1. **Purpose**

The College provides non-means tested travel support for eligible Further Education students aged under 18 in the form of a travel pass. We have a 20 year partnership with the Public Transport Unit at Perth and Kinross Council to deliver this service. The College decides on student eligibility and details of eligible students are passed to the Council to process a travel pass. The thinking has been that if the student has a travel pass rather than an allowance, this should better help them maintain attendance at College than if they received an allowance for travel that they might spend elsewhere. It also ties in with Council goals to make fullest possible use of the local public transport network.

1. **Arrangements Prior to Academic Year 2016/17**

The Council allocates a travel pass for the most appropriate means of travel to allow the student to get to College. This can be a bus pass, a rail pass or both. Students needing a rail pass have been issued with a Scotrail commercial product, which is purchased by the Council. Students needing a bus pass have been in most cases issued with a Scholar’s Travel Pass similar to what the Council produced for school pupils, although in some cases they have needed to be issued with a Citylink pass. The College is invoiced by the Council 4 times per year for travel costs.

The Council has been able to secure deals with the local bus companies (Stagecoach, Strathtay and Docherty’s Midland Coaches) to get the best deal for the College based on bulk purchase of tickets.

The downside of the previous arrangement is that travel has been restricted to weekdays, generally on a 9-5 timetable. As we are seeing more students studying out with traditional hours, coupled with the opening of the Academy of Sport and Wellbeing, it has become clear that a more flexible travel offering for this group of students would be desirable.

1. **Smart Travel Proposal**

In October 2014, the College, in partnership with Perth and Kinross Council Public Transport Unit, Transport Scotland and Stagecoach initiated a project to deliver a Smart Travel product for the target group of students using a Stagecoach Unirider product that would permit students unlimited travel, based on home location, throughout various zones. Zones include: Perth Zones 1, 2, 3, Fife Zones 1, 2, Tayside Zones 1, 2 and East Scotland Zone.

The platform used to deliver this project would be the National Entitlement Card, branded as a Young Scot Card for this group of students. This would be a Perth College UHI branded Young Scot Card that would have standard Young Scot branding on one side and a look based on the College student ID card on the other. Once produced, the cards would be sent to Perth and Kinross Council Public Transport so that they could load the relevant travel product(s) onto the cards. Stagecoach were agreeable to us using the Young Scot Card as a platform rather than insisting that the travel product was loaded onto one of their own branded cards.

1. **Benefits of New Scheme**

Moving to a Smart Travel scheme should help deliver the following benefits:

* Students can use their pass to travel 24/7, allowing late classes and use of campus facilities such as the Union and ASW.
* It will be possible to get statistics about when the passes are being used. This will require further work with Perth and Kinross Council and Stagecoach to see what information it is possible to get out of the system.
* User Benefits associated with the Young Scot Card, such as reward points.

1. **Implementation**

The original start date was planned to be the start of the 2016/17 Academic Year but some delays to the ordering process for the National Entitlement Cards caused this to be put back to early December 2016. As a result, we had to run with the previous scheme for the first 3 months of term and issue the new cards in exchange for the old passes at the start of December, when they arrived. Stagecoach and Perth and Kinross Council were of great assistance in making sure students were able to travel using the old passes, which had originally been due to expire at the end of October.

1. **Next Steps**

We are looking at how we can extend the scheme for 2017/18. The main areas under consideration at present are:

* We are currently working with Perth and Kinross Council, Abellio Scotrail and Transport Scotland to allow students whose journey is all or partly by train to have the rail component of their journey put on the National Entitlement Card. At present, students have to get a Scotrail-only Smart card for this part of their journey, complicating the application process.
* One of the local bus operators, Docherty’s Midland Coaches, is not currently fully Smart-enabled, so Perth and Kinross Council is working with them on this front. Docherty’s carry roughly 10% of our FE students who have a bus pass, mainly from the Blackford/Auchterarder area and at present, these students have to use the old non-Smart travel pass from the Council.
* Can this be extended to a wider range of students? E.g. over 18’s and/or HE? This could present challenges with means testing awards (how do you give someone half a bus pass?) as well as possibly requiring a renegotiation of our contract with PKC due to the extra work involved. As the travel products on the cards are commercially available, there is nothing stopping students using their travel allowance to buy the product(s) on a Stagecoach Smart card without any formal extension to the College scheme.