



Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy

Island Communities Impact Assessment Report

On behalf of



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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

- 1.1.1 The Islands (Scotland) Act 2018 provides a legal basis for greater decision making at a local level within Scottish Islands and seeks to increase economic prosperity for island communities.
- 1.1.2 This is to be achieved through ‘island proofing’ legislation, policy, and strategic decisions by taking account of the special circumstances of island communities and ensuring no disadvantage to people living and working on islands (as defined by Section 1 of the Act).
- 1.1.3 Section 7 of the Act sets out a specific duty for relevant public bodies (including Regional Transport Partnerships) to “*have regard to island communities*” in carrying out their functions. A related duty in Section 8 of the Act requires relevant public bodies to undertake an island communities impact assessment “*in relation to a policy, strategy, or service which, in the authority’s opinion, is likely to have an effect on an island community which is significantly different from its effect on other communities (including other island communities) in the area in which the authority exercises its functions*”.
- 1.1.4 This Report sets out the background to the Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy study and presents the evidence base and Island Communities Duty Impact Assessment process to be undertaken at an interim impact assessment stage during the options appraisal stage of the study.

Table 1.1: Report Structure

| Section | Description |
|------------------|--|
| Section 1 | Introduction |
| Section 2 | Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy project background |
| Section 3 | Assessment framework and guide questions |
| Section 4 | Baseline conditions |
| Section 5 | Island Communities Impact Assessment |
| Section 6 | Summary of impact assessment |

2 Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy

2.1 Project Background

- 2.1.1 The development of a Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy has its foundations embedded in SPT's A Call to Action: The Regional Transport Strategy for the west of Scotland (2023 – 2038) (or 'RTS'), and its vision, priorities and objectives, and clear policy statement setting out the aim for a world class passenger focused public transport system.
- 2.1.2 The RTS was published in 2023, and reinforces national policy ambitions, setting out the following Vision for transport in the region:
- “The west of Scotland will be an attractive, resilient and well-connected place with active, liveable communities and accessible, vibrant centres facilitated by high quality, sustainable and low carbon transport shaped by the needs of all.”*
- 2.1.3 The RTS recognises the need to invest in transformative public transport ensuring a sufficiently attractive 'offer' to move more people by more sustainable transport modes rather than by car. Therefore, a key theme within the strategy encompasses enhancing the quality and integration of public transport with a specific objective to make public transport a desirable and convenient travel choice for everyone.
- 2.1.4 The RTS concluded that the **“strategy Vision will not be achieved without improving the quality and integration of the bus network and set out a policy aiming for a world class passenger focused public transport system”**. Given this conclusion, the need for the development of a Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy (SRBS) was recognised with the new powers and opportunities available through the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019 requiring consideration in the development of the SRBS.
- 2.1.5 In this regard, a previous scoping study to consider the new powers and bus improvement options available to local transport authorities under the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019, concluded that a truly 'fit for purpose' network would achieve the RTS objective to *'make public transport a desirable and convenient travel choice for everyone with a regional public transport network that guarantees access to work, health, education and recreation – without breaking the bank or planet – and builds the foundation of a dynamic, integrated and efficient 21st century transport system , with the ultimate outcome of more people using buses'*.
- 2.1.6 The development of the world class system is guided by the RTS Connecting Places Policy theme which focuses on the spatial context for the RTS and future RTS Delivery Plans, setting out the strategic gateways, corridors and locations that will be a focus for future transport appraisal and investment to support regional development priorities, economic strategies and the regional Growth Deals.
- 2.1.7 The Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy is being developed through the consideration of:
- the role of bus in delivery the RTS
 - the spatial context of the bus network
 - the attributes and components of a world class bus network for the region
- 2.1.8 The option development and appraisal process will consider the operating and funding model (from the range of bus reform options available to SPT) and during the option appraisal process will be informed by this Fairer Duties Scotland Impact Assessment. Options will include, and may be a combination of the following:
- Option 1 – Business as usual

- Option 2 – Voluntary partnerships
- Option 3 – Bus Service Improvement Partnerships (BSIP)
- Option 4 – Local Franchising
- Option 5 – Municipal Bus Operations

2.1.9 The appraisal will identify the most appropriate operating and funding model(s) for the region, taking into account the powers available through the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019.

2.1.10 An overview of each option is provided in **Section 2.2 – 2.6** of the **Options Appraisal Report**.

3 Assessment Framework

3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The following guide framing questions and assessment criteria matrix will be applied to testing the performance of the emerging Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy (SRBS) options in relation to implementing the ICIA, with the assessment to be undertaken with regard to the Scottish Government's guidance and toolkit prepared on ICIAAs (Scottish Government, 2020). This provides a transparent framework to assess the extent to which emerging SRBS components.
- 3.1.2 The assessment will be informed through engagement activities with relevant groups of interest and impact (as discussed below).

3.2 Guide Questions

- 3.2.1 The framing questions, as set out below, will be applied in relation to the two key parts of the Duty, with relevant criteria identified from the statutory guidance.

Guide Questions: Island Communities Duties

Will the emerging SRBS and its associated delivery mechanisms...

- *Protect and increase the economic prosperity of island communities?*
- *Effectively address the unique transport challenges faced by island communities?*
- *Effectively address the unique economic challenges faced by island communities?*
- *Effectively address the unique social challenges faced by island communities?*
- *Impact on the islands' infrastructure or natural environment and biodiversity?*
- *Effectively address the unique health challenges faced by the islands' communities?*
- *Protect and enhance quality of life for island residents?*

- 3.2.2 Consideration will be given to the thematic questions in the ICIA guidance around:

- Demographics – including current demographic structure, challenges faced in areas with greater proportion of older people and impacts on these challenges including encouraging young people to leave;
- Economy – potential for impacts on key industries, on island infrastructure and natural environment, on communications networks, on small businesses and their supply chains and taking account of the costs of travel particularly for people on low incomes; and
- Social – the often dispersed nature of island deprivation, impacts on the cost of living, changes affecting people in fuel poverty, consideration of part time and self-employed nature of much of the islands' workforce and issues with availability of childcare provision.

- 3.2.3 The framing questions will also be applied taking account of key aspects in Section 8 of the Act around the potential for differential impacts on the islands' communities and on consideration of the extent to which delivery of the SRBS might improve or mitigate outcomes.

3.3 Assessment Criteria Matrix

3.3.1 The following matrix will be used to assess any disproportionate impact of the emerging SRBS on protected characteristics.

Table 3.1: Assessment Criteria Matrix

| Impact Score | Description | Symbol |
|-----------------------------|--|--------|
| Major Beneficial Effect | The policy contributes significantly to the requirements of the Island Communities Duty, particularly to advancing equality of opportunity and meeting the needs of people experiencing economic, geographical or social disadvantage. | ++ |
| Minor Beneficial Effect | The policy contributes significantly to the requirements of the Island Communities Duty, particularly to advancing equality of opportunity and meeting the needs of people experiencing economic, geographical or social disadvantage, but not significantly | + |
| Neutral / Negligible Effect | The policy has a neutral effect on the requirements of the Island Communities Duty, or the relationship is negligible | 0 |
| Minor Adverse Effect | The policy adversely affects the requirements of the Island Communities Duty, particularly with respect to advancing equality of opportunity and meeting the needs of people experiencing economic, geographical or social disadvantage | - |
| Major Adverse Effect | The policy significantly adversely affects the requirements of the Island Communities Duty particularly with respect to advancing equality of opportunity and meeting the needs of people experiencing economic, geographical or social disadvantage | -- |
| Uncertain Effect | The policy has an uncertain relationship to the Island Communities Duty requirements or insufficient detail, or information may be available to enable an assessment to be made. | ? |
| No Clear Relationship | There is no clear relationship between the proposed policy and the achievement of the Island Communities Duty. | ~ |

3.3.2 The assessment criteria provide an objective means of undertaking and reporting the equalities assessments of the transport policies on a consistent basis. The colour coding also allows for rapid identification of the impacts most likely to be significant, generally those assessed as having a major positive or negative effect. Commentary will be provided on any identified impacts in relation to the policy options and protected characteristics.

3.3.3 During the appraisal of options for the strategy, an interim assessment is to be undertaken on the options being developed and appraised toward the development of the Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy. This assessment will support the options appraisal process. A final assessment would also be undertaken as the Strategy itself is developed.

3.3.4 The interim assessment will be undertaken using the Guide questions and assessment criteria matrix as set out above, and informed through an engagement exercise, as discussed below. The outcome of the assessment and engagement will be clearly stated in the appraisal outcomes, with options adapted if required, given the assessment findings.

3.4 Stakeholder Engagement and Consultation

3.4.1 Engagement to inform the assessment has been conducted in two stages:

- During Option Appraisal, engagement has been undertaken with local authorities and bus operators in the Strathclyde region.
- As part of a wider consultation exercise planned at the end of the options appraisal process, where engagement would be undertaken and targeted towards a range of key stakeholders pertinent to the duty as well as more generally through the planned public engagement exercise.

4 Baseline Conditions

4.1 Overview

4.1.1 There are almost 100 populated islands within Scotland. At the time of the 2011 Census, the total island population was 103,700, which is just 2% of the population of Scotland. Within the SPT area, there are two populated islands: Arran and Cumbrae. At the time of the 2011 Census, the total combined population of Arran and Cumbrae was 6,036 (4,660 people lived on Arran and 1,376 people lived on Cumbrae). Population decline is a real threat to the sustainability of many of Scotland's Island communities, especially Arran and Cumbrae. According to the Isle of Cumbrae Economic Baseline Report (North Ayrshire Council, 2021), the total population of the Isle of Cumbrae has experienced a sustained contraction in population since the mid-2000s.

4.2 Island Accessibility

- 4.2.1 Transport is a fundamental issue for island communities, and it is a key factor in the ability of people living in the islands to access services and employment.
- 4.2.2 Access issues for island communities are similar to those faced by mainland remote areas. However, dependence upon ferry services creates additional access issues for island residents in terms of cost, time and aligning journeys (and especially those made by public transport) to ferry schedules. For Islanders who require frequent trips to the mainland for medical appointments, this is even more pertinent, from both an accessibility and affordability perspective.
- 4.2.3 Poor transport links both to connect within the islands, and connecting to transport on and off the islands can disadvantage island communities relative to one another and to similar mainland communities. Respondents to the consultation for the National Plan for Scotland's Islands (Scottish Government, 2019a) emphasised that island communities face many different transport challenges in their day-to-day lives compared to those living in less rural areas on the Scottish mainland. These include a lack of transport services, long journey times, the need for interchange / overnight stays, and the high cost of transport to and from the islands. Baseline data for Young persons' Free Bus Travel Scheme shows those living in rural areas and on islands were more likely to cite timetables, frequency of buses, limited route options, a lack of bus stops nearby, and having to rely on family members when travelling as issues they faced, compared to those living in towns and cities (Transport Scotland, 2022). SPT's RTS public survey in 2019 reported issues around frequency, costs and timetabling between ferries and onward public transport connections on the mainland (Stantec UK, 2021).
- 4.2.4 Analysis undertaken as part of the Case for Change for the Strathclyde Regional Bus Strategy (Stantec, 2023) considered weekday bus service frequency and highlighted bus frequencies on Arran and Great Cumbrae almost entirely operating at 1 to 2 buses an hour or less, with the north of Arran in particular with many bus stops served less often than one bus every 3 hours. Further analysis undertaken to inform the Case for Change highlighted that, in Scotland, between 2004-05 and 2021-22, whilst bus fares have increased by 88%, this has largely reflected increasing operating costs per bus-kilometre which have increased by 98% (both in current prices) - similarly, and reflecting the reduction in passenger numbers, the operating cost per passenger has increased by 215% over this period (all figures in current prices).
- 4.2.5 Those in the islands are generally more likely to drive, and less likely to use the bus - this is consistent with results from the Scottish National Islands Plan Survey (2020), where 71% of those aged 18-35 used the bus once a year or less, or never.

4.3 Social and Demographic Issues

4.3.1 Island rurality can exacerbate inequality already experienced on account of the protected characteristics defined under the Equalities Act 2010. Issues which impact on all islanders such as access to transport may be acutely felt by some groups more than others requiring targeted measures to redress the inequality experienced (Scottish Government, 2020).

- 4.3.2 The population on the islands of Cumbrae and Arran is typically older than for the rest of the North Ayrshire and SPT areas, with over 30% of people aged 65 or over on these islands compared with 22% in North Ayrshire and 18% in Scotland (National Records of Scotland, 2021). Similarly young people are under-represented in island population demographics with 13% or less of the population under the age of 16 (compared with 17% in both North Ayrshire and Scotland) and less than 10% of the population comprised of people in the 16 to 24 years age group (compared with 10.3% in Scotland). Further information on the general demographic profile of North Ayrshire is presented in the detailed baseline analysis reports prepared to inform the Regional Transport Strategy process ((Stantec, 2019) and (Stantec, 2021)).
- 4.3.3 Depopulation can have an adverse effect on communities, reducing confidence and the sustainability of services, increasing the vulnerability of communities already experiencing higher costs of service provision and market access. Population levels on Arran and Cumbrae between 2010 and 2020 declined by between 10% and 20% in some datazones although this trend has been partly reversed in the last 5 years in parts of west and south Arran. These changes and the corresponding reduction in the working age population on the islands means there are fewer people of working age available to provide necessary support services for the increasing number of older people. In survey work undertaken for the National Islands Plan (Government, Scottish, 2020), less than 82% of respondents in Arran, Bute and Cumbrae identified that they would be likely to stay on the island for the next five years (compared with 86% for all islands), indicating the potential for further reductions in future island populations. Baseline data collated to inform the SRBS also identifies that the population of North Ayrshire is projected to decline between 2016 and 2026 (Stantec, 2019).
- 4.3.4 The lack of transport connectivity, and to some extent digital links, to employment opportunities for young people in island communities can be a major factor in out-migration towards the mainland, exacerbating issues of shrinking working-age populations even further (Transport Scotland, 2021). In the National Islands Plan survey 71% of young islanders indicated they would be likely to stay on the islands for the next 5 years, significantly below the average of 86% for all island residents. More generally, poor public transport links, gaps in network provision and high costs of travel can restrict the ability of people to travel to employment opportunities and limits the availability of a workforce for employers.

4.4 Socio-Economic Disadvantage

- 4.4.1 Whilst reported levels of satisfaction with island quality of life across the Scottish islands are often high, the lack of visible poverty (and/or its dispersed pattern) can hide the existence of pockets of deprivation in some island communities. For example, data from the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (Scottish Government, 2020) indicates that some parts of south and east Arran are within the second and third lowest deciles for housing and parts of Millport on Cumbrae are within the second lowest decile overall due to high levels of income, employment, health, education and housing deprivation.
- 4.4.2 Relative child poverty for local authorities in Scotland using the DWP's experimental statistics on local child poverty indicate relatively high levels of children were living in low-income families in the Ardrossan and Arran ward, with figures increasing from 18.2% in 2015 to 28.0% in 2020. Equivalent figures in the 'North Coast and Cumbraes' ward were lower but also increased over this period to 14.7% in 2020 (UK Department for Work and Pensions, 2020). Whilst this data includes part of the mainland areas and therefore does not directly represent the island situation, it indicates that socio-economic disadvantage is encountered in some island communities.
- 4.4.3 Transport plays a key role in alleviation of poverty and the rest of this section reviews relevant evidence on the relationship between transport and socio-economic disadvantage for the islands relevant to the SPT region.
- 4.4.4 The cost of transport within island communities is a significant factor and contributes to an overall higher cost of living relative to other locations. Parents/carers from rural areas and those living on islands were more likely to be spending £100+ each month on household travel compared to those living in urban areas and towns (Transport Scotland 2022b). They are also more likely to indicate that they/their child missed out on activities/opportunities compared to people living in cities. Research conducted by Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) in 2016 (Highland and Islands Enterprise, 2016), found that the minimum living cost for a single person living in a remote island settlement was 35%

higher than those living in an urban area on the mainland, with transport and delivery costs accounting for a considerable proportion of this additional expense. The higher costs of living in rural and island areas represents a threat to the sustainability of local communities by making it harder for people from lower income households (and potentially some people in protected groups such as elderly, young or disabled) to live in island locations at an acceptable standard. Further work by HIE in 2021 identified that people needing to travel between islands by ferry for work incur costs in order of £30-£40 per week which effectively doubles the additional cost of fuel compared with equivalent journeys to work made in rural England (Highlands and Islands Enterprise, 2021). Whilst the cost of living disparities may not be quite so marked for islands in the SPT region they indicate the higher costs for island communities compared to the mainland.

4.4.5 The ICIA for the National Transport Strategy 2 identified key factors giving rise to additional costs for households in islands communities compared to the rest of the UK include:

- longer commuting distances compounded by higher fuel prices;
- issues around integrated timetabling;
- the additional cost of the need to make occasional trips to the mainland; and
- additional ferry/air costs for inter-island travel.

4.4.6 Island communities can also face additional freight costs, such as to get goods, including farming and seafood produce, to market or to import energy sources or building materials and labour. Additional charges for deliveries can also be a challenge.

4.4.7 Across Scotland, tourism accounts for 1 in 12 jobs, while rural and island communities, rely more heavily on tourism than some of Scotland's other regions. Poor transport links may reduce the number of tourists resulting in negative impacts on people who works in this sector.

4.4.8 Currently, the cost of transport on islands is much higher, relative to income, than in the rest of Scotland. Lack of integrated ticketing adds further cost and complexity. Difficulties with accessing public transport in the islands and service limitations have promoted the use of private cars and vans as the principal means of transport for many families. In Scotland, the proportion of island households with at least one car or van available was 79%, compared with just over two-thirds (69%) nationally. However, for low-income families, car ownership may be pushing them into poverty due to maintenance and fuel costs (Skerratt, et al., 2014). These effects may be exacerbated for island communities particularly where regular ferry and onward travel is required to access employment or key services.

4.5 Safety

4.5.1 Accident rates reported in the STPR2 show greater casualty rates in local authorities that have island communities. Road traffic accident casualty rates (per 100,000 between 2017-2019) in North Ayrshire is 65.79 (national average 59.34). Any reduction in traffic, achieved through a more attractive and affordable bus network that encourages modal shift should support a reduction in road traffic and associated casualties.

4.6 Key Issues for Arran and Cumbrae

4.6.1 The islands of Arran and Great Cumbrae are identified as 'remote rural' areas under the Scottish Government Urban Rural Classification (Scottish Government, 2018) (areas with a population of less than 3,000 people and with a drive time of over 30 minutes to a settlement of 10,000 or more). Their primary connection with the mainland is via ferry services to Ardrossan and Largs (for Arran and Cumbrae respectively) in North Ayrshire (within the SPT region) although there is also a ferry connection from the north of Arran to Kintyre (in Argyll and Bute and outwith the SPT region). The RTS Case for Change (Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, 2021) identified that access issues for island communities are similar to those faced by mainland remote areas, but dependence on ferry services creates additional access issues for island residents in terms of cost, time and **aligning journeys to**

ferry services. Connectivity priorities in the Ayrshire and Arran Regional Spatial Strategy include connections to Arran.

- 4.6.2 Information collated by North Ayrshire Council for the Isle of Arran and Isle of Cumbrae Local Island Plans (North Ayrshire Council, 2019a; North Ayrshire Council 2019b) provides a useful summary of key priorities for Arran and Cumbrae and a context for consideration of islands communities impacts related to transport issues identified during development of the RTS.

Key Issues for Arran and Cumbrae

- Economic growth, investment and sustainability, and retention of local businesses, requiring more targeted investment by public and private sector to create opportunities which will provide employment and resilience.
- Reliance on seasonal tourism and the need for diversification.
- Community capacity and empowerment, including more subsidiarity and control of local budgets.
- Education and skills and retention of young people on the islands.
- Recruitment and retention of employees, including proposals for an islands' allowance for key staff.
- Population and depopulation and the demographic imbalance.
- Housing, including affordable housing, older people's housing, and local construction.
- Transport, including the impact of RET on island residents; concessionary transport; cycling infrastructure; need for more reliable ferry service (Arran); more integrated transport arrangements across providers, including online purchasing; priority for residents on ferries; better disabled facilities and a strategic approach to regulation of the number of vehicles allowed on to the islands (Cumbrae).
- Marine planning, including licensing, consistent with the empowerment of communities and work to further devolve powers from the Crown Estate, Scotland. Provide opportunity for island communities to promote sustainable development of their own waters, which best reflect the commercial, recreational and conservation interests of the islands.
- Health and social care, especially lack of care homes, need for improved care at home packages and better transport to hospital.

5 Assessment Matrix

5.1 Business as Usual

- 5.1.1 The current bus operations in the SPT region reflect the provisions of the 1985 Transport Act. The majority of bus services are provided on a commercial basis by privately owned bus companies who recover the cost of operating their services through a mixture of farebox revenues and government payments. Socially necessary bus services are also provided through tendered contracts let by SPT in places or at times when bus services are not provided on a commercial basis. This includes all of the bus services on Arran and Cumbrae, which are closely integrated with school bus services.
- 5.1.2 Currently on the Isle of Cumbrae, the bus service is operated by Millport Motors Ltd with SPT supporting the service in the early morning and evening. The service runs between Millport Pier and Cumbrae slip with varying timetables between winter and summer. There are three existing bus routes on the Isle of Arran that are operated by Stagecoach on behalf of SPT. Both operator timetables align with the ferry service on the islands. Under a Business as Usual model this structure would be maintained, and operation would continue.
- 5.1.3 Given the commercial nature of operations, operators tend to focus on the corridors and towns where bus ridership, and the potential for growth in ridership, is higher. This means that some communities, or links between relatively nearby communities, can receive a poor bus service or, in extreme cases, no timetabled conventional bus service at all. SPT has a budget of £13m per annum to contract with operators to fill these gaps in the commercial networks and provide socially necessary bus services. These can take the form of:
- Entire services using conventional buses or door-to-door dial-a-ride operations;
 - Early morning, evening and Sunday services where the communities are served by commercial services during the rest of the week; and
 - Extensions and diversions to commercial services that would otherwise not serve certain communities.

Table 5.1: Business as Usual: Island Communities Impact Assessment

| ICIA Framework Criteria | |
|---|--|
| Will the SRBS options... | Commentary |
| Protect and increase the economic prosperity of island communities? | The lack of transport connectivity, and to some extent digital links, to employment opportunities for young people in island communities can be a major factor in out-migration towards the mainland, exacerbating issues of shrinking working-age populations even further (Transport Scotland, 2021). In the National Islands Plan survey, 71% of young islanders indicated they would be likely to stay on the islands for the next 5 years, which is significantly below the average of 86% for all island residents. More generally, poor public transport links, gaps in network provision and high costs of travel can restrict the ability of people to travel to employment opportunities and limits the availability of a workforce for employers. |

| ICIA Framework Criteria | |
|---|--|
| Will the SRBS options... | Commentary |
| | <p>Many employment sectors on Arran and Cumbrae rely on seasonal tourism; however, poor transport links may reduce the number of tourists resulting in negative impacts on people who works in this sector resulting in the need for diversification.</p> <p>The cost of transport is also a particular issue for island communities. Research by the Scottish Government found that less than half of island residents agree that local bus and ferry fares are good value.</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> Overall, it is assessed that Option 1 – Business as Usual could result in a Minor Adverse Effect in protecting and increasing the economic prosperity of island communities as the current model of operation can only meet basic accessibility needs on Arran and Cumbrae. As such, this model does not address population growth, increased tourism or better island to mainland connectivity that are essential to guaranteeing the economic prosperity of island communities.</p> |
| Effectively address the unique transport challenges faced by island communities? | <p>Respondents to the consultation for the National Plan for Scotland’s Islands (Scottish Government, 2019a) emphasised that island communities face many different transport challenges in their day-to-day lives compared to those living in less rural areas on the Scottish mainland. These include a lack of transport services, long journey times, the need for interchange / overnight stays, and the high cost of transport to and from the islands. Baseline data for Young persons’ Free Bus Travel Scheme shows those living in rural areas and on islands were more likely to cite timetables, frequency of buses, limited route options, a lack of bus stops nearby, and having to rely on family members when travelling as issues they faced, compared to those living in towns and cities (Transport Scotland, 2022).</p> <p>Weekday bus service frequency on Arran and Great Cumbrae almost entirely operate at 1-2 buses an hour or less (Stantec, 2023). Those in the islands are generally more likely to drive, and less likely to use the bus - this is consistent with results from the Scottish National Islands Plan Survey (2020), where 71% of those aged 18-35 used the bus once a year or less, or never.</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> Overall, it is assessed that Option 1 – Business as Usual could result in a Minor Adverse Effect in effectively addressing the unique transport challenges faced by island communities, due to current operational models providing basic levels of accessibility.</p> |
| Effectively address the unique social and demographic challenges faced by island communities? | <p>Population decline is a real threat to the sustainability of many, although not all, of Scotland’s Island communities. The population on the islands of Cumbrae and Arran is typically older than the rest of the North Ayrshire and SPT areas, with over 30% of people aged 65+, compared to 22% in North Ayrshire and 18% in Scotland (National Records of Scotland, 2011). Similarly, young people are under-represented with <13% of the population under the age of 16, compared with 17% in both North Ayrshire and Scotland (National Records of Scotland, 2011).</p> <p>Depopulation can have an adverse effect on communities, reducing confidence and the sustainability of services, increasing the vulnerability of communities already experiencing higher costs of service provision and market access. Population levels on Arran and Cumbrae between 2010 and 2020 declined by between 10% and 20% in some datazones although this trend has been partly reversed in the last 5 years in parts of west and south Arran. These changes and the corresponding reduction in the working age population on the islands means there are fewer people of working age available to provide necessary support services for the increasing number of older people.</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> Overall, it is assessed that Option 1 – Business as Usual could result in a Minor Adverse Effect in effectively addressing the unique social and demographic challenges faced by island communities.</p> |

| ICIA Framework Criteria | |
|---|--|
| Will the SRBS options... | Commentary |
| Impact on the islands' infrastructure or natural environment and biodiversity? | <p>There is no clear relationship in the appraisal between the business as usual scenario and the impact on the islands' infrastructure or natural environment and biodiversity. The environmental impact improvements related to modal shift away from car to bus are expected to be limited under business as usual in Arran and Cumbrae. Additionally, there is no discussion in the appraisal of what environmental initiatives would be included for islands.</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> Overall, it is assessed that Option 1 – Business as Usual could result in No Clear Relationship on the impact on the islands' infrastructure or natural environment and biodiversity.</p> |
| Effectively address the unique health challenges faced by the islands' communities? | <p>As previously stated, the population on the islands Cumbrae and Arran is typically older than the other SPT areas, with over 30% of people aged 65+. An older population will typically have more health challenges than a younger population. Dependence upon ferry services creates additional access issues for island residents, especially for Islanders who require frequent trips to the mainland for medical appointments from both an accessibility and affordability perspective. A key issue identified in the RTS Case for Change (Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, 2021) included the need for better transport networks to and from hospitals.</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> Overall, it is assessed that Option 1 – Business as Usual could result in a Minor Adverse Effect in effectively addressing the unique health challenges faced by the islands' communities.</p> |
| Protect and enhance quality of life for island residents? | <p>Whilst reported levels of satisfaction with island quality of life across the Scottish islands are often high, the lack of visible poverty (and/or its dispersed pattern) can hide the existence of pockets of deprivation in some island communities. For example, data from the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (Scottish Government, 2020) indicates that some parts of south and east Arran are within the second and third lowest deciles for housing and parts of Millport on Cumbrae are within the second lowest decile overall due to high levels of income, employment, health, education and housing deprivation.</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> Overall, it is assessed that Option 1 – Business as Usual could result in a Minor Adverse Effect in protecting and enhancing the quality of life for island residents.</p> |
| Overall Assessment | <p>Overall, it is assessed that Option 1 – Business as Usual could result in a Minor Adverse Effect on island communities.</p> <p>These areas currently benefit from services that are supported and subsidised by SPT. Due to higher operating costs, the viability of continuing current service provision levels may be challenging under a business as usual model. Without greater funding provision, we have assumed some deterioration of the bus network in these locations in regard to service levels, coverage, affordability and quality.</p> <p>The current model of operation can only meet basic accessibility needs on Arran and Cumbrae. As such, this model does not address population growth, increased tourism or better island to mainland connectivity that are essential to addressing key challenges faced by these island communities.</p> |

5.2 Voluntary Partnerships

5.2.1 A voluntary partnership (VP) provides a formal written framework within which bus operators, local transport authorities, local highway authorities and other relevant actors will work together to achieve stated objectives and deliver agreed measures and facilities. A VP is typically entered into to provide a structure for agreeing enhanced operating and highways standards when a major investment in infrastructure or services is secured. During the engagement process, the operators expressed the desire to establish a more ambitious and transformational VP than previous examples e.g. Glasgow City Region Bus Partnership. It is understood that this enhanced version of a partnership could include:

- A single network identity, including a region-wide app, website and branding;
- A joint management group made up of SPT and operator representatives to consider areas such as network strategy and operational reviews;
- Enhanced data sharing and KPI targets;
- Reinvestment of savings from bus priority measures into service enhancements;
- A review fares and ticketing to provide simpler and consolidated products; and
- Customer service improvements on-street and through other channels.

Table 5.2: Voluntary Partnerships: Island Communities Impact Assessment

| ICIA Framework Criteria | |
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| Will the SRBS options... | Commentary |
| Protect and increase the economic prosperity of island communities? | <p>Young people are under-represented in island population demographics with 13% or less of the population under the age of 16 (compared with 17% in both North Ayrshire and Scotland) and less than 10% of the population comprised of people in the 16 to 24 years age group (compared with 10.3% in Scotland). Population levels on Arran and Cumbrae between 2010 and 2020 declined by between 10% and 20% in some datazones.</p> <p>The lack of transport connectivity, and to some extent digital links, to employment opportunities for young people in island communities can be a major factor in out-migration towards the mainland, exacerbating issues of shrinking working-age populations even further (Transport Scotland, 2021). In the National Islands Plan survey 71% of young islanders indicated they would be likely to stay on the islands for the next 5 years, significantly below the average of 86% for all island residents. More generally, poor public transport links, gaps in network provision and high costs of travel can restrict the ability of people to travel to employment opportunities and limits the availability of a workforce for employers. A shrinking working-age population will adversely impact the economic prosperity of island communities.</p> |

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| Will the SRBS options... | Commentary |
| | <p>Many island communities, such as Arran and Cumbrae, rely on seasonal tourism. Poor transport links may reduce the number of tourists visiting the islands and may result in people of working age in this sector having to move to the mainland for more secure employment.</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> Overall, it is assessed that Option 2 – Voluntary Partnerships could result in a Minor Adverse Effect in protecting and increasing the economic prosperity of island communities. VPs exist in some areas of the SPT region however they do not appear to have significantly influenced levels of service provision. It is unlikely that any enhancements to current accessibility levels in Arran and Cumbrae would be delivered under a VP option.</p> |
| Effectively address the unique transport challenges faced by island communities? | <p>Transport is a fundamental issue for island communities. Poor transport links both to connect within the islands, and connecting to transport on and off the islands can disadvantage island communities relative to one another and to similar mainland communities. Respondents to the consultation for the National Plan for Scotland’s Islands (Scottish Government, 2019a) emphasised that island communities face many different transport challenges in their day-to-day lives compared to those living in less rural areas on the Scottish mainland. These include a lack of transport services, long journey times, the need for interchange / overnight stays, and the high cost of transport to and from the islands.</p> <p>Baseline data for the Young persons’ Free Bus Travel Scheme shows those living in rural areas and on islands were more likely to cite timetables, frequency of buses, limited route options, a lack of bus stops nearby, and having to rely on family members when travelling as issues they faced, compared to those living in towns and cities (Transport Scotland, 2022). The SPT 2019 public survey reported issues around frequency, costs and timetabling between ferries and onward public transport connections on the mainland (Stantec UK, 2021).</p> <p>Those in the islands are generally more likely to drive, and less likely to use the bus - this is consistent with results from the Scottish National Islands Plan Survey (2020), where 71% of those aged 18-35 used the bus once a year or less, or never.</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> Overall, it is assessed that Option 2 – Voluntary Partnerships could result in a Minor Adverse Effect in effectively addressing the unique transport challenges faced by island communities.</p> |
| Effectively address the unique social and demographic challenges faced by island communities? | <p>The population on the islands of Cumbrae and Arran is typically older than for the rest of the North Ayrshire and SPT areas, with over 30% of people aged 65 or over on these islands compared with 22% in North Ayrshire and 18% in Scotland (National Records of Scotland, 2021). Similarly young people are under-represented in island population demographics with 13% or less of the population under the age of 16 (compared with 17% in both North Ayrshire and Scotland) and less than 10% of the population comprised of people in the 16 to 24 years age group (compared with 10.3% in Scotland).</p> <p>The data from Young persons’ Free Bus Travel Scheme shows that young people living in rural areas and on islands were more likely to cite timetables, frequency of buses, limited route options, a lack of bus stops nearby, and having to rely on family members when travelling as issues they faced, compared to those living in towns and cities (Transport Scotland, 2022).</p> <p>Depopulation is a major concern for island communities as it can reduce confidence and the sustainability of services, consequently increasing the vulnerability of communities already experiencing higher costs of service provision and market access. A reduction in the working age population on the islands means there are fewer people of working age available to provide necessary support services for the increasing number of older people. In survey work undertaken for the National Islands Plan (Government, Scottish, 2020), less</p> |

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| Will the SRBS options... | Commentary |
| | <p>than 82% of respondents in Arran, Bute and Cumbrae identified that they would be likely to stay on the island for the next five years (compared with 86% for all islands), indicating the potential for further reductions in future island populations.</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> Overall, it is assessed that Option 2 – Voluntary Partnerships could result in a Minor Adverse Effect in effectively addressing the unique social and demographic challenges faced by island communities.</p> |
| Impact on the islands' infrastructure or natural environment and biodiversity? | <p>A VP has the potential to enhance the delivery of low- and zero- emission vehicles and co-ordination of their deployment. Similarly, improvements to the bus network to encourage modal shift from car to bus are also possible. However, based on the geographical context on Arran and Cumbrae, initiatives delivered under this arrangement are unlikely to generate significant or sustained growth in passenger demand or implementation of fleet enhancements. Should arrangements be enhanced, however, then there may be more scope for this but likely at a lesser scale than other options, such as a BSIP or franchising model, which would be more likely to set and deliver more ambitious targets. Due to limited detail or evidence for island communities, there is no clear relationship between a VP options and impact on the islands' infrastructure or natural environment and biodiversity.</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> Overall, it is assessed that Option 2 – Voluntary Partnerships has No Clear Relationship on the impact on the islands' infrastructure or natural environment and biodiversity.</p> |
| Effectively address the unique health challenges faced by the islands' communities? | <p>Data from the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (Scottish Government, 2020) indicates that some parts of Cumbrae are within the second lowest decile overall due to high levels some indicators, including health.</p> <p>The population on the islands of Cumbrae and Arran is typically older than the other SPT areas, with over 30% of people aged 65+. An older population will typically have greater health challenges than a younger population. Dependence upon ferry services creates additional access issues for island residents, especially for Islanders who require frequent trips to the mainland for medical appointments from both an accessibility and affordability perspective. A key issue identified in the RTS Case for Change (Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, 2021) included the need for better transport networks to and from hospitals.</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> Overall, it is assessed that Option 2 – Voluntary Partnerships could result in a Minor Adverse Effect in effectively addressing the unique health challenges faced by the islands' communities.</p> |
| Protect and enhance quality of life for island residents? | <p>Whilst reported levels of satisfaction with island quality of life across the Scottish islands are often high, the lack of visible poverty can hide the existence of pockets of deprivation in some island communities. For example, data from the SIMD (Scottish Government, 2020) indicates that some parts of south and east Arran are within the second and third lowest deciles for housing and parts of Millport on Cumbrae are within the second lowest decile overall due to high levels of income, employment, health, education and housing deprivation.</p> <p>Relative child poverty for local authorities in Scotland using the DWP's experimental statistics on local child poverty indicate relatively high levels of children were living in low-income families in the Ardrrossan and Arran ward, with figures increasing from 18.2% in 2015 to 28.0% in 2020. Equivalent figures in the 'North Coast and Cumbraes' ward were lower but also increased over this period to 14.7% in 2020 (UK Department for Work and Pensions, 2020). Whilst this data includes part of the mainland areas and therefore does not directly represent the island situation, it indicates that socio-economic disadvantage is encountered in some island communities.</p> |

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| Will the SRBS options... | Commentary |
| | <p>Island rurality can exacerbate inequality already experienced on account of the protected characteristics defined under the Equalities Act 2010. Issues which impact on all islanders such as access to transport may be acutely felt by some groups more than others requiring targeted measures to redress the inequality experienced (Scottish Government, 2020).</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> Overall, it is assessed that Option 2 – Voluntary Partnerships could result in a Minor Adverse Effect in protecting and enhancing the quality of life for island residents.</p> |
| Overall Assessment | <p>Overall, it is assessed that Option 2 – Voluntary Partnerships could result in a Minor Adverse Effect on island communities.</p> <p>Ultimately, delivering a partnerships model such as VPs in areas such as Arran and Cumbrae with a number of existing SPT supported services or weak commercial markets are likely to be challenging. Any benefits arising from these models will depend on funding agreements that could allow the supported services network to be expanded. Due to limited enhancements made in the SPT region under current VPs it is unlikely that this option would lead to significant enhancements to current levels of accessibility on Arran and Cumbrae.</p> |

5.3 Bus Service Improvement Partnerships (BSIPs)

5.3.1 A Bus Service Improvement Partnership (BSIP) is a new form of statutory quality partnership enabled by the Transport (Scotland) Act 2019. A BSIP enables partners to come together and agree on binding commitments that will be delivered during the term of the partnership. If measures and facilities agreed upon during the inception of the BSIP are not delivered, then the relevant partner can be at risk of sanctions – as an example, an operator who fails to meet the agreed standards of operation for a service (a vehicle quality standard or the acceptance of multi-operator tickets, for instance) could see its services deregistered by the Traffic Commissioner. A Bus Service Improvement Partnership provides the relevant parties with greater confidence that the proposed outcomes developed in the consultation period will be delivered. Within a BSIP, commitments made by partners are more binding, given the statutory nature of the partnership. More ambitious working relationships between partners could result in benefits such as:

- An expansion of the network;
- An enhancement of services through adherence to agreed standards;
- A more integrated system through area wide tickets and value for money multi-operators tickets

The process of establishing a BSIP involves consultation between local authorities, bus operators and other relevant parties to establish an initial view on the content of the BSIP plan and scheme(s) and establish commitments. Whilst the statutory nature of the partnership can result in more ambitious outcomes and deliver benefits, it can create considerable demand in terms of management, and the commitments made are reliant on agreement between all partners.

Table 5.3: Bus Service Improvement Partnership: Island Communities Impact Assessment

| ICIA Framework Criteria | |
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| Will the SRBS options... | Commentary |
| Protect and increase the economic prosperity of island communities? | <p>The primary connection to the mainland from both the islands of Arran and Great Cumbrae is by ferry, and both islands are served by bus services that run directly from the ferry terminal. Whilst existing bus services are relatively direct to the ferry terminal, island communities face different transport challenges (Scottish Government, 2019a). These challenges include a lack of available, frequent, and affordable transport services to the mainland, reducing employment, educational, and training opportunities for island communities. These challenges, combined with the perceived peripheral nature of islands, results in youth outmigration from Scottish islands, reducing the working age population and jeopardising the economic prosperity of island communities (Alexander, 2021). In the National Islands Plan survey, 71% of young islanders indicated they would be likely to stay on the island for the next 5 years, significantly below the average 86% for all island residents. More generally, poor public transport links, gaps in network provision and high cost of travel can restrict the ability of people to travel to employment opportunities and limits the availability of a workforce for employers.</p> <p>The economic sustainability of both islands relies heavily on the tourism industry (North Ayrshire Council, 2022). Total employment on the Isle of Cumbrae is estimated at 400, of which a quarter work in tourism related sectors and tourism related employment</p> |

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| Will the SRBS options... | Commentary |
| | <p>accounted for over one in three jobs in Arran in 2019 (North Ayrshire Council, 2022). Affordable, frequent, and available transport options support tourism to the islands, harnessing the economic benefits for the island communities.</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> Overall, it is assessed that Option 3 – Bus Service Improvement Partnerships could result in a Neutral / Negligible Effect in protecting and increasing the economic prosperity of island communities. BSIPs are unlikely to have a direct impact on island networks however some improvements may be delivered to enhance island to mainland connectivity related to BSIP improvements in the mainland SPT region. This could facilitate better links for onward travel to key mainland destinations and encourage more trips to Arran and Cumbrae for tourists and other visitors.</p> |
| Effectively address the unique transport challenges faced by island communities? | <p>Respondents to the consultation for the National Plan for Scotland’s Islands (Scottish Government, 2019a) emphasised that island communities face many different transport challenges in their day-to-day lives compared to those living in less rural areas on the Scottish mainland.</p> <p>The cost of transport on island is much higher, relative to income, than in the rest of Scotland. Journey times are also longer and can require multiple interchanges and tickets, adding further to the cost and complexity of travel for island communities (Scottish Government, 2019). Baseline data for Young persons’ Free Bus Travel Scheme shows those living in rural areas and on islands were more likely to cite timetables, frequency of buses, limited route options, a lack of bus stops nearby, and having to rely on family members when travelling as issues they faced, compared to those living in towns and cities (Transport Scotland, 2022).</p> <p>Weekday bus service frequency on Arran and Great Cumbrae almost entirely operate at 1-2 buses an hour or less (Stantec, 2023).</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> Overall, it is assessed that Option 3 – Bus Service Improvement Partnerships could result in a Neutral / Negligible Effect in addressing the unique transport challenges faced by island communities.</p> |
| Effectively address the unique social and demographic challenges faced by island communities? | <p>Population decline is a threat to the sustainability of many island communities. Over the last 10 years, almost twice as many islands have lost populations as have gained (Scottish Government, 2024). Between 2001 and 2019, the total population of the Isle of Cumbrae and Arran contracted by 10% (North Ayrshire Council, 2022).</p> <p>As well as population decline, island communities typically have ageing populations. The population on the islands of Cumbrae and Arran is typically older than the rest of the North Ayrshire and SPT areas, with over 30% of people aged 65+, compared to 22% in North Ayrshire and 18% in Scotland (National Records of Scotland, 2011). Similarly, young people are under-represented with <13% of the population under the age of 16, compared with 17% in both North Ayrshire and Scotland (National Records of Scotland, 2011).</p> <p>Depopulation can have an adverse effect on communities, reducing confidence and the sustainability of services, increasing the vulnerability of communities already experiencing higher costs of service provision and market access. These changes and the corresponding reduction in the working age population on the islands means there are fewer people of working age available to provide necessary support services for the increasing number of older people.</p> <p>Island communities can also face additional freight costs, such as to get goods, including farming and seafood produce, to market or to import energy sources or building materials and labour. Additional charges for deliveries can also be a challenge. The Isle of Cumbrae Local Island Plan identified that suppliers of goods to the island may apply an additional premium to compensate for the</p> |

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| Will the SRBS options... | Commentary |
| | <p>unreliability of the ferries. The cost is passed on to the consumer, creating a higher cost of living on the island (North Ayrshire Council, 2022).</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> Overall, it is assessed that Option 3 – Bus Service Improvement Partnerships could result in a Neutral / Negligible Effect in addressing the unique social and demographic challenges faced by island communities.</p> |
| Impact on the islands' infrastructure or natural environment and biodiversity? | <p>Future transport systems on islands will have to play their role in reaching net zero emissions and contribute to the Scottish Government's climate change obligations. Access to sustainable travel choices such as bus transport is integral to helping to achieve this.</p> <p>Community Energy Scotland conducted an audit of the Transport sector on the Isle of Cumbrae to develop a baseline of greenhouse gas emissions study as part of the Carbon Neutral Island Project. The transport sector includes emissions from on-road traffic as well as ferries departing the island. Waterborne transport accounts for around 33% of emissions in this sector predominately due to the fuel powering the ferry, while around 66% of emissions come from on-road vehicles. The reduction of emissions from on-road vehicles on both islands could benefit the natural environment and improve biodiversity.</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> Overall, it is assessed that Option 3 – Bus Service Improvement Partnerships could result in a Neutral / Negligible Effect on the islands infrastructure or natural environment and biodiversity.</p> |
| Effectively address the unique health challenges faced by the islands' communities? | <p>Access issues for island communities are similar to those faced by the mainland remote areas. However, dependence upon ferry services creates additional access issues for island residents in terms of cost, time and aligning journeys (and especially those made by public transport) to ferry schedules. For Islands who require frequent trips to the mainland for medical appointments, this is even more pertinent, from both an accessibility and affordability perspective.</p> <p>Respondents to The National Islands Plan (2019) highlighted concerns about the perceived centralisation of healthcare services; both in terms of access to certain services being moved to the mainland or the population centres of larger islands.</p> <p>Local access to services was an important issue for many women who reported having to travel long distances for appointments. In island communities, there was a desire to have as much care as possible provided locally, although women did recognise the need to ensure that services were safe and sustainable. Travel challenges leading to lengthy periods away from home were particularly difficult for families with other children or caring responsibilities (Scottish Government, 2019).</p> <p>Additionally, the population on the islands Cumbrae and Arran is typically older than the other SPT areas, with over 30% of people aged 65+. An older population will typically have more health challenges than a younger population. A key issue identified in the RTS Case for Change (Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, 2021) included the need for better transport networks to and from hospitals.</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> Overall, it is assessed that Option 3 – Bus Service Improvement Partnerships could result in a Neutral / Negligible Effect in addressing the unique health challenges faced by island communities.</p> |
| Protect and enhance quality of life for island residents? | <p>Whilst reported levels of satisfaction with island quality of life across the Scottish islands are often high, the lack of visible poverty (and/or its dispersed pattern) can hide the existence of pockets of deprivation in some island communities. For example, data from</p> |

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| Will the SRBS options... | Commentary |
| | <p>the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (Scottish Government, 2020) indicates that some parts of south and east Arran are within the second and third lowest deciles for housing and parts of Millport on Cumbrae are within the second lowest decile overall due to high levels of income, employment, health, education and housing deprivation.</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> Overall, it is assessed that Option 3 – Bus Service Improvement Partnerships could result in a Neutral / Negligible Effect in protecting and enhancing quality of life for island residents.</p> |
| Overall Assessment | <p>Overall, it is assessed that Option 3 – Bus Service Improvement Partnerships could result in a Neutral / Negligible Effect on island communities.</p> <p>Ultimately, delivering a partnerships model such as BSIP in areas such as Arran and Cumbrae with a number of existing SPT contracts for supported services and weak commercial markets are likely to be challenging. As such a BSIP is unlikely to have a direct impact on island networks. However, there may be some improvements to island-mainland connectivity under a BSIP option if improvements are delivered in mainland regions that facilitate connectivity to and from Arran and Cumbrae.</p> |

5.4 Franchising

- 5.4.1 Franchising allows the authority to specify service standards, which includes the potential to set ‘ambitious’ levels of service (subject to sufficient funding). Under franchising, service levels will not only be dependent on passenger demand (as is the case currently) but can also support wider public sector policies such as offering sustainable travel alternatives, tackling social deprivation, or supporting local economies. A franchising option is more likely to be applied region wide so could deliver far reaching benefits such as wider network coverage, enhanced comparative access by different population groups, and comparative access by geographic sub-context. A precise franchising model is subject to further development; however, it could range from a comprehensive form (e.g., covering all/most of the region) to a more localised form (e.g., covering a single local authority or part of an authority), with different options available in between. Franchising has the potential to set an ambitious model of comprehensive specifications covering every aspect of bus service operation however it could also seek to operate with more flexible arrangement with a range of risk-sharing between the public and private sectors.
- 5.4.2 Delivering a franchising scheme is recognised as a complex and resource intensive endeavour with significant risks associated with funding, set-up and preparation, unknown timescales and potential legal challenges raised from commercial operators.

Table 5.3: Franchising: Island Communities Impact Assessment

| ICIA Framework Criteria | |
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| Will the SRBS options... | Commentary |
| Protect and increase the economic prosperity of island communities? | <p>The primary connection to the mainland from both the islands of Arran and Great Cumbrae is by ferry, and both islands are served by bus services that run directly from the ferry terminal. Whilst existing bus services are relatively direct to the ferry terminal, island communities face different transport challenges (Scottish Government, 2019a). These challenges include a lack of available, frequent, and affordable transport services to the mainland, reducing employment, educational, and training opportunities for island communities. These challenges, combined with the perceived peripheral nature of islands, results in youth outmigration from Scottish islands, reducing the working age population and jeopardising the economic prosperity of island communities (Alexander, 2021). In the National Islands Plan survey, 71% of young islanders indicated they would be likely to stay on the island for the next 5 years, significantly below the average 86% for all island residents. More generally, poor public transport links, gaps in network provision and high cost of travel can restrict the ability of people to travel to employment opportunities and limits the availability of a workforce for employers.</p> <p>The economic sustainability of both islands relies heavily on the tourism industry (North Ayrshire Council, 2022). Total employment on the Isle of Cumbrae is estimated at 400, of which a quarter work in tourism related sectors and tourism related employment accounted for over one in three jobs in Arran in 2019 (North Ayrshire Council, 2022). Affordable, frequent, and available transport options support tourism to the islands, harnessing the economic benefits for the island communities.</p> <p>The SPT Regional Transport Strategy (2023-2028) states that <i>“Rural, remote and island areas need to be connected to their closest town centres and public transport hubs. Good connections are required between towns that have highly integrated labour markets and economies, such as within Ayrshire, Lanarkshire and between the whole of the region and Glasgow. The region also needs good connections to the rest of Scotland and beyond, for passenger and freight movements”</i>.</p> |

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| Will the SRBS options... | Commentary |
| | <p>The region's connectivity needs are highly complex, the SPT Regional Transport Strategy (2023-2028) states that <i>“Amongst these needs, the regional transport network needs to support rural, island and coastal areas to reverse depopulation trends and manage sustainable growth in rural tourism; ensure access to jobs both within many sub-regional contexts as well as region-wide access to Glasgow, and underpin regional cohesion and economic development goals whilst also ensuring integration with other regions and national economic and development policy”</i>.</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> The economic prosperity of island communities is influenced by many complex factors. However, the provision of reliable, integrated and more affordable public transport links benefitting both local island residents and visitors will deliver positive impacts to the local economy. Overall, it is assessed that Option 4 - Franchising could result in a Major Beneficial Effect in terms of increasing the economic prosperity of island communities.</p> |
| Effectively address the unique transport challenges faced by island communities? | <p>The population on the islands of Cumbrae and Arran is typically older than for the rest of the North Ayrshire and SPT areas, with over 30% of people aged 65 or over on these islands compared with 22% in North Ayrshire and 18% in Scotland (National Records of Scotland, 2021). Similarly young people are under-represented in island population demographics with 13% or less of the population under the age of 16 (compared with 17% in both North Ayrshire and Scotland) and less than 10% of the population comprised of people in the 16 to 24 years age group (compared with 10.3% in Scotland).</p> <p>The data from Young persons' Free Bus Travel Scheme shows that young people living in rural areas and on islands were more likely to cite timetables, frequency of buses, limited route options, a lack of bus stops nearby, and having to rely on family members when travelling as issues they faced, compared to those living in towns and cities (Transport Scotland, 2022).</p> <p>Depopulation is a major concern for island communities as it can reduce confidence and the sustainability of services, consequently increasing the vulnerability of communities already experiencing higher costs of service provision and market access. A reduction in the working age population on the islands means there are fewer people of working age available to provide necessary support services for the increasing number of older people. In survey work undertaken for the National Islands Plan (Government, Scottish, 2020), less than 82% of respondents in Arran, Bute and Cumbrae identified that they would be likely to stay on the island for the next five years (compared with 86% for all islands), indicating the potential for further reductions in future island populations.</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> Overall, it is assessed that Option 4 – Franchising could have a Minor Beneficial Effect in addressing unique transport related challenges in island communities.</p> |
| Effectively address the unique social and demographic challenges faced by island communities? | <p>Population decline is a threat to the sustainability of many island communities. Over the last 10 years, almost twice as many islands have lost populations as have gained (Scottish Government, 2024). Between 2001 and 2019, the total population of the Isle of Cumbrae and Arran contracted by 10% (North Ayrshire Council, 2022).</p> <p>As well as population decline, island communities typically have ageing populations. The population on the islands of Cumbrae and Arran is typically older than the rest of the North Ayrshire and SPT areas, with over 30% of people aged 65+, compared to 22% in North Ayrshire and 18% in Scotland (National Records of Scotland, 2011). Similarly, young people are under-represented with <13% of the population under the age of 16, compared with 17% in both North Ayrshire and Scotland (National Records of Scotland, 2011).</p> <p>Depopulation can have an adverse effect on communities, reducing confidence and the sustainability of services, increasing the vulnerability of communities already experiencing higher costs of service provision and market access. These changes and the</p> |

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| Will the SRBS options... | Commentary |
| | <p>corresponding reduction in the working age population on the islands means there are fewer people of working age available to provide necessary support services for the increasing number of older people.</p> <p>Island communities can also face additional freight costs, such as to get goods, including farming and seafood produce, to market or to import energy sources or building materials and labour. Additional charges for deliveries can also be a challenge. The Isle of Cumbrae Local Island Plan identified that suppliers of goods to the island may apply an additional premium to compensate for the unreliability of the ferries. The cost is passed on to the consumer, creating a higher cost of living on the island (North Ayrshire Council, 2022).</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> It is assessed that Option 4 – Franchising would have a Minor Beneficial Effect on addressing the unique social and demographic challenges faced by island communities.</p> |
| Impact on the islands' infrastructure or natural environment and biodiversity? | <p>Future transport systems on islands will have to play their role in reaching net zero emissions and contribute to the Scottish Government's climate change obligations. Access to sustainable travel choices such as bus transport is integral to helping to achieve this.</p> <p>Community Energy Scotland conducted an audit of the Transport sector on the Isle of Cumbrae to develop a baseline of greenhouse gas emissions study as part of the Carbon Neutral Island Project. The transport sector includes emissions from on-road traffic as well as ferries departing the island. Waterborne transport accounts for around 33% of emissions in this sector predominately due to the fuel powering the ferry, while around 66% of emissions come from on-road vehicles. The reduction of emissions from on-road vehicles on both islands could benefit the natural environment and improve biodiversity.</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> It is assessed that Option 4 – Franchising could have a Minor Beneficial Effect in terms of enhancing island infrastructure and reducing adverse environmental impacts associated with bus travel by integrating island transport more clearly as part of the wider regional bus network.</p> |
| Effectively address the unique health challenges faced by the islands' communities? | <p>Access issues for island communities are similar to those faced by the mainland remote areas. However, dependence upon ferry services creates additional access issues for island residents in terms of cost, time and aligning journeys (and especially those made by public transport) to ferry schedules. For Islands who require frequent trips to the mainland for medical appointments, this is even more pertinent, from both an accessibility and affordability perspective.</p> <p>Respondents to The National Islands Plan (2019) highlighted concerns about the perceived centralisation of healthcare services; both in terms of access to certain services being moved to the mainland or the population centres of larger islands.</p> <p>Local access to services was an important issue for many women who reported having to travel long distances for appointments. In island communities, there was a desire to have as much care as possible provided locally, although women did recognise the need to ensure that services were safe and sustainable. Travel challenges leading to lengthy periods away from home were particularly difficult for families with other children or caring responsibilities (Scottish Government, 2019).</p> <p>Additionally, the population on the islands Cumbrae and Arran is typically older than the other SPT areas, with over 30% of people aged 65+. An older population will typically have more health challenges than a younger population. A key issue identified in the</p> |

| ICIA Framework Criteria | |
|---|---|
| Will the SRBS options... | Commentary |
| | <p>RTS Case for Change (Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, 2021) included the need for better transport networks to and from hospitals.</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> It is assessed that Option 4 – Franchising could have a Minor Beneficial Effect in addressing the unique health challenges faced by island communities.</p> |
| Protect and enhance quality of life for island residents? | <p>Whilst reported levels of satisfaction with island quality of life across the Scottish islands are often high, the lack of visible poverty (and/or its dispersed pattern) can hide the existence of pockets of deprivation in some island communities. For example, data from the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (Scottish Government, 2020) indicates that some parts of south and east Arran are within the second and third lowest deciles for housing and parts of Millport on Cumbrae are within the second lowest decile overall due to high levels of income, employment, health, education and housing deprivation.</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> It is assessed that Option 4 – Franchising could have a Major Beneficial Effect in terms of enhancing quality of life for island residents. A franchising model could deliver improved island to mainland connectivity facilitating opportunities for growth, local businesses and tourism. Clearer integration with the wider regional bus network, with opportunities for cross-subsidy, can provide more affordable, higher quality, more accessible and integrated multi-modal journeys for island residents and visitors.</p> |
| Overall Assessment | <p>Overall, it is assessed that Option 4 – Franchising could result in a Minor Beneficial Effect on island communities as it is likely to have the widest reach in terms of geographic coverage it can set ambitious standard for operation that are tailored to local geographic contexts.</p> <p>The lack of commercially viable services on the islands, and the likelihood of this continuing or worsening, may potentially mean that a franchising option would have a greater beneficial impact given that this option has the potential for SPT to specify strategic and societal targets as part of their agreements with local island bus operators.</p> <p>Region-wide franchising could support connectivity to and from Arran and Cumbrae by providing a more cohesive and integrated bus network for island to mainland journeys. Increased connectivity and network integration options could support local growth and tourism opportunities that would directly benefit Arran and Cumbrae.</p> |

5.5 Municipal Bus Operators

- 5.5.1 Under a Municipal Bus Operator model, the operator would likely be an arms-length company wholly owned by the local authority, providing suitable separation when competing for tendered bus service contracts. This options could come forward under two formats to replace current commercial operators' businesses: either by winning contracts in a franchise scheme, or by acquisition of bus operator assets and businesses – which although possible is not considered feasible to achieve market dominance.
- 5.5.2 It is considered that this option would work in conjunction with the franchise scheme options, inheriting all costs, benefits and risks associated with that option.
- 5.5.3 A municipal operator is unlikely to acquire all existing commercial services in the region, at least in the short term, and is more likely to start at a smaller scale, perhaps by operating subsidised services or filling gaps in the network. Therefore, there is uncertainty about the geographic applicability and relevance of any benefits associated with this option as they are dependent on the wider operating context.

Table 5.4: Municipal Bus Operators: Island Communities Impact Assessment

| ICIA Framework Criteria | |
|---|---|
| Will the SRBS options... | Commentary |
| Protect and increase the economic prosperity of island communities? | <p>The primary connection to the mainland from both the islands of Arran and Great Cumbrae is by ferry, and both islands are served by bus services that run directly from the ferry terminal. Whilst existing bus services are relatively direct to the ferry terminal, island communities face different transport challenges (Scottish Government, 2019a). These challenges include a lack of available, frequent, and affordable transport services to the mainland, reducing employment, educational, and training opportunities for island communities. These challenges, combined with the perceived peripheral nature of islands, results in youth outmigration from Scottish islands, reducing the working age population and jeopardising the economic prosperity of island communities (Alexander, 2021). In the National Islands Plan survey, 71% of young islanders indicated they would be likely to stay on the island for the next 5 years, significantly below the average 86% for all island residents. More generally, poor public transport links, gaps in network provision and high cost of travel can restrict the ability of people to travel to employment opportunities and limits the availability of a workforce for employers.</p> <p>The economic sustainability of both islands relies heavily on the tourism industry (North Ayrshire Council, 2022). Total employment on the Isle of Cumbrae is estimated at 400, of which a quarter work in tourism related sectors and tourism related employment accounted for over one in three jobs in Arran in 2019 (North Ayrshire Council, 2022). Affordable, frequent, and available transport options support tourism to the islands, harnessing the economic benefits for the island communities.</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> The economic prosperity of island communities is influenced by many complex factors. However, the provision of reliable, integrated and more affordable public transport links benefitting both local residents and visitors will deliver positive impacts to the local economy. Due to uncertainties around the operating environment that could support a municipal bus operator model and the scale of geographies that could be affected it is assessed that Option 5 – Municipal Bus Operators could result in an Uncertain Effect in terms of increasing the economic prosperity of island communities.</p> |

| ICIA Framework Criteria | |
|---|---|
| Will the SRBS options... | Commentary |
| Effectively address the unique transport challenges faced by island communities? | <p>The population on the islands of Cumbrae and Arran is typically older than for the rest of the North Ayrshire and SPT areas, with over 30% of people aged 65 or over on these islands compared with 22% in North Ayrshire and 18% in Scotland (National Records of Scotland, 2021). Similarly young people are under-represented in island population demographics with 13% or less of the population under the age of 16 (compared with 17% in both North Ayrshire and Scotland) and less than 10% of the population comprised of people in the 16 to 24 years age group (compared with 10.3% in Scotland).</p> <p>The data from Young persons' Free Bus Travel Scheme shows that young people living in rural areas and on islands were more likely to cite timetables, frequency of buses, limited route options, a lack of bus stops nearby, and having to rely on family members when travelling as issues they faced, compared to those living in towns and cities (Transport Scotland, 2022).</p> <p>Depopulation is a major concern for island communities as it can reduce confidence and the sustainability of services, consequently increasing the vulnerability of communities already experiencing higher costs of service provision and market access. A reduction in the working age population on the islands means there are fewer people of working age available to provide necessary support services for the increasing number of older people. In survey work undertaken for the National Islands Plan (Government, Scottish, 2020), less than 82% of respondents in Arran, Bute and Cumbrae identified that they would be likely to stay on the island for the next five years (compared with 86% for all islands), indicating the potential for further reductions in future island populations.</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> Due to uncertainties around the operating environment that could support a municipal bus operator model and the scale of geographies that could be affected it is assessed that Option 5 – Municipal Bus Operators could result in an Uncertain Effect in terms of increasing the economic prosperity of island communities.</p> |
| Effectively address the unique social and demographic challenges faced by island communities? | <p>Population decline is a threat to the sustainability of many island communities. Over the last 10 years, almost twice as many islands have lost populations as have gained (Scottish Government, 2024). Between 2001 and 2019, the total population of the Isle of Cumbrae and Arran contracted by 10% (North Ayrshire Council, 2022).</p> <p>As well as population decline, island communities have typically ageing populations. The population on the islands of Cumbrae and Arran is typically older than the rest of the North Ayrshire and SPT areas, with over 30% of people aged 65+, compared to 22% in North Ayrshire and 18% in Scotland (National Records of Scotland, 2011). Similarly, young people are under-represented with <13% of the population under the age of 16, compared with 17% in both North Ayrshire and Scotland (National Records of Scotland, 2011).</p> <p>Depopulation can have an adverse effect on communities, reducing confidence and the sustainability of services, increasing the vulnerability of communities already experiencing higher costs of service provision and market access. These changes and the corresponding reduction in the working age population on the islands means there are fewer people of working age available to provide necessary support services for the increasing number of older people.</p> <p>Island communities can also face additional freight costs, such as to get goods, including farming and seafood produce, to market or to import energy sources or building materials and labour. Additional charges for deliveries can also be a challenge. The Isle of Cumbrae Local Island Plan identified that suppliers of goods to the island may apply an additional premium to compensate for the unreliability of the ferries. The cost is passed on to the consumer, creating a higher cost of living on the island (North Ayrshire Council, 2022).</p> |

| ICIA Framework Criteria | |
|---|---|
| Will the SRBS options... | Commentary |
| | <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> Due to uncertainties around the operating environment that could support a municipal bus operator model and the scale of geographies that could be affected it is assessed that Option 5 – Municipal Bus Operators could result in an Uncertain Effect in terms of increasing the economic prosperity of island communities.</p> |
| Impact on the islands' infrastructure or natural environment and biodiversity? | <p>Future transport systems on islands will have to play their role in reaching net zero emissions and contribute to the Scottish Government's climate change obligations. Access to sustainable travel choices such as bus transport is integral to helping to achieve this.</p> <p>Community Energy Scotland conducted an audit of the Transport sector on the Isle of Cumbrae to develop a baseline of greenhouse gas emissions study as part of the Carbon Neutral Island Project. The transport sector includes emissions from on-road traffic as well as ferries departing the island. Waterborne transport accounts for around 33% of emissions in this sector predominately due to the fuel powering the ferry, while around 66% of emissions come from on-road vehicles. The reduction of emissions from on-road vehicles on both islands could benefit the natural environment and improve biodiversity.</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> Due to uncertainties around the operating environment that could support a municipal bus operator model and the scale of geographies that could be affected it is assessed that Option 5 – Municipal Bus Operators could result in an Uncertain Effect in terms of increasing the economic prosperity of island communities.</p> |
| Effectively address the unique health challenges faced by the islands' communities? | <p>Access issues for island communities are similar to those faced by the mainland remote areas. However, dependence upon ferry services creates additional access issues for island residents in terms of cost, time and aligning journeys (and especially those made by public transport) to ferry schedules. For Islands who require frequent trips to the mainland for medical appointments, this is even more pertinent, from both an accessibility and affordability perspective.</p> <p>Respondents to The National Islands Plan (2019) highlighted concerns about the perceived centralisation of healthcare services; both in terms of access to certain services being moved to the mainland or the population centres of larger islands.</p> <p>Local access to services was an important issue for many women who reported having to travel long distances for appointments. In island communities, there was a desire to have as much care as possible provided locally, although women did recognise the need to ensure that services were safe and sustainable. Travel challenges leading to lengthy periods away from home were particularly difficult for families with other children or caring responsibilities (Scottish Government, 2019).</p> <p>Additionally, the population on the islands Cumbrae and Arran is typically older than the other SPT areas, with over 30% of people aged 65+. An older population will typically have more health challenges than a younger population. A key issue identified in the RTS Case for Change (Strathclyde Partnership for Transport, 2021) included the need for better transport networks to and from hospitals.</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> Due to uncertainties around the operating environment that could support a municipal bus operator model and the scale of geographies that could be affected it is assessed that Option 5 – Municipal Bus Operators could result in an Uncertain Effect in terms of increasing the economic prosperity of island communities.</p> |

| ICIA Framework Criteria | |
|---|--|
| Will the SRBS options... | Commentary |
| Protect and enhance quality of life for island residents? | <p>Whilst reported levels of satisfaction with island quality of life across the Scottish islands are often high, the lack of visible poverty (and/or its dispersed pattern) can hide the existence of pockets of deprivation in some island communities. For example, data from the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (Scottish Government, 2020) indicates that some parts of south and east Arran are within the second and third lowest deciles for housing and parts of Millport on Cumbrae are within the second lowest decile overall due to high levels of income, employment, health, education and housing deprivation.</p> <p>The extent to which this domain can be influenced is dependent on the scale and coverage that could be afforded to island communities under a municipal bus operator model. At present, further appraisal is required for this option to understand if it could be applied in conjunction with another operating model (e.g., voluntary partnership, BSIP or franchising). The wider delivery context to be applied to this option would influence the scale of benefits and network coverage that would be feasible. If applied in conjunction with a BSIP or franchising model it is possible that municipal ownership could support the delivery of similar benefits that might be afforded under these models. However, at this stage the application of this model to island communities is assessed as uncertain.</p> <p><u>Overall Impact:</u> Option 5 – Municipal Bus Operators could result in an Uncertain Effect in terms of increasing the economic prosperity of island communities.</p> |
| Overall Assessment | <p>For reasons detailed above, Option 5 – Municipal Bus Operators could result in an Uncertain effect in terms of increasing the economic prosperity of island communities.</p> <p>The lack of commercially viable services on the islands, and the likelihood of this continuing or worsening, may potentially mean that a municipal option could deliver some beneficial impacts given that this option, like franchising, has the strategic and societal benefit oversight that other partnership options have less of. However, it is uncertain how this option could be applied to island contexts due to limited detail / evidence.</p> |

6 Summary

Table 6.1: Summary of Impacts

| ICIA Framework Criteria | Assessment of Options | | | | |
|---|-----------------------|---|---|----|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Will the SRBS options... | | | | | |
| Protect and increase the economic prosperity of island communities? | - | - | 0 | ++ | ? |
| Effectively address the unique transport challenges faced by island communities? | - | - | 0 | + | ? |
| Effectively address the unique social and demographic challenges faced by island communities? | - | - | 0 | + | ? |
| Impact on the islands' infrastructure or natural environment and biodiversity? | ~ | ~ | 0 | + | ? |
| Effectively address the unique health challenges faced by the islands' communities? | - | - | 0 | + | ? |
| Protect and enhance quality of life for island residents? | - | - | 0 | ++ | ? |
| Overall Assessment | - | - | 0 | + | ? |

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