

**REPORT TO MARR AREA COMMITTEE - 20 AUGUST 2019****BALLATER - BRAEMAR SUNDAY BUS SERVICE UPDATE****1 Recommendations**

The Committee is recommended to:

1.1 Note that the Sunday service between Ballater and Braemar will continue in its current form until 31 March 2020, during which time a community consultation survey and an assessment of the service performance will be undertaken, permitting this service and other supported bus journeys on the Deeside corridor to be reviewed as part of the proposed comprehensive 'clean sheet' review of all Aberdeenshire Council supported bus services; and

1.2 Note the current usage of the Sunday service between Ballater and Braemar.

2 Background/Discussion

2.1 The Committee will recall the Aberdeenshire-wide review of supported local bus services undertaken in early 2019 in order to realise Revenue Budget savings in the order of £560,000 during financial year 2019-2020. Reference was made exclusively to the Council's approved Performance Management Framework (PMF) model for supported bus services, in undertaking the review, with the resultant service revisions implemented on 15 April 2019.

2.2 Amongst the services affected in the Marr Area was the withdrawal of the Sunday service between Ballater and Braemar, which was ranked 153 out of the 168 supported bus services in the PMF model. There was an average usage of 5.6 passengers per journey (on this and two other supported Sunday journeys on the Deeside corridor), with on-bus passenger surveys indicating that demand was almost exclusively for leisure and social purposes. Such reasons for travel are not ranked as highly in the PMF model as, for example, travel to and from work, reflecting the Council's approved Passenger Transport Strategy.

2.3 There was a considerable response from the Braemar community, including from Local Members, Braemar Community Council, business interests, and bus users. The Council was asked to reconsider the decision and to maintain the link to/from Braemar until there could be a full assessment of the future impact on bus services of developments such as the re-opening of the Fife Arms Hotel and the public opening of the new Highland Games centre, along with the travel needs of staff employed at these facilities. There was also mention of Braemar Castle, Crathie Church and its new cafe, and Balmoral, as significant tourist attractions, particularly during the summer months.

2.4 These concerns were reiterated by the wider community at a public meeting in Braemar on 29 March 2019, attended by the Head of Transportation,

Passenger Transport Manager, and Stagecoach North Scotland's then Operations Director.

- 2.5 Following the above meeting and the receipt of a petition from the Braemar community, it was agreed that the Council would fund a Sunday 'shuttle' bus service between Braemar and Ballater over the summer period, commencing with effect from 15 April 2019, to permit a community consultation exercise and an assessment of the implications for bus service provision of new and proposed economic development in the Braemar area to be undertaken. Details of both the current Monday to Saturday, and Sunday, contracted journeys, are provided in **Appendix 1** to the report.
- 2.6 At its meeting of 16 April 2019, the Area Committee instructed a report be brought to the Committee in August, to include a review of the six day timetable to allow for the seven day service to continue within the existing budget and provide further information on the review through the Passenger Transport Network Review Member Officer Working Group (MOWG).
- 2.7 Unfortunately, delays have been experienced in undertaking the proposed community consultation exercise. However, following the outcome of the re-tendering of supported bus service contracts in South Aberdeenshire, sufficient funds became available to retain operation of the 'shuttle service' in its current form until the end of the current financial year. This will allow the proposed community survey to be undertaken in a more considered manner, provide the opportunity to gather patronage data covering the full summer period and permit the further review of the seven day service in the context of the proposed 'clean sheet review' of all Aberdeenshire supported local bus and dial-a-bus services. This comprehensive service delivery review will be progressed by the MOWG, with a planned completion date of May 2020.
- 2.8 Given the short notice reinstatement of the Sunday service, regrettably it was not possible to initially publicise the service in the most desirable manner and, therefore, the extension of service operation will also permit the review to be completed using more robust patronage figures.
- 2.9 At the time of writing this report, the Council is in receipt of patronage data for the Braemar - Ballater Sunday service for the months of May and June 2019, details of which are provided in **Appendix 2** to the report. The average number of passengers per journey in June 2019 of 5.0 compares with a figure of 4.4 for the then service in June 2018, suggesting a slight uplift in performance. Usage is variable across the seven return journeys and, excluding positional journeys to/from Stagecoach Bluebird's Ballater depot, the last 2 journeys are the most poorly patronised. However, this situation could change over the school holiday period and again during the winter months.

3 Scheme of Governance

- 3.1 The Committee is able to consider this item under Section B.1.2 of the List of Committee Powers as it relates to a matter which impacts the Committee's area.

3.2 The Head of Finance and Monitoring Officer within Business Services have been consulted in the preparation of this report and are satisfied that it complies with the Scheme of Governance and relevant legislation.

4 Implications and Risk

4.1 An equality impact assessment is not required because the purpose of the report is simply for the Committee to note the current situation and it does not have a differential impact on any of the protected characteristics.

4.2 No risks have been identified as relevant to this matter at a Corporate or Strategic level and there are no direct staffing and financial implications.

4.3 There will be no impact on town centres arising from this report and therefore a Town Centre First Impact Assessment has not been undertaken.

Stephen Archer
Director of Infrastructure Services

Report prepared by Neil Stewart, Principal Officer
06 August 2019

Appendix 1

Timetable

MONDAY TO FRIDAY

ABERDEEN (Union Square)	0605	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Cults Hotel	0622	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Culter (Gordon Arms)	0633	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Crathes Castle	0646	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Banchory (Hill of Banchory School)	0652	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Banchory (Raemoir Road)	0657	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
BANCHORY (Mount St, Int.)	0703	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
BALLATER (Golf Road, Int.)	-----	0935	1140	1340	1901	1952
Crathie (For Balmoral)	-----	0947	1152	1352	1913	2004
BRAEMAR (A'ch'ndryne Sq)	-----	1002	1207	1407	1928	2019

			NF	FO	
ABERDEEN (Union Square)	-----	-----	-----	-----	2315
Cults Hotel	-----	-----	-----	-----	2332
Culter (Gordon Arms)	-----	-----	-----	-----	2343
Crathes Castle	-----	-----	-----	-----	2355
Banchory (Hill of Banchory School)	-----	-----	-----	-----	0001
Banchory (Raemoir Road)	-----	-----	-----	-----	0006
BANCHORY (Mount St, Int.)	-----	-----	-----	-----	0011
BANCHORY (Mount St, Int.)	2009	2113	2243	2243	0013
TORPHINS (The Square, Int.)	2023	2127	-----	-----	0027
Kincardine O'Neil (Dee Street)	2030	-----	2256	2256	0034
ABOYNE (Victory Hall, Int.)	2037	-----	2303	2303	0041
Dinnet (Crossroads)	-----	-----	2311	2311	0048
BALLATER (Golf Road, Int.) arr.	-----	-----	2322	2322	0059
BALLATER (Golf Road, Int.) dep.	-----	-----	-----	2324	-----
Crathie (For Balmoral)	-----	-----	-----	2336	-----
BRAEMAR (A'ch'ndryne Sq)	-----	-----	-----	2351	-----

CODES: FO - Fridays Only

NF - Not Fridays

MONDAY TO FRIDAY

BRAEMAR (A'ch'ndryne Sq)	-----	1031	1231	1431
Crathie (For Balmoral)	-----	1046	1246	1446
BALLATER (Golf Road, Int.)	0651	1058	1258	1458
Dinnet (Crossroads)	0701	-----	-----	-----
ABOYNE (Victory Hall, Int.)	0708	-----	-----	-----
Kincardine O'Neil (Dee Street)	0716	-----	-----	-----
Lumphanan (Station Square)	-----	-----	-----	-----
BANCHORY (Mount St, Int.)	0730	-----	-----	-----

BRAEMAR (A'ch'ndryne Sq)	1641	1751	2031	2141
Crathie (For Balmoral)	1656	1806	2046	2156
BALLATER (Golf Road, Int.) arr.	1708	1818	2058	2208
BALLATER (Golf Road, Int.) dep.	-----	-----	2101	-----
Dinnet (Crossroads)	-----	-----	2111	-----
ABOYNE (Victory Hall, Int.)	-----	-----	2118	-----
Kincardine O'Neil (Dee Street)	-----	-----	2126	-----
GLEN O'DEE HOSPITAL	-----	-----	-----	-----
BANCHORY (Corsee Road)	-----	-----	-----	-----
BANCHORY (Mount St, Int.)	-----	-----	2140	-----

SATURDAY

BANCHORY (Mount St, Int.)	0954	-----	-----	-----	-----
TORPHINS (The Square, Int.)	-----	-----	-----	-----	-----
Kincardine O'Neil (Dee Street)	1009	-----	-----	-----	-----
ABOYNE (Victory Hall, Int.)	1016	-----	-----	-----	-----
Dinnet (Crossroads)	1024	-----	-----	-----	-----
BALLATER (Golf Road, Int.)	1037	-----	-----	-----	-----
BALLATER (Golf Road, Int.)	1040	1140	1340	1540	2058
Crathie (For Balmoral)	1052	1152	1352	1552	2110
BRAEMAR (A'ch'ndryne Sq)	1107	1207	1407	1607	2125

ABERDEEN (Union Square)	2015	-----	2315		
Cults Hotel	2032	-----	2332		
Culter (Gordon Arms)	2043	-----	2343		
Crathes Castle	2055	-----	2355		
Banchory (Hill of Banchory School)	2101	-----	0001		
Banchory (Raemoir Road)	2106	-----	0006		
BANCHORY (Mount St, Int.) arr.	2111	-----	0011		
BANCHORY (Mount St, Int.) dep.	2113	2243	0013		
TORPHINS (The Square, Int.)	2127	-----	0027		
Kincardine O'Neil (Dee Street)	-----	2256	0034		
ABOYNE (Victory Hall, Int.)	-----	2305	0041		
Dinnet (Crossroads)	-----	2311	0048		
BALLATER (Golf Road, Int.)	-----	2322	0059		
Crathie (For Balmoral)	-----	-----	-----		
BRAEMAR (A'ch'ndryne Sq)	-----	-----	-----		
BRAEMAR (A'ch'ndryne Sq)	0831	1131	1231	1431	1811
Crathie (For Balmoral)	0846	1146	1246	1446	1826
BALLATER (Golf Road, Int.)	0858	1158	1258	1458	1838

SUNDAY

BALLATER (Golf Road, Int.)	0908	0945	1145	1345	1545	1745	2021
Crathie (For Balmoral)	0920	0957	1157	1357	1557	1757	2033
BRAEMAR (A'ch'ndryne Sq)	0935	1012	1212	1412	1612	1812	2048
BRAEMAR (A'ch'ndryne Sq)	0938	1113	1313	1513	1713	1813	2058
Crathie (For Balmoral)	0953	1128	1328	1528	1728	1828	2113
BALLATER (Golf Road, Int.)	1005	1140	1340	1540	1740	1840	2125

Appendix 2

PASSENGER USAGE FOR 4 SUNDAYS IN MAY 2019

SUNDAY

BALLATER (Golf Road, Int.)	0908	0945	1145	1345	1545	1745	2021
Crathie (For Balmoral)	0920	0957	1157	1357	1557	1757	2033
BRAEMAR (A'ch'ndryne Sq)	0935	1012	1212	1412	1612	1812	2048

Average no. of passengers/day **1.0** **5.8** **3.3** **2.3** **5.7** **2.3** **1.8**

BRAEMAR (A'ch'ndryne Sq)	0938	1113	1313	1513	1713	1813	2058
Crathie (For Balmoral)	0953	1128	1328	1528	1728	1828	2113
BALLATER (Golf Road, Int.)	1005	1140	1340	1540	1740	1840	2125

Average no. of passengers/day **3.0** **4.0** **4.3** **3.5** **2.0** **1.5** **2.0**

Average no. of passengers/journey **3.0**

PASSENGER USAGE FOR 5 SUNDAYS IN JUNE 2019

SUNDAY

BALLATER (Golf Road, Int.)	0908	0945	1145	1345	1545	1745	2021
Crathie (For Balmoral)	0920	0957	1157	1357	1557	1757	2033
BRAEMAR (A'ch'ndryne Sq)	0935	1012	1212	1412	1612	1812	2048

Average no. of passengers/day **0.8** **7.4** **8.2** **4.8** **4.4** **4.8** **2.4**

BRAEMAR (A'ch'ndryne Sq)	0938	1113	1313	1513	1713	1813	2058
Crathie (For Balmoral)	0953	1128	1328	1528	1728	1828	2113
BALLATER (Golf Road, Int.)	1005	1140	1340	1540	1740	1840	2125

Average no. of passengers/day **5.6** **7.6** **6.2** **8.8** **5.6** **2.0** **1.8**

Average no. of passengers/journey **5.0**