

NEW BUS LINK TAKES THE STRAIN OUT OF TRAVELLING TO THE PLANE

A NEW bus link from Elgin to Inverness Airport will take the strain out of travelling to the plane for passengers from Moray and Nairnshire.

The extension of the Stagecoach JET 11 service has been introduced in answer to public demand and has received £60,000 start-up funding from regional transport partnership HITRANS.

Calling at Forres and Nairn the new link, which will begin on Monday, May 18, offers much more than an opportunity for direct travel to the airport.

For the striking buses operating the service are all low floor easy access vehicles, meaning the route will be an excellent choice for people who need to take a pram, buggy or wheelchair aboard.

The initiative is the latest in a number of service improvements made possible as a result of the quality partnership between Stagecoach and HITRANS. It comes in response to calls from Moray Council, as well as the public, for a regular, direct bus link to the airport.

Moray MSP Richard Lochhead, launching the service at Elgin Cathedral, said: "I really appreciate the efforts of Stagecoach and HITRANS in launching this service.

"I know that many of the letters I receive from constituents relate to the need for direct bus links to Inverness Airport and for low floor easy access buses to be available for travel from Moray to Inverness.

"I am delighted that Stagecoach and HITRANS have found a way of killing both birds with one stone and I look forward to using this link myself in the future."

HITRANS board member and Moray Council Convener, Councillor George McIntyre, added: "The direct bus to Inverness Airport has been a missing link that the council and HITRANS have been keen to provide for a long time.

"I am really delighted that the first project HITRANS tackled with funding from their START project involved establishing this new service and I have every confidence that the Moray and Nairnshire public will use this service in great numbers."

Thanks to the cash input from the HITRANS START project some of the set-up costs, which include two new buses, plus the extra operating costs for the first two years of the service, will be covered.

There will also be additional funding to market the service and to introduce real time information units on the buses.

But Stagecoach will take on all the other commercial risks associated with the service. Stagecoach in the Highlands Divisional Traffic Manager Scott Pearson said: "Stagecoach is delighted to work with key local partners at HITRANS and Moray Council in delivering this new option for travel to Inverness Airport.

"We always encourage feedback and suggestions from our passengers and this service is one that we have been asked to provide many times.

"We are delighted to deliver for our customers and look forward to helping many people start their holidays in style by catching the bus to Inverness Airport.

"We also hope the low floor buses will provide a welcome option for travel along the route between Elgin and Inverness."

The new JET 11 branded buses will offer real business class comfort to passengers, with leather seats as standard.

Four double deck Volvo buses will run on the service along with two single deck Enviro 300 buses, currently being made at Alexander Dennis, in Falkirk.

Until the new buses enter service in August, Stagecoach is to use two high quality Volvo buses, in addition to the double deckers.

As the service is in addition to the existing express coach services 10, 305 and 315 operated by Stagecoach this will offer a completely new option to passengers.

The JET 11 will operate hourly from Monday to Saturday, with the first bus leaving Elgin Bus Station at 05.50am and the last departure from Elgin at 18.25pm. Details of the full timetable can be found at www.stagecoachbus.com/highlands

To mark the introduction of the new service people wanting to travel on the first day can download a voucher that entitles them to free travel for one return journey on Monday May 18.

Go to www.stagecoachbus.com/highlands to claim your free journey and try out the service. Vouchers should be handed to the driver and all the returned vouchers will be entered in a prize draw, with one lucky winner receiving a JET Monthly Megarider entitling them to a month's travel on the new service.



Pictured above at the service launch event at Elgin Cathedral are from left to right Moray MSP and Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs Richard Lochhead MSP, Scott Pearson Divisional Traffic Manager of Stagecoach in the Highlands and Randal Robertson HITRANS Partnership Manager.

Notes to editors and photo caption information:

1. The JET 11 service was originally introduced in July 2007 improving links from Inverness, Nairn and Croy to Inverness Airport. This upgrade was funded by HITRANS who secured £2.1Million from the Scottish Government's bus route development scheme.
2. The extension of JET 11 to Nairn, Forres and Elgin is being funded through a partnership of Stagecoach and HITRANS. HITRANS £60,000 contribution to kick start the service will offset some of the increased operating costs including part funding two new buses. HITRANS contribution is funded through the START project which HITRANS secured EU INTERREG IVB ERDF funding for, in partnership with other regional development agencies in the Atlantic Area.
3. The voucher will be available to redeem from Friday morning.

Ends

