

OCTOBER 2023 WEATHER EVENT – UPDATE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Following a period of wet weather which left ground conditions very wet and in many cases saturated, over a months' worth of rain fell over a 36 hour period starting Friday 6 October 2023 and running into Saturday 7 October 2023.
- 1.2 Conditions was so severe that by mid-morning on Saturday 7 October, Police Scotland had declared a major incident and a multiagency tactical response was assembled to ensure that the incident could be managed across the many agencies and communities involved.
- 1.3 Transport connections into and out of Argyll and Bute were severely compromised on Saturday 7 October and for a period of time, all of the trunk roads and many of the local roads were impassable. Numerous people became stranded due to flood waters, landslips and damaged structures. Mountain rescue were deployed along with the coastguard who arranged ground units and a helicopter to support the response to assist Police Scotland who were coordinating the responses in line with protocol for major incident response.
- 1.4 The Council response was significant with reception centres and catering put in place to accommodate individuals who were unable to get home, together with many staff from Roads and Infrastructure assisted by several contractors involved in responding to the chaos and disruption to public infrastructure caused by the event.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members of the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee consider and note this report.

3.0 DETAIL

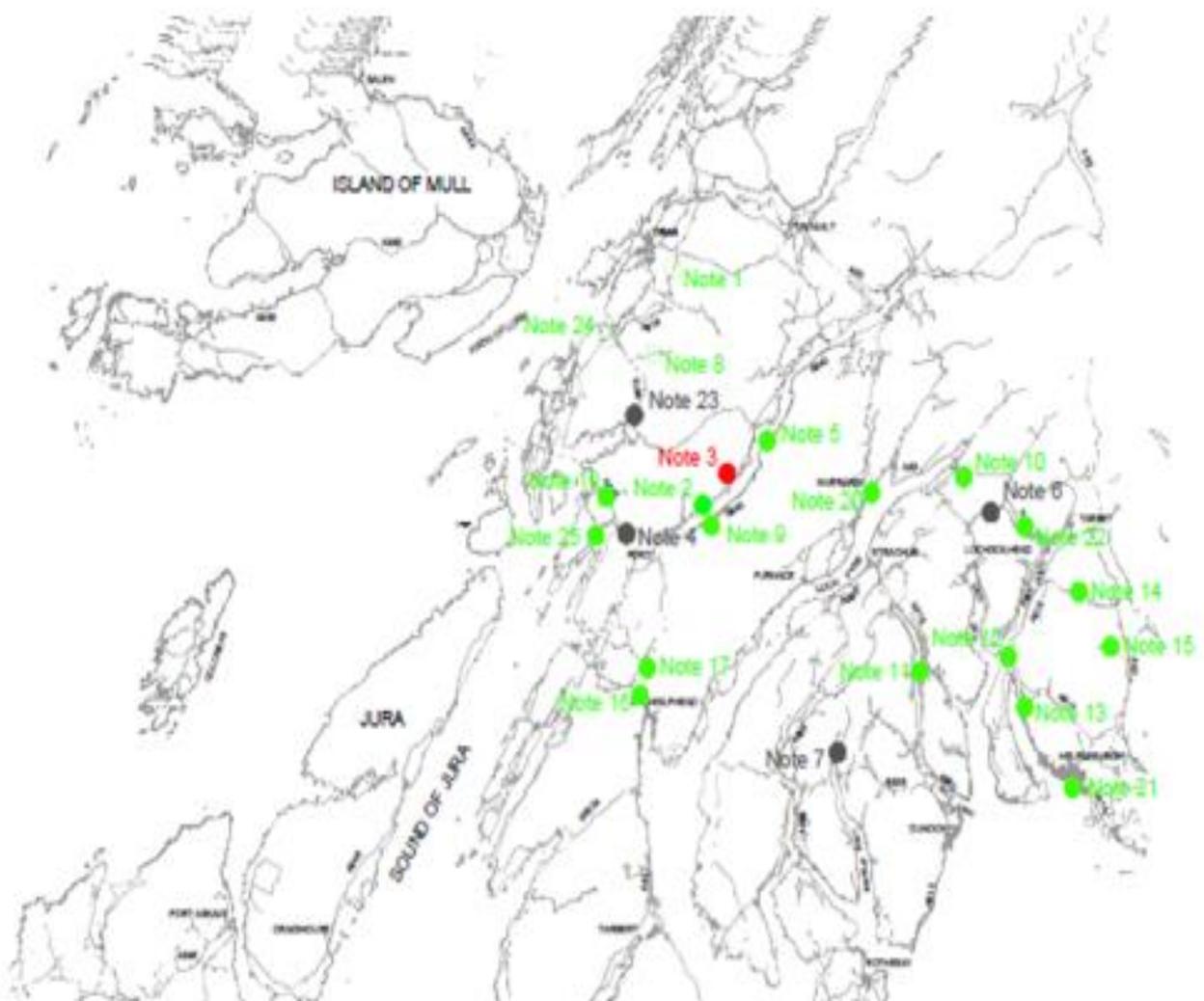
- 3.1 We are seeing an increasing number of weather events locally, nationally and internationally no doubt linked to climate change. In recent years in Argyll and Bute we have had several weather events including:

- West of Mull bridge wash out At the foot of Ben More July 2012;

- Clachan snow event March 2013 – significant snow fall blocked the road and the weight of frozen snow on power lines resulted in power lines breaking and several thousand households being without power;
- Beast from the east February 2018;
- Sea wall wash out Bute December 2021;
- Numerous flood events in locations such as Lochavullin Oban, East and West Clyde Street Helensburgh, Rothesay, Campbeltown (flood prevention works underway) Lochgilphead Front Green etc.

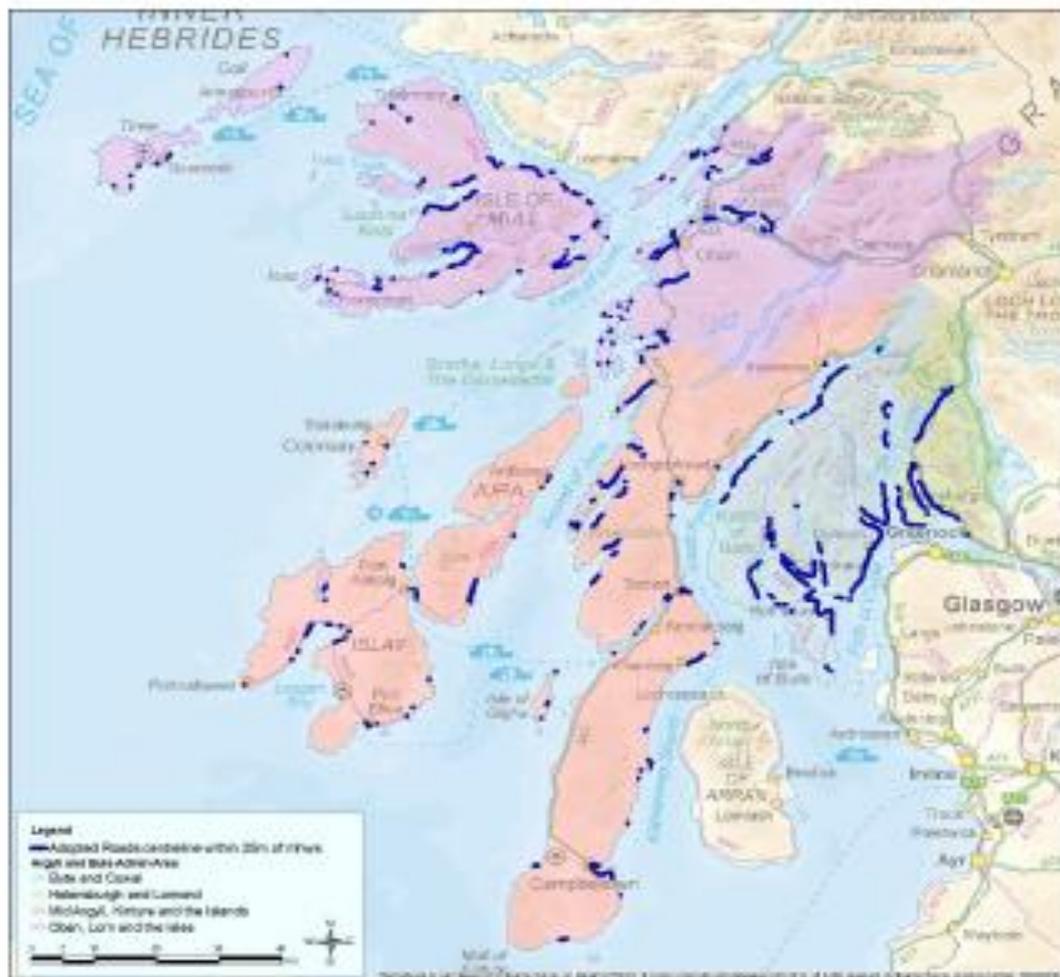
3.2 The map below shows each of the locations where there was disruption caused across Argyll and Bute's road network on 7 October 2023. It is interesting to note that the weather band was very localised sweeping through the central part of Argyll and Bute, this is illustrated with the damage caused. Also, and perhaps quite unusual, is that the majority of damage caused took place inland rather than on the coast. This very local weather and damage is peculiar to this storm event. As Members will be all too familiar with, often Argyll and Bute, with over 3000 miles of coastline, regularly suffers coastal damage during storms, the recent example being the sea wall on Bute where around 100m was extensively damaged in December 2021.

The map below shows each of the locations where there was disruption caused across Argyll and Bute's road network on 7 October 2023



- 3.3 The second map below shows the 214km of the Council's road network which is within 25m of the sea and vulnerable to coastal damage.

Map of Argyll and Bute showing areas where the centre line of public roads is within 25m of Mean High Water Springs in plan view. Note that only roads where Argyll and Bute Council is Roads Authority (as at 4 September 2014) are shown.



- 3.4 Regular updates have been provided to Members and the public following the October rain event and on Monday 6 November a presentation was given to Members. This presentation can be viewed here: [ELECTED MEMBER SEMINARS 2023 | The Hub](#)
- 3.5 The works carried out by Roads and Infrastructure following the rain event were extensive with dozens of locations requiring attention from simple cleansing of a small drain to significant landslides and bridge replacements. Appendix 1 details some of the works undertaken/ongoing. This is not an exhaustive list, these are just examples of the many issues which Argyll and Bute were faced with.
- 3.6 Whilst the costs incurred from this weather event are ongoing, we expect to see a final cost exceeding £8M. Some of these costs will be eligible for funding through the Bellwin Scheme although many costs may well fall to the Council.

Next Steps

- 3.7 Our initial focus is to complete the various works still outstanding and to continue to monitor slopes where debris flows may affect the road network. These works continue and regular updates will be provided on the Council's website and also through the RIS weekly briefings to Members.
- 3.8 Climate change is a significant challenge to the Council for a number of reasons but not least it is a challenge for the road and transport infrastructure. This report highlights some of the challenges faced recently and over the last decade or so. The road and wider transport system provides the economic backbone for our communities. We need to have infrastructure which is fit for purpose and sufficiently resilient to withstand the increasing weather challenges we are experiencing which are linked closely to climate change. The building of a bypass on the A816, strengthening bridges, and modifying roadside ditches are all adaptations being progressed to better accommodate some of the climate changes we are seeing. However, more will be needed to be done and whilst the works mentioned above will increase our infrastructure's resilience to future weather events, the network overall is fragile and unable to cope with significant weather events.
- 3.9 It will be necessary to see more infrastructure investment put in place to enable climate change adaptations to be made. The level of investment will be significant and the Council will need to consider how its funding can be assembled and what lobbying can be progressed with Scottish and UK Governments.

4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 This report summarises the rain event which caused significant travel disruption and damage during the weekend of 7 October. The report and appendix also summarises the extent of works that have been carried out to repair the damage and considers what our next steps should be as detailed in paragraph 3.9 above.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Policy - policies in place for climate change, coastal protection etc where applicable these policies are being worked to.
- 5.2 Financial - new costs pressures have no identified funds to respond to the infrastructure damage. A Bellwin claim is being progressed for eligible costs and works not eligible for Bellwin will need to be funded.
- 5.3 Legal – various land agreements necessary for individual locations.
- 5.4 HR – none known.
- 5.5 Fairer Scotland Duty:
- 5.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics – none known.
 - 5.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – none known.
 - 5.5.3 Islands – none known.

- 5.6 Climate Change – the impact of the storm is very closely linked to climate change and the October event has highlighted to need for further adaptation to be made to infrastructure to increase our resilience to future weather events. The level of investment to improve resilience is expected to be significant.
- 5.7 Risk – significant risk of similar future events impacting our infrastructure.
- 5.8 Customer Service – none known.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – October Weather Event Update