



# Press Release

Issued on 16 April 2025

## **Auchterarder Town Bus - the Next Chapter**

Auchterarder Community Bus Group (ACBuG) will operate the Town Bus Service for the final time on Friday, 18 April 2025, with the Council's Public Transport Unit taking over full responsibility for the service from Monday, 21 April 2025. Initially, the only operational change will see the single adult fare increase to £1.30.

ACBuG was formed in 2017 to address transport problems being experienced by members of the local community which impacted on their ability to carry out relatively straightforward daily activities, such as shopping or going to a medical appointment. Social isolation was a real issue for some residents.

A year of planning, procurement and fundraising culminated in the introduction of the new Auchterarder Town Bus Service on 05 August 2019. Tom Gray, one of the original Trustees of ACBuG, commented "Whilst ACBuG had identified the problem, it was unrealistic to expect the Council to immediately fund a transport solution without clear evidence of on-going demand. Our expectation was that ACBuG would run the service for two years before the Council would step in and directly fund it like the Town Services in Crieff and Blairgowrie."

However, as Tom noted "COVID put paid to our original plans, and it has ultimately taken nearly six years to get the Council to agree to fund the Town Bus through their Local Bus Service budget."

Operating the Town Bus has not been without its challenges, but as Carol Duncan, another original Trustee, commented "It's been really rewarding to see the usage of the Town Bus grow every year since we started, with nearly 10,000 passenger journeys undertaken in the last year, and 96% of these people able to travel free of charge using a National Entitlement Card. Keeping the bus on the road to date has involved ACBuG raising £319k from ten different sources and we are incredibly grateful for their support. However, the reality of a charity like ACBuG trying to gain sustainable longer-term funding was proving to be exceedingly difficult."

ACBuG Chair Andrew Warrington highlighted "The enthusiasm, hard work and endeavour of the nine ACBuG trustees over the last eight years to support the Town Bus Service has been awesome and they deserve our sincere appreciation. Additionally, there has been excellent assistance from a range of community groups, individuals and local stakeholders, such as Café Kisa. Thank you for your support and encouragement."

Andrew also noted “The Town Bus Service has been operated from the outset by Docherty’s Midland Coaches, and they have been brilliant. Their regular drivers have been truly first class - providing an excellent, empathetic, service. We are pleased that Docherty’s will continue to operate the service under the new arrangements, providing continuity of drivers who are familiar with the route and all the regular passengers.”

Concluding, Andrew commented “There is no doubt the Town bus has improved the personal mobility of many residents, providing enhanced access to the wider community. To achieve the long-term future of the new, Council-funded, Town Bus contract requires patronage to continue to grow. The Town Bus has become an important community asset, please use it as often as possible.”

**Further information available from:**

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**Note:**

The Council have agreed to fund the Town Bus for three days a week (Monday, Tuesday and Friday), with the new contract awarded to Docherty’s Midland Coaches. Additionally, Docherty’s have very generously agreed, for the foreseeable future, to operate Wednesday on a commercial basis.