Aberdeenshire Council on target to achieve substantial savings with QRoutes

Aberdeenshire Council provide transport services for 11,000 pupils, with around 500 of these requiring Additional Support Needs (ASN). The total cost per annum to provide this transport is around £16m for Mainstream schools and £3m for ASN. Aberdeenshire have their own fleet of vehicles to provide some of this transport but still tender over 600 contracts to local operators.

Sean Jamieson, the Principal Officer for Client Transport, says the Passenger Transport Unit was charged with saving £1m over two years out of these costs. "Such a saving seemed impossible", said Sean, "but it's looking like we might achieve this target with QRoutes".

The PTU did some initial route optimization work with a small number of their northern schools, which immediately delivered around £80K savings. This gave them confidence that QRoutes might help them tackle a major review of their southern area schools.
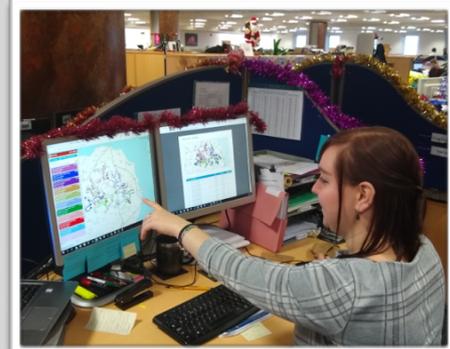
Alana Bowie, Senior Transport and MOWG Project Officer, was initially tasked with reviewing 9 south Community Schools Networks (CSN's), encompassing 80 schools. Using QRoutes she found savings at 36 of them and was able to save 8 contracts at one of the larger academies.

"The total initial reduction in the number of routes was 72", says Alana. "However, we needed to risk assess the revised routes, and after this exercise still expect to save 39 vehicles."

Although some of the savings relate to smaller taxi routes, which obviously cost less, larger contracts can equate to over £45K per annum. In total the savings look as though they will be in excess of £500,000 in south Aberdeenshire in the first year, on target to reach the £1m saving required.

Aberdeenshire are tendering the southern routes in 2019 for the academic year 2019/20and will be reviewing the northern schools for the following year.

They also plan to process their Health and Social Care network in due course to see what savings QRoutes can help them identify there.

When asked how the savings were made, Sean and Alana agreed that coping with so many trips and routes without QRoutes is incredibly difficult. When additions, reductions or address changes occur it is almost impossible to understand their impact on the overall solution. Over time the efficiency of the network degrades.

QRoutes gave them a digital map view of the schools, trips and pickup points so they could visualise the planned routes and see the impact of changes. Furthermore, using QRoutes meant the team could test the feasibility of alternative solutions in minutes and deliver a level of improvement that had previously seemed unimaginable.

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info@qroutes.co.uk