



The Scottish
Rural & Islands
Transport Community

A Community Interest Company

A RURAL AND ISLAND MOBILITY PLAN; BUILDING BLOCKS

Authors

**Jenny Milne
Matthew Kendrick
Steve Cassidy**

ruralmobility.scot | sritc@ruralmobility.scot

Table of Contents

1. Setting the stage	Page 03
1.1 SRITC background	Page 03
1.2 Rural and Island Mobility Plan Origins	Page 03
2. Co-designing a Rural and Island Mobility Plan (RIMP)	Page 05
2.1 Methodology	Page 05
2.1.1 Development of the Methodology	Page 05
2.1.2 Aims of the Lego Workshop	Page 06
2.1.3 The Format of Lego Workshop	Page 06
2.1.4 The Lego Exercises (online and in person)	Page 07
2.1.5 Limitations	Page 08
3. Results of Lego Workshop	Page 09
3.1 Guiding Tenets of a Rural and Island Mobility Plan	Page 09
3.2 Pillars of the Rural and Island Mobility Plan	Page 10
3.2.1 Flexibility	Page 10
3.2.2 Data	Page 10
3.2.3 Accessibility + Communication	Page 11
3.2.4 Holistic Asset Management	Page 11
3.2.5 Promotion and Dissemination	Page 12
3.2.6 Impact vs Cost Planning	Page 12
3.2.7 Transport Mode Priorities	Page 13
3.2.7.1 Ferries	Page 13
3.2.7.2 Shared Mobility	Page 13
3.2.7.3 Wheeling	Page 14
3.2.8 Funding	Page 14
4. Next Steps	Page 16
5. Useful Resources	Page 17

1. Setting the stage

1.1 SRITC background

In 2018, the Scottish Rural and Islands Transport Community (SRITC) was founded based around the mission of uniting concerned stakeholders in tackling the diverse transport challenges that rural and island communities face. In 2021, SRITC became a social enterprise, Community Interest Company (CIC). Through fostering knowledge sharing and best practices, SRITC strives to encourage change from the grassroots for a better future for all those impacted by rural transport, be that a resident, an employer/ee, or a visitor.

SRITC has acknowledged the value of a Rural and Island Mobility Plan (RIMP) since its early days, built upon knowledge of European rural transport initiatives, as well as through member and stakeholder engagement. In Scotland, the National Transport Strategy (NTS2) guides transportation strategy and policy. In 2022, SRITC (CIC) was commissioned to conduct a review of the NTS2 Delivery Plan from a rural perspective. Those involved a range of stakeholder workshops with the findings published in a report - "Spotlight on Rural & Islands Transport" (June 2022). This Report highlighted and reflected the gaps and concerns for rural and island areas in the context of the NTS2. The seven themes emerging from consultation on the NTS2 delivery plan are captured in Diagram 1.



Diagram 1: SRITC Spotlight on Rural & Islands Transport Report: Response to NTS2 Consultation | June 2022

1.2 Rural and Island Mobility Plan (RIMP) Origins

In 2018/2019, the European Project SMARTA explored Europe's rural mobility policy landscape. In the analysis for Scotland, the report highlighted that 17.2% of the population lived rurally but that no transport policies were focused on/from the rural region. The report examined the National Transport Strategy (NTS) and underscored the significance of formulating a comprehensive policy framework and plan for rural areas to improve lives and unlock economic potential.

According to the SMARTA report, Latvia was the only country that had developed a plan for rural transportation. On the other hand, most European countries had developed Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMPs).

To address this gap and promote a rural perspective, SRITC organised an online workshop in 2020 as part of the annual Conference. The question for the workshop centered on "What would you like to see in a Future Rural Mobility Strategy?" The Key themes to come out of the workshop are captured in Diagram 2 below.

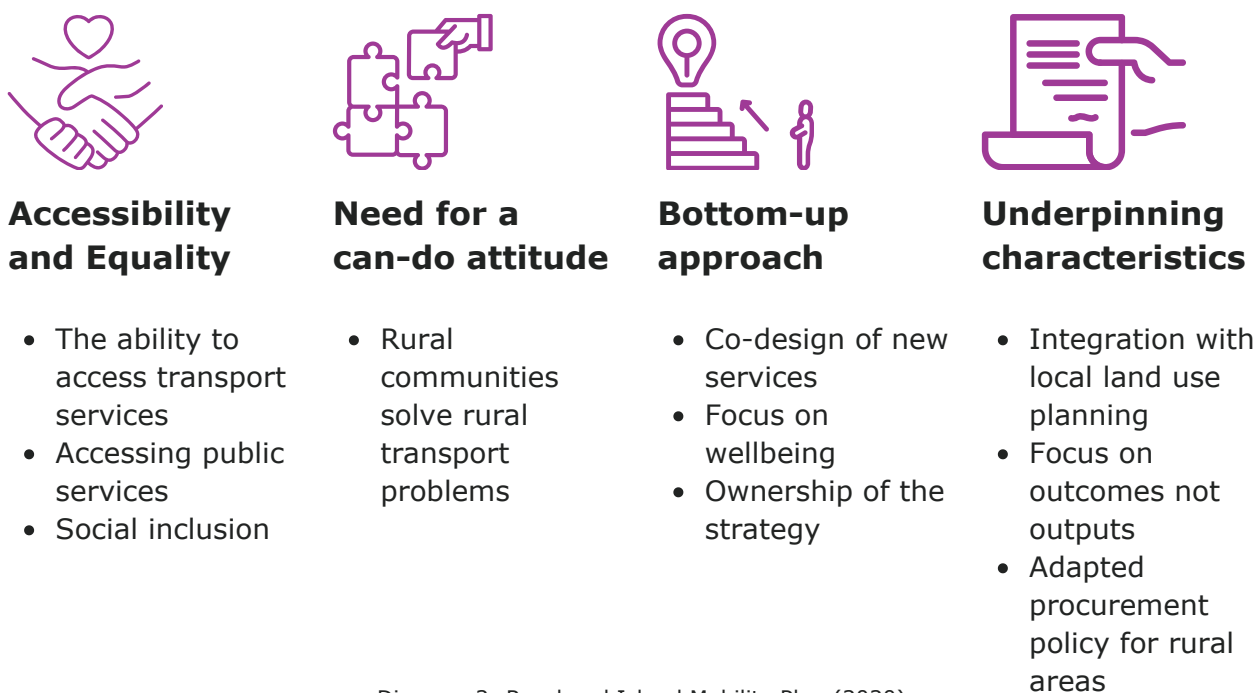


Diagram 2: Rural and Island Mobility Plan (2020)

Furthermore, the “Spotlight on Rural & Islands Transport” (June 2022) publication produced 6 BigAsks (Diagram 1), with BigAsk 1 focused upon the development of a RIMP.

In 2023 the SRITC (CIC) Hybrid Gathering provided the opportunity to take this BigAsk forward in a workshop, by asking - ‘What would you like to see in a Future Rural Mobility Strategy?’. At the Gathering, SRITC developed a multi-stakeholder play-based workshop to form the template of an RIMP for Scotland. This hybrid workshop promoted collaboration among various sectors in a creative and informal setting. This report details the workshop's approach and findings in co-designing a RIMP.

2. Co-designing a Rural and Island Mobility Plan (RIMP)

The 2023 Hybrid Gathering brought together experts from throughout Scotland, the UK and internationally, with experience and professional knowledge of rural mobility. To foster collaborative, creative working, a Lego-based RIMP workshop was designed by two leading academics in rural mobility and creative methods: Jenny Milne (our Founder) and Kate Pangbourne.

2.1 Methodology

This workshop was influenced by the Lego Serious Play facilitation method. Lego Serious Play is a dynamic and innovative facilitation method that leverages the power of Lego bricks to enhance communication, problem-solving, and creativity within groups and organisations. It goes beyond conventional brainstorming and discussion techniques, enabling participants to construct tangible representations of their ideas and insights. This hands-on approach fosters deeper engagement, encourages a diversity of perspectives, and unlocks a more profound understanding of complex challenges. Lego Serious Play is widely recognised for its effectiveness in promoting team cohesion, ideation, and strategic planning. It is a valuable tool for teams and organisations seeking to unlock their full creative potential and thus the method was designed to include all those attending, in person and online.

2.1.1 Development of the Methodology

In preparation for the workshop, several collaborative preparation meetings were undertaken. Jenny Milne and Kate Pangbourne designed the Lego Workshop, and a wider facilitation team was recruited. The volunteer team all had experience in rural transport and research. The team included a Workshop lead (Milne), a method owner (Pangbourne), eight facilitators and two workshop support workers.

The draft method was presented to the workshop team via an interactive Teams preparation workshop. Following comments and discussion, several amendments were made concerning timing, responsibilities, and approach. The final Lego Workshop method, including timings and objectives, was then circulated to the facilitation team and online training occurred. This training event was recorded and provided a resource for the team. This preparatory phase was important in the design and delivery of a successful, meaningful workshop.

2.1.2 Aims of the Lego Workshop

The agreed aims of the workshop were as follows:

- 1**
To develop consensus on the essential component themes of a RIMP
- 2**
To encourage and harness co-design practices
- 3**
To develop visual solutions using Lego for discussion
- 4**
To develop new skills and partnerships for all

2.1.3 The Format of Lego Workshop

In-person participants were split into five groups of approximately 10-12, each with two facilitators. Meanwhile, the online participants were divided into two groups, and their workshops ran simultaneously with those in person. The online participants utilised the official digital Lego platform to create their models.



The experienced facilitators for each group were charged with keeping time and providing 'tech support' if anyone was struggling to fix one piece of Lego to another. They also facilitated discussion and clarification of terms and thinking for the group. Two support workers walked between individual groups to monitor the whole session and help resolve any issues.



All the groups (in person and online) worked simultaneously to undertake the following:

- 1** Build an individual Lego model that represents what they think should be in the ideal RIMP.
- 2** Individually select a 'must have' item - identified as a 'red brick'.
- 3** Collaboratively build a shared model using the 'red brick' items identified.
- 4** Share the team model with the wider group.

2.1.4 The Lego Exercises (online and in person)

The individual group exercises followed the process outlined in Diagram 3, with groups finally gathering together in the main hall to present their models. The online participants and each online facilitator (who attended in person) also joined the main hall.

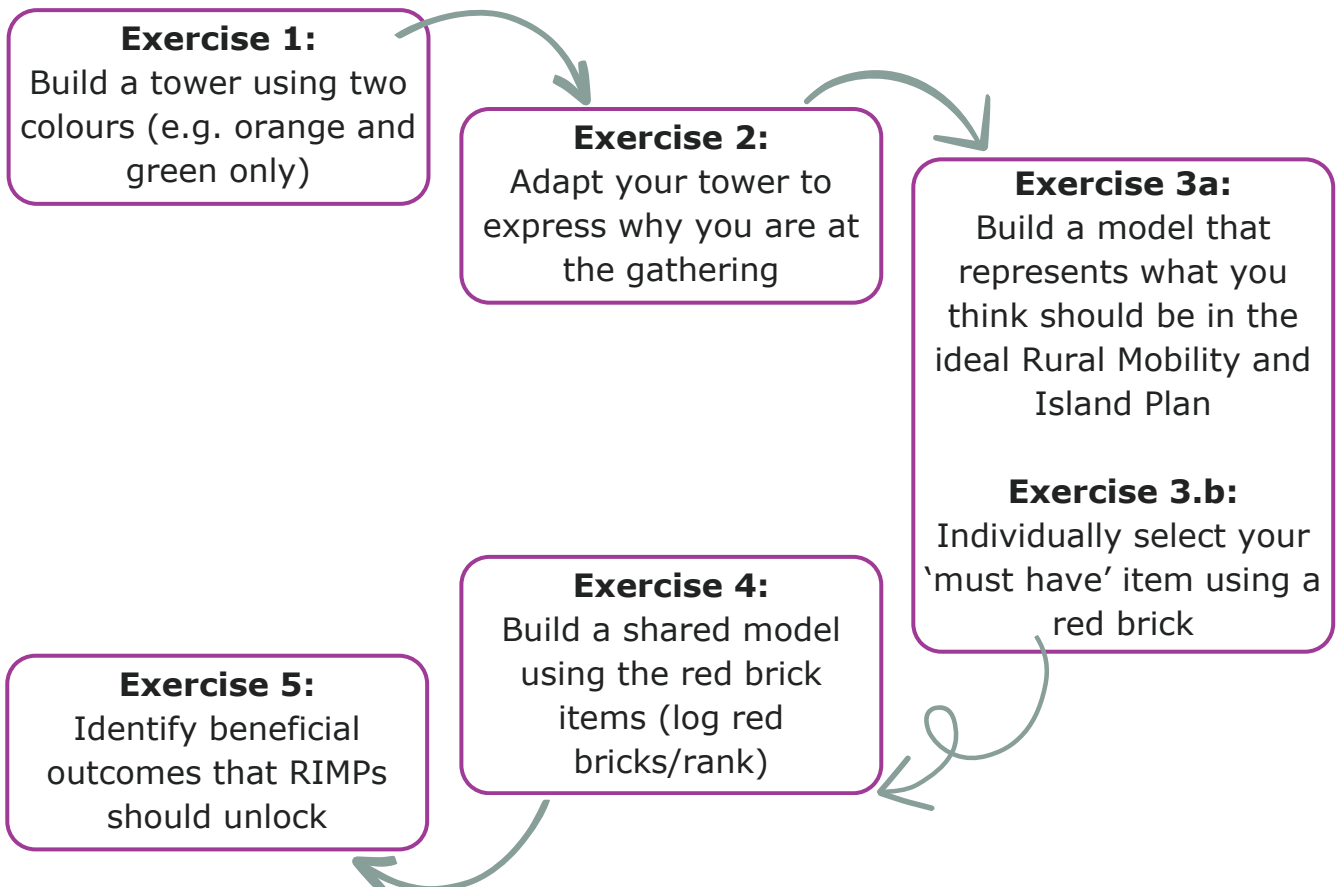


Diagram 3: The Lego Exercises

2.1.5 Limitations

The Lego Workshop faced several limitations, predominantly due to the requirements and constraints of the Gathering.

1

The number of physical break-out rooms was restricted due to space availability, and the weather wasn't conducive to outside working.

2

The workshop was compressed and completed within 90 minutes. Ideally, half a day should be dedicated to the workshop, so timekeeping was critical. Support workers ensured this did not become a significant problem.

3

The use of the official Lego online platform was restrictive due to downloading processes and organisational firewalls, despite all participants receiving preparatory instructions. Consequently, the facilitator utilised the platform under instruction from the online participants.

3. Results of Lego Workshop

Using Lego in the workshop created a sense of novelty and levity for a group of stakeholders that often feel marginalised in the current transport policy environment. Injecting energy into the conversation about rural transport policy was an intangible product of the workshop. The physical embodiment of concepts in a physical brick was beneficial, facilitating a clear, concise definition of “must haves”, which are detailed in the following section.

The following sections highlight the key themes (red brick) items which emerged from the workshop. As such, they represent the fundamental items which must be included and addressed within a successful RIMP.



3.1 Guiding Tenets of a Rural and Island Mobility Plan

A clear and transparent RIMP is essential for stakeholders to develop and improve rural mobility cohesively. Clarity in objectives, strategies, and timelines ensures that everyone understands the vision and purpose of the plan. Transparency builds trust among communities and stakeholders by offering a view into decision-making processes, resource allocation, and expected outcomes. A well-defined plan also helps prioritise projects and optimise resource allocation for impactful results. Transparency demonstrates accountability and helps measure progress, creating a foundation for continuous improvement and adaptability.

Involving communities in transport policy decision-making ensures that policies align with local needs, fostering ownership and empowerment among residents. Community-led initiatives often lead to sustainable and inclusive solutions prioritising accessibility, safety, and environmental considerations. By embracing local expertise, transport policies become more effective and responsive to the diverse needs of the population.

Stakeholder collaboration is vital for effective transport policies. Bringing together various groups, including government, communities, experts, advocates, and businesses, creates a multi-faceted approach to address complex transportation challenges. Diverse perspectives, resources, and expertise contribute to developing well-rounded policies that promote sustainability, equity, and resilience.



3.2 Pillars of the Rural and Island Mobility Plan



3.2.1 Flexibility

A flexible and agile RIMP is paramount in responding to the dynamic and evolving needs of rural communities. Rural areas often face unique challenges, including fluctuating populations, seasonal variations, and unforeseen disruptions like weather events. A rigid plan will become outdated and unable to address these challenges effectively. As such, it will lose credibility over time. In contrast, a flexible and agile plan can adapt to changing circumstances, allowing for quickly implementing innovative solutions and adjustments as needed. It ensures that rural mobility remains responsive to the diverse requirements of residents.



3.2.2 Data

Data availability is pivotal for rural mobility, as it serves as the connective tissue that transcends siloed transport modes and fosters seamless integration. In rural areas, where transportation resources may be limited, harnessing data from various sources helps optimise existing infrastructure and services.

It enables informed decision-making by providing insights into demand patterns, unmet transportation needs, and areas where multi-modal connectivity can be most effective. This data-driven approach encourages collaboration among transport providers, including public transit, ridesharing services, and community initiatives, facilitating coordination for better rural mobility outcomes. Moreover, by sharing data transparently and collaboratively, rural areas can identify opportunities for resource-sharing and the development of shared transportation hubs, efficiently using limited resources while enhancing accessibility for residents. Ultimately, data availability becomes the cornerstone for transforming rural mobility into an interconnected and efficient system that serves the diverse needs of its communities.



3.2.3 Accessibility + Communication

Accessibility to transportation in rural areas, encompassing physical and digital dimensions, is imperative for ensuring equitable and inclusive mobility. Physical accessibility involves creating safe and convenient transport options for all residents, including those with disabilities or limited mobility. It means well-maintained roads, sidewalks, transit facilities, and vehicles equipped to accommodate diverse needs. In parallel, digital accessibility is increasingly vital in rural mobility, ensuring that information about transportation services is readily available and user-friendly. This includes accessible websites, apps, and real-time information systems that allow residents to plan their journeys efficiently. In combination, these facets of accessibility break down barriers for vulnerable populations, enabling them to access essential services, education, employment opportunities, and healthcare, fostering social inclusion and enhancing the overall quality of life in rural communities. By prioritising both physical and digital accessibility, rural mobility initiatives can truly leave no one behind, creating a more inclusive and resilient transport system.



3.2.4 Holistic Asset Management

Leveraging existing vehicle assets from different government departments is a strategic move that promotes sustainability and optimises resource utilisation in rural and island mobility planning. Many government agencies possess a fleet of vehicles dedicated to various purposes, such as healthcare, education, and public services. Coordinating and sharing these assets can significantly reduce the financial burden of acquiring new vehicles, which is often challenging in rural areas with limited budgets. Moreover, it contributes to environmental sustainability by reducing unnecessary vehicle emissions and the overall carbon footprint. This collaborative approach maximises public resources' efficiency while enhancing the reach and impact of any RIMP. It exemplifies a holistic and responsible approach to addressing transportation needs in rural communities, emphasising the importance of interagency cooperation and the shared goal of enhancing the well-being of rural residents.

Holistic asset management extends to blending goods/logistic transportation and people transportation.



3.2.5 Promotion and Dissemination

Promoting rural transport initiatives and documenting best practices are essential to advancing rural mobility. These initiatives provide valuable real-world examples of what works effectively in diverse rural contexts. By showcasing successful case studies and sharing documented experiences, rural communities, policymakers, and stakeholders can draw inspiration and insights to tailor mobility solutions to their needs. Moreover, these resources offer a repository of knowledge that can guide the planning and implementation of future projects, ensuring that lessons learned and proven strategies are not lost but instead inform the continuous improvement of rural transport initiatives. Through promotion and documentation, we can create a virtuous cycle of innovation, where each success story inspires and informs the next, ultimately leading to a more connected, accessible, and sustainable rural transportation landscape.



3.2.6 Impact vs Cost Planning

Creating a RIMP focused on impact rather than cost underscores the prioritisation of tangible benefits for the community. While financial considerations and cost-effectiveness are undoubtedly crucial, the true value of a RIMP lies in the positive changes it brings to the lives of residents. An impact-oriented approach ensures that the plan addresses the real needs of rural communities, improving accessibility to essential services, boosting economic opportunities, and enhancing overall quality of life. By emphasising impact, rural mobility planning shifts the focus from expenditure to long-lasting, sustainable changes that resonate with the people it serves. It encourages decision-makers to consider not just the immediate fiscal implications but the broader, transformative effects that a well-executed plan can have on rural areas' social fabric and resilience.



3.2.7 Transport Mode Priorities

The RIMP should also highlight and focus on specific transportation forms which are both essential to and begging prioritisation in rural/island communities. The utilisation and reliance on these modes of transport are often significantly more important in a rural context where choices are limited compared to urban centres. This is particularly true for smaller island communities reliant on ferry schedules and availability.



3.2.7.1 Ferries

When addressing rural communities based on islands, placing ferries at the heart of any RIMP is imperative. For these communities, ferries often serve as the lifeline, connecting them to the mainland's essential services, supplies, and economic opportunities. Ensuring the reliability, affordability, and efficiency of ferry services is crucial to the well-being and sustainability of island-based populations. Ferries must be designed and operated to support the vitality of island communities and foster tourism, trade, and economic growth in these regions. It underscores the significance of tailored and nuanced policy approaches to address island-based rural communities' unique challenges and opportunities.



3.2.7.2 Shared Mobility

Shared mobility in rural settings presents distinct challenges and benefits compared to urban areas. Population density is often lower in rural settings, and travel distances can be greater. This can make shared mobility options less financially viable due to reduced demand. However, shared mobility initiatives in rural areas can be crucial in addressing isolation and providing access to essential services like healthcare, groceries, and employment opportunities. Furthermore, shared mobility in rural areas often necessitates more flexible and adaptable solutions, such as demand-responsive transportation, given the dispersed nature of communities.

It is important for the RIMP to acknowledge the specific needs and travel patterns of the rural population, acknowledging that the dynamics of rural and urban settings differ significantly. The success of rural shared mobility hinges on creative solutions that balance the challenges of low population density with the potential for enhancing accessibility and inclusivity in remote areas.



3.2.7.3 Wheeling

Including cycling and non-motorised transport in a RIMP is paramount for creating sustainable and inclusive transportation systems. These modes of transport offer numerous benefits, such as promoting physical health, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, and minimising traffic congestion, which are equally relevant in rural areas and urban centres.

In rural settings, where distances between services and amenities can be significant, cycling and non-motorised transport can bridge the gap, providing residents with cost-effective and environmentally friendly alternatives. Moreover, these modes of transportation enhance accessibility for individuals who may not have access to motorised vehicles, ensuring that everyone, regardless of age or physical ability, can participate fully in their community's social and economic life. Incorporating cycling and non-motorised transport into the RIMP encourages sustainable and active lifestyles and contributes to the resilience and vitality of rural communities.



3.2.8 Funding

Committing long-term funding to rural and island mobility initiatives is a crucial step in ensuring the continuity and success of these projects. Rural areas often face unique challenges that require sustained investments. Long-term funding provides stability and predictability, allowing for the planning and execution of initiatives that might span several years or even decades. It also encourages innovation and experimentation by allowing stakeholders to explore new solutions and technologies, knowing that resources will be available over the long haul.

Moreover, it sends a powerful signal to rural communities that their transportation needs are not just short-term priorities but a fundamental part of sustainable development. By committing to long-term funding, governments and stakeholders can create a resilient and interconnected rural mobility landscape that benefits future generations, ensuring that rural areas remain vibrant and accessible.

Setting out the plan for establishing a business case for the RIMP is equally vital in ensuring the plan's sustainability and successful implementation. A well-structured business case outlines the plan's rationale, costs, expected (direct and indirect) benefits, and return on investment, making a compelling argument for its viability. It should also provide a comprehensive view of how the plan aligns with broader economic and social goals, facilitating buy-in from stakeholders and potential funders.

Crucially, the business case should explore and evaluate the value the RIMP, and its constituent parts, can deliver (see section 3.1). It also allows for ongoing monitoring and evaluation, ensuring that the plan remains aligned with its intended objectives and can adapt to changing circumstances.

4. Next Steps

SRITC is taking the insights captured by this report to the Scottish Rural and Island Parliament (SRIP) hosted by Scottish Rural Action on 2 November 2023. SRITC is facilitating the transport forum during the Parliament. A workshop forms part of the forum and will bring together a further set of stakeholders to delve into the mechanics of the pillars (Diagram 1) and presented in this report.

Additionally, SRITC will contribute, where possible, to the proposed Scottish Government Rural Delivery Plan which was announced on 24 July 2023.

5. Useful Resources

1. [Transport Scotland. \(2019\). National Transport Strategy. \[Online PDF\].](#)
2. [SRITC Spotlight on Rural & Islands Transport. Response to NTS2 Consultation. \(2022\). \[Google Drive\].](#)
3. [Scottish Government. \(2018\). Rural Delivery Plan: Ministerial Working Group.](#)
4. [SRITC. \(2020\). SRITC Convention 2020 COVID Workshop Report. \[Online PDF\].](#)
5. SMARTA (n.d.) Insight papers available on [SMARTA](#) website.



Acknowledgements

We would like to take this opportunity to thank all those in the SRITC community that have contributed to the discussions and evidence gathering since early 2020. We would like to offer our appreciation Irina Protasova, member of the SRITC team, who supported the photography of the Lego Workshop and writing of this report.

Contact SRITC



sritc@ruralmobility.scot



www.ruralmobility.scot



The Scottish
Rural & Islands
Transport Community

A Community Interest Company