
STRATEGIC TRANSPORTATION INFRASTRUCTURE

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Following the recent landslip event at the A83 Rest and Be Thankful and the associated road closure, and the ongoing operational issues associated with the new Dunoon-Gourock passenger ferry service, this report advises Members on the Council's actions with regard to the addressing the requirement for better and more integrated strategic transportation infrastructure planning across government bodies and local authority agencies who have a responsibility for roads and ferries in Argyll & Bute.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.0 That the Executive:
- 2.1 Notes the contents and agrees the actions summarised within this report
- 2.2 Mandates the Executive Director for Development & Infrastructure to bring forward to the Executive a paper which sets out proposed Terms of Reference for the formal constitution of the proposed Roads and Transportation Working Group; as anticipated at 4.3.

3.0 INFORMATION**3.1 Trunk Roads**

In February 2011 Audit Scotland reported that "*Transport Scotland and councils should review their road maintenance strategies and plans to confirm that adequate prioritisation is given to those routes which are likely to contribute greatest to economic growth and improved quality of life.*"

- 3.2 The Spokesperson for Transportation & Infrastructure, the Executive Director for Development & Infrastructure, the Head of Economic Development and the Partnership Director, HITRANS, attended a meeting with the Minister for Transport and Senior Transport Scotland officials in November 2010. The meeting focussed upon Trunk Road issues and in particular the A82, the A83 and the A85. The Council set out its strategic position, stressing the importance of these routes in terms of serving not only the mainland

communities within Argyll & Bute, but also the Council's island communities and the communities of the Western Isles served from Oban. At the meeting the Council welcomed the plans being brought forward for the upgrade of the A82 but stressed the requirement to develop appropriate contingency plans, given the history of landslips on the A83. The Council outlined its own planned programme of works and its intention to upgrade the A819 Inveraray-Dalmally to build greater resilience into the transport infrastructure within Argyll & Bute and to play its part in terms of contingency planning to provide a suitable alternative route for trunk road traffic during any future closure of the A82 for upgrade works.

- 3.3 Regular meetings have subsequently been held, chaired by the Council, with Transport Scotland, Transerve and Strathclyde Police, which cover operational issues but importantly have developed a more coordinated approach towards planning future programmes of work between the Council and Transerve. These meetings have led to the development of communications protocols which now take into account the impact of closures, not only upon the immediate locality of the proposed works, but also upon the mainland and island communities "down stream" of the works; e.g. the closure of the A83 at the Rest and Be Thankful affects communities as far afield as Dunoon, Campbeltown and Islay.
- 3.4 A request for a meeting with the Minister for Transport was sent on 10 November by the Executive Director for Development & Infrastructure Development. The meeting between Minister, the Spokesperson for Transportation & Infrastructure and Senior Council and Transport Scotland officials will address the strategic development of the roads and transportation network in Argyll & Bute to support the local economy, and in particular the growth of the Renewable Energy, Tourism, and the Marine Science & Aquaculture Sectors associated with the Lorn Arc (A85), connectivity issues including the A82 and the Kintyre Renewable Hub (A83), the Scottish Ferries Review and the Dunoon-Gourock passenger ferry. The Council is committed to work with Transport Scotland officials to develop a clearly defined and integrated strategy which sets out how the roads infrastructure within Argyll & Bute (Trunk Roads & Local Authority Roads) can be maintained and improved in forthcoming years to better support the local economy, in the short, medium and longer term.
- 3.5 A clear focus in forthcoming months will be, along with colleagues in HITRANS, to obtain from Transport Scotland their timescales and contingency plans for the proposed works on the A82 at Pulpit Rock in 2012/13 and an assurance that they have fully taken into account the potential economic detriment of any future road closure on the A83 to Cowal, Mid Argyll, Kintyre and the islands, either planned or unplanned, within their proposed actions to mitigate the risk. In particular, the Council will want to be satisfied that prior to any final decision being taken to close the A82 for the planned upgrade works, that appropriate action has been taken to minimise the risk of future landslip, and the provision of a suitably resourced "recovery" contingency plan which can bring the A83 back into operation as quickly as possible, should such an event occur.

- 3.6 The Scottish Government last month issued its Infrastructure Investment Plan 2011 identifying national capital investment priorities in the period up to 2030. While no specific road schemes in Argyll and Bute other than those on the A82 are named in the Plan, a programme of 'targeted trunk road improvements' is included and the Council should promote inclusion of schemes to overcome the impact of the land slips on the A83 and improve local road safety improvements on the A83 and A85 within any such programme. In this regard HITRANS is currently carrying out a refresh of its Regional Transport Strategy Delivery Plan which supports delivery of the Regional Transport Strategy and the Council will provide proposed schemes for inclusion within any subsequently revised Delivery Plan.
- 3.7 In its Corporate Asset Management & Capital Plan for 2011-2013, the Council set out a clear short term strategy to arrest the rate of decline in its roads network. This strategy was informed by policy framework of supporting the local economy and the quality of life of residents. The Roads Reconstruction Programme was consequently increased in 2011/12 from £2.3M to £7M, with a focus upon upgrading the Council's strategic arterial A class roads which support the greater part of commercial activity and community travel within Argyll & Bute.
- 3.8 As by way of example of this economy focussed approach, in recognition of the importance of the timber industry within the Council's Economic Development Action Plan, the Council has in partnership with the Argyll Timber Transport Group (ATTG) and Transport Scotland led the development of an agreed set of designated timber haul routes, which takes into account future timber extraction plans and seeks to make operational and physical provision to minimise the impact upon the roads network.
- 3.9 As referred to at 3.2, the Council has recognised the strategic importance of the A819 as the "link road" between the A82/A85 and the A83. In terms of strategic planning, the Council has recognised the requirement to not only upgrade the running surfaces on these routes, but also to make targeted road improvements in terms of road width and improvements to sight lines; such as the £600K allocated to improve the swept path on the A83 at Muasdale which will better allow the transport of wind turbines, and the road widening and sight line improvements on the A819.

The Council has invested £570K during financial year 2011-2012 on the A83 in Kintyre and a further £1.2M over the past two years in upgrading the A819 Inverary to Dalmally Road; in anticipation of this route being required as a diversionary route for trunk road traffic during the future A82 upgrade works at Pulpit Rock.

The Roads & Amenity Service has developed a 3 year programme of works, with the proposed programme of £5M of works currently being presented to Members through Area Committees. This programme includes a further investment of £0.68M on the strategic A83 and A819 routes for 2012/13 – £0.32M on A83 and £0.36M on A819.

3.10 Argyll Ferries – Dunoon / Gourock

Following the introduction of the new passenger ferry service between Dunoon-Gourock, the Council has installed temporary passenger accommodation and facilities. The Council continues to maintain the Wooden Pier and associated linkspan, and has developed its planning and made financial provision within the development of the CHORD Final Business Case for permanent “fit for purpose” passenger accommodation at Dunoon. The Council requires however to have clarity with regard to the future ferry provision and associated shore-side requirements before committing expenditure towards permanent infrastructure. The Council has also led the development of options to improve the embarkation /disembarkation arrangements for passengers and has led the procurement of a Feasibility Study which will examine the scope to introduce access pontoons at Dunoon. This feasibility Study is a joint initiative supported by the Scottish Governments Ferries Division, Argyll & Bute Council, Inverclyde Council, CMAL, SPT and Argyll Ferries

- 3.11 In light of the growing concern being expressed by the Cowal community served by the new passenger ferry, and following the public meeting on 24 November, attended by local politicians and senior representatives from the operators of Argyll Ferries, the Council Leader, Councillor Dick Walsh, arranged a meeting held on Friday 9 December at the Queens Hall Dunoon. Attending the meeting, which was chaired by the Council Leader was Alan Reid, MP; Michael Russel, MSP; Chief Executive Argyll & Bute Council and senior officials from The Scottish Government’s Ferries Division, Inverclyde Council and Argyll & Bute Council. Also attending the meeting as representatives of Ferry Users was Mr Cameron Smith, Chair of Dunoon Community Council and Professor Kay, Resident.
- 3.12 The outcome of the meeting was a 3 point plan, which all attending the meeting agreed. The local MSP for the area, Michael Russel, MSP, undertook at the meeting to present the proposed 3 point plan to the Cabinet Secretary, Alex Neill, MSP. It is an expectation that the outcome of this meeting should be a further meeting with the Cabinet Secretary, which it is anticipated would examine responsibilities, actions, resources and timetable for the development of the 3 point. The elements of the 3 point plan are:
- a) Immediate Action:- the development of an improvement plan by Argyll Ferries to significantly improve the current service - timescale 2 weeks. The intention would be that, through the Scottish Government, Argyll and Bute Council, Inverclyde Council and the Ferries Users Group would be given the opportunity to comment on the improvement plan.

Then, a confidential options appraisal exercise should take place, led by Scottish Government officials and supported by Argyll and Bute Council and Inverclyde Council (and CMAL where appropriate) as follows;

b) Short to Medium Term options:- a short to medium terms options appraisal process would look at options to improve the current service and travelling experience for the public in the short to medium term. This process will examine options for improving the current service provided by the Argyll Flyer and the Alicat, the potential utilisation of the Coruisk on the Dunoon-Gourock route, improvements in embarkation / disembarkation arrangements, which will include the provision of berthing pontoons and shore side passenger accommodation infrastructure, and any other potential short to medium term proposals which parties consider appropriate for consideration. This process would require options to be developed which should be examined in terms of technical and operational feasibility, deliverability and cost. The target timescale for this would be April but will be dependent upon the Project & Resource Plan developed by the Scottish Government's Ferries Division.

c) Medium to Longer Term options:- a confidential options appraisal process would look at options for the provision of a vehicular ferry service operating between Dunoon & Gourock . This process would look at all potential options which would include the existing service model, the provision of new vessels designed specifically for the Dunoon-Gourock route by the Scottish Government, the procurement or lease of suitable vehicular ferry vessels available within the shipping industry, and the scope to develop an operating model which could allow a private sector operator to provide a vehicular ferry service on this route. The timescale and resources required to undertake this options appraisal will be identified by the Scottish Government's Ferries Division, with a target date to develop a Project Inception Document which will set out the Project & Resource Plan.

4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 In the context of the recent events which have disrupted the strategic transportation infrastructure controlled and operated on behalf of the Scottish Government through Transport Scotland and the Ferries Division, this paper sets out in summary form the Council's actions in terms of developing better integrated strategic planning in the future, and immediate actions which have been set in hand to address current difficulties.
- 4.2 It would appear that there is a growing appetite across all government bodies with a responsibility for transportation infrastructure and operations, local government officials and regional transport partnerships to better integrate future transportation infrastructure planning; with a clear focus upon supporting the economy and the quality of life of communities.
- 4.3 To assist the Council to shape its response and contribution to the development of future strategic infrastructure planning, it is proposed that consideration should be given to formally constituting a Roads and Transportation Working Group (RTWG). It is anticipated that the RTWG would develop the policy framework upon which the Council will approach these future discussions.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

Policy	–	As per content
Financial	–	As per content
Personnel	–	As per content
Equalities Impact Assessment	–	None anticipated
Legal	–	As per content
Economic Development	–	As per content

Sandy Mactaggart

Executive Director
Development & Infrastructure
15 December 2011

DRAFT