



## Buchan Dial-a-Community Bus

Unit 7&8 Community Service Centre  
Market Street, Maud, Peterhead  
AB42 4NH  
Tel: 01771 619191



### SCOTS conference May 2011

Pre-presentation; a film created by a PHD student Rob Craig.

All too in our daily jobs we speak in strategic terms or in ways that de-humanise the issues. It's not that we don't care... just that we get caught up in the logistics..

Rob came to DACB with a vision to show the "human" side of transport...to show that ...vehicles, or roads, or infrastructure... are all vital but the end product is not to "provide transport, or to move people"...it's to **enable people to live their lives**. That simple.

I think that he's managed to do that through this film.

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Dial-a-Community Bus is a charity based out in Maud Aberdeenshire.

For the last 11 years we have covered the Buchan area, providing community transport services for those who cannot access conventional transport and in 2010 we expanded our operations in to Aberdeen city with the addition of 3 S19 contracts for Aberdeen City council.

We currently provide thousands of passenger journeys per year, taking people to shops, patient appointments, visiting, youth services, school transport job training etc.

We also have a social Enterprise business; DAB Plus which runs a variety of small businesses from a private hire taxi to our Training academy to private bus hire.

In 2000 we had £36 in our bank account and a grant of £92,000 to buy two buses, employ a f/t driver and a coordinator for 15 hours a week.

11 years later; the two organisations have a joint turnover of over £250k and a range of services.

#### Questions;

- What has worked for us and what hasn't?
- Does CT ALWAYS work?
- Do we help communities and do we add value to the region?
- Where the third Sector can help the Local Authorities achieve their outcomes and how Local authorities/Statutory organisations can help in that.

#### What has worked and what hasn't?

The CT provision we have has worked, and for the most part it's worked well.

Our great strength is our connection with the community and the ownership of DACB BY the local community. That independence means that we do what is necessary, we see what's needed, the clients tell us what they want...and, where possible we make it happen.

The clients and the community run DACB, not the other way round.

What we've learned is that if the community doesn't want a service, or sees "green cheese" and doesn't actually NEED a service but want it cos a neighbouring village has it....it's a complete waste of time and effort putting it on.

Buchan Dial-a-Community Bus is a company limited by guarantee and is recognised as a Scottish Charity.  
Company no; 216225 Scottish Charity no; SC 031183.



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### Does CT always work?

No!

Like I just said; if the community doesn't want the service...no matter what it is... it won't work.

It's also not the right thing all the time.

One pilot programme we're running at the moment is to provide the use of our private hire taxi in an area where there's no accessible transport. There are three possible outcomes for it; we could prove there is a need for CT, or a need for us to keep the accessible private hire taxi there, OR we could prove a business case for a local taxi operator to replace a vehicle with an accessible taxi.

We don't know how it will work, but we won't just assume that it always SHOULD be CT.

### Do we add value?

Absolutely.

Both organisations employ 16 people in various guises; f/t, p/t or ad hoc.

Over the years we have taken on people who for various reasons are fairly vulnerable, we have had a pretty good success rate here and at least one person has left us for better employment opportunities.

We also have 50+ volunteers who work with us in many different ways...we try and employ from our volunteer base if we can; but we also provide a lot of training which is useful for our volunteers in their "normal" lives...therefore expanding their own abilities and skills.

We actively promote local purchasing;

The Dial-a-Bus shopping service timetables clients to go to local cafes, farm shops and other local services. All our shopping is done locally as much as we can; bus servicing at the local council depot, lunches for our training classes are purchased from the local community cafe and village shop...even the sign writing for the buses is done locally.

We would suggest that we put far more into the immediate local economy than we take out through a trip to Aberdeen. And even then...the money is still in the region...giving jobs to people who might just commute from the rural areas.

We also use other local social enterprises where we can, therefore encouraging the growth and sustainability of other 3<sup>rd</sup> sector organisations. For instance, our Social Return on Investment was completed by the Buchan Development Partnership; a local community development group, our computer training is done by a local IT charity BiTES. And Foyer Graphics have worked with us for some printing services we needed.

On the subject of the Social Return on Investment; it is a tool which basically puts a financial value on the organisations importance to the local community economy. It's a difficult project to undertake and a lot of work but we evaluated a couple of our core services last year and discovered that every £ put in creates £3.03 in the local economy. Pretty good value for money.

We feel that the regional economy will grow more with the growth of our Social Enterprise.

Our Training Academy offers a variety of training programmes for the passenger transport industry and we aim to target those people who we call the "grey" market. Not those who work for the large commercial operators...but the individuals who work for themselves, who may be p/t workers on an ad hoc basis...and who face a tough time being able to afford good training.

We have to make a profit because the charity is going to become more and more dependent on that profit...but at the same time our ethos is to help people. And by offering affordable training to those who need it most, we will increase the skill levels of the local workforce and hopefully encourage more employment.

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The new contracts we have, especially those in Aberdeen City, gives us a whole new resource to work with....we can offer groups in the city who struggle with transport due to high costs etc access to affordable accessible transport services; for instance community groups may be able to access the minibuses at nights/weekends etc. While this is perhaps not creating wealth, it is saving it....in these frugal days we need to share resources and make every pound shilling and penny stretch as far as we can.

We already work with a range of private and statutory partners; from both Aberdeen City and Shire councils who give us a great deal of help and support, to Grampian Police who support us with inputs and advice...and for whom, in turn, we create community placements for the police cadets. We work with companies like the group who provide our HR support, and our accountant... both of whom have saved us time, effort and probably a great deal of money over the last years or so!

The word "value" in this context is not just about monetary value though....it's about organisational wealth; knowledge, skills, sustainability, growth, and security. Local Authorities can help organizations like DACB...and vice versa.... without spending a whole heap of money.

And don't forget; statutory organisations gain from this too...there is much to learn from the 3<sup>rd</sup> sector. We are frugal to the point of miserliness.... what we can do with a wee bit of money defies belief on occasion.... this is the sector that CAN get blood out of a stone!

The voluntary/3<sup>rd</sup> sector are an incredibly innovative bunch of people. We have a whole different view on many issues, we embrace diversity and equality like no other sector, and we can teach as well as learn.

### **Where can the third Sector go in the Future and where can the council help?**

Over the years DACB has been very responsive to the ever changing needs of society and of our community. That's what makes us special. And Aberdeenshire Council has recognised that. We see a need, or an opportunity and we figure a way to fulfil it.

Money is vital and we would plead for your support for those CT groups who need a wee bit of funding, no matter where in the country they are.

But, just as vital is support. Whether that's just a friendly ear, advice and a shoulder occasionally. Or some help with trying to take the step to contracting. It's all helpful beyond belief. Last year when DACB achieved some school run contracts with Aberdeenshire Council and Social works contracts with the city, without the support of both PTUs we would probably struggled badly. With their help we've learned a lot and I hope that as we grow we can be of more support and help to both councils.

A little bit of help, advice and support...partnership in other words, has enabled us to grow from a dependent charity to a fully fledged Social enterprise who can be an active and fully integrated partner to the councils.

The Third Sector / the Social Enterprise Sector...whatever you want to label us....won't stop. We are probably the most passionate bunch of people I've ever met and my advice to you is ...let us do what we're here to do. Help us, support us...and it'll pay you back in dividends.

Thank you.

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