



**Interreg**  
North Sea Region  
G-PaTRA  
European Regional Development Fund



**Aberdeenshire**  
COUNCIL



# Aberdeenshire Lighthouse Project: Covid Impact

G-Patra,  
Online Workshop  
29th March 2022

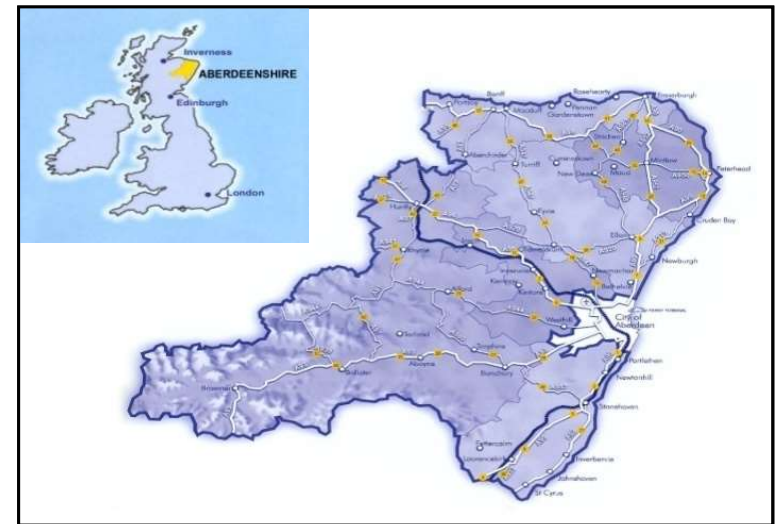




# Aberdeenshire

## ‘Geographical’ Context

- Large predominately **rural area**  
part of 0.5 million city region
- **No major urban areas**  
6 towns > 10,000 pop
- **Varied landscape**  
mountains + agricultural lowlands  
+ coastline
- Population 260,500 (in 2014)  
**ageing population**
- **Service Delivery**  
very difficult to plan and deliver transport services  
(due to land use distribution and road network)

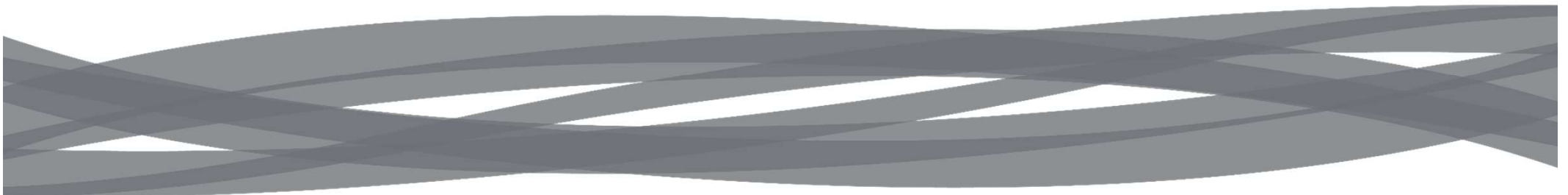




# Aberdeenshire

## G-Patra service design

- Local Authority not allowed to compete with commercial services
- Local Authority in house DRT is free for users
- Vast majority of school transport is free for users
- Turriff town 5,000 pop plus surrounding rural area
  - Demand responsive service booked via call centre
  - Some timetabled journeys in the town area
  - One primary school (5-11)
  - One secondary school (11-18)
- Two minibuses – three drivers

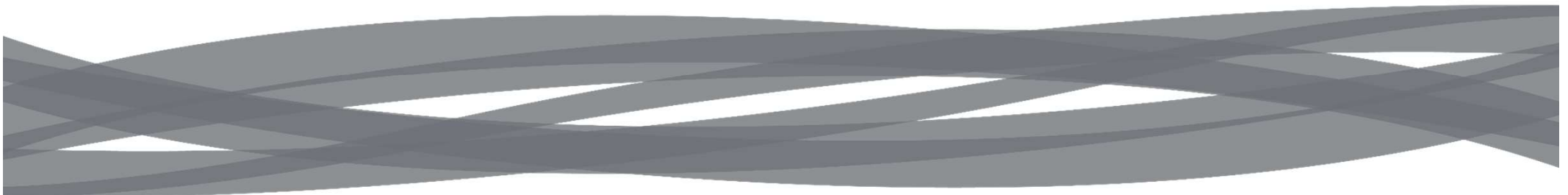




Sample bus route from tracker



15km

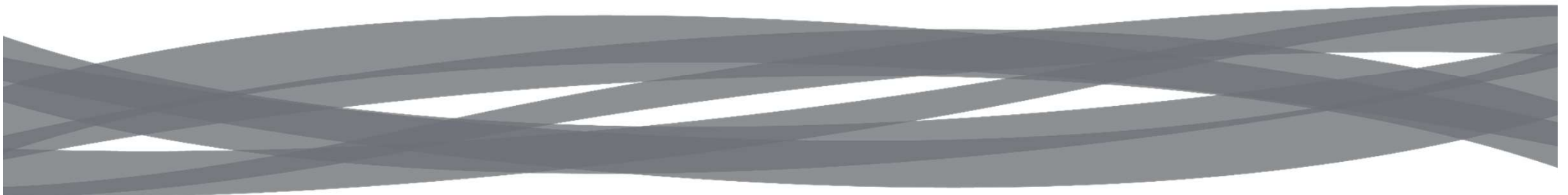




# Timeline to the evolving public health emergency.

## March 2020

- School transport and DRT (A2B dial-a-bus) elements suspended
- The Turriff G-PaTRA service was the last Aberdeenshire A2B dial-a-bus service to be suspended on 26 March 2020
- G-PaTRA resources were assessed as to any contributions that they could make to the Covid-19 response effort, in line with the project objectives (e.g., by providing patient transport).
- Impact: improved dialogue with the health sector and other related organisations, as per original lighthouse project objective
- All G-PaTRA vehicles and drivers were made available for health staff transport and patient transport albeit with low uptake
- Resources maintained on standby awaiting appropriate health sector transport requirement.





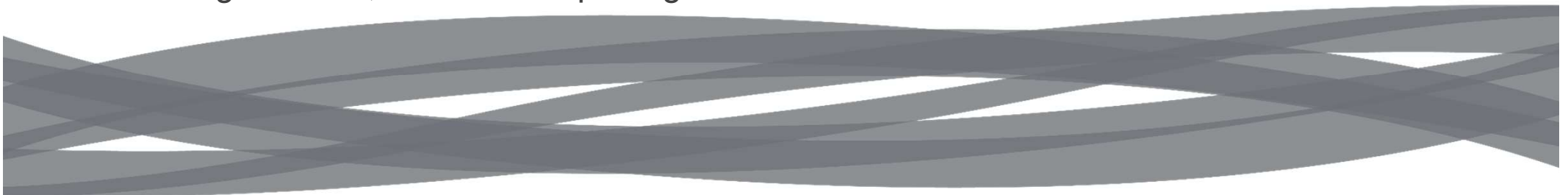
# Timeline to the evolving public health emergency.

## June / July 2020

- most regular rural dial-a-bus passengers were directly contacted by telephone to enquire if they were able to get shopping and whether they were interested in using the G-PaTRA service again
- explanation given of proposed Covid-19 mitigation measures
- typical response was that they would be comfortable using the bus service again with mitigating measures in place
- they were typically managing to cope, albeit with help of family, friends and neighbours, but missed the independence and social interaction provided by the G-PaTRA bus service

## August 2020

- the school transport components of the G-PATRA service resumed operation on 11 August 2020, with the re-opening of schools

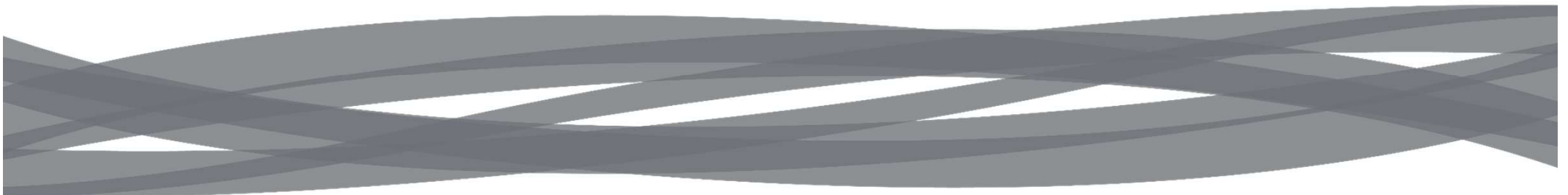




# Timeline to the evolving public health emergency.

## October 2020

- the G-PaTRA DRT service re-commenced operation on 26 October 2020 as a pre-booked only, on-demand, service; with such pre-booking only being allowed as and when permitted by lockdown and other Covid-19 restrictions.
- a revised service (reduced operating hours, Mon-Fri only) allowing for mitigation measures to the vehicles and operating practices.
- timetabled journeys that had operated within the town of Turriff without the need to prebook were not re-instated)





# Timeline to the evolving public health emergency.

## January 2021

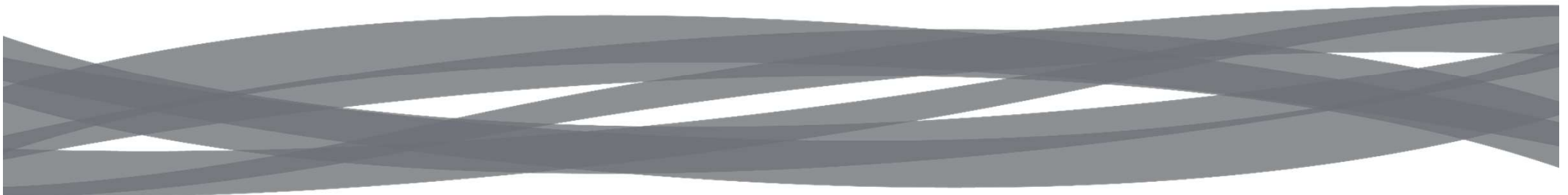
- school transport operations again ceased on 5 January 2021, with the second phase of school closures

## February / March 2021

- The two G-PaTRA school transport elements resumed on 22 February 2021, with the phased return of pupils to schools
- Full school transport operations resumed on 15 March 2021

## March 2022

- Continued operation of DRT services (on Mon-Fri), still with slightly reduced seating + both school transport services





## Capacity timeline

**Pre-Covid:** Timetabled service – no restriction

**Pre-Covid:** DRT service 10 seats available (to allow space for shopping)

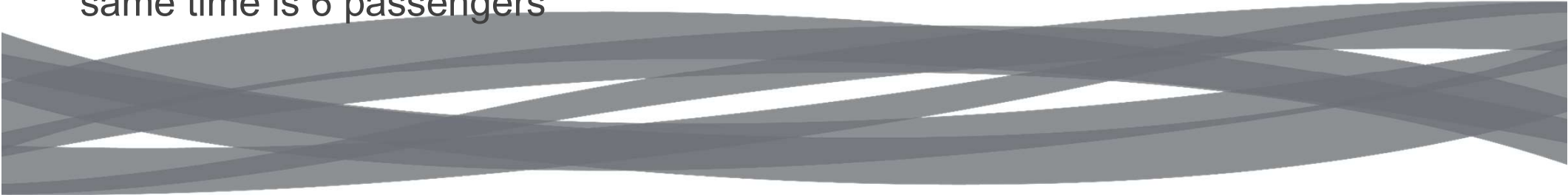
**Post March 2020** one person or couple per vehicle

**Post October 2020:** maximum of 4 passengers permitted at the same time, or up to 6 passengers when couples travelled together

As national guidance on physical distancing on public transport has eased, so the vehicle capacity has increased

**Current:** 8 passengers can travel at the same time (from a maximum of 6 households)

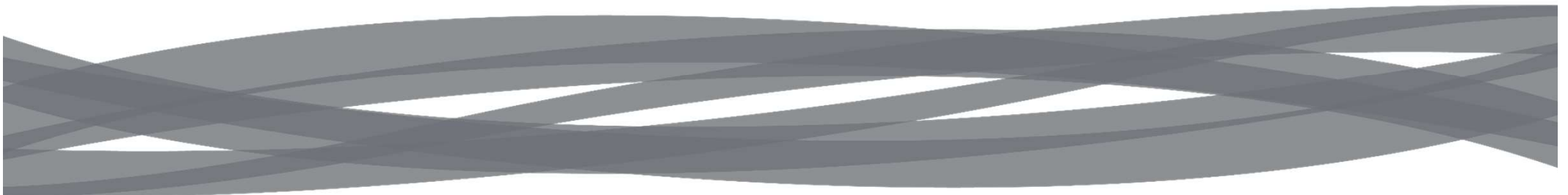
This is sufficient for current demand as usually the most travelling at the same time is 6 passengers





## Numbers

- **Initially** - minimum of 500 were known to be aware of the service  
(‘registered’ = ‘signed up’ for DRT service)
- **Report 3** – 250 registered – DRT regular users approx. 100 plus walk-up passengers plus 1 school service
- **Report 4** – 317 registered - plus approx. 25% additional users
- **Report 5** – 397 registered – similar usage to report 4 - but second school service added October 2019 (to a different school)
- **So initial steady growth**
- **December 2021** - limited Covid ‘pre-booked only’ DRT and school services
- 77 regular users of which 1/3 are school children
- Daily school services round trip for 25 children plus 369 DRT trips per month

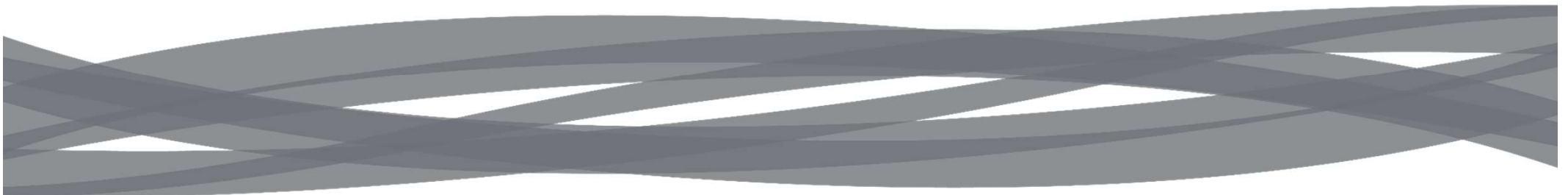




## Numbers - Current

Comparing the monthly passenger figures for February 2020 with February 2022

- It would seem that in the **'urban' area demand** (excluding school traffic) has dropped to **25% of that pre-Covid**  
(note: it is only DRT service component that is provided and not the previous timetabled options - the overall service is also on reduced hours)
- In contrast we have seen in the more **rural area nearly 50% demand** (again excluding school traffic) even though a reduced service is provided in terms of operating hours and days.
- By comparison over the same period patronage on the **wider supported bus network in Aberdeenshire has recovered to approx. 70%** of the pre-Covid level
- Two drivers are used (down from three)





## Summary

- In recovery from the initial ‘lockdown’ restrictions - subsequent operation of the lighthouse DRT project element with pre-booked journeys only and with appropriate mitigating measures in place;
- There were two suspensions of the school journeys for parts of the reporting period (due to the general closure of schools in Scotland);
- There has been a significant impact on passenger demand for the G-PaTRA service, greater than that experienced across the local public transport network.

Service	Destinations	Operator	Time
35	Aberdeen	Stagecoach	17:20
35	Aberdeen	Stagecoach	18:33
35	Aberdeen	Stagecoach	20:39
35	Aberdeen	Stagecoach	22:09

Service	Destinations	Operator	Time
35	Elgin	Stagecoach	17:23
35	Banff	Stagecoach	18:03
35	Elgin	Stagecoach	18:33
35	Banff	Stagecoach	19:03
35	Whitehills	Stagecoach	19:20

**Opposite**

Service	Destinations	Operator	Time
35	Elgin	Stagecoach	1 min
35	Elgin	Stagecoach	16:38
35	Elgin	Stagecoach	17:23
35	Banff	Stagecoach	18:03
35	Elgin	Stagecoach	18:33

6th Dec 15:26