
Kerrera STAG/Road Options Update

1. Introduction

- 1.1 A Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) report by Transport Scotland was published in June 2013 which identified long term options for ferry service provision to the island of Kerrera.
- 1.2 The STAG report identified that despite the island of Kerrera being served by 3 ferry services residents are concerned that current services do not meet the needs of islanders and are not financially sustainable.
- 1.3 The STAG report recommended that the existing vehicle ferry route is retained with a north-south link road constructed on the island to negate the requirement for 3 separate ferry services. Transport Scotland would be responsible for upgrading the shore infrastructure to enable a non-tidal operation of the ferry service however costs associated with the road infrastructure will be the Councils responsibility.
- 1.4 The Deputy Leader and Strategic Transportation Manager (on behalf of the Head of Economic Development and Head of Roads and Amenity Services) visited Kerrera and met with residents of the island on 13 March and noted that there was a willingness to expand their population and work towards securing external funding for road infrastructure improvements to drive down costs to the Council.

2.0 Background and Community Views

- 2.1 There are 33 residents on Kerrera and approximately half of the population are located north of the vehicle ferry slipway with the other half to the south of it. There is currently no vehicle road link between the north and middle of Kerrera and in effect this results in two separate communities, divided between the north and south of the island. Residents of Kerrera consider the island to be physically divided between the north and the south end because of the lack of proper and reliable access between the two areas.
- 2.2 The existing roads in the south of the island are of a basic standard, akin to forest tracks. It can take around half an hour to travel from the south end of Kerrera to the vehicle ferry in the middle of the island. The two roads on the west of the island are both adopted by Argyll and Bute Council however, they are in very poor condition, being of a basic granular construction with no sealed surface or formal drainage.
- 2.3 It should be noted that the lease from Dunollie Estate for the current vehicle ferry service precludes members of the public taking cars over to the island for non-business purposes. Only island residents, utility vehicles and work traffic are permitted vehicular access to Kerrera.
- 2.4 Residents view the provision of a new road as a lifeline link due to concerns regarding existing access for emergency services and medical staff to the island. There are now ten children living on the island six of which are under school age.

- 2.5 The proposed route of the road would require the permission of four land owners of which all have indicated that they are happy to provide this.
- 2.6 Dunollie Estate have also advised that they would be prepared to allow the ground for the road to be acquired by the community so that they can apply for any grant funding. In addition, any stone that can be gathered on site to reduce costs associated with construction would be contributed by the Estate.
- 2.7 There are numerous businesses on the island that a new road would benefit from eg Kerrera Marina, Lower Gylem Tea room, Bed and Breakfast establishment(s), new facility to assist the development of young people with behavioural problems
- 2.8 Dunollie Estates have indicated that they would allow the use of any suitable materials on the island for free to construct the new road. Dunollie Estates indicated that Argyll and Bute Council Roads and Amenity Services had undertaken a study of the road in 2006 and that planning approval has been given for the route of the proposed road.
- 2.9 The community are keen on recycling and prepared to work with the Council on any new systems for disposing waste.

3.0 Key Issues from Roads and Amenity Services

3.1 Current known costs to the council in terms of transportation/logistical matters on Kerrera

- A weekly service for refuse collection is under contract to Argyll and Bute Council. This includes use of the Scottish Sea Farms and Oban Marina slipways in the north of the island. The services costs the council approximately £21k per annum. The provision of a road linking the north and south of the island would enable a pickup or van to be use via the ferry to gain access onto the island. This would result in a saving being made.
- There are presently four school pupils at the north end of the island-two secondary and two primary. They travel by boat every school day between the marina and Oban North Pier. This service is provided by a local contractor (David Wishart) and is solely for the transport of the pupils. It is procured and funded (at a cost of around £13,000 per annum) by Argyll and Bute Council. The service is required due to the lack of a road that would allow the pupils access to the Kerrera Ferry Ltd service to Oban. In Oban the four pupils are taken between the North Pier and their schools by a minibus that also transports other pupils. The cost to Argyll and Bute Council to transport the 4 Kerrera pupils via minibus is approximately £5,000 resulting in a total cost for school transport of approximately £18,000 per annum.

3.2 Possible borrowing opportunity through revenue savings

- The £13,000 from the dedicated ferry service for school children and £6,500 from the refuse collection would be in line with the funding associated with prudential borrowing of approximately £300,000 over 30 years.

3.3 Estimated Cost of the North South Link Road

- The proposed road would be to a specification that provided adequate drainage through side ditches and have a stone running surface similar to a forest haul road. The estimated cost for the road is somewhere between £600,000 - £1,000, 000 but would be determined by a number of factors not least:
 - the ability to win and process suitable stone on the island
 - disposal of excavated material
 - access onto and off the island for construction plant and equipment

3.4 Oban Marina & Yacht Services Ltd

- Oban Marina & Yacht Services Ltd operate a ferry service from the marina at the north end of the island. This is by two passenger only vessels, sailing between the marina's own pontoons and the North Pier at Oban. If berthing and landing charges were applied to this service the cost to the marina would be in the region of £30,000 per annum and the owner of the marina has advised that this would threaten the viability of their business. As this is an important ferry service for residents of Kerrera, the Council have restricted landing and berthing charges to £2,000 per annum to sustain this service.

3.5 Development Opportunity

- There are limited development opportunities available on the island which have the potential to lever in funding to contribute towards the provision of a road.

4.0 Next Steps

- 4.1 The estimate for the road is estimated somewhere between £600,000- £1,000,000. As the proposed road will be of Forestry Commission standards it would be advantageous for Roads and Amenity services to seek advice from Forestry contractors on what could be achieved and to assist in defining the cost.
- 4.2 A Memorandum of Understanding will require to be prepared between Dunollie Estates, the four land owners and Roads and Amenity Services so that Argyll and Bute Council can work collectively with the Kerrera island community to deliver a road and future maintenance responsibility to the satisfaction of all parties.
- 4.3 There is potential to work with Kerrera community to submit a bid for the construction of a road on the island to the Coastal Communities Fund. This fund aims to encourage the economic development of UK coastal communities by awarding funding to create sustainable economic growth and jobs. Applications need to be submitted by 30 April 2014.

5.0 Recommendations

- 5.1 It is recommended that members note the content of this update report.

For further information and clarification contact Jim Smith, Head of Roads and Amenity Services, Kilmory or Fergus Murray Head of Economic Development and Strategic Transportation.