

The North East of Scotland Bus Alliance

Bus Action Plan

April 2020

Background and Objectives of the North East Bus Alliance

The North East of Scotland Bus Alliance was formed in 2018 and is a voluntary partnership of:

- Nestrans;
- Aberdeen City Council;
- Aberdeenshire Council;
- First in Aberdeen;
- Stagecoach North Scotland; and
- Bains Coaches.

The objectives of the North East Scotland Bus Alliance are to:

1. Arrest decline in bus patronage in the North East of Scotland by 2022;
2. Achieve year on year growth in bus patronage to 2025.

A number of sub-objectives have also been identified:

- a) To increase the mode split proportion of people travelling by bus across the region;
- b) To improve operational performance of bus services;
- c) To improve customer satisfaction with the overall level of service across the region;
- d) To reduce emissions per bus passenger journey, contributing to improved local air quality and reducing carbon emissions;
- e) To improve access to public transport for all, reducing the equalities gap across the region by reducing barriers including cost and physical access.

The first action of the Bus Alliance was to identify the key issues for the bus network in the north east. This is provided in the State of the Network Report which was published in June 2019.

Further information on the Bus Alliance and the State of the Network Report can be found [here](#).

Bus Action Plan

This Bus Action Plan is the first action plan produced under the new Alliance and draws on the findings of the State of the Network Report. It sets out the priority actions of the Bus Alliance partners over the next 5 years.

This is a rolling programme of actions which will be reviewed and updated on a regular basis. An updated version of the action plan will be reported to the Bus Alliance Board and published every 6 months on the Nestrans website at www.nestrans.org.uk.

Ref	High level action	Sub-actions	Details	Timescales (short term 1 year; medium 2-3 years; long 3-5 years)	Progress & Next Steps	Lead organisation	
1 Journey Times and Reliability							
a)	Developing Bus Service Improvement Partnerships	Undertake corridor study on priority corridor 1 - the A944/B9119 corridor.	Westhill to Aberdeen via the A944 Lang Stracht and B9119 Queens Road – to include Kingswells Park and Ride, the city centre, Mounthooly, East/West North Street junction and bus station. STAG based appraisal to identify the baseline, identify corridor improvements and develop a programme of monitoring and evaluation. This will lead to the development of a programme of works and feed into the development of a BSIP agreement for service and infrastructure improvements. Options considered for all priority corridors to include actions that are aspirational and that will provide a step change improvement to bus provision on the corridor; to encourage increased patronage and improve attractiveness of bus as a mode of transport. These will aim to provide a significant increase in bus priority through considering the feasibility of options such as Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). Actions identified through the corridor studies will feed into a Bus Service Improvement Partnership Agreement which would require specific obligations from both operators and local authorities.	Short	ACC commissioned study which is due to be complete in summer 2020. Nestrans and Aberdeenshire Council also sit on the client group	Aberdeen City Council	
b)		Development of BSIP agreement for priority corridor 1	This will provide a template for future corridors. Guidance on BSIPs to be published by TS but work towards developing an agreement on a voluntary basis in the first instance, in line with the requirements of BSIP.	Short to medium	Transport Scotland invited to meet with Bus Alliance Executive to discuss how to take this forward.	Nestrans	
c)		Develop action plan for corridor 1 in line with RTS aspirations to develop Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) network			Medium		Nestrans
d)		Implement infrastructure and service improvements in line with BSIP agreement and in line with aspirations to develop BRT network	Details to be developed once outcomes of study are available		Medium to long		Local Authorities and Operators

e)		Undertake corridor study on priority corridor 2 - Access from the North	Scope of corridor agreed to be Ellon Park and Ride to RGU, excluding city centre, which is covered in priority corridor 1. To include A90, Ellon Road, King Street, Holburn Junction, Holburn Street and Garthdee Road.	Medium	Study brief to be developed. First Bus have commissioned Mott McDonald to undertake a corridor study	Aberdeen City Council lead in partnership with Aberdeenshire Council and Nestrans
f)		Undertake corridor study on priority corridor 3 - Inverurie to Aberdeen via the A96 and Craibstone P&R	This will follow the same format as priority corridor 1 & 2 above	Medium	To be agreed through Bus Alliance.	To be agreed
g)	Agree prioritisation of future corridors	Identify timescales for progressing corridor studies and agreements following conclusion of the initial priority corridors	Corridors to be considered will include, but are not limited to, A90 South, A956 Wellington Road, A93 Deeside and A947 corridor.	Short to medium		Nestrans
h)	Develop and submit bid to Scottish Government Bus Investment Fund	To be informed by above actions	Awaiting details of the bid process and timescales to be published	Short		Nestrans
i)	Facilitate the development of City Centre Masterplan and Locking in the Benefits proposals for bus	Develop a comprehensive list of CCMP and LITB bus related proposals and actions	Work with ACC to identify alignment between BAP actions and CCMP / LITB actions and opportunities to progress improvements	Short	Identify opportunities to progress actions in partnership through the Bus Alliance	Aberdeen City Council
j)	Local Town Centre Improvements	To identify and implement options for alleviating local town centre congestion to improve reliability of services	To identify key locations to be considered as priorities for the action plan. In the first instance these are identified as Stonehaven, Ellon and Inverurie. Westhill and Inverurie to be looked as part of priority corridors above.	Short to medium	Options to be identified and feasibility to be assessed.	Aberdeenshire Council
2	Information, Marketing and Promotion					
a)	Improvements to Bus Stop Information	Undertake pilot of digital bus timetable information	Pilot being carried out on the A96 corridor and various rural locations.	Short	An initial 6 locations have been identified for implementation on this corridor. To investigate further funding opportunities to maximise the benefit of the project. Jan 2020 - Tender Issued Feb 2020 - Tender evaluated, award anticipated w/c 17th Feb Installation of product anticipated in May 2020	Aberdeenshire Council
b)		To undertake a full review and upgrade of bus shelter information provision on the priority corridors as part of the Digital Transformation project and integrated within BSIP corridor improvements.	Initial implementation to be looked at on the A944/B9119, A96 and future priority corridors. Aspiration for all flags and timetables to be 100% digital as part of a package of wider improvements identified in a Bus Service Improvement Partnership Agreement.	Medium	Assess results of pilot and lessons learned and input into BSIP development	Aberdeenshire Council

c)	Park and Ride Promotion	Continue to advertise and maintain the website www.getaboutbyparkandride.org.uk	Ensure all information is relevant and up to date	Short	Website launched in November 2019	Nestrans
d)		To review park and ride promotion following the conclusion of the winter campaign	Explore new ways of promoting the benefits of park and ride	Short		Nestrans
e)		Continue to run the winter promotional campaign and other campaigns through the year for all park and ride sites through Getabout.	To undertake further promotion of the park and ride sites to encourage increased use and provide information to highlight sites as an attractive alternative to parking in the city centre	Short to medium		Nestrans
f)	Targeted campaigns to encourage increased use and provide information to highlight buses as an attractive alternative to travel by private car	To run a promotional campaign on how to use a bus for non-users.	To look at options for integrating this into shelter screens. Potential to deliver the campaign through Getabout. This should also consider the needs of disabled people and those with hidden disabilities who are anxious / concerned about using public transport.	Short	Getabout to hold a dedicated workshop on 2nd April to discuss targeted campaigns	Nestrans
g)	Engage with the business community and major employers regarding travel planning	Explore opportunities for linking in with the Civitas Travel Planning workstream and linking operators to Getabout		Short	Stagecoach presented at Dyce Travel Plan Business Breakfast in Jan 2020	Nestrans
3	Fares and Ticketing					
a)	Further development of the GrassHOPPER ticketing products	To develop an online retail solution for purchasing GrassHOPPER tickets.		Short	Feb 2020 - scheduled to be launched in March 2020	Aberdeenshire Council
b)		To launch an alternative ticket option, such as fixed period tickets (4 weekly), in addition to day and weekly tickets.		Short to medium	Operators to consider relevant business cases	Operators
c)		To explore further smart / mobile options for GrassHOPPER tickets	First step to look at feasibility of such options in context of current technology	Medium	Operators to consider relevant business cases	Operators
d)		To explore options for contactless capping of GrassHOPPER fares	First step to look at feasibility of such options in context of current technology	Long	Operators to consider relevant business cases	Operators
e)	Contactless and Smart Ticketing	To have contactless capping available from all major operators in Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire.	To encourage any pilot schemes to be brought to Aberdeen/Aberdeenshire.	Medium to long	'Tap and Cap' already available with First Bus.	Stagecoach
4	Affordability and Accessibility					
a)	Improve the affordability of bus travel	Better inform the public of availability of different fare types and promotion of special fares to relevant groups, in order to maximise the number of people benefiting and improve overall access to bus from an affordability perspective.	Review the available fares already in existence, including special fares, with a view to considering necessary promotion to highlight what is already available; particularly with regards to DWP/Jobseekers tickets. Review and take on board the recommendations of the SYP All Aboard Campaign when targeting young people.	Short		Nestrans

b)		Identify any potential gaps in ticket types, particularly where there may be such tickets available elsewhere.	Review the available fares, including special fares, to identify any gaps that could be addressed in collaboration between partners. To identify whether there are any options or pilots elsewhere that could be introduced in Aberdeen/Aberdeenshire	Short		Nestrans
c)	Improve access to services and employment	Engage with groups including the Department of Work and Pensions and Scottish Youth Parliament with a view to identifying ways to improve access to employment and to identify key challenges and potential actions		Short	KC met with DWP and other RTPs in Dec 2019. KC compiling a list of all travel resources available to provide to DWP staff, so they have accurate and up to date information when advising job seekers.	Nestrans
d)		Undertake a review of the supported bus and community transport network in Aberdeenshire	Aberdeenshire have carried out a significant consultation exercise to obtain views on the provision of public transport in rural areas to feed into a clean sheet review of supported bus and demand responsive provision across Aberdeenshire	Short	Feb 2020 - outcome of questionnaire to be publicised late March 2020	Aberdeenshire Council
e)		Carry out an accessibility mapping exercise to identify areas of poor accessibility	This is required before we can identify potential actions and will complement Aberdeenshire's clean sheet review of bus and DRT provision	Short to medium		Aberdeenshire Council
f)	Review fares as part of corridor BSIP agreements	The Transport (Scotland) Act establishes the opportunity to consider fares as part of a BSIP agreement		Short to medium		Operators
g)	Improve accessibility for those with disabilities	Continue to promote and distribute the Thistle Assistance card and look for ways to enhance the promotion of this.	Nestrans already undertake some promotion in conjunction with other RTPs across Scotland and will liaise with RTPs about further joint promotion. Nestrans to continue to distribute the cards.	Short		Nestrans
5	Interchange					
a)	Development of the park and ride network (infrastructure and services)	To increase capacity at Ellon Park and Ride, upgrade facilities and improve information provision.		Medium	Feb 2020 - Ellon P&R tender package being finalised with a view to issuing before the end of Feb 2020. Anticipating project to commence in May 2020 with an 8-month construction programme - dates tbc post tender award.	Aberdeenshire Council
b)		To investigate the feasibility of a new park and ride to the south of Aberdeen. To include what enabling measures would be required on the corridor	This site is identified in STPR 1 alongside the P&R on the A96. With the A96 site now delivered and fully funded at a local level, we are looking to make the case to Transport Scotland to deliver a site to the south.	Long	Aberdeenshire Council and Nestrans have met with representatives of TS to initiate discussions on this.	Aberdeenshire Council
c)		To identify bus priority and propose a bus service pattern to and from the A92 P&R site under the corridor BSIP		Long		Aberdeenshire Council

d)	Enhance interchange opportunities	Develop a mini interchange hub at Crathes		Medium	Feb 2020 - currently progressing via Legal department to complete the purchase of the land to construct the footpath	Aberdeenshire Council
e)		Develop a mini interchange hub at Oldmeldrum		Medium	Feb 2020 - planning permission granted but progress delayed due to Landlord not having approval to build a housing development adjacent to the Hub	
f)		To review need and identify locations for further mini-hubs		Medium to long	Feb 2020 - Banchory P&R is included in the latest LDP	
g)		To improve the access and provision of interchange sites within town centres	Focus on town centres, a need to also identify potential for short term improvements	Medium to long		Aberdeenshire Council
h)		To improve the access and provision of interchange sites in Aberdeen City Centre	Focus on Foresterhill bus interchange and Union Street. Links to City Centre Masterplan proposals but a need to also identify potential for short term improvements	Medium to long		Aberdeen City
i)	Bus Station Improvements	To upgrade facilities at Peterhead Bus Station to improve access and operation of services within the site	Station requires a level of redevelopment and facelift as well as a better understanding of the operation and customer access.	Short to medium	Next step to develop a Business Case	Aberdeenshire Council
j)		To review facilities at Fraserburgh bus station	Refresh the bus stop infrastructure (stances) and implement improved passenger information	Short to medium		Aberdeenshire Council
k)		To better understand the requirements and feasibility of improvements to Aberdeen Bus Station	To gain a full understanding of the requirements of Aberdeen Bus Station, what improvements would be most beneficial and the feasibility of any improvements as part of the City Centre Masterplan and development of Union Square, given the ownership of the site. Will require an understanding of what obligations were included as part of the planning permission for the extension of Union Square, and timescales for when the planning permission is due to lapse.	Short	Next step to get information on current planning agreements	Aberdeen City Council
6	Bus Stop Infrastructure					
a)	Improvements to Bus Stop Facilities	To ensure that current provision of bus shelters is maintained (i.e. no reductions) and then focus on enhancing provision.	Councils to develop a rolling programme of required upgrades so that funding can be targeted to improvements.	Short	Convene a meeting between the two authorities	Aberdeen City Council (City assets) Aberdeenshire Council (Shire assets)
b)	Priority Corridor Infrastructure Specification	To consider, in line with agreements on the priority corridors, the potential for enhanced shelter and infrastructure specification on a corridor basis	To align with the priority corridor studies and to complement the digital transformation project. Any improvements to be incorporated within Bus Service Improvement Partnership Agreements on the priority corridors.	Short to medium	Feb 2020 - LAs to agree a standard corridor specification to be input to BSIP negotiation	Aberdeenshire Council

7 Quality of the Fleet						
a)	Priority Corridor Vehicle Specification	To agree vehicle specification for the priority corridors, e.g. vehicle type and/or emission standards for input to BSIP negotiations	Any improvements to be incorporated within Bus Service Improvement Partnership Agreements on the priority corridors.	Short to Medium		Operators
b)	Reduce bus fleet emissions	In liaison with operators to look at opportunities for low emission vehicles to complement the introduction of a Low Emission Zone in Aberdeen and Bus Alliance priorities	Will be taken forward within any partnership agreements. May also require a separate city centre agreement to complement a LEZ. Opportunities include retrofitting, introduction of Euro 6 vehicles and introduction of zero emission vehicles such as electric or hydrogen buses	Medium to long		Aberdeen City Council
c)		Expand the fleet of hydrogen vehicles across the region	Work with ACC Economic Development to ensure links between Bus Alliance and the Hydrogen Bus Project (which will see 15 new hydrogen vehicles introduced in 2020).	Short	Nestrans invited a representative from the Hydrogen Bus Project to speak to the Bus Alliance Board. Presentation by LN at Board on 27/02/20	Aberdeen City Council
d)		Lobby the Scottish Government on issues relating to the support and funding available for switch to hydrogen buses.	Identified as an action at the Bus Alliance Board on 27/02/20 and a discussion around the lifespan of hydrogen buses, operation and maintenance costs further down the line. Funding at present only assists with the initial purchase of the vehicles and does not consider increased costs down the line.	Short		Aberdeen City Council
e)		Enhance accessibility of the bus fleet	Work with local communities and bus users to ensure vehicles meet the needs of those with restricted mobility or other disabilities	Aim to increase passenger satisfaction with ease of access, provision of grab rails etc	Medium	