

## NEWCASTLETON COMMUNITY COUNCIL

### Response to SBC bus survey – additional comments, Dec 2022

- Online only, no facility to provide copies for community input
- Urban centric without any regard for rural access/services or need
- Precursor to making further cuts/changes to service?
- Expectation of widening the PINGO trial in Berwickshire - a DRT option
  - is the cost of this PINGO service known?
  - even if it does work well is it sustainable or how green is it?
  - For rural communities such as Newcastleton we see set timetables for local bus services as hard to beat. DRT might look attractive but it presents real practical issues:
    - works well in a town or over shorter distances as many journeys can be booked and completed over a short period of time but, should a passenger want to go to Carlisle or Hawick this is the best part of two hours without any wait time for maybe one person/one return journey.
    - DRT for Newcastleton doesn't make sense financially - serious concerns over the longer-term because usage would be low and there would be no defence to culling it when the funding ran out and we would be left with nothing and no alternative public transport service.
    - Not only that but the community could potentially lose one of its core businesses which has additional financial implications to the economic sustainability of local businesses.
- NDCC see the retention of the 127A bus service to Carlisle in a structured format continuing to operate to a pre-set timetable, without it the community would suffer very badly if this service was to cease altogether or be replaced by DRT.
- Also, a set timetable allows passengers in both Dumfries and Galloway and Cumbria to also use the 127A service which brings in revenue and helps reduce costs to SBC.
- In the case of the 128 service to Hawick whilst running costs are lower than Carlisle usage is also lower, however it is an essential link for appointments, education and onward travel and we stress these points again.
- The problem any bus operator has is once a bus and a driver(s) are employed many of the costs are already incurred, cutting out bits of bus services here and there to try and save money simply doesn't work, **effective utilisation** is the key to cost effective operation.
- Has investing and increasing usage by growing sectors like green tourism been investigated in relevant locations. Wider marketing and key destination drop off on route or with slight variations could attract new users and help to maintain existing services?
- NDCC welcome the opportunity to discuss any changes constructively with SBC and their partners but this discussion also needs to extend to include D&G who may have a part to play in any changes they are making the same noises about funding and savings.
- UK Gov initiative of capped fares – has this been considered to increase usage?