

## Frontline Employees Of The Year

At the end of December 2015 and early 2016, Storm Frank resulted in serious infrastructure damage throughout Aberdeenshire, causing rivers to burst their banks and flood the surrounding areas

One of the affected rivers was the Dee, particularly between Ballater and Braemar. Many sections of the A93 are on low lying land close to the river, which meant that as the water rose it

subsequently caused damage to the nearby road and associated infrastructure. The flooding also caused the partial collapse of the Invercauld Bridge which resulted in the bridge being closed to



vehicular traffic on 30th December 2015, cutting off access to Braemar from the east.

Aberdeenshire planned, implemented and oversaw the operation of an emergency shuttle service that was put in place following the closure of the Invercauld Bridge

During the planning phase, our local drivers liaised with Stagecoach Bluebird, who were a key partner in the emergency shuttle operation, to ensure the correct vehicle type was in the correct location. To ensure that the service could operate in time for the schools returning, one of our drivers carried out the fleet transfers late into night in poor weather conditions and negotiated various road closures along the significant diversion route. Not only was this carried out late in the evening, but was also during the New Year public holiday.

When operating the emergency shuttle, our drivers liaised with the local community to ensure that they were aware of the service as it was implemented with very short notice. They also assisted with ensuring the access route to the service was safe

by arranging for a temporary footpath to be laid across the muddy path that customers had to use. Our drivers, in liaison with Stagecoach Bluebird, ensured the service ran smoothly.

As there are only two entrances to Braemar; from the east and the south, the alternative would be to access from the south via Glenshee, which would have been a considerable detour of over 130 miles.

This emergency shuttle service provided a lifeline for customers wishing to travel to Ballater and beyond, and was also used to transport goods between Invercauld Bridge and Braemar. By providing this service our drivers ensured the residents of Braemar and the surrounding area were able to maintain access to work, education, healthcare, shops and the other services.

The bridge was re-opened to road vehicles on 14 January 2016, but their work over the intervening period was crucial to keeping the residents of Braemar connected with the rest of Aberdeenshire.



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As the storm became more widespread across Aberdeenshire other locations also required our drivers to go above and beyond their normal duties, such as an Aberdeenshire Council bus driver normally based at Dalvenie Gardens care home in Banchory who was on annual leave at the time of the flooding. He came in to work during his leave however in order to evacuate the residents of Allachburn and move them to emergency accommodation at Aboyne Academy.

After having done this he then went back out to work (while still on leave) to help move residents from the temporary accommodation back to the home.

When particularly heavy rainfall on the 4th January once again caused more flooding threats, the same driver went out and performed a 10-hour shift in Banchory while still on leave.

His dedication was all the more impressive in that, in addition to working throughout his planned leave, he remained professional in his duties while his own property was at risk of flooding.

The above are examples of how Aberdeenshire Council strives to ensure that our residents receive the best service possible and employees like Charlie Denny, David Souter, Terry Gauld, Terry Rigby albeit assisted by Criag Smith, Garry McLennan and Martin Hall are essential to our service delivery. They are representatives of the 60 full time and 30 part time drivers who provided services all across the area in conjunction with our local bus companies. All of them worked together in challenging and difficult times to move people to safe, dry, warm locations.

