

Keeping Dumfries & Galloway Council Moving

Dumfries & Galloway establishes pool car scheme with the aims of reducing carbon emissions, mileage and the overall cost of staff travel.



As far as we are aware, at the time we went live, no other local authority had implemented such a significant pool car service in terms of either numbers or geography. The scheme has been a success and we now have better control over employee journeys and can monitor where vehicles are. We have also reduced our grey fleet mileage, costs of staff travel and reduced CO2 emissions by 75 tonnes.

Harry Thomson
Head of Business, Support & Professional Services, Dumfries & Galloway Council

Dumfries & Galloway Council recently established a centrally controlled corporate car pool in response to the rising costs of staff travel and the concern staff would not be able to carry out their roles effectively following the removal of "Essential Car User" status. The Corporate Pool seeks to maximise vehicle utilisation, at the same time ensuring vehicles are fit for purpose and their usage more effectively monitored.

Background

Dumfries & Galloway is the third largest mainland council area in Scotland, but also has the third lowest population density, at 23 people per km². Its two largest towns (and staffing locations) are 75 miles apart.

Similar to other authorities in the UK, Dumfries & Galloway Council was faced with cost pressures in relation to staff travel, particularly from rising fuel prices. The Council also needed to overcome a problem from implementing 'Single Status' for its 8,000+ staff, which had led to the removal of 'Essential User Allowance' for staff who were previously paid a lump sum to drive their own car on business.

The Council had concerns that staff may not have the means to travel where required in the course of their duties and that they could not expect all staff to provide their own vehicles.

In 2009, it was agreed that the preferred method of facilitating staff travel by car was to implement a Corporate Car Pool of 100 vehicles based across 23 locations. External hire companies were ruled out due to the underdeveloped market in more remote areas of Dumfries & Galloway, but also because internal management of the Pool was felt to offer more autonomy in ensuring cars were effectively used.

The majority of travel undertaken by officers tended to involve only one or two staff travelling together, so the pool car fleet was based on small vehicles. The fleet included 75 small, 15 medium, five multi-purpose vehicles and five automatics. CO2 emissions caps were placed on the various classes of cars of 120, 130, 140 and 156 g/km respectively but in practice all were below 120 g/km.

Tranman Pool Car Booking Solution

Harry Thomson, Head of Business, Support & Professional Services, Dumfries & Galloway Council comments, "Having the correct booking system was essential. We looked at several commercially available options but none were designed for running an inhouse pool fleet. We then looked at the option of working in partnership with Civica, our existing fleet management system supplier, to develop a pool car booking system in Tranman."

The Tranman pool car booking system provides an availability search based on time, dates and location. The search returns any vehicles flagged in Tranman as 'Pool', that are not on existing booked or in-progress contracts for the requested dates and also have no services due or jobs pre-booked for the dates requested.

From the list of pool vehicles available, drivers can select a vehicle and make a booking. The system prompts the driver to enter their details including name and employee number. The system then checks the date of the last licence check. Once the booking is complete, confirmation of the booking is automatically produced and can be either saved or printed.

The pool car web application allows drivers to enter their employee number and view the details of any future bookings. The confirmation details can be printed or drivers can update the booking with collection and return details.

The Tranman pool car booking system cross references the booking details with the existing driver database in Tranman, ensuring no bookings are made without the driver having a current, valid licence. This has the added benefit of encouraging staff to represent their licences when requested, or being unable to travel.

Initially the Council trialled booking pool cars by telephone or email, but quickly decided the best option was to provide access to pool car booking online, which significantly reduced the time spent going through the conventional car hire process. Staff can now check availability and make bookings without any intervention from the Fleet team and bookings can be made at any time. Vehicle keys are held by existing reception staff at a number of Council offices. They release keys to drivers and update Tranman to indicate the keys have been uplifted or returned.

Benefits achieved

The Corporate Pool has achieved its objectives of reducing carbon emissions and helped to maintain the reduction in mileage. There is reduced reliance on the grey fleet and the pool fleet is above target at 80% utilisation. All vehicles are fitted with vehicle tracking and panic buttons, improving the Council's ability to monitor driver behaviour and provide better staff and vehicle security, particularly for lone workers.

Using smaller vehicles and choosing models with lower CO2 emissions has contributed towards the reduction in carbon emissions. Sampling of grey fleet vehicles indicates an average 150 g/km emissions, with the estimated mileage of the Corporate Pool running to 1,500,000 per year, simply replacing the grey fleet mileage with the new pool cars would result in a reduction of 75 tonnes emissions. Dumfries & Galloway are also the first council in the UK to take delivery of four Nissan Leaf electric vehicles.

The total cost of staff travel has dropped from £2,387,155 in 2007/08 to £2,104,307 in 2010/11 – a net saving of £282,848. As the staff mileage rate has now increased by 5p per mile to 45p, and the Pool, at current mileage rates is calculated at costing 40p per mile, a further saving of £55,000 will be achieved at these initial usage rates.

Pool vehicle utilisation is approximately 80%, which is above average for pool or hire car usage. The target for next year is to increase mileage in the vehicles by prioritizing longer journeys.

Employees now carry out daily vehicle checks, whereas many employees previously using "grey fleet" would not carry out any checks. Implementing the process of vehicle checks will undoubtedly have contributed towards increasing safety on local roads.

The Council's Internal Audit section has completed a review of the system. The review concluded that "the scheme is well administered and this is reflected in the high utilisation of cars." Following the review, the Corporate Pool will be extended to cover other vehicles owned by the Council to increase their utilisation and improve access.



Dumfries & Galloway Council pool cars are located across 23 locations

Benefits summary

- > Lower carbon emissions
- > Reduced mileage
- > Less reliance on grey fleet
- > Pool fleet above target at 80% utilisation
- > Improved lone worker safety
- > Reduced total cost of staff travel.

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