

N76 / Rural Services Bus Survey

Period: 14/1 – 20/2/26. Total Respondents: 483

Summary

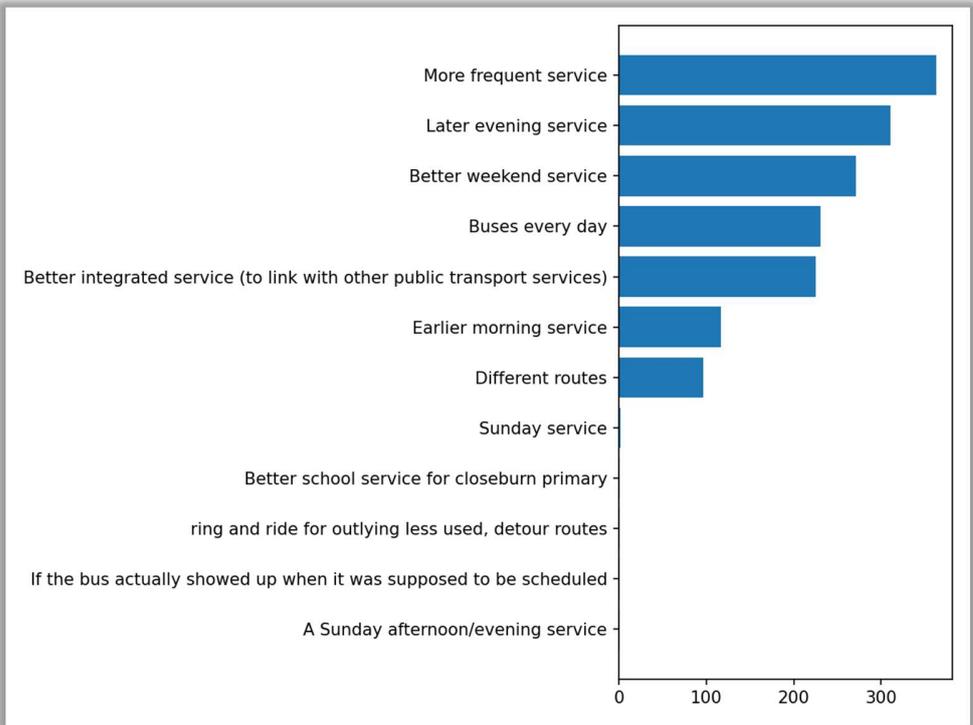
Commissioned by the N76 Group of community organisations operating from Glencairn and Closeburn, up to Kirkconnel and beyond to New Cumnock in East Ayrshire. This report presents insights from 483 survey responses on the recent rural public transport reorganisation on the area.

Key concerns include reduced evening and weekend services, loss of direct Cumnock/Ayr links, missing morning Edinburgh connections, overcrowding at school times, reliability problems, and geographic/rural isolation for non-drivers.

1. What's Most Wanted

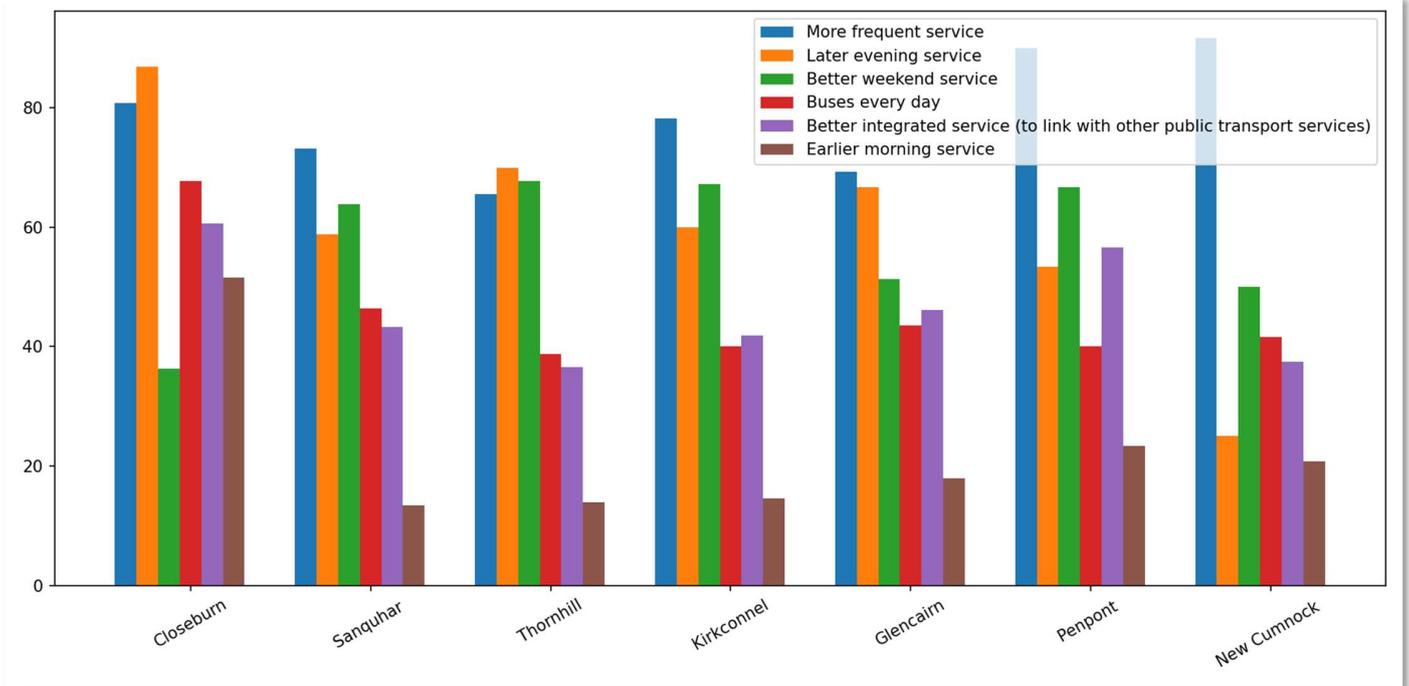
Top priorities reflect essential needs for daily life, i.e. work, education, healthcare, social participation and options for travel further afield.

- More frequent service: 363 mentions
- Later evening service: 311
- Better weekend service: 271
- Buses every day: 231
- Better integrated service (to link with other public transport services): 225
- Earlier morning service: 117
- Different routes: 96



2. Differences by Locality

Local areas show distinct needs. Closeburn and Thornhill prioritise evening buses; Sanquhar and Kirkconnel stress Cumnock/Ayr connectivity; Glencairn highlights missing 202 journeys; Penpont emphasises integration with the 246 and Edinburgh routes.



Colours represent: Blue=More frequent, Orange=Evening, Green=Weekend, Red=Daily service, Purple=Integration, Brown=Earlier morning.

3. Who is Most Affected

- Young people lose independence
- Disabled and older residents face barriers to medical access
- Workers cannot rely on early/late buses
- Low-income households face forced car dependency.

4. Community-Backed Fixes

Solutions proposed include restoring evening/Sunday buses, reinstating direct Cumnock/Ayr routes, reviving the 101/102 morning service, improving timetable accuracy, integrating buses with trains, and addressing school-related capacity issues.

5. What People Say

Analysis of free-text comments shows strong frustration around service cuts, poor connections, inconsistent timetables, overcrowding and reduced access to essential services. Illustrated here with respondents' quotes:

"My daughter has an almost 2 hour journey in the morning to get to college in Dumfries and the same in late afternoon, due to bad bus service connection between bus arriving in Dumfries and next bus to the college."

"could we get back the morning 102/101 Thornhill TO Edinburgh back please even if just at weekends and out of term periods. It takes 4.5 hrs on the connecting buses via Dumfries with no toilet "

"Cumnock being a transport hub and having shopping, vet, dental and optician services should be more easily reachable from upper Nithsdale. Sunday service connecting rural villages is important to a lot of people."

"The service provided is broken.

We need to return to the timetable along the A76 to what it was before August 2025. "

"When the busses ran on a more regular basis it was easier to nip into town during the school hours without having long waits at either side "

"I think there should be a bus every hour and 1 for yo get to hospital for visiting at nite"

"Later evening busses enabled you to have a day out in town with friends, socialising with work colleagues - no longer able to as no busses run after 5:30pm."

"More regular times "

"No suitable buses to get to/home from a night out in dumfries. Even a bus 9.30/10pm would be an improvement "

"Last bus back from Dumfries going north is now at 1740/1745 absolute joke !

Before covid there was a 2235 which was lost into the Abyss of covid and never returned , after that the latest was 2035 which was also lost when stagecoach pulled out , I know of people who have had to change jobs because of this, and the lack of a busses to Dumfries in the morning the timing are absolutely awful "

"We used to use the bus to go into Dumfries but since the changes last summer we've stopped using it as the timetable doesn't suit us. "

"Would really like to see a later bus services being added back in for the spring/summer months. For people socialising or for day/nights out and Hobbies. The last 246 bus from Dumfries is 5.30pm and Cumnock to Dumfries 8pm. We also need a Sunday bus services back too. "

6. Impact and Frustration

Survey responses reveal escalating frustration: residents feel cut off from employment, education and vital appointments. Evening social life has collapsed for many, reliance on costly taxis is widespread, and families with no car face severe isolation. The removal of direct Cumnock/Ayr services is described as “devastating”, while the absence of Sunday buses effectively traps entire communities. Young people cannot attend weekend jobs or social activities, and older or disabled passengers report feelings of abandonment. The system is viewed as unreliable, poorly integrated and unresponsive to rural needs.

Conclusions

The survey results paint a clear and consistent picture: public transport in the N76 corridor is no longer meeting the basic mobility needs of residents.

Responses emphasise the cumulative impact of reduced frequency, the loss of evening and weekend services, and the disappearance of direct or well-timed connections to key destinations such as Dumfries Cumnock, Ayr and Edinburgh. These gaps affect every demographic group but fall heaviest on those without access to a car, including young people, older residents, disabled passengers and low-income households.

The comments highlight how diminished services restrict access to employment, education, healthcare and community participation, increasing isolation and reducing overall quality of life. The strength and consistency of community feedback signal that the current transport model is not functioning equitably or sustainably, and that reinstating reliable, integrated provision is critical for the social and economic wellbeing of the area

Recommendations

- **Reintroduce evening and weekend (esp. Sunday) services** to reduce social isolation, support shift-workers, and restore access to leisure, healthcare and family visits.
- **Restore direct or guaranteed-connect services to Cumnock/Ayr** to address the most frequently raised connectivity gap and reduce forced reliance on costly alternatives.
- **Reinstate a reliable morning link to Edinburgh**, either via the former 101/102 route or by ensuring timely connections at New Cumnock or Abington.
- **Improve timetable accuracy and information at stops**, ensuring that printed and online times reflect real operational patterns and reduce uncertainty for passengers.
- **Strengthen integration with rail services** by aligning bus arrival/departure times with key train connections, especially for work and study travel.
- **Increase capacity at school peaks**, either through larger vehicles or duplicate runs, to address overcrowding and improve safety and comfort.
- **Implement ongoing community engagement**, gathering regular feedback to refine routes and timetables and ensure services remain responsive and sustainable