



Auchterarder Community Bus Group (ACBuG) Trustees' Annual Report and Financial Statements

01 September 2022 - 31 August 2023



SCIO, Charity No. SC048669

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Chair's Introduction

This fifth Annual Report by Auchterarder Community Bus Group (ACBuG) provides an overview of the activities of the charity over the year and highlights our key priorities for 2024.

Following operational changes, the Auchterarder Town Bus Service experienced significant and sustained growth in usage from Autumn 2022. It is evident from user feedback that the Town Bus has improved the personal mobility of a good number of residents, providing enhanced access to the wider community.

However, notwithstanding the positive patronage figures, ACBuG faced some severe funding challenges in early 2023. This regrettably resulted in the Town Bus being reduced to a two-day a week service from 05 June 2023, although this situation has been partly reversed in November 2023.

My sincere thanks are due to the current Trustees, whose enthusiasm for and ongoing commitment to the Town Bus Service has never waned.

Following a couple of retirements, ACBuG are on the lookout for several new Trustees. Aiming for a diverse Board that reflects our community, we would really like to hear from any residents who feel able to help take the charity forward.

Andrew Warrington
Chair, ACBuG

Charity contact information

Auchterarder Community Bus Group (ACBuG)

Scottish Charity Number: SC048669

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Website www.acbug2018.com

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Charity Trustees

Neil Anderson	Treasurer	
Carol Duncan	Secretary	re-elected 05 December 2022
Tom Gray		
Lisa McGraw		
Irvine Small		resigned 09 November 2022
Andrew Warrington	Chair	re-elected 05 December 2022

Objectives and activities

ACBuG was formed in 2017 to address a severe lack of public transport provision in the residential areas of Auchterarder.

After seeking views about the transport problems being faced, we decided to provide an innovative transport solution. We worked in partnership with PSV-



licensed Docherty's Midland Coaches to deliver a publicly available Town Bus Service, which started on 05 August 2019.

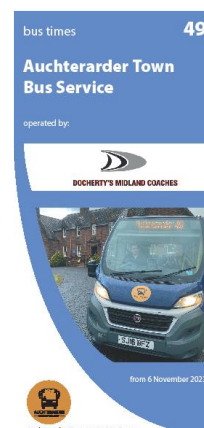
A low floor, wheelchair accessible vehicle, with a dedicated livery, provides the hourly daytime service. It operates as 'hail and ride' along most of the routes to facilitate passenger access.

The elderly, people with a disability, and young people under 22 years of age, who have a National Entitlement Card, travel free of charge. For others, a low adult fare of £1.20 applies to all journeys.

The service was available six days a week until June 2023 when it had to be reduced to a two-day a week timetable.

Following subsequent success with several funding applications, the Town Bus has increased to four days a week from November 2023 through to March 2024.

Despite the changes to the number of days operated, no other operational alterations were made to the Town Bus Service in terms of route, timetable, fares, vehicle used, regular driver etc. The same promotional regime is still in place, whilst Travel Assistance for Independent Travel (TAIM) continues to be offered to help new users to access the bus.



Structure, governance, and management

Charitable status and purpose

ACBuG became a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO) on 30 August 2018, charity number SC048669.

The organisation's purpose is to *'provide a public transport service for those inhabitants living in Auchterarder and surrounding area that supports the advancement of citizenship or community development'*.



The Trustees run and manage ACBuG according to a constitution (single-tier) that was accepted by the Office of the Scottish Charity Regulator (OSCR).

Being a SCIO facilitates ACBuG applying for grants from a variety of trusts and public/third sector funds.

Trustee recruitment and appointment

The initial Board of Trustees was appointed at the time that ACBuG gained charitable status.

Thereafter, appointment of trustees is by the ACBuG Board, by way of a resolution passed by majority vote at a board meeting.

The Constitution requires that we have a minimum of three trustees and a maximum of nine.

At the conclusion of each Annual General Meeting, one third (to the nearest round number) of the charity's trustees shall retire from office. The Constitution explains the process for re-electing or replacing such trustees.

Operational Experience

Second Phase of Development Activity

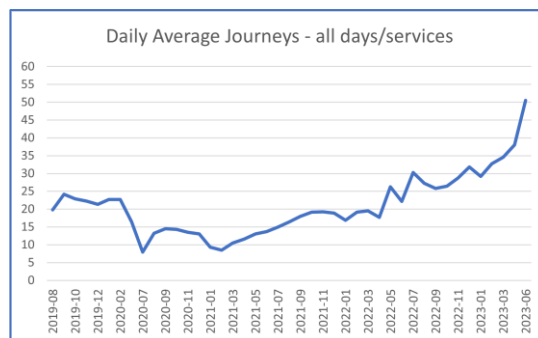
The aim of our development activity during 2022/2023 was to enable local people to be better connected within the community, including access to St Margaret's health facilities. Additionally, it was hoped that isolated people would have more opportunities to be involved in core community activities.

"Without the bus many of us older folk would be housebound"

Really positive progress was made, with significant and sustained growth in usage of the Town Bus. By the second half of this financial year, the Town Bus had an average weekday patronage level of nearly 50, an increase of more than 70% on the same period in the previous year. In addition, the cost per journey had reduced by more than 50%.

A User Survey in Spring 2023 provided plaudits for the helpfulness and friendly approach of the regular driver. An increasing number of residents with wheelchairs and other mobility aids regularly use the bus.

“Encourages people to remain independent”



What also became clear was that ACBuG was fulfilling a more facilitative role in terms of transport provision rather than trustees directly providing one-to-one support for new users, as had been our original expectation of Travel Assistance for Independent Mobility (TAIM). In part, ACBuG was reaching its target population via the activities of other community groups.

An excellent example of the positive contribution that ACBuG can make - working in partnership with others - was the *Cosy Spaces* project that started in Autumn 2022 and operated through the subsequent winter.

“The bus has been a really important part of the cosy spaces programme - getting people to and from venues as well as being a place to pick up the cosy packs. Many have commented on how they use it themselves or how they know of someone in their street who wouldn't go out otherwise”.

Community Connector, Auchterarder & Aberuthven Connected

Funding Challenges

ACBuG faced significant challenges in early 2023 in its attempts to gain sustainable funding.

The reality is that to operate the Town Bus for six days a week with an hourly daytime timetable would cost upward of £80k per annum, and multi-year core funding is essential to underpin such a service.

ACBuG sought to secure longer term funding and support from two major charities and detailed discussions also took place with Perth & Kinross Council about the Town Bus being funded (at least in part) from their local bus service budget.

One of the charities turned down our funding bid outright and indicated that we could not resubmit an application to them for at least 12 months, whilst the other UK-wide charity would not allow us to apply for multi-year funding.

The discussions with the Council's Public Transport Unit were constructive but did not result in them offering funding support.

ACBuG were faced with the real possibility that the Town Bus Service would not be able to continue past May 2023. As a SCIO, trustees recognised that we

could not fall into a deficit position, even for a short time. Trustees discussed a range of options and took the exceedingly difficult decision to scale back the operation of the Town Bus.

With two funding sources for the 2023/24 financial year secured, and with on-going support from Docherty's Midland Coaches (who did not increase their daily rate in line with transport inflation), it was deemed practical to go ahead with a reduced two-day a week service.

Prior to implementing the reduced service, passenger travel patterns were reviewed to decide the best days to operate. The revised Tuesday and Friday timetable commenced on 05 June 2023.

The two-day operation regrettably inconvenienced some of the existing users, with access to outpatient appointments at St Margaret's being one concern brought to the fore, together with bus users having practical difficulties being able to reschedule other appointments (chiropody, hairdressers etc).

As had been expected, the two-day operation saw the average number of daily journeys increase significantly. The highest daily total during the first four weeks of two-day operation was 79 passengers carried, with the lowest 43: giving an overall average of 56 passengers per day.

Additional Days

Despite the reduction in operational days, it was humbling for ACBuG to receive supportive feedback from the local community - individuals and organisations - who acknowledged our efforts to maintain a Town Bus, whilst also offering their assistance going forward.

ACBuG Trustees continued to actively seek out further financial support and increase the number of days operated. By July 2023 ACBuG had been successful in gaining funding from Auchterarder & District Community Trust (A&DCT) and from Friends of St Margaret's (FoSM) which allowed the Town Bus to increase to a three-day operation.

Additionally, ACBuG was thrilled that the management group of Cosy Spaces included an allowance for the Town Bus in their successful funding bid to the Council for winter 2023/2024, which allows a fourth day to operate from November 2023 to March 2024.

Feedback from both bus users and community stakeholders was sought to decide the additional two days. From 115 responses received, Monday and Wednesday were added, with the new timetable commencing on 06 November 2023.

Financial Review

Financial Statements

The financial statements on Pages 12-14 provide details of income and expenditure for the fifth year of ACBuG's existence, during which we received a total of £56,200 from

- Auchterarder Community Facilities Fund
- National Lottery - Awards for All
- Auchterarder & District Community Trust
- Perth and Kinross Community Transport Fund

Looking ahead, we have a further £20,900 of funding which has been committed.

Average operating costs per month clearly depend on the number of days of operation, but we consider we now have sufficient funding to take us up until the Summer 2024.

In addition to the costs due to the bus operator, we will have additional expenses for publicity materials and community engagement activity. Operating costs are forecast to rise by around 5% from 01 April 2024 due to ongoing cost of living pressures.

Statement of the charity's policy on reserves

Funding income will come in unevenly, being linked to successful grant applications, while outgoings are largely regular and predictable. Therefore, we don't have a specific policy on reserves, but ideally, we would always aim to have secured funding to cover up to six months of operational costs, although clearly this has not always been possible in the last financial year.

Future

Financial Sustainability

ACBuG is now proactively addressing what we consider to be a 'sustainability phase' for the Town Bus, with the initial anticipation that that will last for at least two years.

In terms of a future funding strategy, ACBuG acknowledges that it is unrealistic to rely on local trusts for year-on-year continuation funding and thus we need to diversify and assess the merits of a wider range of potential funders.

An important element of this approach will be engaging with private sector businesses and developers to consider what mutual acceptable benefits would arise from them financially supporting the Town Bus.

ACBuG have been delighted that Café Kisa Auchterarder have agreed a sponsorship deal for the year ahead and we hope that this will be the start of a longer-term partnership.



Positive discussions have also taken place with two other local businesses regarding multi-year funding packages. One business has suggested that they would be amenable to progressing such a package subject to match funding being provided by either another private sector business or Perth & Kinross Council.

The Perth & Kinross Offer

Corporately, in recent years, the Council has been encouraging communities - as part of The Perth & Kinross Offer - to address local problems themselves and look for creative solutions.

ACBuG considers that we have adopted this approach proactively, but we now need the Council's direct input to support a longer-term sustainable transport solution for Auchterarder.

Thus, one of the key actions for the ACBuG trustees is to seek further talks with the Council.

Rural bus provision: the Council's role

The Council plays a vitally important role in the provision of local bus services because many rural bus services throughout Perth and Kinross would not exist without their financial support.

In 2019 it was unrealistic for the Council to directly fund a new bus service initiative in Auchterarder because it would have had to cut financial support for another existing rural transport service.

The Auchterarder community thus decided to organise and fund its own solution - and prove to the Council that there was a genuine transport need.

It has always been ACBuG's expectation that when an on-going transport need was proven, the Council would consider either direct provision of a bus service or some funding support to ACBuG to enable them to continue to provide a Town Bus in Auchterarder.

The Council's local bus service budget already funds town bus services in Crieff, Blairgowrie and Aberfeldy; so, from an Auchterarder perspective, there is an equality issue to be addressed.

ACBuG fully recognises that the Council's local bus service funding is prioritised - based on factors such as patronage and passenger cost per journey. To date, however, we have not received any evidence to indicate that the Town Bus Service would underperform if compared to similar Council funded local bus service contracts.

If the Town Bus were subsequently underpinned by funding from the Council (like that previously provided by the ACFF), it would materially address concerns about future sustainability. ACBuG would then look to supplement this with funding from the private sector, other public bodies and trusts. The aggregated level of financial support achieved would determine the number of days the Town Bus could operate.

There is no formal application process for local bus service funding, but - in conjunction with our local Councillors - discussions will be progressed with officials from the Council, in advance of the Council setting its 2024/2025 budget.

The Council's Public Transport Unit provided professional support and guidance to ACBuG during the planning and implementation of the Town Bus Service, but if they now require the Town Bus to improve some of its operational outputs to be considered for direct local bus service funding, ACBuG will endeavour to meet the specified standards.

Engagement

ACBuG has endeavoured to engage with users to help keep the profile of the bus to the fore, including presentations at local community groups, such as Archway.

We will look for new opportunities to build relationships with different local groups and charities, such as the Blue Door Foodbank, and to be proactively involved in their projects.

The Town Bus will continue to be promoted through publications, such as livingLOCAL, and through close engagement with *Auchterarder & Aberuthven Connected*, who are delivering the Community Action Plan.

Environmental benefits

It was interesting to note that a lot of feedback from the latest passenger survey in Spring 2023 highlighted the environmental benefits of the Town Bus; helping to reduce car journeys and emissions as well as alleviating the significant shortage of parking in the centre of Auchterarder.

“Cuts down car use”

ACBuG will be proactively promoting the environmental benefits of the Town Bus in the year ahead, and encouraging car drivers to try the Town Bus, at least for some of their local journeys.

Acknowledgements

ACBuG are very grateful for the on-going assistance of Colin Docherty. The supportive approach of Craig Patrick and the other drivers at Docherty’s Midland Coaches has also been invaluable.

Additionally, we would like to thank Councillor Keith Allen for his support, advice and for facilitating several ‘introductions’ over the last twelve months.

Finally, ACBuG acknowledges the assistance received from those shops, local groups and community facilities that stock timetable leaflets and promote the Town Bus Service. We are very appreciative of your support.

Declaration

The Board of Trustees declare that they have approved the Annual Report and Financial Statements.

Signed on behalf of the Trustees:

Signature(s)	<i>A J Warrington</i>	<i>N A Anderson</i>
Full Name(s)	Andrew Warrington	Neil Anderson
Position	Chair	Treasurer
Date	12 December 2023	12 December 2023

Statement of Receipts and Payments

	Note	Year to 31 August 2023 £	Year to 31 August 2022 £
Receipts			
Grants	4	56,200	66,200
Fundraising		0	58
Total Receipts		56,200	66,258
Payments			
Costs of Charitable Activities	5	58,749	68,238
Fundraising costs		0	0
Governance costs - other		345	291
Total payments		59,094	68,529
Surplus (Deficit) for the period		(2,894)	(2,271)

Statement of Balances

	As at 31 August 2023 £	As at 31 August 2022 £
Opening cash at bank and in hand	21,854	24,125
Surplus for the period	(2,894)	(2,271)
At end of year	18,960	21,854

Bank and Cash Balances

	As at 31 August 2023 £	As at 31 August 2022 £
Current Account	18,960	21,854
At end of year	18,960	21,854

Notes to the Financial Statements

1 Basis of accounting

These accounts have been prepared on the Receipts and Payments basis in accordance with the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) Act 2005 and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended).

2 Nature and Purpose of funds

Unrestricted funds are those that may be used at the discretion of the trustees in furtherance of the objectives of the charity. The trustees maintain a single unrestricted fund for the day-to-day running of the charity.

Restricted funds may only be used for the specific purposes. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for specific purposes.

3 Related party transactions

No remuneration was paid to the trustees or any connected persons during the period.

4 Grants received (year up to 31 August 2023)

	Unrestricted Funds	Total
	£	£
Auchterarder Community Facilities Fund	25,000	25,000
Auchterarder & District Community Trust	20,000	20,000
National Lottery - Awards for All	10,000	10,000
Perth & Kinross Community Transport Fund	1,200	1,200
	<u>56,200</u>	<u>56,200</u>

5 Cost of charitable activities (year up to 31 August 2023)

	Unrestricted Funds	Total
	£	£
Payments to Docherty's Midland Coaches	57,633	57,633
Publicity	315	315
Timetables	801	801
	<u>58,749</u>	<u>58,749</u>

Independent Examiner's Report on the Accounts

APPENDIX 3



Independent examiner's report on the accounts v2							
Report to the trustees/members of	Charity name AUCHTERARDER COMMUNITY BUS GROUP (ACBuG)						
Registered charity number	SC048669						
On the accounts of the charity for the period	Period start date				Period end date		
	Day	Month	Year	to	Day	Month	Year
	01	09	2022		31	08	2023
Set out on pages	12-13					(remember to include the page numbers of additional sheets)	
Respective responsibilities of trustees and examiner	The charity's trustees are responsible for the preparation of the accounts in accordance with the terms of the Charities and Trustee Investment (Scotland) 2005 Act and the Charities Accounts (Scotland) Regulations 2006 (as amended). The charity trustees consider that the audit requirement of Regulation 10(1) (d) of the Accounts Regulations does not apply. It is my responsibility to examine the accounts as required under section 44(1) (c) of the Act and to state whether particular matters have come to my attention.						
Basis of independent examiner's statement	My examination is carried out in accordance with Regulation 11 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations. An examination includes a review of the accounting records kept by the charity and a comparison of the accounts presented with those records. It also includes consideration of any unusual items or disclosures in the accounts and seeks explanations from the trustees concerning any such matters. The procedures undertaken do not provide all the evidence that would be required in an audit and, consequently, I do not express an audit opinion on the view given by the accounts.						
Independent examiner's statement	<p>In the course of my examination, no matter has come to my attention</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> which gives me reasonable cause to believe that in any material respect the requirements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> to keep accounting records in accordance with section 44(1) (a) of the 2005 Act and Regulation 4 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations, and to prepare accounts which accord with the accounting records and comply with Regulation 9 of the 2006 Accounts Regulations have not been met, or to which, in my opinion, attention should be drawn in order to enable a proper understanding of the accounts to be reached. 						
Signed:	<i>A Macpherson</i>			Date:	31 October 2023		
Name:	ANDREW DAVID MACPHERSON						
Relevant professional qualification(s) or body (if any):	FCCA						
Address:	XX XXXXXXXXXXX XXXX						
	EDINBURGH EHXX XXX						

*Please delete the words in the brackets if they do not apply. If the words do apply, set out those matters which have come to your attention on the following page.