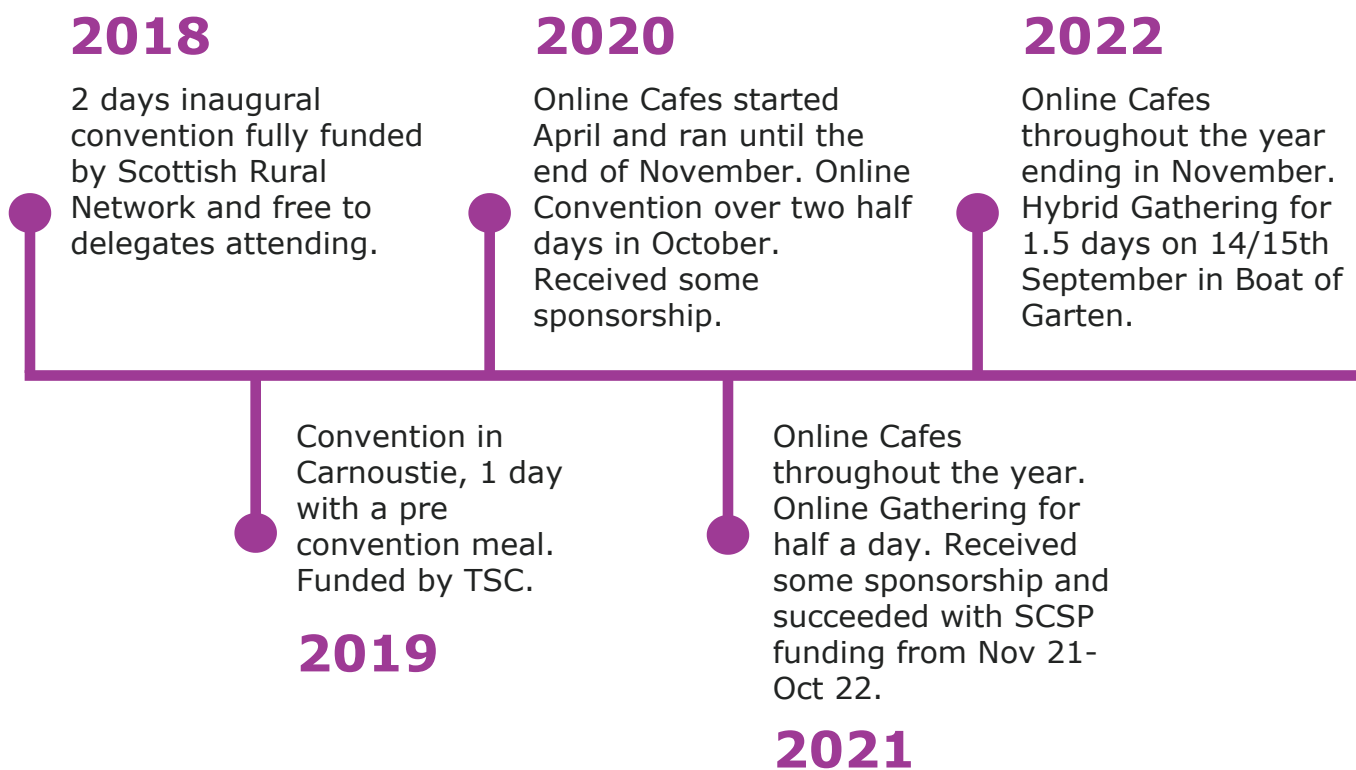
Alan Robertson - Scottish Rural Network

Alison Smith - Angus Council

Ruth Wilson - James Hutton Institute

Colin Young - Argyll & Bute Council

## Appendix 3 – History of SRITC



## Appendix 4 – User Personas

12 user personas were created as an outcome from the 3 workshop consultations. All 12 can be viewed and download via the link below.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1lj7-2CwI9ZsMK7Oei3IFUwS2CZ-drQh2?usp=sharing>

## Appendix 5 – User Journey Maps

3 User Journey maps were created as an outcome from the 3 workshop consultations. Each user journey provides a step-by-step overview of a typical journey that people living in rural communities make on a regular basis. All 3 user journeys can be viewed via the link below.

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1lj7-2CwI9ZsMK7Oei3IFUwS2CZ-drQh2?usp=sharing>



## Appendix 6 – References

- (1) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/rural-scotland-key-facts-2021/pages/2/>
- (2) <https://www.civtech.scot/civtech-challenge-7-4-unlocking-the-power-of-the-bike>
- (3) <https://www.civtech.scot/civtech-7>
- (4) <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/tackling-loneliness-with-transport-fund>
- (5) <https://www.gov.scot/news/carbon-neutral-islands-named/#:~:text=Six%20islands%20to%20become%20carbon,%2C%20Raasay%2C%20Barra%20and%20Yell.>
- (6) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/rural-scotland-key-facts-2021/pages/2/>
- (7) [https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-government-urban-rural-classification2016/pages/2/#:~:text=Categories%205%20and%206%20are,\(6\)%20Remote%20Rural%20Areas.](https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-government-urban-rural-classification2016/pages/2/#:~:text=Categories%205%20and%206%20are,(6)%20Remote%20Rural%20Areas.)
- (8) <https://www.gov.scot/publications/national-islands-plan-survey-final-report/>

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We would like to offer our appreciation to the following members of the SRITC team who supported the facilitation of the workshops and writing of this report.

- Matt Kendrick
- James Gleave
- Johannah Randall
- Irina Protasova

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