

Rural Transport: “Finding An Angry Crofter”

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Rural Transport

“Finding An Angry Crofter”

- Car dependence and finding an angry crofter
- Transport constraint and opportunity
- Rural diversity
- Anger over fuel prices
- Infrastructure investment and changing travel patterns
- Informal lift giving
- Implications for policy



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Car Dependence In Rural Scotland

Those living in rural areas:

- Own more cars
- Make a higher proportion of journeys by car
- Travel further by car
- Enjoy poor access to public transport
- Are disproportionately affected by rising fuel prices



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Rural Scotland



Finding An Angry Crofter



Car Ownership Across Different 'Rurals' (2007)

Area type	<i>Households with at least one car</i>
Scottish average	70%
Accessible small towns	76%
Remote small towns	72%
Accessible rural areas	88%
Remote rural areas	87%



Travel To Work By Car Across Different 'Rurals' (2007)

Area type	<i>Travel to work by car</i>
Scottish average	69%
Accessible small towns	76%
Remote small towns	63%
Accessible rural areas	84%
Remote rural areas	73%



Rural Transport: Opportunity And Constraint

In general terms...

- Those living in accessible small towns have more **opportunities** in terms of where they travel, when they travel and how they travel
- Those living in (remote) rural areas are more **constrained** in when, how and where they can travel



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Ideal Conditions For Running A Rural Bus Service?

- Rural population clustered together in discrete settlements
- A minimum number of settlements/bus stops
- Sparse road network
- One key destination
- A compact hinterland



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Isle Of Lewis



Rural Transport And Diversity

- In *general* terms, travel constraints increase with isolation...
- ...but not always (due to local geography, settlement patterns, etc.)
- This **diversity** is rarely acknowledged in media coverage of rural transport issues
- The angry crofter is not always representative



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Anger Over Fuel Prices: Quotes from Sutherland Focus Group

“I believe this is going to be the straw for rural areas that will break the camel’s back. It’s as simple as that...it will decimate rural areas.”

“Isolation should read victimisation”

“You’d be more effective than the Duke of Sutherland in clearing the Highlands”



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Anger Over Fuel Prices?

“Fuel prices have fallen off the political radar”
(Interviewee, Isle of Skye, February 2008)



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Household Expenditure On Fuel (2006)

Area type	<i>Monthly expenditure</i>
Scottish average	£91
Accessible small towns	£103
Remote small towns	£87
Accessible rural areas	£116
Remote rural areas	£101



Anecdotal Evidence: The Emergence Of The Long Distance 'Whim' Trip

- People in North West Sutherland jumping in the car on the spur of the moment
- Driving 100 + miles to Inverness
- Going to the cinema, having a meal, shopping at Tesco, filling up with petrol...
- ...and driving 100 miles home the same evening



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Anecdotal Evidence: The Emergence Of The Long Distance 'Whim' Trip

- Why is this?
- People's travel behaviour, shopping and consumption patterns evolve in response to investment in infrastructure (e.g. road improvements)
- Norms and expectations are subsequently changing



Infrastructure Investment In Rural Areas

- ‘Unexpected’ social and cultural consequences of infrastructure investment decisions
- Largely positive (e.g. inclusiveness, opportunity)
- Negative unintended outcomes? Does investing in rural road infrastructure undermine local social capital?
- Does it matter?



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Journeys By Adults In Non Car Owning Households: Modal Share

	Car or van	Bus	Walking
Scottish average	20%	30%	40%
Accessible small towns	28%	25%	39%
Remote small towns	23%	10%	57%
Accessible rural areas	31%	30%	31%
Remote rural areas	34%	21%	37%

Importance Of Informal Lift Giving

- Importance of lifts from friends, neighbours, relatives, work colleagues, etc. to access leisure, employment, shops, services and healthcare
- Has been termed *community mobility*
- More important than public transport in remote localities
- Important in sustaining social networks and community ties or an additional burden for hard pressed carers?
- More research required



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Value For Money

- The Scottish Government was previously spending £10m a year on dedicated rural transport schemes
- In 2009/10, The Government will spend £247m on concessionary fares and support for bus services
- £0 will be spent on directly subsidising the most important form of 'public' transport in remote areas: informal lift giving



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Supporting Informal Lift Giving

- Mechanism required to subsidise informal lift giving?
- Direct subsidy to journey maker via smart card?
- Would require major shift in approach by policymakers
- Expensive start up costs
- More equitable than concessionary fares for rural journey makers?



In Conclusion

- The angry crofter masks rural diversity
- Media and political hype over fuel prices can be out of step with experience on the ground
- Travel behaviour responds to infrastructure investment (especially roads) while...
- ... Shopping and leisure behaviour and people's norms and expectations also evolve
- Will infrastructure investment weaken social networks, a vital source of rural mobility and...
- ... are current mechanisms for subsidising public transport equitable for rural journey makers?



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