

Scottish Borders Bus Network Review

Scottish Borders Council

Scottish Borders Bus Network Review – Summary of Recommendations



Introduction

This report contains the key recommendations that have emerged from a review of the bus network in the Scottish Borders.

The Scottish Borders has a large number of bus services, set over a large geographic area with a dispersed population. The routes have remained largely unchanged for many years and are run by multiple bus operators, the largest being Borders Buses. Few of the services operate commercially, and Scottish Borders Council (SBC) invests significant revenue funding each year to keep the network operating.

The bus network review has assessed the existing commercial and supported bus services, and related transport options including demand responsive services, and made a number of recommendations, where appropriate, which could improve the network in relation to better meeting potential outcomes and/or improving service efficiency.

Extensive data (provided by the Edinburgh & South East Scotland City Region Deal – Workforce Mobility Project), research, analysis and stakeholder engagement has informed the review.

The research and evidence has confirmed that:

- The bus network is a key part of many people’s lives, and an important element of many communities, helping connect many people to a broad range of opportunities and social needs;
- That there are substantial risks to the future viability of the network which SBC and its partners should recognise and work to mitigate; and
- Whilst the current network operates well in many respects and provides many benefits, there are opportunities to amend aspects of it to encourage greater use and improve value for money through continued data analysis and partnership working.

Summary of Issues

The key strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and constraints of the bus network in the Borders have been informed by the research and evidence, and are summarised below.

| Strengths | Weaknesses |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Buses are essential for many people to access employment, services and other key social needs, and well-liked by many of its users ▪ The bus network provides significant social, economic and environmental benefits (quantified in Section Error! Reference source not found.) ▪ The extant bus network connects all main settlements of the Borders with at least reasonable weekday daytime frequency, as well as providing town services within the main settlements ▪ Scheduled bus services are complemented by a broad range of more specialist provision, including demand-responsive and community transport services ▪ Many people are eligible for free bus travel ▪ The Borders has a major operator (Borders Buses) who is willing to invest in bus services in the region and innovates (e.g. Borders Buses app, Pingo, bikes on buses) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The settlement pattern of the Borders makes it challenging to serve by public transport, as there are no dominant demand corridors ▪ Journey patterns are highly dispersed, meaning it is difficult for bus to serve a high proportion of them, and bus is used for only a relatively small proportion of journeys ▪ Many residents of the Borders do not have good access by bus to employment, services, healthcare or other key needs, for reasons including buses not operating on appropriate routes or at appropriate times, and not being able to access a nearby bus stop ▪ Most bus services are not commercially viable, and rely on on-going public revenue funding which is scarce ▪ The network is highly dependent on concessionary users, which may distort demand from fare-paying passengers ▪ Few bus services operate early or late in the day, or in some of the rural areas away from main routes ▪ Bus service reliability is perceived by many users to be a regular problem ▪ There is limited competition for contracts between operators, which is likely to increase costs to SBC ▪ There is no consistency of specialist transport provision (different areas have different provision) and it is proving challenging for the CT sector to maintain its operations ▪ Demand for bus use in the Borders was significantly impacted by Covid, and the long-term patronage effects remain uncertain ▪ For those people that have access to one, there are few disincentives for using car for journeys in the Borders |

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|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is some good infrastructure supporting bus services (notably including Galashiels interchange) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SBC is probably investing less per person in its bus network than is typical amongst other comparable Scottish authorities |
|--|--|

| Opportunities | Constraints |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> An effective and attractive bus network is supported by a broad range of national, regional and local policies Growth in use of the bus network could help more people in the Borders access jobs, education, healthcare and other key needs using a sustainable transport mode, benefiting the region's economy, social inclusion and carbon emissions Most journeys in the Borders are local, and there is potential for the bus network to serve more of them More journeys by bus could be encouraged and enabled, using options including improving access to bus stops and increasing awareness of services Full uptake of the Under-22 concessionary pass should promote bus use by more people Rebuilding of demand back closer to pre-Covid levels, especially for older/disabled concessionary passengers Joint working with partners outside the bus industry (e.g. NHS Borders, Borders College) to share vehicle assets and encourage use of bus could enable improved efficiencies Better integration of school transport services with the main scheduled network may also be able to improve efficiencies Make use of the opportunities that new data sources, especially employee travel pattern data and movement data tracked by mobile phones, provide to understand demand for transport in the region | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SBC funding for bus services is being reduced at a time of significant cost pressures on operators, so there is a high risk of service withdrawals Withdrawal of Scottish Government NSG+ funding places a further cost pressure on operators The ageing population of the Borders is likely to increase demand for more specialist transport provision Usage of bus services is influenced by many external factors, including car ownership and use, and there are presently few incentives not to use car for journeys in the Borders for those people that have access to one There is a lack of partnership working ethos between relevant organisations (SBC, operators, employers, communities, etc) The challenges that the bus industry is facing to recover patronage from the effects of Covid Increased cost of living reduces demand for travel |

Objectives for Change

The primary outcome objectives that were developed for the study are informed by the issues and are to:

- Reduce inequalities: provide fair and equitable access to key services, easy to use for all and affordable for all;
- Take climate action: contribute to net zero targets by reducing net carbon emissions from transport, promoting greener and cleaner choices;
- Maximise the efficiency and effectiveness of the publicly subsidised bus services in the Scottish Borders ensuring integration, removing overlap with other bus services.

There are three further supporting outcome objectives:

- Help deliver inclusive economic growth and community wealth building by linking people to jobs and customers to businesses;
- Improve health and wellbeing by connecting people to communities and enabling healthy transport choices;
- Enhancing links between modes of transport, supporting the NTS2 transport hierarchy.

Options for Change

There are a large number of options for change to the Borders’ bus network which have potential to make contributions to objectives. This review considers and appraises those options.

These options are presented mindful of the current governance and regulatory environment for bus service operation in Scotland, which can be briefly summarised as:

- Scottish Government/Transport Scotland: who set the regulatory environment, provides some on-going revenue funding support for bus operations and occasional capital support to meet specific priorities;
- Local Authorities: who can provide revenue funding for socially necessary bus services that would not otherwise operate, and provide and maintain most of the roads on which services operate and most other bus infrastructure (including stops);
- Bus operators: who run bus services and collect fare revenue, and who operate either on a commercial or third-sector basis;
- Communities, employers, land-use planners and many others that have an influence on travel demand, and hence on bus use.

Funding and Regulation

Funding

| Source | Section Summary | Recommendations |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| Bus Infrastructure Funding | There are several funding opportunities available which might be able to assist develop bus infrastructure in the Scottish Borders, but none that is specifically focussed on the wholesale enhancement of bus stops or interchanges that may be the highest priority improvements in the region. | SBC should work to monitor the availability of funding and work, with partners where appropriate, to access external funds where these can efficiently help deliver improvements to the bus network. |
| Bus Vehicle Funding | Funding options for investment in buses are limited, but the Scottish Zero Emission Bus Challenge Fund (ScotZEB) might be relevant for some operators if they have appetite to invest in electric vehicles. | SBC should engage with operators to highlight the potential opportunity of ScotZEB and offer support for any applications. |
| Bus Service Revenue Funding | Sources for significant long-term revenue funding for bus operations are extremely limited | SBC should work with operators to grow the number of bus passengers, and hence revenue, and consider investing additional revenue funding to support maintenance and expansion of the network. |
| Operating Costs | Bus operators’ costs are increasing significantly, at the same time as revenue from passengers and external sources is under pressure | SBC should anticipate a widening gap between operators’ income and costs which, unless it can be filled by increased investment by SBC, will lead to service withdrawals |
| School Transport | The requirements of school pupil transport mean that many buses operating in the Borders have a larger capacity than is required for the operation of scheduled services. However, the operating cost saving of moving to smaller vehicles can often be relatively modest. A change to electric propulsion may be able to help reduce operating costs, but the benefits of so doing are uncertain, and the financial barriers to change currently high | SBC should engage with operators to determine whether changes to schools and/or scheduled contracts could facilitate operating cost savings, and also assist any local operator that wants to access external funding to facilitate a move to electric propulsion |

Contractual and Regulatory Options

Section summary: SBC has a variety of contractual and regulatory mechanisms available to it in order to influence the strength of partnership working with commercial operators and deliver best value for expenditure on support for the bus network.

Recommendations: SBC should:

- Continue to make use of both minimum subsidy and minimum cost contracts for supported services, with the latter being prioritised for new/innovative contracts;
- Consider the length of contracts to enable bus operators to invest in the long term and also attract new operators interest to the region;
- Consider whether there are investments that it could make which could support the development of an in formal bus alliance or Voluntary Bus Partnership agreement and, if there is, enter discussions with all operators in the region to determine whether there is joint appetite for entering into such a partnership;
- Keep the benefits of entering a formal Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP) under review (especially in respect of the potential for the creation of a BSIP to unlock Government funding) and should those benefits significantly increase and/or the costs of entering into a BSIP reduce, assess operators' appetite for the creation of one;
- Continue to operate council run services (i.e. as an operator of last resort) in situations where it is efficient to do so and competition would otherwise be limited, but engage with operators to identify mechanisms to increase competition and their ability to operate a wider range of services;
- Not consider the implementation of franchised operations or the creation of a municipal operator unless there are significant changes in the operating environment in the Borders.

Encouraging Competition

Section summary: there are actions which SBC could progress which might be able to increase competition for bus tenders and hence efficiency of public investment, notably including facilitating a data-driven approach to understand demand for use of bus. Some would increase revenue burden and/or financial risk to SBC; SBC must consider whether it can take on these costs or risk but should prioritise officer time to engage with operators to improve joint working.

Infrastructure and Marketing

| Infrastructure Type | Recommendations |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| Improved bus stop infrastructure | <p>SBC should seek to improve bus stop infrastructure at busier stops (for bus boardings) where extant provision is relatively poor. It should analyse data on bus boardings and work with operators and community representatives to identify which stops are most worthy of improvement.</p> <p>It should test the market for whether there are worthwhile opportunities for revenue raising from advertising on bus shelters.</p> |
| Improved Interchanges | <p>SBC should work to develop detailed proposals and identify funding to deliver improvements to bus-bus interchange locations.</p> |
| Improved Routes to/from Bus Stops | <p>It is recommended that SBC invests to improve walking/wheeling routes between bus stops and key destinations in locations where road crossings are a concern, or where there is a significant community which does not currently have a safe route. It should analyse available data on gaps between communities and bus stops, then work with operators and community representatives to identify which stops are most worthy of improvement.</p> <p>It is also recommended that SBC pilot the provision of cycle parking infrastructure at some bus stops which meet the criteria set out in the report.</p> |
| Increased Park & Ride Provision | <p>It is not recommended that SBC pursue opportunities for dedicated bus-based park & ride sites at this time. <i>However, this provision should be monitored as the region develops and Net-Zero obligations need to be delivered.</i></p> |

Marketing, Ticketing and Passenger Experience

Passengers must be aware of, understand how to use, and rate the user experience if they are to be regular users of the bus network.

| Opportunity | Recommendations |
|---|---|
| Marketing of Bus Services | <p>SBC should invest in the marketing and promotion of bus services as there is direct correlation with increased patronage and income. Sharing costs with those operators that would benefit from the increased use, with focus given to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Raising awareness of new/amended services; ▪ Promoting bus use to people that have had a significant change in their journey needs; ▪ Promoting use of services that are marginally commercial; ▪ Encouraging previous users 'back to bus'. ▪ Increasing the awareness of the comfort of modern bus fleet; ▪ Work with business to promote services and align shift timings with service provision. |
| U22 Concessionary Pass | <p>SBC should work to raise awareness of the Under 22s' concession and encourage applications to it in order both to enable everyone who can benefit from the scheme to do so, and to help sustain the bus network. High schools, Borders College and Heriot Watt University may be key partners to enable access to this audience.</p> |
| Ticketing, Passenger Information and Mobility as a Service (MaaS) | <p>SBC should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Continue to review the market for MaaS systems and, if a provenly cost-effective solution becomes available, ensure that all bus operators in the region support it; ▪ Support the provision of real-time bus information on all services in the region through extant public portals; ▪ Support operators to provide a range of attractive ticketing options; ▪ Work with operators to raise awareness of the variety of ticketing options that are available, and also of the potential of One Ticket for multi-bus journeys and app-based payment. |
| Improved Data Sharing and Analysis | <p>SBC should seek to work in partnership with operators to improve two-way information flow to help SBC manage the bus network and jointly identify opportunities for service or network enhancements. Making best use of available data would be dependent on increased capacity within SBC's Passenger Transport team.</p> <p>It could use the powers of the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 to compel operators to share at least basic information in certain circumstances and should consider writing this into contracts for supported services.</p> <p>SBC should continue to access and utilise demand data from the county's workforce and mobile phones (as supplied by the Workforce Mobility Project) for continued network performance analysis and decision making.</p> |
| Scheduling Software | <p>It is recommended that SBC moves away from timetable-based contracts towards specification-based ones (which will help operators identify how to operate most efficiently, and it is hoped will be reflected in their tender prices), the value of timetable preparation by SBC is reduced. In the light of this, and the significant potential financial and staff time implications, it is therefore not considered that investment in bus scheduling software should be a priority for SBC at this time.</p> |
| Complaints Management | <p>SBC should seek to channel:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The feedback from any complainant on issues that relate to a specific operator (these including of driver or vehicle standards and of reliability/punctuality) to the operator, with contracts for tendered services to include a requirement for operators to log, respond to and provide summary reports to SBC regarding complaints; |

| Opportunity | Recommendations |
|-------------|---|
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Any feedback on broader network issues that are within SBC’s control to the ‘report it’ functionality of its website, which currently has sections for many issues (including the reporting of potholes or faulty streetlights), but not issues relating to bus services. |

Operational Options

This section considers options for types of passenger transport operations (over and above scheduled public bus operations). It considers options in a generic manner, where they may be relevant to all or much of the Borders region.

| Option | Recommendations |
|---------------------------------------|---|
| <p>Integrated School Bus Services</p> | <p>SBC should amend its policies in order to register more extant school transport services to enable carriage of members of the public. Discussions should be held with operators to determine the most effective routes for any such change, based on issues including capacity on the school service and potential for operating cost savings on other routes. SBC should consider option of putting out tenders for both a registered public service and a school transport only service to help evaluate costs and benefits.</p> <p>Privilege Lifts should be withdrawn from those pupils that have access to a reasonable public bus service for their journeys between home and school, with the children encouraged to make use of the Under-22 concessionary entitlement.</p> |
| <p>Other Operational Models</p> | <p>A variety of operational options are appropriate for the transport mix in the Scottish Borders, in addition to the operation of fixed timetable scheduled bus services. Following the context set out in this section, the following recommendations emerge:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Many-to-Few Demand Responsive Transport (DRT) services have the potential to offer cost-effective solutions for the small communities and rural areas that are not served by scheduled buses, and hence be an important component of the overall bus network. Services could potentially be operated by bus or taxi operators (the latter as Taxibus), and operator engagement and market-testing of both is likely to be beneficial; Many to Many DRT services are likely to only offer a cost-effective solution in locations where there is significant potential for the sharing of journeys; if not then taxi operation may be more efficient to provide door-to-door transport; Taxicard schemes could provide benefits to some people, but the costs of establishing and operating such schemes is likely to outweigh their benefits, at least in situations where community transport solutions are available to enable door-to-door journeys for people that would otherwise be unable to use and pay for conventional taxis, so their introduction is not recommended in the Borders at this time; Community transport provided through social car schemes can provide a valuable service to users for modest cost to local authorities, though the capacity and sustainability of services can be uncertain. It is recommended that SBC continue to work with CT operators to build capacity and resilience, and support social car schemes where they can provide good value (tested through adherence with SLAs); It is also recommended that SBC help facilitate the sharing of minibuses or other vehicles between organisations, but only in cases where there is a clear joint willingness to do so, with investigations to focus on opportunities with Borders College in the first instance. <p>Recommendations for which option is applicable in each circumstance are made in Section 7 of the report.</p> |
| <p>Network Change Options</p> | <p>This section considers some potential generic options for changes to service provision; that may have relevance to all of the Borders. Recommendations for changes to specific services or in specific locations are addressed in section 7 of the report.</p> |

| Option | Recommendations |
|--------|---|
| | <p>SBC should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Monitor the effectiveness of the Smarter Choices, Smarter Places (SCSP) funded evening bus service pilot, and work to expand to other services if proven successful; ▪ Promote the use of bus services for leisure purposes; ▪ Support any operator that is seeking to adopt a more sustainable bus fleet. |

Recommendations for Changes

This review of the bus network of the Scottish Borders has undertaken an evidence-led approach, building on extensive data analysis, research and engagement. It has provided network concept scenarios and appraised options for change in the light of this evidence.

This section of the review makes recommendations for change which would enable that vision to be realised. It commences with an overview of network- or region-wide changes, followed by locally specific changes.

Network-Wide Recommendations

Recommendations for network-wide changes are listed below. More information about specific recommendations is provided in the review's main report.

- Funding and efficiency:
 - Withdraw or amend inefficient and/or duplicitous services in order to enable investment of their subsidy requirements into better value bus options;
 - Seek to enhance SBC's long-term investment of revenue funding for bus services, recognising that cost pressures are likely to lead to a reduction of what can be delivered per pound invested in future years;
 - Determine whether SBC has appetite to take on more revenue risk in relation to bus services, which would help encourage competition and patronage growth;
 - Develop and maintain a data-driven approach to understanding the performance of, and potential to make improvements to, the network, with sufficient capacity and expertise within SBC's Passenger Transport Team to deliver this;
- Service changes (refer to later section for specific recommendations):
 - Move to an integrated school transport concept, at least on those routes where there is some space capacity on vehicles and it makes operational sense to do so;
 - Focus opportunities for service enhancements on filling gaps in local connectivity, especially town services, bringing people to town centres for local services and onward connections;
 - Enable rural accessibility, but with more efficient delivery models (most likely through many-to-few demand responsive services, by either taxi or bus operators) and with a focus on meeting key social needs;
 - Support the growth of the community transport sector where this can be demonstrated to deliver cost-effective and reliable transport particularly for people unable to make use of scheduled services;
- Infrastructure changes:
 - Seek to improve passenger infrastructure at busier stops where there is currently none, and access routes to stops where there are clear gaps that can be readily remedied;
 - Seek to improve facilities at key bus-bus interchange locations;
 - Utilise the demand data collected to identify and deliver Active Travel infrastructure to improve rural, remote rural access to the sustainable transport network; and
 - Identify and support the development of bike on bus solutions to increase the reach of 'first mile / last mile' accessibility to the fixed route networks.
- Complementary investments:

- Improve the marketing and promotion of bus services, especially to specific target groups (including to Under-22s and people that stopped using bus because of Covid) and where there are service changes;
- Partnership:
 - Further develop more constructive working relationships with operators, encouraging all to join at least a voluntary Bus Service Improvement Partnership agreement, and working with them towards a higher level of competition for contracted services;
 - Seek to agree Service Level Agreements with operators of all services subsidised by SBC (be those for scheduled, demand responsive or community-based services) which sets out both parties' responsibilities for items including revenue and capital investment, passenger experience requirements (including vehicle quality and service reliability) and data sharing.

Service-Specific Recommendations

This section provides more specific recommendations for changes to the bus network of the Borders, where it is considered that they will help achieve the vision. Recommendations have focussed on identifying priorities for service enhancements, and the amendment of more poorly performing services that could enable a transfer on investment.

In each instance, recommendations are provided for consideration by SBC and its partners as the basis for further investigation. This review has assessed the potential benefits and costs of change based on the available data, but this data has not included items including operators' detailed schedules, comprehensive information on the spare capacity on school transport services, the views of operators of commercial services on changes to the contracts subsidised by SBC, or market testing of the financial implications.

Discussion of relevant issues with partners (likely to include both operators and community representatives) to validate the recommendations being made is therefore suggested.

DRT Services Recommendations

The use of demand responsive services is recommended in the locations shown below, some as a replacement for existing schedule bus services. These could be Taxibuses operated by appropriately licensed taxi operators which only operate when pre-booked by intending passengers, or could be provided by bus operators. Each service would be available to book at specified times and part of the route could be fixed (on a Many-to-Few basis). On inbound journeys, passengers would be picked up from a specified set of postcodes in a defined area. Return journeys would operate from the appropriate town centre bus stops, returning passengers to their point of origin.

The following Taxibus services have been recommended:

- Hawick – Bonchester Bridge;
- Hawick – Jedburgh – Kelso;
- Hawick – Newcastleton;
- Jedburgh;
- Selkirk;
- Tweedmouth – Swinton.

A new Many-to-Many service, similar to the current Pingo service operating in Berwickshire, is recommended for the area bounded by Hawick, Jedburgh, Selkirk and St Boswells. Referred to in the spreadsheet as "Cheviot – Teviot", this would serve all the villages within the area bounded by the A68, A698, A699 and A7, connecting them with the four towns. It would also serve the Borders College campus at Newton St Boswells, the BGH and Dryburgh Abbey (near St Boswells) and Bowhill House (near Selkirk) during the times of the year when they are open to the public. The rationale for this service is to enable movements not served by fixed-route bus services. Potential users who could use existing fixed routes could be encouraged to use these services instead of DRT.

The Pingo service has been funded until March 2024 and the service has been extended to serve Berwick-upon-Tweed station since 1st May 2023. It is recommended that the recommendations contained in the separate evaluation study which reported in March 2023 be applied to improve and continue to develop the service. Development to the Pingo booking app should enable greater efficiencies, such as enabling passengers to share bookings. Also review of operational fleet, operational hours and contract combinations with school services to improve efficiency and value for money.

Town Services Recommendations

Recommendations have been made to SBC that the town services be revised to provide an improved and consistent passenger offer across the five largest towns in the Borders. Further details of the recommendations for each service are provided in the area summaries below. These changes could be achieved by developing the existing services which are already in place in most of the towns (except Selkirk) or by replacing them with new services to the recommended specification. Some elements of the specification (such as evening and Sunday services) may need piloting to determine whether there is sufficient demand to make them viable. Discussions between SBC and the operators of these services in Galashiels, Hawick, Kelso, Peebles and Selkirk recommended to further inform the development of these services.

School Service Registration Recommendations

In many areas of the Borders, there is the potential for some school services to be registered for use by the wider public to provide additional capacity, especially in small settlements which currently have infrequent scheduled bus services, or no bus services at all. The recent registration of the P03, P06 and P12 routes into Peebles on minimum subsidy contracts has been successful and delivered a cash saving of over £15,000 per annum compared to the previous operating model.

Services only operate inbound in the morning and outbound in the mid-afternoon, except on Fridays, so would not suit the needs of all passengers. However, in several locations, school services operate in the Pingo operating area, or in areas where new/revisted DRT services are recommended, which would provide opportunities to make return journeys at other times. Several of the school services are over capacity, so these services run twice. Other services are very near to capacity, so would provide limited opportunities for carrying additional passengers.

Interurban Services Recommendations

It is recommended that services to/from Borders General Hospital (BGH) be improved to increase the journey opportunities available to staff, patients and visitors. It is understood that SBC is in discussion with relevant operators to discuss ways to optimise timetables to match shift times, to improve communication between BGH management, SBC and operators and to improve the marketing and promotion of relevant services.

In addition to improving services to BGH, the following service specific changes have been recommended for consideration, which are also described in the appropriate area summaries:

- the 61A and 68 services be retained, however there is potential for some journeys to be operated on a commercial basis;
- the 60 and 235 services be retained in their current form;
- the 91 and 93 service are improved from Broughton to West Linton via Peebles. The 91 service currently extends to Biggar in South Lanarkshire, but very few passengers are carried between Broughton and Biggar, so better connections with Stuarts 191 and Borders Buses X62 required. Biggar is also served by the 101/102 services. Service 93 could operate on a loop serving Peebles, Biggar and West Linton
- the 127/127A service be revised to operate only between Newcastleton and Canonbie, with journeys to/from Carlisle achieved through interchange in Canonbie with the X95;
- the 21 service operated by Peter Hogg be integrated into the Peter Hogg Service 20 timetable;
- the 34 and 236 services be withdrawn, with the commercial operator of the 235 and 253 services encouraged to increase the number of services to meet increased demand as a result;
- the 260 service operating between Tweedmouth and Duns be withdrawn, with some adjustment to the routes of the commercial services operating on the Berwickshire coast to ensure that affected communities retain access to bus services;
- the 73 service could be modified to run as a Selkirk town service, with interchange to the X95 for onward travel to Galashiels, as there is significant duplication in the timetables of the 73 and X95. However, it is recognised that this route is largely commercial, only supported by SBC on Sundays, so any change will require discussions with the commercial operator;
- the 86 service be withdrawn and that the 32 and 128 be replaced by DRT services.

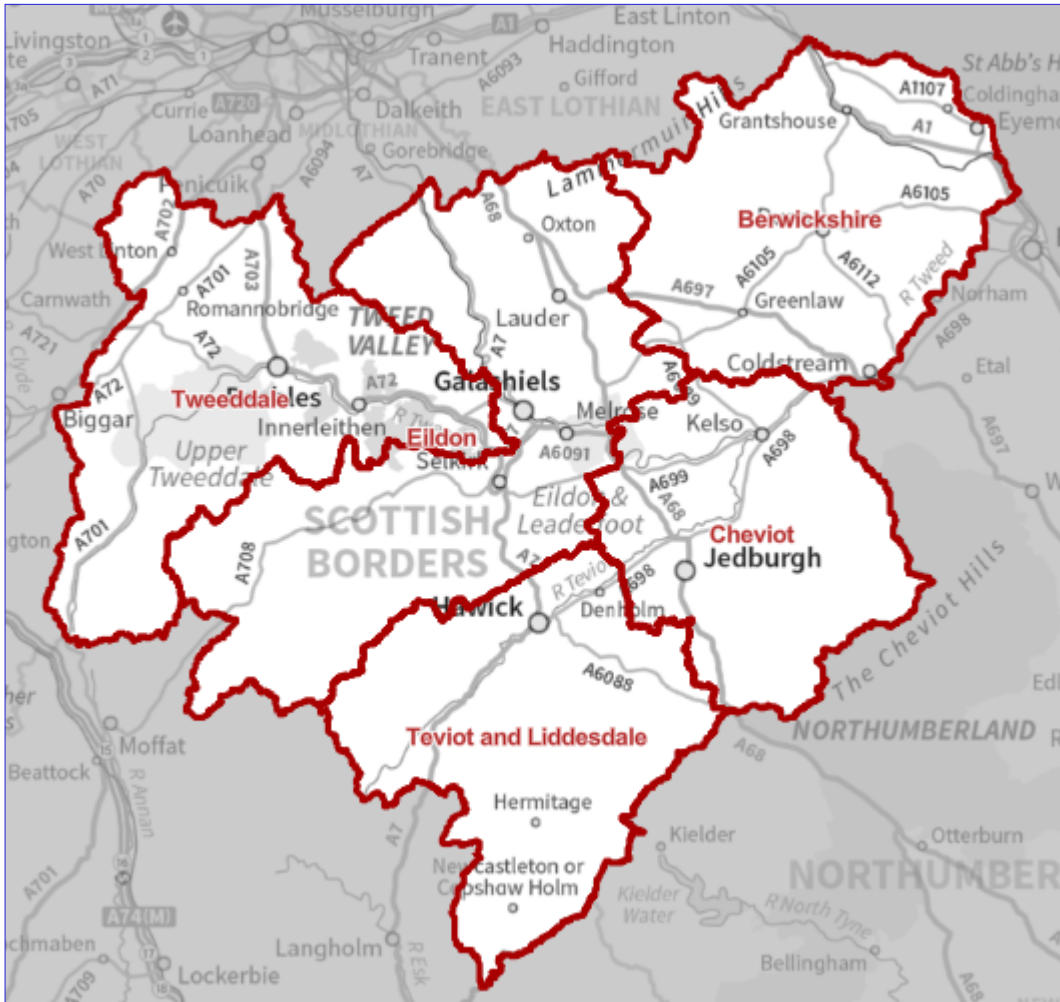
Long Distance Services Recommendations

The recommendations for these services can be summarised as follows:

- the 67 service operates almost at break-even point, and it may be feasible for it to operate commercially with additional marketing and promotion;
- options be explored for some of the 51 services to be operated commercially, possibly by making the 51 more of an express service, in a similar fashion to the X62 and X95 services;
- the 60 service is retained, with discussions to be continued with the operator regarding potential changes to the route in light of recommended changes to the 32, 34, 236 and 260 services, to ensure that affected communities retain access to bus services;
- Weekend support for the 253 and X95 services to be continued;
- Support for the 100/101/102 services, 131 service and 710 service which are managed by neighbouring authorities.

Recommendations: Area Summaries

Recommendations are summarised for each Area Partnership region of the Borders separately, in order to aid comprehension.



Area Partnership Boundaries ¹

¹ Source: SBC <https://www.scotborders.gov.uk/mapadvanced>

Recommendations Summary: Berwickshire Area

Main towns:

- Duns
- Coldstream
- Eyemouth

Key recommendations:

| | |
|--|--|
| Changes to DRT Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Service 32 – Withdraw and replace by Pingo option for most of route, and by new "lollipop" Taxibus services travelling eastwards from the Swinton area into Berwick, operating 6 days per week. ▪ Pingo service has been funded until March 2024 and has served Berwickshire since 1st May 2022. Further consideration is required with regards to the format of the service beyond the 31st of March 2024 with 3 options available. |
| Changes to Town Services | No new Town Services are proposed in Berwickshire |
| Changes to Town Hinterland Services | Service 85 – Consider a revised Kelso town service, which could extend to Leitholm and Greenlaw. Potential also to introduce a taxi bus service. |
| Changes to Inter-urban Services | <p>SBC to discuss with operators the consolidation of coastal services to support the viability of commercial services and deliver better value for public subsidy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service 236 – Withdraw, passengers able to use Borders Buses B1, 235 and 253 • Service 260 – Withdraw, passengers able to use Services B1 and 60, may increase journey time between Duns and Berwick • Service 34 – Withdraw, duplicates Borders Buses commercial services B1, 235 and 253 <p>Still opportunities to utilise the data and respond to the demand between Coldstream and Duns, whether this is achieved by registering school services or creating a new service (data from PINGO and mobile phone).</p> |
| Changes to Long Distance Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Service 60 – Forms part of new 15-minute frequency between Galashiels and BGH. Divert via Eyemouth and Foulden on alternating hours increasing the frequency of the service between Duns and Berwick to Hourly. ▪ Service 67 – Forms part of new 15 minute frequency between Galashiels and BGH. Explore opportunity for operator to operate commercially between Kelso and Galashiels. |
| Potential service reductions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 32 service to be replaced by Pingo & new Taxibus service ▪ Service 34 – Withdraw, duplicates Borders Buses commercial services B1, 235 and 253 ▪ Service 85 – Consider a revised Kelso town services, which could extend to Leitholm and Greenlaw. Potential also to introduce a taxi bus service ▪ Consolidation of coastal services to deliver better value for public subsidy and support the viability of commercial services (remove duplication of services B1, 235 and 253) could result in withdrawal of 34, 236 and 260 services |
| Key infrastructure / non-service options | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve facilities at key interchange points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Duns - Eyemouth <p>.Key transport corridors would benefit from a data review to identify Active Travel linkages to support improved and safer connections for passengers, linking with key communities and employment zones, while increasing the potential for 'bike on bus' usage.</p> |
| Marketing | Marketing of new services (including new Taxibus service and changes to Pingo) and significant service changes could derive patronage benefits identified earlier in this report. |
| Key benefits / outcomes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consolidation of coastal services to deliver better value for public subsidy and support the viability of commercial services ▪ New Taxibus service more cost-effective, only operates when pre-booked and may offer more journey opportunities ▪ Building on success of Pingo and maximising benefits and explore new operating models ▪ More efficient use of subsidy to maximise passenger benefits |

Scottish Borders Bus Network Review – Summary of Recommendations

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ <i>All recommendations will be subject to tender return and delivery within current budget.</i> |
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Recommendations Summary: Cheviot Area

Main towns:

- Jedburgh
- Kelso
- St Boswells

Key recommendations:

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| Changes to DRT Services | <p>Jedburgh</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New Service - New DRT service between Hawick, Jedburgh, Selkirk and St Boswells, all villages within area bounded by A68, A698, A699 and A7 and Borders General Hospital ▪ New Service - DRT many-to-few (lollipop) Taxibus serving Jedburgh <p>Kelso - review of town services by SBC underway, with new Taxibus services being considered as part of the solution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Service 902 (SBC) - Replaced by PINGO option for northern part of route, and/or by new "lollipop" DRT/Taxibus service focussed on Kelso, operating 2 days/week. <p>St Boswells – many-to-many "Cheviot/Teviot" service, as above</p> |
| Changes to Town Services | <p>All Kelso Town and Hinterland services (80, 81, 81A, 85, 902 and 983) being considered by SBC in comprehensive review of Kelso town services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services 80/81/81A (Peter Hogg) – Extend routes to include areas served by 983 service (Springwood & Sprouston) and extend operations until 18:30 • Service 85 (SBC) - Withdrawal of 85 service, replaced by Pingo option for northern part of route, and/or by new "lollipop" DRT/Taxibus service focussed on Kelso, operating 2 days/week |
| Changes to Town Hinterland Services | <p>Review of Kelso town services by SBC underway, to include 85 & 902 services, seeking to retain similar (or higher) levels of service and with more efficient operation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Services 80/81/81A (Peter Hogg) – Extend routes to include areas served by 983 service (Springwood & Sprouston) and extend operations until 18:30 • Service 85 (SBC) - Withdrawal of 85 service, replaced by Pingo option for northern part of route, and/or by new "lollipop" DRT/Taxibus service focussed on Kelso, operating 2 days/week |
| Changes to Inter-urban Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service 20 (Peter Hogg) – Retain and incorporate Service 21, Operator to focus on links between Hawick, Jedburgh and Howdenburn providing connections to the Jed Campus ▪ Service 86 - Replace, acts as a placing journey for Kelso services. ▪ Service 131 - (Peter Hogg) – Retain ▪ Service 68 (Borders Buses) - Service to form part of a 15-minute frequency between Galashiels and BGH, Explore commercial opportunities with operator. |
| Changes to Long Distance Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SBC to consider options to improve 51 service and reduce subsidy requirement, possibly operating peak services as X51 ▪ Service 51 (Borders Buses) – Service to form part of a 15 minute frequency between Galashiels and BGH also serving Edinburgh Royal Infirmary. |
| Potential service reductions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Service 21 (Peter Hogg) – incorporate into service 20 ▪ 85, 902 and 983 being considered by SBC in comprehensive review of Kelso town services ▪ Service 86 – Acts as a placing journey. To be withdrawn, route can be served by 67 service ▪ Service 902 (SBC) - Withdrawal of 902 service, replaced by new "lollipop" DRT/Taxibus service focussed on Kelso, operating 2 days/week ▪ Service 910 (SBC) - Withdrawal of 983 service, replaced by extended 80, 81 or 81A service, and/or revised Town Service |
| Key infrastructure / non-service options | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Improve facilities at key interchange points: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Jedburgh Bus Station |

Scottish Borders Bus Network Review – Summary of Recommendations

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Horsemarket and Woodmarket, Kelso - St Boswells Bus Stance ▪ Key transport corridors would benefit from a data review to identify Active Travel linkages to support improved and safer connections for passengers, linking with key communities and employment zones, while increasing the potential for 'bike on bus' usage. |
| Marketing | Marketing of new services (including Taxibus and new Pingo-style DRT service) and improved Town Services could derive patronage benefits identified earlier in this report. |
| Key benefits / outcomes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New DRT services within Jedburgh and to/from rural communities to/from Hawick, Jedburgh, Selkirk, St Boswells and BGH ▪ New Taxibus services more cost effective - only operate when pre-booked and will offer more journey opportunities ▪ Kelso Town Services to be revised, with simpler passenger offering and extended hours ▪ More efficient use of subsidy to maximise passenger benefits ▪ <i>All recommendations will be subject to tender return and delivery within current budget.</i> |

Recommendations Summary: Eildon Area

Main towns:

- Galashiels
- Melrose
- Selkirk

Key recommendations:

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| Changes to DRT Services | <p>Selkirk</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Introduce new many-to-many (Pingo-style) "Cheviot/Teviot" service operating 7 days/week in rural area bounded by Hawick, Jedburgh, Selkirk and St Boswells, to/from rural communities and towns, and to/from Borders General Hospital ▪ Potential for new Taxibus services (operating 3 days/week) to replace 911 & 912 services, once review of 73 complete |
| Changes to Town Services | <p>Improvements recommended to town services with higher frequency and potentially some extended operating hours. SBC reviewing 54 and 74 services, seeking to retain similar (or higher) levels of service and with more efficient operation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service 54 (Borders Buses) – Incorporate Netherdale into the service and consider an hourly evening service through to 22:30 • Service 70 (Borders Buses) – Discuss with operator potential to incorporate Melrose Gait and replace service 74 • Service 74 (Borders Buses) – Replace with service 70 for Melrose Gait, Netherdale to be included in new 54 service. |
| Changes to Town Hinterland Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Service 73 (Borders Buses) – Discuss with operator utilising the 73 as a Selkirk town service connecting with the X95. ▪ Review of 54 and 74 services (see Town Service section) may result in slight change of route for 964 service. |
| Changes to Inter-urban Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Core Network (Borders Buses) Services 51, 60, 67 and 68 – retain and create a 15 minute frequency into the BGH serving Langlee and Tweedbank and improving connections to Lauder and the Royal Infirmary ▪ Service 61 (Borders Buses) – Incorporate into the 51 service improving Lauder links ▪ Service 964 (SBC) – Retain ▪ Service 86 (SBC) – Acts as a placing journey. To be withdrawn, route can be served by 67 service ▪ Service 68 – SBC to discuss with operator whether there is potential for some commercial operation. |
| Changes to Long Distance Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ SBC to consider options to improve 51 service and reduce subsidy requirement, possibly operating peak services as X51 ▪ SBC studying options for revising 60 route to serve Berwickshire coastal villages if other coastal services withdrawn (see Berwickshire area summary) ▪ SBC to review potential for some 67 services to operate commercially, reducing subsidy requirement ▪ Service X62 (Borders Buses) – Commercial Service ▪ Service X95 (Borders Buses) – Commercial Service |
| Potential service reductions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Potential for 911 & 912 services to be replaced by new Taxibus services (operating 3 days/week) ▪ Service 74 – Explore replacing with 70 for Melrose Gait and 54 for Netherdale, discuss with operator |
| Key infrastructure / non-service options | <p>Improve facilities at key interchange points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Melrose Market Square ▪ Selkirk Market Square <p>Key transport corridors would benefit from a data review to identify Active Travel linkages to support improved and safer connections for passengers, linking with key communities and employment zones, while increasing the potential for 'bike on bus' usage.</p> |
| Marketing | <p>Marketing of new DRT services and improved Town services could derive patronage benefits identified earlier in this report.</p> |

Scottish Borders Bus Network Review – Summary of Recommendations

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| Key benefits / outcomes | <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ New DRT Taxibus services to/from rural communities to/from Hawick, Jedburgh, Selkirk, St Boswells and BGH▪ New Taxibus services more cost-effective - only operates when pre-booked and with greater choice of journey times▪ Review of 54, 73 & 74 services should result in improved passenger offer in Galashiels and Selkirk, and better use of resources▪ More efficient use of subsidy to maximise passenger benefits▪ <i>All recommendations will be subject to tender return and delivery within current budget.</i> |
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Recommendations Summary: Teviot and Liddesdale Area

Main towns:

- Hawick
- Newcastleton

Key recommendations:

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| Changes to DRT Services | <p>Hawick</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New DRT Service - DRT many-to-many serving Hawick / Jedburgh / Selkirk / St Boswells, College campus, Bowhill House, Dryburgh Abbey and Borders General Hospital ▪ Service 910 (SBC) – Withdrawal of 910 service, replaced by new "lollipop" DRT/Taxibus service focussed on Hawick, operating 5 days/week. ▪ Service 911 (SBC) - New "lollipop" DRT/Taxibus service focussed on Selkirk, operating 3 days/week ▪ Service 912 (SBC) - New "lollipop" DRT/Taxibus service focussed on Selkirk, operating 3 days/week <p>Introduce new Hawick / Newcastleton Taxibus to replace 128 service</p> |
| Changes to Town Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hawick Town Services (SBC) - Replace existing 46, 47, 48 & 49 services with a revision of H1 and H2 routes to serve key points on 46 - 49 routes. Some stops already served by existing H1/H2, 20 and other services. ▪ HTS (Borders Buses) - Extend route to replace 46 - 49 and extend services until beyond 18:30. ▪ HTS Sundays (Peter Hogg) – No Changes Proposed |
| Changes to Town Hinterland Services | <p>New "Cheviot/Teviot" DRT service (see DRT section)</p> |
| Changes to Inter-urban Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Service 20 - (Peter Hogg) – Retain and incorporate Service 21, Operator to focus on links between Hawick, Jedburgh and Howdenburn ▪ Service 128 - Replaced by new "lollipop" DRT/Taxibus service focussed on Hawick. ▪ Service 127/127a (Telfords) - No changes proposed |
| Changes to Long Distance Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SBC to review potential for some 67 services to operate commercially, reducing subsidy requirement • X95 (Borders Buses) – No Change Proposed although consideration to be given to improved connections to the BGH. |
| Potential service reductions | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 46, 47, 48 & 49 services under review (see Town Service section) ▪ 128, 910 & 911 services to be replaced by new Taxibus services |
| Key infrastructure / non-service options | <p>Improve facilities at key interchange points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Hawick, Mart Street <p>Key transport corridors would benefit from a data review to identify Active Travel linkages to support improved and safer connections for passengers, linking with key communities and employment zones, while increasing the potential for 'bike on bus usage.</p> |
| Marketing | <p>Marketing of new services (including new Taxibus services and Pingo-style service) and significant service changes could derive patronage benefits identified earlier in this report.</p> |
| Key benefits / outcomes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Consolidation of coastal services to deliver better value for public subsidy and support the viability of commercial services ▪ New Taxibus service more cost-effective, only operates when pre-booked and may offer more journey opportunities ▪ Building on success of Pingo and maximising benefits ▪ More efficient use of subsidy to maximise passenger benefits ▪ <i>All recommendations will be subject to tender return and delivery within current budget.</i> |

Recommendations Summary: Tweeddale Area

Main towns:

- Peebles

Key recommendations:

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| Changes to DRT Services | Potential for new Taxibus service to serve communities to west of Peebles which may not be served by new service operating between Broughton – Peebles – West Linton, combining 91 and 93. |
| Changes to Town Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service 90a/90b (Borders Buses) - Retain, extending services into the early evening, consider a 30 minute frequency beyond 18:30. |
| Changes to Town Hinterland Services | Potential new Taxibus service to west of Peebles (see DRT section) |
| Changes to Inter-urban Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service 91 (Borders Buses) – Improving the connections between the 91 and Stuarts 191 service and Borders Buses X62. Consider working with SPT and Stuarts coaches to extend the 191 through to Peebles. • Service 93 (Borders Buses) – Consider a loop service serving Peebles, Biggar and West Linton. • |
| Changes to Long Distance Services | No changes proposed to either 100/101/102 service (managed by Dumfries & Galloway Council) or X62 (commercial service) |
| Potential service reductions | |
| Key infrastructure / non-service options | <p>Improve facilities at key interchange points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Peebles Eastgate <p>Key transport corridors would benefit from a data review to identify Active Travel linkages to support improved and safer connections for passengers, linking with key communities and employment zones, while increasing the potential for 'bike on bus' usage.</p> |
| Marketing | Marketing of new fixed route and DRT services and improved Town Services could derive patronage benefits identified earlier in this report. |
| Key benefits / outcomes | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ New Taxibus services more cost effective- only operate when pre-booked and may offer more journey opportunities ▪ Earlier start and/or later finish for Town Services would improve passenger offer and be consistent with other larger towns ▪ More efficient use of subsidy to maximise passenger benefits ▪ <i>All recommendations will be subject to tender return and delivery within current budget.</i> |

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