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TURRIFF BUS SERVICE TO UNDERGO COUNCIL OPERATED PILOT SCHEME

TURRIFF'S 257 and 258 bus services which are currently run by Stagecoach are set to be subject to a new dial-a-bus trial system with Aberdeenshire Council taking on responsibility for the scheme in mid-November

Aberdeenshire Council's principal officer of the Passenger Transport Unit, Marion Mackay explained: "The pilot project involves the Council operating the Turriff Town and Circular bus services using a new Council minibus and integrating this operation with the existing TurriffA2B dial-a-bus service which is also operated by a Council minibus. "The Turriff Town and Circular (service 257/8) is currently operated by Stagecoach Bluebird under contract to the Council." The proposed service changes take effect from Monday, November 19. She continued: "Following

By GRANT MILNE

implementation it is proposed that the current services which operate on a fixed route and to a fixed timetable will gradually become more and more demand responsive with the aim of better meeting the needs of residents. "Passengers wishing to use the free door-to-door services will be required to book travel (01467) 535 333. "Bookings can be made from Monday, November 12, or from a week prior if passengers require travel to medical appointments." Requests for same day transport will be considered although passengers are urged to book at least one hour before their travel time. On the routes being replaced the 257 service will initially take a more basic route along main roads in Turriff, with diversions based on passenger requests. Passengers can be picked up and dropped off at their homes if time allows, or at their regular bus stop, although only an estimated

rather than exact pick-up time will be given upon booking. Journey times for the town service will largely remain the same, with exception drawn to the 4.55pm bus on Monday to Friday which is set to operate earlier in order to accommodate a requested re-timing of the 5.30pm bus to Cuminestown. As for the 258 service, Aberdeenshire Council have proposed to offer journeys as per the existing route via Cuminestown, Garmond, New Byth, Crudie and Fintry at 7.40am on non-school-days (with Stagecoach continuing their schooldays service) and 5pm on Monday-Friday, due to known demand for the latter. However it is possible that the precise route could vary dependent on bookings. The following journeys which are not contracted by the Council will not be covered:- 6.35am ex New Byth (Monday-Friday); 7.12am ex New Byth (Monday-Friday); and 8.35am ex Turriff (on schooldays only). The 27-seat Stagecoach bus which is currently in use will be replaced by a 12-seat, wheelchair-accessible council minibus, augmented by the council bus that already operates Turriff's A2B dial-a-bus service on weekdays. The minibus will also operate the existing Saturday service, and will operate as per the current route and timetable, subject to passenger bookings. However those who are likely to be using the service are invited to attend the next meeting of Formartine Area Bus Forum at Ellon Academy on Thursday, November 1 at 7.30pm.



Route masters: Aberdeenshire Council is set to take over the operation of the 257 and 258 local services in Turriff. Photograph by David Porter

Service	Destination
257	Markethill
35	Oldmeldrum for Elgin
303	Huntly

Timetable revision: The pilot scheme aims to make the bus timetable more responsive to users needs by using a booking system. Photograph by David Porter

Those unable to attend can submit questions or comments on the proposals to the A2B dial-a-bus co-ordinator on (01467) 535 213, or by emailing: A2Bdialabus@aberdeenshire.gov.uk by Wednesday, October 31. Funding for the initiative has been secured through an EU-backed project known as G-PaTRA, which aims for solutions to rural transport needs with vehicle emissions taken into consideration.

THE CLOCKS will move back an hour this Sunday from 2am British Summer Time to 1am Greenwich Mean Time.

Call to communities for snow warden scheme

ABERDEENSHIRE council is calling on communities to come forward as applications are now being taken for Aberdeenshire's volunteer snow warden scheme. This is aimed at supporting and assisting communities and individuals to increase their resilience to winter weather. As the first snow of the winter was forecast on higher ground for this week, areas such as Aboyne have already seen sub-zero temperatures on clear nights and road gritters were deployed last Wednesday in some areas. Although recent years have been variable in terms of snowfall, last year was particularly notable for the ice which formed where snow couldn't be cleared quickly enough from surfaces, leading to numerous hazardous situations across Aberdeenshire. A spokesman for Aberdeenshire Council noted: "Many communities, such as those within the Cairngorms National Park, are well prepared for winter, getting regular snow, but others can be caught by surprise. "Establishing a volunteer snow warden scheme in a community with direct support from the council is one way to increase resilience to winter events, expected or not." Aberdeenshire Council's Head of Roads, Philip McKay, said: "It seems fairly obvious to point out the sheer physical size of our area, perhaps not so much the substantial areas of road and pavement surfaces which stretch to about 3,370 miles in length, 10.3 per cent of the non-trunk road network in Scotland. "Despite their experience and dedication our teams cannot keep all surfaces clear at all times when snow is falling with the resources available. "One way to increase the resource available is to equip and train volunteers in local areas who can see the value and sense in being part of keeping their community moving. "Many people will remember a time when getting involved in local snow clearing wasn't that rare an occurrence and people now have even higher expectations about their ability to travel in bad weather."



Slip and slide: Last year saw conditions across Aberdeenshire lead to an unprecedented build up of ice on roads and pavements, leading to a concerted community effort to clear them.

New information and training packs have been produced for communities and individuals interested in getting involved, and the council will supply protective and snow clearing equipment. Volunteers would operate independently of council teams, targeting public footways and paths only. They can decide on the extent of the area to be cleared with the resources available and legal guidance clarifies responsibility if someone falls on a path or pavement cleared by volunteers - if it's done in line with guidance, the responsibility lies with the pedestrian.

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