



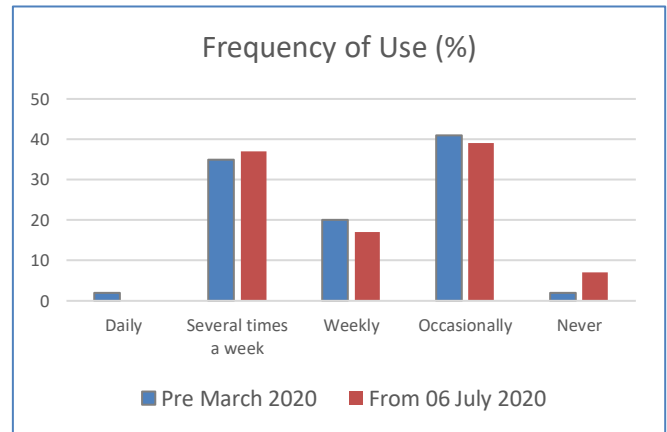
# Auchterarder Town Bus Service: Results of 2021 Users Survey



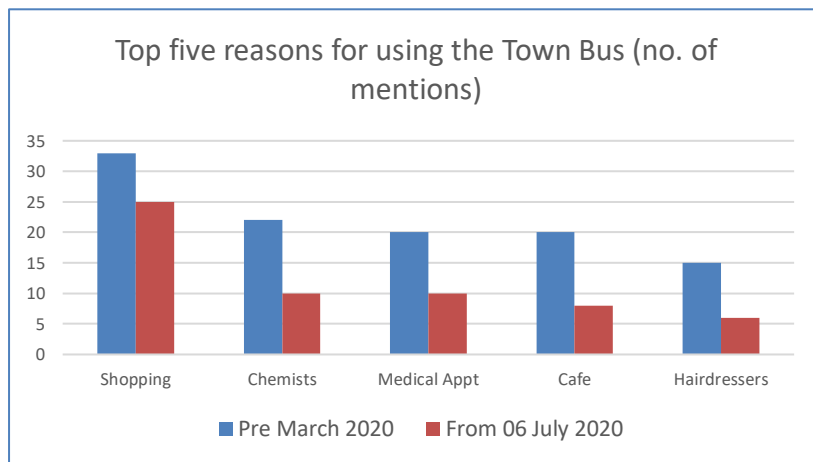
There was an excellent response to the 2021 survey of Town Bus Service users, with the vast majority providing positive feedback. Whilst a good number of users were happy for the bus service to remain predominantly as it is, others made requests and suggestions for it to be developed further.

Responses came from all parts of Auchterarder, with 31% of the total from the Abbey Park 'loop' and 22% from the Kincardine Road 'loop'.

In terms of frequency of use, 'occasionally' and 'several times a week' were most popular, both before March 2020 and from 06 July 2020.



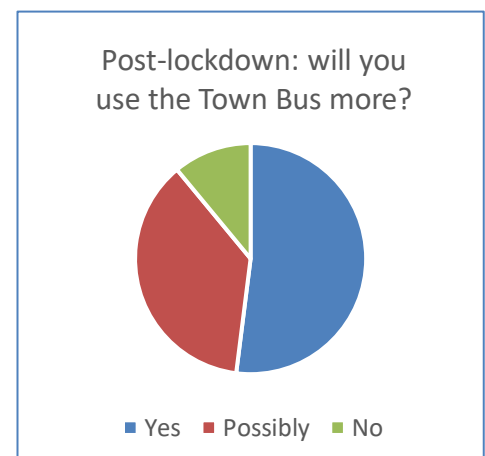
## Why use the bus?



A wide range of different reasons were given for using the Town Bus Service, but the most popular were shopping, going to the chemists, attending a medical appointment and visiting a café/restaurant, both before March 2020 and from 06 July 2020.

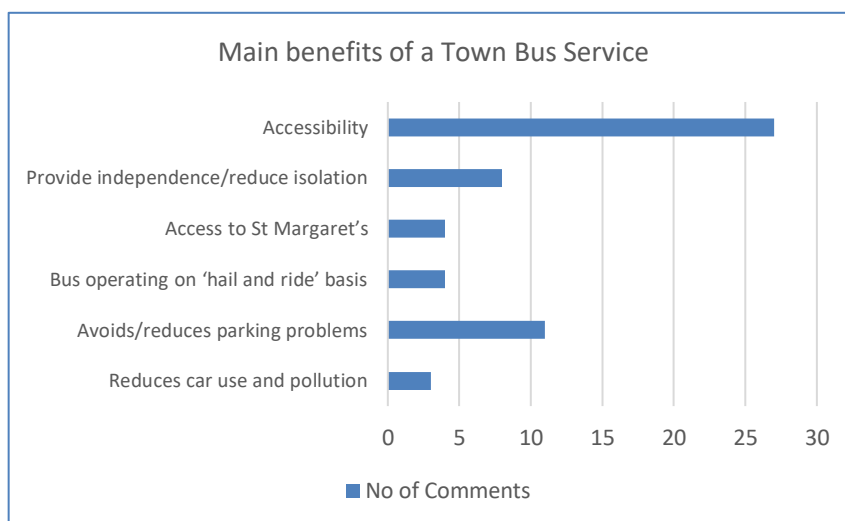
## *“Without the bus I would be housebound”*

The number of journeys on the Town Bus Service has been adversely affected by COVID-19, with passenger numbers below pre-lockdown levels. However, there are encouraging signs of growth in usage as shops, cafes and community facilities progressively reopen. The survey confirms this with 52% indicating they would use the Town Bus Service more in the future.



Not surprisingly, 69% of respondents indicated that they would use Service 49 most in the future, with a further 20% noting they may use both Services 49 and 49A.

## What's good about the bus?



When asked about the main benefits of the Town Bus Service, a large number of comments were received. Grouping the comments into themes, accessibility to the shops and other community facilities for those with no car or reduced mobility was by far the most popular benefit. Complementing accessibility, a number of respondents mentioned the bus providing them with independence to get out, including reducing isolation.

*"I live at the bottom of a steep hill ... I could never walk up to the town"*

Even for those with direct access to a car, the Town Bus was still viewed positively in helping to avoid parking problems in central Auchterarder.

## What could be improved?

Respondents were asked if they had any ideas/suggestions about how ACBuG could make the Town Bus more attractive in terms of timetable changes, route changes and/or other suggestions.

The majority of comments received were positive about the current operational arrangements, however a relatively small number of suggestions were made which have been aggregated into themes (with the number of responses shown in brackets):

- Operate extra days to Grand Eagles and other Service 49A locations, such as Glenorchil (8)
- Operate Service 49A daily (3)
- Operate Service 49 on Wednesdays (2)
- Merge Services 49 and 49A (2)
- Start the Town Bus earlier (9.00am) (2)
- Operate later buses from High Street (4)
- Operate occasional late and early buses for the doctors (1)
- Review routes in estates and extend to Aberuthven (1)
- Delete Sycamore Avenue from Service 49 (2)

Additionally, comments were received about a need for more publicity, including directly to households, shops, surgery, cafes etc. Equally, increased awareness could also be achieved by ACBuG engaging more with the Stronger Communities Network, linking further with the Health & Social Care Partnership and offering to speak to local groups and organisations.

It is interesting to note that 93% of passenger journeys undertaken on the Town Bus Service to date have been by people holding a NEC, and thus travelling free. However, it was noted that it was important to highlight that the Town Bus Service is available to all residents (at a modest cost).

*“A great benefit for the community.  
Don’t know what we would do without it now.”*

## **The way ahead ...**

The ACBuG trustees have considered all the information from the survey, and it is clear there are three main strands of work that should be taken forward in the months ahead.

### **Review options for changing the Town Bus Service timetables.**

Clearly some parts of the Town Bus Service have better patronage than others, despite additional door-to-door leaflet drops.

The aim will be to assess and agree what service changes should be made in the short/medium term, both to benefit existing passengers but also to encourage and facilitate additional usage.

*“Keeps the community in touch with local services, supermarket etc”*

However, looking to provide an enhanced six day a week service to those residential areas where the usage has been consistently highest may have implications for other places currently served.

Maintaining a consistent and reliable hourly timetable is viewed by trustees as crucial to the future, successful, operation of the Town Bus Service. Funding availability will, in all probability, dictate that the Town Bus Service must continue to be operated by a single vehicle.

In addition to passenger feedback, we have access to passenger data from the ticket machine on the bus since the Town Bus Service commenced in August 2018 and this will be invaluable.

The survey results will also be discussed with Docherty’s Midland Coaches and Perth & Kinross Council’s Public Transport Unit (PTU) to see if there are any options for some form of co-ordinated action with the other local bus services serving the Auchterarder area.

### **Travel Assistance for Independent Mobility (TAIM)**

ACBuG will also focus on identifying people in the community who may benefit from using the bus but who need some assistance to access the service. To progress this, ACBuG has launched the Travel Assistance for Independent Mobility (TAIM) project.

*“Encourages people to remain independent”*

The TAIM project will provide one-to-one support to individuals and address any concerns they may have about bus travel - whether due to a mobility issue, a lack of confidence or another reason.

A referral system will be set up, with the aim of providing practical help to allow people to make the initial steps to use the Town Bus and, thereafter, on-going support should their travel needs change.

Respondents in the User Survey were supportive of ACBuG assisting people to undertake their initial Town Bus journeys and helping them to apply for a National Entitlement Card (NEC) if eligible, thus permitting free bus travel.

Initially, in the first year of TAIM, ACBuG hope to directly assist up to 25 people in the community to access and use the Town Bus.

### **Environmental Benefits of Bus Travel**

In the Survey, one of the more popular benefits noted for using the Town Bus was the fact it avoids/reduces parking problems for the respondents. Clearly there is significant potential to further highlight the convenience of the Town Bus for accessing central Auchterarder to the wider population.

*“Parking for cars is getting very bad ... so it is much easier to take the local bus”*

Additionally, several respondents noted what they consider to be the environmental benefits of the Town Bus for reducing car use and pollution. With an international focus on environmental concerns in response to COP26, and the urgent need to find sustainable solutions, there is no doubt that the environmental credentials of the Town Bus will be enhanced as patronage levels increase.

Hopefully the advantages of public transport provision - including the Town Bus - to the future prosperity of the Town, will feature in the Community Action Plan that is currently being formulated for Auchterarder and Aberuthven.

Despite ongoing COVID restrictions, ACBuG has set a year-on-year passenger growth target of 20% for the Town Bus.

Whilst the service is operated by a vehicle powered by a diesel engine - that meets key environmental standards - ACBuG is keen to explore the opportunities for introducing an electric minibus on to the Town Bus Service. Investigations are on-going to identify potential funding sources, with an electric bus more expensive than the equivalent diesel model.

There is a need to raise local awareness of the benefits of bus travel and this will feature prominently in the next edition of the Auchterarder Town Bus Service timetable leaflet.

### **Further information**

ACBuG can be contacted as follows:

Telephone: 07510 303862  
E-mail: [acbug2018@gmail.com](mailto:acbug2018@gmail.com)  
Twitter: [@acbug2018](https://twitter.com/acbug2018)

Auchterarder Community Bus Group  
16 January 2022