

Rural Visitor Bus Services: What Works?

Annexe 2: Case studies

This document accompanies the report: *Rural Visitor Bus Services: What Works?*

Case studies will be added as they become available

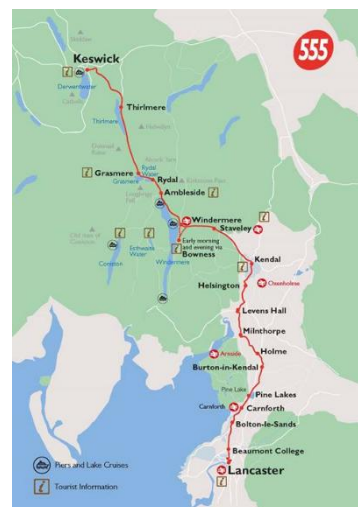
Service(s)	Location	Tour / experience / open-top	Rambler / Explorer	To specific attraction	Express serving visitor areas	Local bus serving visitor areas	Urban - rural connection	Network
<u>555</u>	Lake District	1				5	6	7
<u>Wasdale Explorer</u>	Lake District		2					
<u>Shropshire Hills Shuttle</u>	Shropshire		2					
<u>Blenheim Shuttle</u>	Oxfordshire			3				
<u>Sherpa</u>	Eryri (Snowdonia)		2	3				
<u>Ullswater / SITU</u>			2			5		
<u>Dalesbus</u>	Yorkshire		2			5	6	7
<u>Scottish Citylink</u>	Scotland				4			7
<u>Trossachs Explorer</u>	Scotland		2					
To follow...								
Jurassic Coaster	Dorset	1				5		7
New Forest Tour	New Forest	1						

555 LAKES CONNECTION

1 5 6 7

With near-cult like status, the 100-year old 555 links towns and villages along the core spine route of the Lake District.

It provides access to dozens of walks and attractions – or just top-deck panoramic views of the world-class landscape. It has its own book plus a beer named after it!



SUMMARY

- ✓ Links villages and attractions and six lakes along the main Lake District spine, enabling bus-based days out for visitors and essential access for residents.
- ✓ Runs up to 27 times per day each way from 05:30 – 23:00 in summer (16 on Sundays & BHs); 23 services run to/from Kendal-Lancaster including 7 “fast” (via M6)
Runs 23 times per day in winter (14 on Sundays & BHs) from Kendal to Keswick.
- ✓ Links to other services in Kendal (Barrow etc), Windermere (rail), Ambleside (Langdale, Ullswater, Coniston) and Keswick (Penrith, Carlisle, Workington)
- ✓ Operated commercially by Stagecoach (1/27 services supported by Westmorland & Furness Council)
- ✓ The service celebrated its centenary in September 2025¹
- ✓ “In 2023, the operator invested £3 million in [a fleet of Alexander Dennis Enviro400 double-deckers](#) for route 555. Those buses are to a high specification and include tables with wireless charging, and enhanced legroom” plus “next stop” announcements.



Dedicated fleet of branded double deckers with USB charging, next stop announcements and tables on upper deck; operated commercially by Stagecoach



Keswick - Grasmere - Ambleside - Windermere - Kendal (30mi) – Lancaster (+24mi)



Operates 27 times per day from 05:30-23:00 (summer) (23 to Lancaster, 7 “fast” along M6), **XX** in winter from **XXX to XXX**



<https://scenicbuses.co.uk/routes/stagecoach-cumbria-lakes-connection-555/>
<https://www.visitlakedistrict.com/plan-your-visit/travel/stagecoach-555-p1212561>

¹ <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/articles/cl147d3409o>

ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

- Established in 1925; significant changes in both bus industry and tourism in 100 years, but the 555 has largely stayed the same.
- Current service levels are best ever: up to 27 returns/day now c.f. 24 in 1978 (only 5 on Sundays)
- There was a significant investment (£3m) in 2016 in a dedicated branded fleet of 9 double deckers – leather seats, USB charging at every seat, next stop announcements; led to a 10% increase in ridership.
- Ticket pass prices (see left from 1978) similar or cheaper new compared to 1978.
- The early days of the £2 flat fare saw several “standing room only” departures.

tour Cumbria ticket
7 whole days of unlimited travel !
COMMENCING 0845 HOURS DAILY
fares
Adult £4.95 Child £3.30

These fares are liable to alteration subject to Traffic Commissioners approval. Tickets are valid for unlimited travel on Ribble and Cumberland ordinary services within Cumbria (except Ribblesdale & 625 - Ulverston-Dalton-Barrow), Ribble Services 654, 555 & 556 northwards from Lancaster from 0845 hours daily, and on certain day and half-day excursions operating from Ambleside, Grange, Gretna, Penrith and Windermere. Get the fully descriptive leaflet and purchase your ticket now at any

RIBBLE » or CUMBERLAND »
TRAVEL OFFICE
OR WRITE

Ribble Motor Services Ltd.,
Frenchwood Avenue, Preston
PR1 4LL.

Cumberland Motor Services Ltd.,
Tangier Street, Whitehaven
CA2 9PF.

LOCAL AGENTS AT: Bowness-on-Windermere, Carnforth, Cockermouth, Flockburgh, Grange-over-Sands, Kendal, and Windermere.

Lakeland can be yours for a day for £2.50

Enquire at any Ribble office about the
‘FAMILY TRAVELLER TICKETS’ (Fares liable to alteration)
A full day out for the Family—exceptional value for money

WHO USES THE SERVICES?

- The 555 is said to be a proper “omnibus” - used by a wide range of people; it demonstrates the mutual benefits between different demands – of visitor/residents and leisure/utility travel as it caters well for all.
- On any day, it is typical to see overseas visitors and UK visitors of a wide range of ages sharing the bus with local adults and younger people going to work or college.
- Children pester parents – include many who would not normally take a bus - to get the 555 (and the 599 open-top) so that they can go on the top deck.

MARKETING, PROMOTION, INTEGRATION & TICKETING

- The 555 is branded as “Lakes Connection”, with consistent branding across bus and all media.
- It is a key part of the seasonal “The Lakes by Bus” summer guide of 16 services.
- The bus is a key part of destination marketing such as that by Visit Lake District, Cumbria² and the Lake District National Park³.
- There is a long history of knowledge and promotion of walks from the 555 including by Stagecoach⁴, other tourism websites⁵ and a dedicated book⁶
- A special 555 Blonde Ale was launched to celebrate its centenary, with tie-in “Lakes Ale Trail” linking pubs serving the ale along the 555 route⁷

WHAT IF?...

Those involved in the service consider the following to be desirable:

- Tackle traffic congestion.
Recovery time is already built in to timetables, but reduced congestion would provide both faster journeys and more reliable journey times
- Focus on place-based access design – to create better overall “mobility landscape” for bus services to fit
- “Signs and paint” – upgrading the quality of bus stop / waiting area infrastructure and design.

Take a journey along the 555

Celebrating a century since the origins of the ‘555’, which is now our most popular bus route through the heart of the Lake District, Bowness Bay Brewery have launched the **555 Blonde Ale**. Stocked in 5 specially selected venues along the route of the iconic 555 journey from Kendal to Keswick, why not grab your friends and family in order to take a trip on arguably Britain’s most scenic bus route and stop off at one of these chosen establishments to sample a taste for yourself.

555 is a smooth and refreshing golden ale, perfectly balanced with subtle floral and fruity hints.

Its delicate notes create a delightful drinking experience, making it a true thirst-quencher for any occasion.

Crafted with care, it captures the essence of quality and the unique flavour of the Lake District in every sip.

555 BLONDE ALE
4.2% abv

The Lakes Ale Trail:

- The Waterfront Pub, Bowness
- Badger Bar, Rydal
- Temperance Bar, Ambleside
- The Crafty Bus, Windermere
- The Barrel House, Kendal

² <https://www.visitlakedistrict.com/plan-your-visit/travel/stagecoach-555-p1212561>

³ <https://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/visiting/plan-your-visit/getting-to-the-lake-district#buses>

⁴ 10 of the best walks from the 555; <https://www.stagecoachbus.com/news/cumbria-and-north-lancashire/2024/june/10-of-the-best-walks-from-the-555>

⁵ Such as <https://weareintro.co.uk/2024/07/09/10-of-the-best-walks-from-the-uks-most-scenic-bus-route/>

⁶ Swain, R. 2001 *55 555 Walks*, Yan Press, ISBN 0954071301

⁷ <https://www.robinsonsbrewery.com/latest/555-bus-route-lakes-ale-trail/>

WASDALE EXPLORER

- 2** Free seasonal shuttle to popular Wasdale Head “Britain’s Favourite View” from rail station & pop-up P&R; developed via local citizen’s panel; tendered via National Park Authority. Means otherwise remote Wasdale is accessible for people without a car and service of quality to tempt people to leave their car behind – easing congestion and demand for parking



Free Wasdale Explorer

18 April – 21 Sept 2025

Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays only



SUMMARY

- ✓ Provides access to the popular Wasdale valley (Lake District) – recently voted as Britain’s Favourite View⁸
- ✓ Service developed with the local community alongside other measures to tackle excessive visitor traffic and parking pressure in a popular and well-known part of the Lake District
- ✓ Provides free, car-free access at busy times to Wasdale
- ✓ Links Wasdale from rail station (Ravenglass – for Eskdale) plus local villages and accommodation, including pop-up Park & Ride (Nether Wasdale)



22 seater bus – best suited to small roads and levels of demand; Contracted to Reays Coaches



Ravenglass – Muncaster Castle – Gosforth – Nether Wasdale (P&R) – Wasdale Head; c. 17 miles 1-way



Operates on weekends & bank holidays from April to September (28 days)

4 full routes / day, 10 between Nether Wasdale & Wasdale Head



<https://www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/visiting/plan-your-visit/getting-to-the-lake-district/wasdale-shuttlebus>

Monitoring exists – available via the LDNPA

Free!

Wasdale Explorer

18 April – 21 September 2025
Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays

It has been funded through the Strategic Visitor Management Group, including contributions from LDNP, NT and Cumberland Council

Timetable

	0845	1045	1225	1355					
Ravenglass, village car park, bus shelter									
Muncaster Castle, car park entrance	0900	1100	1230	1400					
Gosforth, Petton Place	0900	1100	1240	1410					
Nether Wasdale, village car park	0900	1020	1120	1220	1300	1430	1450	1550	1630
Wasdale Head, Green	0910	1010	1110	1210	1310	1500	1520	1620	1700
Wasdale Head, Green	0950	1050	1150	1250	1330	1500	1520	1620	1700
Nether Wasdale, village car park	1020	1120	1220	1320	1400	1530	1550	1650	1730
Gosforth, Petton Place	1140		1340					1710	1910
Muncaster Castle, car park entrance	1130		1330					1720	1920
Ravenglass, village car park, bus shelter	1155		1355					1725	1925

Bus route

Legend: camping, toilets, refreshments, bike hire, station, parking for shuttlebus

The bus will pick up anywhere on the route where it is safe to do so. Well behaved dogs are allowed, not on the seats!

www.lakedistrict.gov.uk/wasdaleshuttle

⁸ <https://www.discoveringbritain.org/activities/north-west-england/viewpoints/wasdale-viewpoint.html>

ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

- Established in August 2021 response to covid post-lockdown surge in domestic visits, but in the context of long-standing problems of car congestion in the Wasdale valley and lack of bus service. In summer 2021, it was a turn-up-and-go 16-seater shuttle from the Nether Wasdale pop-up P&R to Wasdale head (c. 5 miles)
- The Strategic Visitor Management Group⁹ led the initial development, with capacity from & contracts with the LDNPA.
- In 2021, a citizen's panel was established¹⁰ which was instrumental in the subsequent development of the service – with LDNPA staff capacity. This provided a deeper sense of local ownership of the service.
- Key milestones:
 - 2015: Clearway designated on Wasdale road – limiting road-side car parking
 - 2021: Free seasonal 16-seater turn-up-and-go shuttle established between a pop-up P&R at Nether Wasdale – Wasdale Head (5.5 miles); timetabled in 2022
 - 2023: route extended to Ravenglass (rail station connection) with two 22-seater buses used; 10 Wasdale Head – Nether Wasdale return services + 4 extended to Ravenglass per day in season
 - 124 passengers / day in 2024 season
- Service tendered by LDNPA

WHO USES THE SERVICES?

- Walkers (77%) – using it either to enable 1-way walk or to access walks; people having a day out / for the view
- 20% are local residents (mainly for leisure), 69% from outside Cumbria
- Staying visitor use it in both directions – access *from* and *to* Wasdale
- 68% had access to a car that day but chose not to use it

MARKETING, PROMOTION, INTEGRATION & TICKETING

- Bus integrated with rail services at Ravenglass; the route passes accommodation & attractions and linked to seasonal pop-up P&R
- Marketing materials (Facebook-ready copy, email footers, posters etc) made freely available. Web & social media via SVMG⁹ partners. Widespread leaflet distribution. On-the-ground people (e.g. rangers) and preparation was seen as “vital”. Buses branded with removable (magnetic) wraps. Logo designed by local primary school. Local businesses have become proactive in promoting the service to their customers in person and digitally.
- Users cited (in order) the main source of information as personal recommendation, Internet, leaflet, signs/posters and social media
- Reasons for using the service were (in order) less stress, parking difficulties, cheaper, environmental issues, better experience

WHAT IF?...

Those involved in the service consider the following to be desirable:

1. Community more deeply involved in running the service
2. Longer season, operating every day in season and earlier/later in the day
3. Bespoke vehicles – wheelchair accessible, branded, electric

⁹ Established to manage post-lockdown visitor surges, comprising the Lake District National Park Authority, Westmorland & Furness Council, Cumberland Council, Cumbria Tourism and National Trust

¹⁰ Led by Action with Communities in Cumbria with assistance from Shared Future to address the main question “How do we get the best out of our visitors in Wasdale, so we thrive as a community?”;
<https://www.cumbriaaction.org.uk/what-we-do/wasdale-citizens-panel>

4. Greater resource for marketing; resource to market further afield (e.f. Manchester rail stations); resource for staff capacity & more holistic approach to management
5. Bus included as part of area-wide guest pass
6. More stable year-on-year funding – so that service can be relied upon when visitors are planning future visits; franchising not seen as relevant to this service.
7. Further restrict car access; car parking is still free in the valley

USER COMMENTS

The following are comments from users. They are included here unedited as together they give a real richness to how users view the service

As we are a big party, it saved us taking multiple cars; Car broke down and didn't want it to ruin the weekend plans; Car in the garage but we will use this service again it's brilliant so far; If there is a service offered to support people then it makes sense to us to use it. We had to confirm departure times so we can get home via shuttle bus; It is always good/trial to use services which are offered as it helps everyone; It was much more convenient for us and would benefit for parking if on a busy day; We came for food and drinks (alcohol); We got told about it in the hostel so thought we'd use the service as didn't know where we were going so it's helped us so far; We were getting tickets for the castle and gardens anyway so planned our route;

Brilliant. Hope it stays; Fantastic, a little more information would have been good but we made it on and have asked when we can return; Friendly and convenient for us as a family; Friendly service, we hope it continues however, more times would be more beneficial; Great, really helped us as we weren't going to come here today if we hadn't seen the signs for the shuttle bus and came along; Great, reliable, friendly; Great. Just advertise it more; If there was later option for departure from Wasdale that would be beneficial as your day hiking doesn't always go to plan. If we were late we would potentially miss it; Very friendly service, driver explained destinations and offered advice – plenty of knowledge of the area and very helpful, plus bus was on time

SHROPSHIRE HILLS SHUTTLE

2

Summer weekend shuttle – a long-standing part of the visitor proposition to the Long Mynd, Stiperstones and Carding Valley of the Shropshire Hills National Landscape. Equally popular with visitors and residents for leisure access, days out and enabling 1-way walks. Excellent, trusting relationship with operator.



SUMMARY

- ✓ Managed by Shropshire Hills National Landscape Team and funded by Shropshire Council with support from [Visit Shropshire Hills](#), [Church Stretton Town Council](#), National Trust and Natural England.
- ✓ Contracted to Boultons Coaches; fares held by SHNL
- ✓ Has dedicated [Shuttle bus supporter scheme](#)
- ✓ Designed and used for leisure access – roughly 50:50 local residents: visitors
- ✓ Range of ticket types; season pass popular with residents
- ✓ On-bus volunteer conductor / guide / welcome
- ✓ Ridership significantly increased in 2025



16 seater bus (19 when catering for high demand); Contracted to Boulton's Coaches



Church Stretton – Carding Mill Valley – Stiperstones c. 10 miles 1-way



Operates on weekends & bank holidays from May to late September (28 days)
4 routes / day



<https://www.shropshirehills-nl.org.uk/explore-and-enjoy/the-great-outdoors/shropshire-hills-shuttle-bus>

“The bus climbs the Long Mynd with its panoramic views of the hills from Snowdonia in the north to the Malvern Hills in the southeast. The view from the bus is exceptional, and not without thrills, with sheer drops on both sides of the road. From the Mynd, the bus descends to Ratlinghope, passing the popular Bridges Country Pub and Bridges Youth Hostel. From here it climbs again to pass the jagged tors and purple heather of the Stiperstones National Nature Reserve and the Bog, with its unique community run visitor centre in the restored Victorian school. From here it's a winding road that threads along the edge of the Stiperstones, passing the Stiperstones Inn, famed locally for its excellent Sunday lunches. The route provides exceptional opportunities for walking, wildlife watching, exploring local history and site seeing. Its last stop brings you into Carding Mill Valley one of the National Trust's most popular and welcoming places. As you would expect, it has an excellent tearoom!”

ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

- Established in early 2000; expanded to be part of 5 supported services via Transport for Everyone in South Shropshire (dissolved 2010)
- 2 buses served the route until 2020, but single bus on 2-hourly frequency post-covid

WHO USES THE SERVICES?

- Understood to be about 50:50 residents and visitors
- Mainly for leisure purposes – sightseeing or accessing walks and sites and enabling 1-way walks
- Some residents use the shuttle to access Church Stretton for shopping & services

MARKETING, PROMOTION, INTEGRATION & TICKETING

- Marketing basic (due to lack of resource) but effective: flyers, posters, timetables paper & online
- Presented as visitor proposition i.e. walks, days out etc
 - <https://www.shropshirehills-nl.org.uk/explore-and-enjoy/the-great-outdoors/shropshire-hills-shuttle-bus>
 - <https://www.visitshropshirehills.co.uk/things-to-do/shropshire/church-stretton/activities/shropshire-hills-shuttle-buses/>
 - <https://www.goodjourney.org.uk/attractions/carding-mill-valley/>
- Various ticket deals: singles, day rover (hop on/off), Scenic tour, season ticket; Children free
- On-bus volunteer conductor / guide / welcomer very popular
- Facebook marketing in 2025
- Ridership increase in 2025 result of many factors: simplified service, prices held, increase to 5 journeys/day, last bus later & larger, contactless ticketing, free for children, Facebook; good weather, staycation/short break trend.

WHAT IF?...

Those involved in the service consider the following to be desirable:

8. Marketing budget + better accessible buses – *would optimise existing services and maximise revenues*
9. 2 buses allowing more journeys per day; larger hybrid accessible bus; larger local driver pool; paid conductor/guide – *expand existing capacity*
10. Increase car parking charges in Long Mynd, point visitors to access hubs (Church Stretton) and invest extra parking revenues into the shuttle – *as integrated demand management*
11. Dependable year-on-year funding – *for stability: certainty in planning and reliability for users*
12. Year-round network of stable, integrated services linked to residential travel needs; more east-west services via key hubs – *make buses a reliable part of the fabric of the area's mobility*

BLenheim SHUTTLE

3

A great example of a shuttle funded by a large attraction to enable car-free access – to reduce car visits and make visiting easier by car-free overseas visitors.



SUMMARY

- ✓ Free shuttle linking Blenheim to nearby Long Hanborough Station (c. 2.5 miles), providing access from Oxford / London and stations to Worcester / Birmingham
- ✓ Finances covered as part of extensive car-free access as a key part of commitment to sustainability by Blenheim, working in partnership with Good Journey
- ✓ Car-free access options (Blenheim shuttle plus other public transport & cycling options) given priority on web and other visitor materials; visitors arriving without a car receive 20% discount
- ✓ Helped to increase car-free visitor arrivals by 25,000 in 2 years, taking 100,000 car journeys off the roads



16 seater branded minibus; Contracted to Oxford Bus Company



Long Hanborough station – Blenheim Palace (c. 2.5miles)



Operates on weekends & bank holidays from April to September



<https://www.blenheimpalace.com/visitus/getting-here/>
<https://www.goodjourney.org.uk/attractions/blenheim-palace/>

ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

- Launched in 2022 as part of Blenheim's active commitment to sustainability
- One bus, runs every half hour during opening times, weekends & bank holidays, April – September

WHO USES THE SERVICES?

- Mainly visitors to Blenheim from Oxford/London arriving into Long Hanborough station by train
- Enables confident marketing of Blenheim as a car-free experience; helps to attract overseas visitors who do not have cars
- Local residents also use it as free access to Woodstock (village on other side of Blenheim estate)

MARKETING, PROMOTION, INTEGRATION & TICKETING

- Prominent on website, along with broader dedicated Good Journey car-free access advice:
<https://www.blenheimpalace.com/visitus/getting-here/>

WHAT IF?...

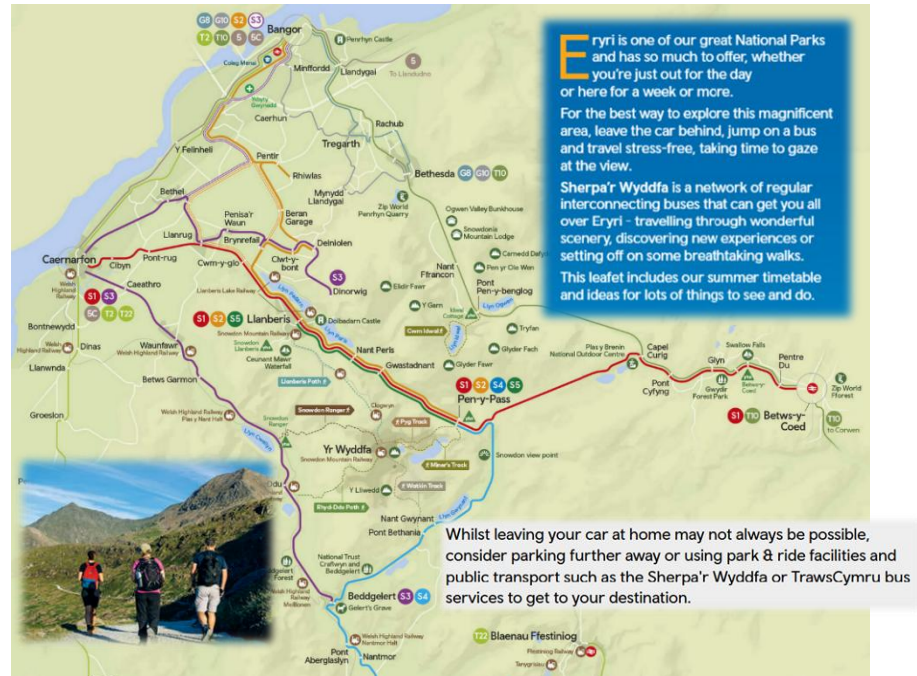
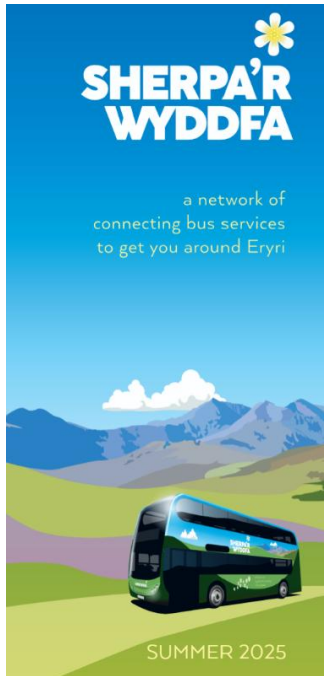
Those involved in the service consider the following to be desirable:

1. Ability to operate the service year-round, every day – to provide comprehensive car-free access and to make comms and marketing simpler
2. Expand the free shuttle to link to Oxford Parkway & Oxford rail station
3. More resource to expand marketing ambition
4. Franchising is seen as irrelevant to this service.

SHERPA NETWORK & S1/2/5: NANT PERIS – PEN Y PASS

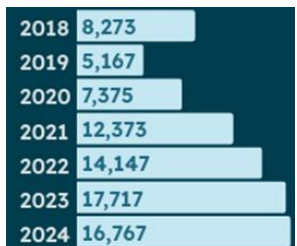
2 3

A network linking the northern destinations in the National Park around Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) with surrounding villages and towns. Up to 4 buses per hour to Pen-y-Pass coupled with pre-booking of parking at Pen y Pass and strict management of illegal verge parking has resolved long-standing acute car parking problems.



SUMMARY

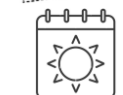
- ✓ Shuttles linking valley P&R to popular Pen-y-Pass, and main walkers route up Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon)
- ✓ Enhanced post-lockdown as part of a package of locality demand management to tackle excessive verge car parking: strict car parking enforcement on verges plus pre-booked, high-cost limited parking at Pen y Pass
- ✓ The scheme is broadly very popular having led to better visitor experiences and significantly reduced landscape impact and road danger.
- ✓ Branded network of 5 integrated services providing access across the Eryri (Snowdonia) National Park comprising 13 dedicated vehicles.
- ✓ Passenger numbers for all 5 Sherpa services have risen by 79% from 304,343 (2021-22) to 528,791 (2024-25); cars parking at Nant Peris P&R have trebled since 2019.



Up to 15-min frequency double decker for Nant Peris P&R to Pen-y-Pass
Part of 5 branded services covering national park



(Llanberis -) Nant Peris (Park & Ride) – Pen y Pass (3.2mi)



Operates every day from April – November, 07:00 – 19:30; c. 50% in winter



<https://www.sherparwyddfa.wales/index.shtml>

"It is clear that the journey on the Sherpa has become an all-weather attraction in its own right"

Yr Wyddfa

ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

- Sherpa services have existed for many years, mainly contracted by the NPA with various sources of subsidy.
- In 2020, the National Park's Visitor Management Strategy provided a more ambitious vision for the role of the buses. Engagement with the Welsh Government and Transport for Wales led to a better integrated networks of services for the national park.
- The new, branded network launched in 2022 offering improved integration with timing at key hubs such as Bangor, Porthmadog, Caernarfon and integration with Trans Cymru services on A5 corridor.
- Part of 1bws deal (national transport ticket)
- It is currently operated by Gwynfor Coaches in partnership with Transport for Wales, Conwy County Borough Council, and Eryri National Park Authority (ENPA). The Sherpa services are supported by Gwynedd CC, the NPA and TfW (guaranteed for 5 years).



WHO USES THE SERVICES?

- Visitors mainly plus residents for trips between settlements & for local recreation
- 12% of visitors to Yr Wyddfa (Snowdon) used the bus; 37% of visitors to NP use public transport during their visit

MARKETING, PROMOTION, INTEGRATION & TICKETING

- Consistent branding across buses, infrastructure, information and media channels
- Significant social media promotion & profile – especially TikTok & Instagram, snowballing user-generated content
- Short video shown in local libraries
- Shared responsibility for marketing. ENPA collaborates with Gwynedd CC destination marketing team; ENPA create own on-line content; Leaflets and information in TICs.



Passengers in the park and ride car park in Nant Peris take a bus to Pen y Pass in Eryri. (Image: David Powell)

WHAT IF?...

Those involved in the service consider the following to be desirable:

13. Service enhancements: Ability to run earlier/later services in summer (when there is known unmet demand) (needs more resource)
 14. Network enhancements (need more resource) :
 - a. Strengthen services to south of Yr Wyddfa (Beddgelert / Nant Gwynant) – to spread walker demand from popular access points and enable more 1-way walks
 - b. Stronger Bangor to Betws-y-Coed via Bethesda and Llyn Ogwen service - by increasing frequency of T10 TrawsCymru service
 15. More leaflets and posters and paid adverts on social media (if had time/resource).
 16. More confident regional approach to bus networks to serve the national park – gateway hubs / Park & Ride
- The following planned initiatives will help to enhance these services:

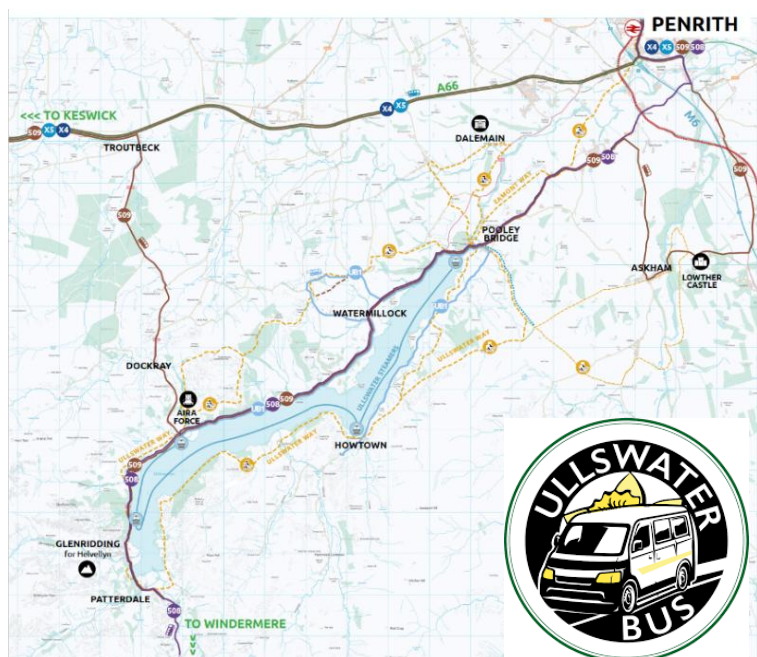
- Sustainable tourism visitor incentive scheme based on [CopenPay “Free attractions for thoughtful actions”](#)
- Developing links with possible visitor levy (2027?)

ULLSWATER: SITU & UB1 (ULLSWATER HOPPER)

2 5

NUGGETS

- 👉 Services are partly under-written by local visitor businesses (via SITU) – meaning that businesses have a vested interest in marketing them to their guests
- 👉 Business under-writing for a 509 service route variation in 2023 led to Stagecoach then taking on the route as a commercial proposition
- 👉 A “bus stop” WhatsApp group – of drivers and businesses near bus stops – provides human real-time information about any disruptions



SUMMARY

- ✓ Sustainable Integrated Transport for Ullswater (SITU) is a network of visitor businesses and resident community whose purpose is to improve sustainable transport in the valley¹¹.
- ✓ Enhanced and better integrated bus services + new service – the Ullswater Hopper (UB1)¹² – all to create a network that works for visitors and residents to & in the valley
- ✓ The Ullswater Hopper connects holiday accommodation centres and local destinations
- ✓ SITU businesses underwrite the Ullswater Hopper service.



16 seater minibus – best suited to small roads and levels of demand
Operated commercially by Stagecoach, under-written by SITU



“Connects holiday accommodation around the valley with destinations such as Pooley Bridge, Howtown and the Ullswater Steamers”¹², c. 13 miles



4 return journeys per day
Weekends & bank holidays from early April to November *plus* daily during summer half-term and main holidays (84 days)



<https://situcumbria.org.uk/ullswater-bus/>

¹¹ “Through local projects, SITU promotes, encourages and works towards the creation of a sustainable and integrated transport system for the Ullswater valley which will benefit residents, local businesses and visitors in keeping with the World Heritage status of the Lake District National Park”, <https://situcumbria.org.uk/>

¹² <https://situcumbria.org.uk/ullswater-bus/>

ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

SITU emerged in 2020 via an approach by the community environmental group Ambleside Action for a Future¹³ to Matteredale Parish Council about conceiving integrated transport for the valley. A small PC working group established SITU's mission & plan¹¹. This was taken to all of the valley's 5 PCs to establish SITU as a voluntary organisation comprising resident communities and businesses. SITU was incorporated as a CIO in 2025 (to facilitate fundraising and provide long term stability). Their first project was the development of the Eamont way¹⁴, then the development of bus services.

2023: Establishment

- Service UB1 linked accommodation sites on Ullswater's western side to Pooley Bridge; UB2 linked Pooley Bridge to Lowther Castle; UB3 linked Pooley Bridge to Howtown (Ullswater east side). These all used the same vehicle.
- SITU paid Stagecoach a daily rate to run these services, SITU receiving all fare revenue. SITU fund this from pledges from visitor businesses plus some grant funding.

2024/5: Simplification, extension, ridership increase.

- SITU supported the diversion of Stagecoach service 509 (Penrith – Keswick via Ullswater) to include Lowther Castle; Stagecoach took on the risk of this service i.e. no support from SITU in 2025.
- UB1 (2024/5) combined 2023's UB1 and UB3 to link accommodation and attractions on Ullswater's west (to include NT Aira Force) and east shores.

As ridership builds year-on-year, the scale of support from SITU is reducing. Given the support from businesses, SITU are planning to increase capacity and frequency of UB1 by funding a second bus in 2026.

Visitor businesses had been calling for these sorts of bus services for years, so asking them to collaborate to support them via pledges was fairly straightforward. It'll all part of making Ullswater a better destination and fits into the broader vision of providing great visitor experiences without a car – by bus, boat & boot. It's also in all businesses' interests to market the services to their guests

UBI & 509 on Saturdays,
Sundays & Bank Holidays

from 5 April
- 2 Nov 2025

NEW for 2025

27-30 May and 30
Jun - 29 Aug 2025

UB1 Daily Service

UB1

Aira Force • Pooley Bridge •
Howtown - return

Aira Force Car Park	0915	1115	1415	1615
Gowberrow Cottages	0920	1120	1420	1620
Leeming House Hotel	0923	1123	1423	1623
Ullswater Holiday Park	0928	1128	1428	1628
The Quiet Site	0933	1133	1433	1633
The Brackenrigg Inn	0936	1136	1436	1636
Waterfoot Park Entrance	0940	1140	1440	1640
Pooley Bridge Ullswater Guest Hse	0947	1147	1447	1647
Park Foot Entrance Gate	0950	1150	1450	1650
Waterside House	0951	1151	1451	1651
Ullswater Yacht Club Gates	0953	1153	1453	1653
Howtown	1002	1202	1502	1702
The House Cattle Grid	1007	1207	1507	1707
The House Cattle Grid				
Howtown	1010	1210	1510	1710
Ullswater Yacht Club Gates	1021	1221	1521	1721
Waterside House	1022	1222	1522	1722
Park Foot Entrance Gate	1024	1224	1524	1724
Pooley Bridge Inn	1032	1232	1532	1732
Waterfoot Park Entrance	1036	1236	1536	1736
The Brackenrigg Inn	1039	1239	1539	1739
The Quiet Site	1045	1245	1545	1745
Ullswater Holiday Park	1050	1250	1550	1750
Leeming House Hotel	1055	1255	1555	1755
Gowberrow Cottages	1058	1258	1558	1758
Aira Force Car Park	1103	1303	1603	1803

WHO USES THE SERVICES?

- The UB1 service are popular with visitors in motorhomes and vehicles with roof tentboxes – so that they don't have to pack up to make a journey. As there are several large camping and caravan sites in the valley, this is a significant market.
- Residents – especially retired people and people with wheelchairs - use the services mainly for an easy day out, some just riding the bus for a sightseeing journey.
- People working and living at the visitor accommodation sites use the buses to get around.
- 10% of users are concessionary pass holders.

Key benefits:

- “The buses help to reduce traffic, congestion and emissions in the valley – making it better and more pleasant for all and enabling walking and cycling on the valley's roads and lanes”.
- They are part of the visitor proposition that can then be used by visitor businesses – that it's just easy to get around, opening up different opportunities and experiences by bus boat and boot. Visitors enjoy using the combination of services, encouraging them to return and recommend it as a destination.

¹³ <https://aafaf.uk/>

¹⁴ Signed and branded footpath linking Ullswater to Penrith <https://www.ullswaterheritage.org/eamont-way>

MARKETING, PROMOTION & TICKETING

A key part of the approach to marketing is via the pledging system - from businesses to help under-write services. This means that local businesses not only feel “ownership”, but have a commercial vested interest in selling the proposition (of using the buses to get around) to their guests. Many visitor accommodation businesses tell their guests about the services at the point of booking, before they arrive and on arrival as part of orientation and welcome.

SITU work with an informal group of local younger people who advise on marketing via social media.

The services are all part of the Stagecoach network. This means:

- 👉 They appear in the “See more of the Lakes” Summer bus guide¹⁵.
- 👉 Stagecoach have a dedicated page for the Ullswater valley services with suggestions for days out and how to get to various attractions¹⁶.
- 👉 They are on major national route finding apps such as Google maps
- 👉 All services are part of the £3 fare scheme and take concessionary passes
- 👉 Stagecoach have bus + boat tickets for the main Lakes in the Lake District including Ullswater “*The Bus & Boat tickets include any one way single cruise journey from any of the four piers at Pooley Bridge, Howtown, Glenridding or Aira Force plus unlimited all day bus travel within the Explorer Zone*”¹⁶

SITU consider the drivers to be a key part of the attractiveness of the service – friendly, calm, helpful and considerate.

WHAT IF?...

SITU have ambitions for / would like:

1. A guest pass – Bus + Boat + Bike + Boot i.e. all-inclusive travel pass that means that the Ullswater valley becomes attractive because a visit is better without a car, so people choose to leave their cars behind.
2. Car access to be restricted progressively as alternative access options build; the Ullswater valley could and should aim to be car-free so that it shares the appeal that goes with that with places like Zermatt.
3. For the valley to have 20mph speed limits to make roads feel safer and enable widespread active travel
4. Ambitions are *not* being held back by lack of funds: the strategic expansion of bus capacity needs to build on existing passenger growth so that businesses are confident to build investment; plans for 2026 include a second vehicle on the UB1 route. Easier access to funds to complement the visitor pledges *would* make life easier for those involved and SITU are very much aware of managing financial risk.

When asked, SITU do not see how franchising – as they understand it – would make the system or services any better as they have developed a constructive and trusting relationship with Stagecoach. Whilst they *would* like to take profit from the services, they consider the added value – of central timetabling, Stagecoach integration & marketing etc – to be worth the cost.

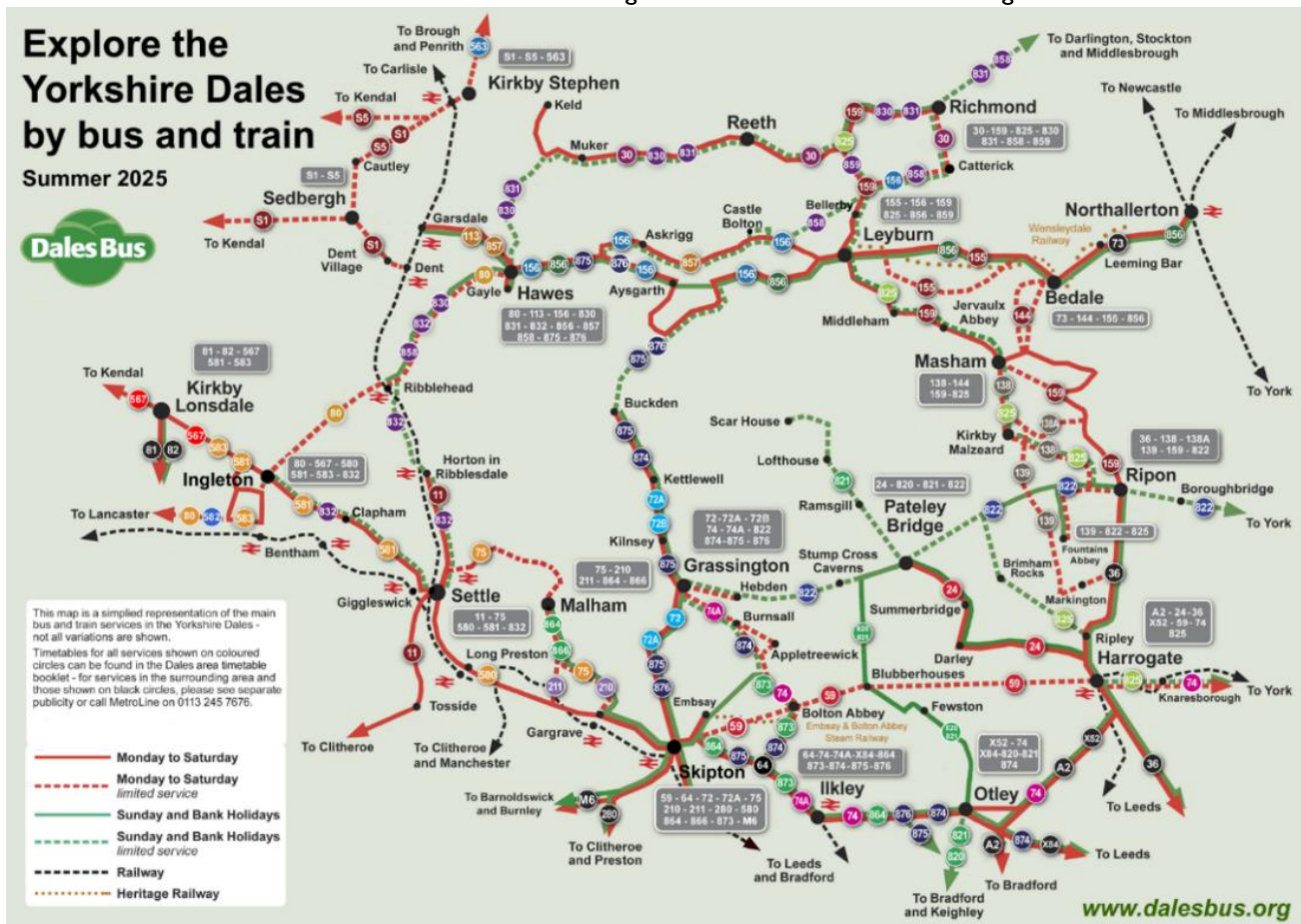
¹⁵ Widely distributed: <https://tiscon-maps-stagecoachbus.s3.amazonaws.com/Timetables/Cumbria/Lakes%20Connection/Summer%2025/Lakes%20by%20Bus%20Summer%202025%20WEB.pdf>

¹⁶ <https://www.stagecoachbus.com/promos-and-offers/cumbria-and-north-lancashire/ullswater-buses-explore-the-area-during-your-visit>

DALESBUS

2 5 6 7

Multiple Sunday & BH services to provide access into and around the Yorkshire Dales. Extensive ticketing deals and linked visitor marketing.



SUMMARY

- ✓ Extensive networks of services to / around / within the Yorkshire Dales + access from nearby cities and towns
- ✓ Managed by a dynamic and reactive CIC
- ✓ Primarily focussed on leisure use / visitors (Sundays/BH), but mixing visitor and resident demands (key weekday services to match resident demands)
- ✓ Focus on integration between services and with rail, and the value of an integrated network that provides access across an area.



ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

- The roots of Dalesbus are in the 1970s when North Yorkshire County Council and the Yorkshire Dales NPA, with a dedicated member of staff.
- The focus has generally been on visitor and weekend/Sunday services, though NYCC funding for Sunday services was withdrawn in 2011.
- The [Dales & Bowland CIC](#) was established in 2007 and is a subsidiary of the [Friends of the Dales](#); responsibilities were gradually transferred to the CIC.

- Services developed or taken on to link from Leeds, Northallerton, Skipton-Harrogate
- Finances for services became more strained post covid due mainly to cost increases and constraints on revenues linked to the £2/£3 fare cap
- Currently (2025) have BSIP grant from NYC – helping to shift risk back to public sector from voluntary sector

Current operations:

- 18 Sunday services and 5 Saturday services; 14 vehicles on summer sunday
- The CIC procures services; contracts are gross cost (i.e. operator is paid fixed sum to operated services over contract, all revenues to CIC); contracts only 1-year due to financial uncertainty
- Operators are 3 Transdev operators, Go Ahead East Yorkshire, Proctors, First Leeds, York Pullman, Lonsdale Coaches, Little White Bus.
- Sourcing drivers has been an issue
- DalesBus is run on a purely voluntary basis - 8 directors (most retired), no paid staff.

WHO USES THE SERVICES?

- Depends on route: some are mainly used by residents (c. 90% on Northallerton-Hawes); significant leisure access from neighbouring urban areas for leisure
- 61% users from car-owning households had a car available but chose to use the bus
- 61% (note: same figure is by chance) of all users could not get to the Dales without DalesBus.

MARKETING, PROMOTION, INTEGRATION & TICKETING

- The services are primarily marketed as part of a wider visitor experience package – as illustrated by the design and focus of the [website](#) and pages such as [Days out](#) providing information linking popular destinations



with advice on how to get there using bus & train.

- Dales bus have an extensive and long-established distribution network for printed materials – posters & timetables. Bus & train time [booklet](#) and [map](#) produced twice yearly.
- Active on X, Facebook & Bluesky
- Working with Visit North Yorkshire as part of efforts to promote public transport; seeking to emulate the “Sit back and enjoy the ride” campaign that was done for North York Moors by Ryedale Council and NYC.
- Ticketing: [Multiple deals](#) including:
 - Dales Rover (£18 for 2 adults and 3 children. £10 Adult version) been same price for long time and popular providing access across 39 bus services including connections into surrounding towns & cities
 - Dales Rambler: including local connecting rail plus 5 DalesBus services

- Looking into establishing virtual rail stations (Hawes, Malham) i.e. places on Rail database that then enable single-ticket rail + bus journey via rail ticketing sites.

WHAT IF?...

1. DalesBus future resilience is an issue – as it depends on its current volunteers
2. Their ideal is for the LTAs to take over
3. Longer season, operating every day in season and earlier/later in the day
4. Bespoke vehicles – wheelchair accessible, branded, electric
5. Greater resource for marketing; resource to market further afield (e.f. Manchester rail stations); resource for staff capacity & more holistic approach to management
6. Bus included as part of area-wide guest pass
7. More stable year-on-year funding – so that service can be relied upon when visitors are planning future visits; franchising not seen as relevant to this service.
8. Further restrict car access; car parking is still free in the valley

4



“Citylink operates an extensive network of long-distance express services within Scotland, carrying over 5 million passengers annually to more than 200 destinations and linking the cities of Glasgow, Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dundee, Stirling and Inverness”

Provides visitor access to many rural destinations as a complement & extension to Scotrail and ferry services.



SUMMARY

- ✓ Network of 19 scheduled coach services connecting Scotland’s cities and cities to rural destinations
- ✓ Service run a few times per day (e.g. 3/day Inverness-Skye, 5/day Glasgow-Oban) to many (13/day Glasgow-Inverness)
- ✓ Modern coaches with tables, USB charging, WCs)
- ✓ Most coaches can carry one bike (pre-booked); 4 services (Inverness-Fort William / Portree / Ullapool and Glasgow-Skye) take 2 bikes.
- ✓ Concessionary passes can be used on Citilink services

Scotland comes to life during the winter months, the rugged landscapes and stunning mountainous trails bask in the glow of low winter sun offering no shortage of breathtaking scenes, unforgettable memories and countless pinch-me-moments.

If you’re holding out for a winter wonderland this year, we’ve got the best spots for you to experience at the end of a comfortable, coach ride from across Scotland’s cities.



ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

- The Citylink network emerged in 1985 in response to a re-organisation of the Scottish Bus Groups to coordinate the network’s services across different operators.
- Privatisation through a management buy-out in 1990 led to coordinated contracting across a number of operators. In 1993, it was sold to National Express, but with NE’s takeover of Scotrail in 1997, the Competition Commission forced the sale of Citilink. It has been owned by [ComfortDelGro](http://www.comfortdelgro.com/) – a global multi-modal transport operator - since March 2000.

WHO USES THE SERVICES?

- There are no publicly available data on Citylink users or usage.
- The design of the services and marketing is strong evidence that services are for utility and leisure / residents and visitors.

MARKETING, PROMOTION, INTEGRATION & TICKETING

- Citylink information and marketing focusses on both the individual services/routes and the network. There is also a strong focus on [network coverage, speed, comfort and cost](#).
- Marketing is predominantly online (web). This indicates a focus on experiences (such as the [travelogue](#) pages and [destination guides](#)) – both urban and rural; whilst most of the web copy is focussed on cities, there is a significant use of rural and landscape imagery.
- Ticketing is per-journey. Like-for-like journeys are a similar cost to rail.

TROSSACHS EXPLORER

2

Explorer services piloted in summers of 2024 and 2025. A key value is its demonstration of extensive use of reviews and user feedback to improve service – route extensions, accessible buses etc.



SUMMARY

- ✓ New service piloted in summers of 2024 and 2025 to fill in a recognised gap in public transport access in the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park.
- ✓ Service specifically designed for visitor and resident demands – route, timings, brandings, connections etc; ongoing customer feedback and evaluation used to enhance the service
- ✓ Service specifically provides access to popular visitor destinations and points of access: The Lodge, Ben Venue, Loch Katrine, Ben A'an, Brig o Turk, Kilmahog/Ben Ledi
- ✓ c. 6000 passengers carried in 2025 – a 15% increase compared to 2024



Branded 23-seater, accessible low-emission midi-bus



Callander – Loch Catrine – Aberfoyle – Drymen; connections to other bus & ferry sailings



July-October, 7 days/week



<https://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/the-trossachs-explorer/>
2024 evaluation: <https://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/trossachs-explorer-pilot-evaluation-report-findings/> with in-depth analysis of user feedback & benefits

ORIGINS AND DEVELOPMENT

- Established in summer 2024 as a pilot for a gap in the national park’s public transport network – from Callander – Loch Catrine – Drymen.
- Led by the Loch Lomond & Trossachs NPA [in partnership with local and national partners and funding](#)
- Operated on contract to local operator McColl’s.
- Established as a pilot – to be responsive to customer and usage feedback: *“The shuttle bus will continue to test and learn what works both in terms of service operation and inspiring people to use more sustainable travel options to connect and protect the special environment of our National Park”*

Informed by evaluation and feedback:

- Public-focussed explanation of approach taken via the [website](#)
- Initial evaluation identified the successes shown to the right
- Customer feedback (2024) on what they liked about the service and what they think could be improved (acted on for 2025) are indicated in the word clouds (2024)

What users liked



Areas for improvement



Evaluation Findings

Evaluation Findings

- **Improved accessibility** – Opened up remote areas, new trails, and destinations within the Park.
- **Community & business support** – Strengthened social and economic ties in the area.
- **Convenience & reliability** – Offered an easy-to-use, friendly, and dependable alternative to car travel.
- **Environmental benefits** – Promoted sustainable tourism and more responsible recreation.
- **Strong branding** – Created professional, cohesive branding that conveyed reliability and quality.
- **Social connections** – Fostered a welcoming, community atmosphere.
- **Strategic alignment** – Contributed to sustainability and accessibility goals while balancing tourism growth with environmental protection.

WHO USES THE SERVICES?

- The service was designed primarily as a visitor service and this is reflected in the 2024 monitoring:
 - 88% users from Scotland, wide range of age groups
 - Main uses: Access to nature, access to experiences made possible by the bus (1-way walks etc)
 - Provides access for people who did not have a car or did not want to use their car

MARKETING, PROMOTION, INTEGRATION & TICKETING

- Buses, bus stops and all information materials used consistent branding
- Significant online & social media presence announcing the service season and details; [extensive and clear FAQs](#)
- Tickets designed for user needs and behaviour, including all-day (hop on hop off) for adults, families & groups, 7-day ticket and tickets integrated with connecting McColls services.
- Information on [extensive dedicated website](#); journey planner information via the [dedicated national park journey planner](#)
- Bus integrated into the [Munros by public transport page](#)



Munros by public transport

Here is a list of Munros (Scottish mountains over 3000ft/914m) which you can access by public transport from Glasgow, located less than hour away from the borders of the National Park.



WHAT IF?...

A critical evaluation of the service and user feedback identified nine main areas for improvement

- **Enhanced marketing & awareness** – Earlier promotion and outreach to regional transport hubs.
- **Improved integration** – Better timetable alignment with other transport services and integrated ticketing options.
- **Operational enhancements** – More frequent services, sustainable vehicles, and circular routes.
- **Extended season & coverage** – A longer season and potential year-round operation.
- **Better user experience** – Clearer signage, onboard stop announcements, and bike-friendly options.
- **Stronger community engagement** – Showcasing passenger success stories and business partnerships.
- **Increased environmental commitment** – Transition to electric buses and measuring car journey reductions.
- **Digital solutions** – User-friendly journey planning, ticket purchasing, and real-time updates.
- **Inclusivity measures** – Continued concession-friendly pricing and expanded discounts for families and youth groups.

Whilst these emerge from the Trossachs Explorer, they typify the nature of comments that emerged from several of the case studies presented here