
**REPORT BY DEPUTE LEADER OF COUNCIL AND POLICY LEAD FOR ROADS,
AMENITY SERVICES, INFRASTRUCTURE, ASSET MANAGEMENT AND STRATEGIC
PROJECTS**

1. DEPUTE LEADER

- 1.1** I have attended 2 COSLA Convention Meetings in Edinburgh where for Argyll & Bute Council the key issue was the maintenance of the flat cash settlement for this year and next year. This year's has been secured, but there is still a degree of uncertainty around the following year.
- 1.2** I was also delighted to attend the COHI Convention which, for the first time, met in Helensburgh. It was an excellent networking opportunity and, in particular, I was pleased to be able to talk to Mr Swinney, the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, and Mr MacKay the Minister for Local Government about a number of issues but particularly about the need for Argyll & Bute to have better recognition of the budgetary strain caused by the lack of proper recognition that we represent a significant number of islands within our Council. I found both Ministers very easy to talk to and very sympathetic to the issues of sparsity and rurality. I am also pleased to record that Mr Swinney took the time and trouble to write to the staff in the Victoria Hall thanking them for all their work and complimenting the Council on the facility, a gesture very much appreciated by the staff.
- 1.3** I have also taken part in 2 important interview panels and, as Members will be aware, we have now appointed Pippa Milne Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure, and Fergus Murray Head of Economic Development & Strategic Transportation. Pippa should be arriving in post on 1st April, while Fergus should be in post with effect from 20th January. I am delighted that we are now getting this team back up to strength and look forward to working with both officers as we deliver the Economic Development of the area which we have unanimously agreed is our top priority.

2. POLICY LEADCHORD

- 2.1** One of my first priorities in post is to expedite the delivery of all our CHORD Projects.
- 2.2** The Oban CHORD Project was not progressing as well as the Council had hoped, so I began with Oban by attending a Workshop in Dunstaffnage in October. This was an opportunity both to bring all partners round the table and to get all of us up to speed with the issues. I am delighted to report to Council that there was agreement among all the partners on the desired outcomes, reflected both at the workshop and then in the decisions taken at the CHORD Project Board meeting which unanimously endorsed the outcomes from the earlier discussions. Obviously, as with all big projects, the agreed outcomes are

subject to full business cases which are now being developed.

- 2.3** Since the workshop day I have made several visits to Oban to see the proposed sites, meet key players and establish a relationship between the new administration and the local media. I am very optimistic that the Council will be able to help Oban realise its significant potential through the various projects we are working on in cooperation with a number of partners. The lighting of McCaig's Tower funded through CHORD was successfully completed prior to the Oban Winter Festival and has been very well received by the local community. Work is progressing on the detrunking and pedestrianisation of Stafford Street and we anticipate that the Public Realm Improvements in Stafford Street and in Oban Bay Harbour Area will be completed by the end of this year. The work on the ground will not begin until after the summer tourist season to minimise the impact on local businesses.
- 2.4** Helensburgh town centre public realm improvements are moving on fairly well, and the contractor is continuing work on phase 1b on the Esplanade and starting phase 2 in Colquhoun Square. One issue which I was involved with was ensuring that the terrible storms which battered the Esplanade did not cause any long-term damage to the area and I should like to thank Roads staff who came out in the worst of weather over the Festive period to provide inspections and any necessary protection. A number of the retailers on West Clyde St have reported to the contractor or to local Members that the impact of the recent severe weather had less impact on their properties than in previous years and that they felt this was a result of the enhanced drainage works undertaken by CHORD.
- 2.5** I am now moving on to focus on the Dunoon, Rothesay and Campbeltown CHORD projects and have some dates set for visits during February. Again I think it is important that I familiarise myself with the locations and see the proposals in context, as well as meet with local Members and identify any areas of difficulty which might impede delivery.

Amenity Services

- 2.6** One of the major tasks for Amenity Services has been agreeing the details of how to achieve the budget savings agreed in February 2013. I was involved in this work and am pleased that after detailed discussions with senior officers all 4 Area Committees accepted the agreed proposals. Mr Murphy is committed to continuing to work positively with local Members to ensure the most appropriate solutions for each area.

Roads Reconstruction Programme

- 2.7** In 2011, following the Roads Operations Service Review, the Council decided to focus investment in upgrading its strategic A class roads, and subsequently delivered a £7M programme of works which made an immediate and positive impact on the roads network. In February 2012, the Council approved a further £21M investment programme for roads reconstruction for 2012-15. Additional Scottish Government funding of £0.35M in 12/13 and £1.20M in 13/14 has been allocated as further investment to the roads reconstruction programme.
- 2.8** The Roads Department has had a busy year delivering the programme agreed by Council, planning for the next year's spend and dealing with weather issues as they arose. The Roads Reconstruction Programme has been structured in accordance with the Roads Asset Management and Maintenance Strategy (2012). The focus of the Roads Reconstruction Programme has been to recover

the network through the delivery of a mix of carriageway resurfacing, patching/surface dressing and in situ road surface recycling; designed to seal the road to stop the ingress of water, improve ride quality and reduce the amount of reactive repair required. Proportionate scrub clearance, ditching/drainage works, minor realignments and improvements to sight lines have also been carried out in conjunction with the surfacing works to leave a 'finished' job.

2.9 Roads Reconstruction Programme – Works Completed 2011-14

The summary table below highlights the positive and visible impact of the works undertaken to date. On completion of this year's capital programme the Council will have upgraded over a third of its "A" class roads and almost 415km of roads in total since 2011/12.

Roads Reconstruction Programme – Works Completed 2011-14

Road category	Treatment % 2011/12	Treatment % 2012/13	Treatment % 2013/14	Total Treatment Length	Total Treatment as a % of network length 2011-14
A	55.76 km = 10%	93.37 km = 17%	47.42 km = 8.51%	196.55 km	35.51%
B	26.846 km = 4%	58.912 km = 10%	25.96 km = 4.23%	111.718 km	18.23%
C	12.374 km = 3%	4.008km = 1%	7.99 km = 1.84%	24.372 km	5.84%
U	18.860 km = 3%	17.553 km = 2%	43.60 km = 6.01%	80.013 km	11.01%
				412.653 km	

- 2.10** The current capital investment programme to 2015/16 will allow the Council to upgrade over 50% of its class A roads and 30% of its class B roads by 2016; which in line with the SOA outcomes, will make a significant and positive impact upon the local economy, connectivity and the quality of life of our communities.
- 2.11** To date, over the course of the 3 year programme, significant work has been carried out to mainland strategic routes including the: A814, A818 (Helensburgh and Lomond) A815, A886 (Bute and Cowal), A819, A816 (Oban Lorn and the Isles & Mid Argyll), A83 (Mid Argyll, Kintyre and Islay): and on strategic island routes including A849, A884, A848 (Mull) and A846, A847 (Islay).
- 2.12** In October last year Council considered the first roads Annual Options and Status Report which provides an analytical analysis of each of the asset sets including carriageway, footway, lighting and bridges and structures. This report provides Members with a significant amount of data which will assist in helping to make decisions relating to establishing priorities within the overall road network.

2.13 Maritime Change Programme

I have been involved with senior officers in a meeting with MOD to ensure that the Maritime Change Programme is delivered as smoothly as possible to the mutual benefit of the MOD and the local area. It is critical that we build relationships to ensure partnership working to deliver a good outcome for the Helensburgh & Lomond area as well as for all of Argyll & Bute. The potential for building our population and reversing current trends and the employment and apprenticeship opportunities are enormous and the Council must position itself to take full advantage of these. To this end officers from Planning are going to set up a project team with the MOD to deliver a Strategic Development Framework for the MOD Estate in the Helensburgh and Lomond area.

2.14 Hermitage Park, Helensburgh

Members will be aware that the Friends of Hermitage Park have now secured a £2 million grant subject to their detailed plans being approved. The first tranche of £170,000 will be released shortly to allow for a public consultation on the details of the proposed development of the park. This is a marvellous opportunity for Helensburgh and I should like to publicly record the Council's thanks to all those who have made this possible: most importantly the Helensburgh citizens who came together in 2012 to form the Friends to improve the Park, with a clear recognition that the Council could not do everything desired by the local community; Tom Murphy, Stuart MacCracken, Arlene Cullum and other officers who worked to support the aspirations of the Friends and helped them put together a winning bid, persevering even after the first attempt failed; also Helensburgh Play Park Association and Transitions Helensburgh, 2 community groups who have also come on board to make sure that a real community asset is developed in a sustainable fashion in an outstandingly successful example of partnership working.

2.15 Scottish Flooding Summit

Last week I attended the Scottish Flooding Summit at the Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh. The event was attended by elected members, chief and senior officers from 28 of the 32 Scottish Local Authorities, COSLA, Scottish Government, Scottish Water, SEPA and Ordnance Survey. The Summit was formally opened with a speech from Paul Wheelhouse MSP, Minister for Environment and Climate Change. The Minister introduced the Flood Hazard and Flood Risk Maps that have been launched this week by SEPA. SEPA will be running training sessions on the maps in March aimed at planners.

2.16 This was an event that had been planned for some while but it was refreshing to see that many of the speakers had adjusted their presentations to reflect on the storms and flooding that affected many Scottish communities over the festive period. In his speech, the Minister, made specific mention of the coastal flooding suffered in Oban which had resulted from a combination of low pressure, high spring tides and gale force winds.

2.17 The Summit confirmed that all partners involved in flooding need to work in collaboration to get the most benefit. There was also a stark reminder that property owners have a primary duty to protect their property and should not rely on public bodies for providing resilience.

2.18 In the facilitated workshop session I was delighted to be told that the flooding

information on the Argyll and Bute website is considered to be one of the most informative sources of information available. Congratulations go to the Roads and Amenity flooding team lead by Arthur McCulloch, Lesley Montague in Governance and Law and the Web Team for producing and posting this information.

- 2.19** The last session of the day focused on finance and the civil servant making the presentation stated that the current funding arrangement for capital flooding allocation will remain until 2015/16. Thereafter a new formal is being considered but the current £2M minimum scheme value and the rate of return consideration make it unlikely that we will benefit from additional funding unless the criteria can be changed to be more in our favour. There will be opportunities for the Council to make representations to COSLA regarding the payment mechanism.

Roads and Amenity Services - Employee Recognition

- 2.20** My final comment must be to thank all the Roads and Amenity Services officers who came out over the Festive Season when Argyll & Bute was battered by storms. During that period they worked tirelessly in the most difficult conditions to keep us all safe, to keep our roads open and to protect our infrastructure. Since then they have continued to work to clear up the debris and deal with the aftermath. We all owe them a debt of gratitude.

Councillor Ellen Morton

14 January 2014