

26 JUNE 2025

**SWestrans**  
English Street  
DUMFRIES  
DG1 2DD

**TO ALL SWESTRANS BOARD MEMBERS**

**Any enquiries please contact**  
Claire Rogerson  
E-mail [claire.rogerson@dumgal.gov.uk](mailto:claire.rogerson@dumgal.gov.uk)

Dear Board Member,

**SWestrans Board – 27 June 2025**

I enclose for your attention the report marked “Copy to Follow” for consideration at the above meeting, which was not available at the time of the original despatch:

**ITEM 5 – LOCAL BUS NETWORK UPDATE (PAGES 3-6)**

Members of the Board are asked to: (1) note the outcome of the procurement process to award contracts for the bus network; and (2) agree the proposed changes to services and timetables set out in Section 3 above.

Please be advised that the Lead Officer has withdrawn item 19, “Local Bus Network Procurement Update” from the agenda. Therefore item 18, “Exclusion of the Press, Members of the Public and Observers” has also been withdrawn.

Yours sincerely

Claire Rogerson  
Secretary to the Board

Encs

This page is intentionally left blank

## LOCAL BUS NETWORK UPDATE

### 1. Reason for Report

1.1 To update the South West of Scotland Transport Partnership (SWestrans) Board on the outcome of the procurement process for the local bus network.

1.2 To provide the Board with an overview of changes that have been made to the local bus network and the approach being followed to raise awareness of exiting Western Buses Ltd commercial routes.

1.3 Lastly, the report sets out next steps in commencing the retendered bus network from 7 August, and the process of communicating any changes to the public.

### 2. Background

2.1 The procurement process for the local bus and home to school network closed on Monday 12 May 2025, followed by a period of evaluation and negotiation, with ongoing discussions with suppliers.

2.2 An exempt item was presented to SWestrans Board on 6 June 2025 to provide an overview of the situation at that time in the procurement of the local bus and home to school transport network.

2.3 Since the 6 June 2025 Board, the procurement process has now completed, with a 10-day standstill period having passed, and award letters issued to suppliers on 23 June, to confirm the bus contracts that they have been awarded.

### 3. Amendments to the local bus network

3.1 The Board was previously informed that there would be amendments to the bus network to introduce efficiencies and avoid duplication ahead of procurement. One such change was the withdrawal of the 420 Newton Stewart town service. DGC Buses has since identified the opportunity to operate this service following a home to school route and so the 420 service will be retained.

3.2 A change has been proposed to the service 101/102 Dumfries to Edinburgh. If Houston's Minicoaches ran the 09.10 Edinburgh service via Moffat, this would cover the existing commercial 74 service, 08.45 Dumfries to Moffat. This provides a service to students attending Barony College and if the 101/102 service were changed, this would allow capacity in the service to operate the existing commercial 74 service.

3.3 If there is no commercial interest in the 74 service (Dumfries to Moffat) and the Board agrees to this change, we will submit a contract variation request to Strathclyde Partnership for Transport (SPT) who procure this route, with a contribution from SWestrans. The current route via Thornhill currently averages only one to two people each day and so would have an impact on very few passengers, with a previous diversion to the Moffat route resulting in higher passenger numbers.

3.4 Houston's Minicoaches have also requested a change to the 381 Lockerbie to Dumfries service that they have been awarded, to bring the timetable in line with the commercial 81 Lockerbie to Dumfries service. This will alter the Monday to Friday 18:25 service from Dumfries Whitesands to 15 minutes past the hour and change the Sunday evening services to run later (18:50, 20:15 and 21:40 to 19:00, 21:00 and 23:00).

3.5 Minor timing alterations (5/10 minute changes) have been proposed to a few other Houston's Minicoaches services, including the 372 Dumfries to Dalbeattie and 380 Moffat to Lockerbie, to allow them to operate their services more efficiently.

3.6 At the Board Meeting of 6 June 2025, the board was informed that the only remaining route that did not have a compliant tender submission is the 79 subsidised local bus route from Dumfries to Carlisle (Gretna). The subsidised element of this service only operates after 19:27 (3 evening services, Monday - Saturday) and supplements the Stagecoach Cumbria commercial 79 Dumfries to Carlisle service. At this time, no award has been issued for this service, however the potential to operate the route through DGC Buses as operator of last resort will be considered, dependent on capacity.

#### **4. Commercial Services Currently Operated by Western Buses Ltd**

4.1 The Board is aware of the rejection of Western Buses Ltd (trading as Stagecoach West Scotland) from the procurement process, on the basis they did not submit a compliant bid. Thereafter, Western Buses Ltd have publicly announced their intention to exit Dumfries and Galloway and have subsequently provided deregistration notices to SWestrans for 12 of the 13 commercial routes they operate across Dumfries and Galloway, along with their subsidised routes.

4.2 Following receipt of the deregistration paperwork, SWestrans responded to Western Buses Ltd with Information Request Forms that require them to provide data relating to passenger figures, ticket types, revenue received etc. This data was duly provided by Western Buses Ltd and SWestrans has made this information available to operators both within and outwith the region to consider registration of existing commercial routes.

4.3 The deadline for submission of registration paperwork to the Office of the Traffic Commissioner (OTC) is Thursday 26 June. Until this date has passed and any update provided on the OTC PSV Notices and Proceedings website, it is not possible to know whether or not commercial routes will be registered. Even beyond

this date, operators can still choose to register commercial services up until the date of 6 August 2025, with a short-notice registration, subject to SWestrans and Dumfries and Galloway Council support.

4.4 SWestrans has been made aware of a number of routes that operators intend to register and run commercially. SWestrans is engaging with the operators to ensure that where they choose to operate existing Western Buses Ltd commercial services, this does not impact on their ability to operate the subsidised contracts that they have been awarded. SWestrans is aware that the operators have finite capacity through their operators licences and are limited in their ability to expand at short notice.

4.5 If commercial operators do not choose to register any or all of the remaining routes currently run commercially, then further investigation will be undertaken by Dumfries and Galloway Council to identify potential to support, including through DGC Buses as operator of last resort.

## 5 Communication of bus service changes

5.1 Whilst detailed communications planning is ongoing, SWestrans and Dumfries and Galloway Council will provide updates to bus passengers through the use of the council website, on-bus advertising and social media. With more than 1,000 bus stops across the region, the process of updating all the bus timetable information in each will be a particular challenge, particularly with many timetable cases old and corroded, adding further difficulty to replacing paper timetables.

5.2 SWestrans and Dumfries and Galloway Council Communications Unit are currently considering the potential to distribute communications to bus stops to alert passengers to timetable changes and point to Traveline and the Dumfries and Galloway Council website to check for changes.

## 6. Next steps

6.1 The contract awards are being progressed and an operator workshop is planned for July for all appointed operators to discuss the transition to the new contracts.

6.2 Dumfries and Galloway Council Fleet Management will plan for the transfer of SWestrans leased vehicles on 6 August 2025, ahead of the commencement of the new contracts with reallocated vehicles the next day.

## 7. Recommendations

Members of the Board are asked to:

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| 7.1 | note the outcome of the procurement process to award contracts for the bus network |
| 7.2 | agree the proposed changes to services and timetables set out in Section 3 above.  |

Report Author: Simon Bradbury, Lead Officer	Approved by: Simon Bradbury Lead Officer South West of Scotland Transport Partnership Cargen Tower Garroch Business Park Dumfries DG2 8PN
--	--

Tel: 07824 550106

Date of Report: 24 June 2025  
File Ref: SW2/Meetings/2025**APPENDICES –**

None

**BACKGROUND REPORTS –**

Bus Network Retendering update, 6 June 2025 (exempt)

Bus Network Retendering update, 28 March 2025 (exempt)

Bus Network Retendering update, 31 January 2025 (exempt)

Bus Network Retendering update, 29 November 2024 (exempt)

Local Bus Network Review, Report to Board, 27 September 2024 (exempt)

Local Bus Network Review, Report to Board, 22 March 2024.

Local Bus Service Sustainability, Report to council, 28 June 2024

Local Bus Network Sustainability, Reports to Board, 25 &amp; 28 June 2024 (exempt)..