

**POLICY LEAD REPORT – TRANSPORTATION (STRATEGIC, LOCAL, FERRIES,  
PIERS, HARBOURS AND AIRPORTS)**

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**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 This is my first report as Policy Lead for Transportation (Strategic, Local, Ferries, Piers, Harbours and Airports). My thanks go to the team of officers from Development and Infrastructure for assisting me to further understand the wide-ranging issues around managing and developing (in partnership with other agencies and stakeholders) the transport solutions required to support the complex geographic area which makes up Argyll and Bute.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the report.

**3. DETAIL**

**3.1 SPT External Funding**

SPT is the Regional Transport Partnership (RTP) for the west of Scotland. Its remit within Argyll and Bute covers the Helensburgh and Lomond area with the rest of Argyll and Bute falling within HITRANS' remit. In 2015/16 SPT have awarded capital funding totalling £425k to Argyll and Bute Council to deliver the following projects:-

- Helensburgh and Lomond Cycleway - £175K
- Rest and Be Thankful Bus Turning Circle - £150k
- Bus Infrastructure Upgrades - £100k

Details of these projects are detailed below.

### **3.1.1 Helensburgh and Lomond Cycleway**

Argyll and Bute Council has an aspiration to complete a remote cycleway linking Helensburgh and Dumbarton along the A814 corridor. This is a phased project which is currently complete as far as Colgrain. The current focus is on delivering a route linking Colgrain with Cardross. However, this is subject to securing third party land and a Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) has therefore been initiated. While the CPO is being progressed, SPT has awarded Argyll and Bute Council £175k to deliver a section of the cycleway linking Station Road with Ferry Road in Cardross. This has been match-funded with a £25k contribution from Sustrans via its 2015/16 Community Links Programme. This project is being managed by Roads and Amenity Services and it is proposed that construction will start early in 2016.

When complete, the cycleway will provide safe, traffic-free links for walkers and cyclists between Helensburgh and Dumbarton and onwards into Glasgow. The route will also provide links to other on-road and remote cycle ways within Helensburgh, in particular, those on the A814 and A818 which were upgraded by the council in 2014/15 using Sustrans Community Links Funding. This investment will improve opportunities for walking and cycling within Helensburgh and the surrounding area.

### **3.1.2 Rest and Be Thankful Bus Turning Circle**

Work commenced in late July 2015 on a bus turning circle at the Rest and Be Thankful. This project is being jointly funded by £150k from SPT's Capital programme and £250k from Transport Scotland's Bus Investment Fund (BIF). Following a tender process the construction works were awarded to Raynesway Construction Ltd. The project is scheduled to be completed in mid-September 2015.

### **3.1.3 Bus Infrastructure Upgrades**

Argyll and Bute Council has also been awarded £100k from SPT's 2015/16 Capital Programme to continue the programme of bus infrastructure upgrades on local bus routes in the Helensburgh area. These works are undertaken by the council's Roads and Amenity Service and include installation of high raised kerbs and replacement of shelters and lining works. High raised kerbs allow better access to low floored buses for passengers by reducing the vertical/horizontal gap between the bus and footway. New tactile paving will also be installed to assist partially sighted passengers to

board buses. The bus stop waiting environment will be improved with the installation of new contemporary designed shelters and information panels. Bus shelters will be identified by the council's Public Transport Manager based on patronage figures and discussions with local elected members and bus operators. Lining of stops where required will also be undertaken as a priority.

### **3.2 Sustrans Funding**

The Strategic Transportation team secured £320k of external funding for cycle/walking projects across Argyll from Sustrans Community Link Fund for financial year 2015/16. Details of the award are:-

- Helensburgh and Lomond Cycleway - £25K
- A815 Sand haven to Inverreck Footway - £140k
- Fionnphort Village to Community Hall Link - £100k
- South Islay Distilleries path - £55k

Details of the projects are set out below:-

#### **3.2.1 Helensburgh and Lomond Cycleway**

Helensburgh and Lomond Cycleway is a contribution to the same project described above and also awarded funding from SPT.

#### **3.2.2 A815 Sandhaven to Inverreck Footway**

This project involves constructing a footway linking the residential settlements of Sandhaven and Inverreck to the north of Dunoon and once completed, this project will remove a significant gap in the local footway network which currently provides an obstacle for walking and cycling in the area. The lack of footway here requires pedestrians and cyclists travelling between Dunoon and Kilmun to use either the verge or carriageway of the A815, which is the busy main traffic route into Dunoon and is subject to a derestricted speed limit in this area.

Argyll and Bute Council have been investing in improving local footway infrastructure in this area and this project will enable continuous footway links between Dunoon and Kilmun. This project will also complement the recent investment by Sustrans and Argyll and Bute Council at Dunoon Esplanade by providing improved walking and cycling routes into Dunoon, from surrounding settlements such as Kilmun. Currently, Roads Services are in discussions with Sustrans regarding the detailed design for the footway prior to construction.

### **3.2.3 Fionnphort Village to Community Hall Link - £100K**

This project is a partnership between Argyll and Bute Council and The Mull and Iona Community Trust, to deliver an off-road path, linking the village of Fionnphort on Mull with their local village hall (Creich Hall). The project is well supported and the Community Trust have developed a detailed business plan. Funding, this financial year, will be spent on taking forward detailed design and land negotiation.

### **3.2.4 South Islay Distilleries Path – £55K**

This project involves surfacing a recently constructed off-road shared use path linking the villages of Port Ellen and Ardbeg on the island of Islay and the three distilleries sited at Laphroaig, Lagavulin and Ardbeg. The path is approximately 5km in length and 2.5m wide. It is currently a type 1 granular sub base surface. In order to comply with grant funding regulations the path requires a sealed surface and the preferred/cost effective method of achieving this is a double skin slurry seal. This process uses locally sourced aggregate from Dunlossit quarry, mixed on site with bitumen aggregate and spread by hand, creating a durable sealed surface suitable for multi user purposes. Works are due to be completed by November this year.

## **3.3 Road Safety**

With one in five new drivers likely to be involved in a collision in their first six months of driving, Argyll and Bute Council's Road Safety Unit has formed a partnership with Scottish Fire and Rescue to give a series of presentations called 'Ripple Effect/Cut It Out' to the 6<sup>th</sup> year pupils at Lochgilphead Joint Campus and Oban High School.. Fifty-nine people died on the roads in the west of Scotland last year, with 575 being seriously injured. Of those that died, 11 were in the 17-25 year age group. The Road Safety Unit's presentation 'The Ripple Effect' concentrated on the different types of people who could be affected by the death of a young driver. The pupils were asked to put themselves in the shoes of those who may be affected – with real life stories being provided by a paramedic, parent, florist, undertaker and a police officer.

These presentations link into the Single Outcome Agreement; specifically Outcome 6, 'People live in safer and stronger communities' and it is planned that other schools in Argyll and Bute will receive these next term.

Following this, Michael Matheson, MSP and Cabinet Secretary for Justice met the Road Safety Unit and Scottish Fire and Rescue at Oban Fire

Station on 24<sup>th</sup> August, to discuss the positive outcomes of this partnership working.

### **3.4 Oban and the Isles Airport**

The current operator is Hebridean Air Services which was awarded the current three-year PSO contract in May 2015. The number of passengers carried on the isles air services operated out of Oban airport continue to grow. This is despite difficult market conditions, resulting from the current economic climate.

In 2014, the number of passengers carried on Oban and the Isles air services rose to just over 3,500. In total, 3,516 passengers were carried during 2014, compared to 3,334 during 2013. This equates to a 5.5% annual increase.

The highest figure for passengers carried per month was recorded in March this year, and passenger figures for the seven-month period up to July, show an increase of 8.7%, compared with the same seven-month period last year.

Fly Scenic Scotland also continues to grow its scenic flying tours business out of Oban airport.

### **3.5 Piers and Harbours**

#### **3.5.1 Iona Slip**

The Iona slip was successfully repaired this spring, following a competitive tendering exercise. This saw Balfour Beatty Marine Division undertake work, valued at circa £1.4 m, to ensure the future operation of the slip for residents and visitors for many years ahead.

#### **3.5.2 Campbeltown Berthing Facility**

Another significant capital work is the creation of the new Campbeltown Berthing Facility at around £1.3m this May. This new 56-berth facility offers, for the first time, electricity, water and modern toilet facilities for the use of visiting yachts people and their families, helping to boost the economic performance of the town. Now operated by a local person with council support the new facility has proved very popular, with around 300 boats making use of it in its first month of operation. This project represents the final CHORD project in Campbeltown.

### **3.5.3 Dunoon Wooden Pier**

Work is also now underway on the historic Dunoon wooden pier; a grade A listed building. This £2m plus contract is focussing on restoring the historic integrity of the pier and refurbishing two of its prominent buildings. Balfour Beatty are again the main structural contractors with nine local firms involved in supplying key elements of the project, including aspects such as railings and diving services. Despite finding the main building to be in very poor condition, the work remains on budget and on time. It is hoped that, once complete, new uses can be found for the pier's main building and that future phases of work could be taken forward once funding has been identified.

### **3.6 Creation of the Argyll and Bute Single Harbour Authority**

In early August, the first meeting of the new Argyll and Bute Single Harbour Authority was held. This meeting focussed on progress with addressing audit findings and the proposed berthing and charges review for our piers and harbours.

Training for members is scheduled for Friday 4<sup>th</sup> September. The board will meet quarterly and has been set up to deal with strategic issues affecting our piers and harbours in a consistent manner across Argyll and Bute.

### **3.7 Ferries**

#### **3.7.1 Road Equivalent Tariff (RET)**

On October 1<sup>st</sup> 2015, RET will be introduced to ferry routes from Oban to Mull, Mull to Iona, Oban to Lismore and from the mainland to Bute. This represents a significant economic and social boost to our island communities, with an anticipated 35% uplift in vehicles and 11% to 12% uplift in passenger numbers. The main issue resulting from these changes is likely to be either side of the Oban to Craignure route, requiring improvements to infrastructure in Oban and on Mull in response to increased usage/traffic.

Engineering studies have been completed for Craignure and Cal Mac is looking at options for the provision of additional services on this route by the summer. The challenge will be how to pay for these improvements and, to this end, discussions are ongoing with Transport Scotland.

#### **3.7.2 Transfer of the council's ferry services to Transport Scotland**

The council has submitted detailed costs on the operation of council ferry services to our four island communities to Transport Scotland. This has been done with a view to see if there is a possibility of transferring the operation of these lifeline services to

ensure the future delivery of the service given the challenges in providing new boats. There will be a report to the council on this issue, as soon as possible, following Transport Scotland's response.

### **3.7.3 Ferry Tendering**

The Scottish Government ferry tender is currently out for consideration with two potential bidders identified. The tendering exercise has created some uncertainty for our island and peninsular communities that rely on ferry services for connection to the rest of Argyll and Scotland. A number of strike days during the summer caused considerable disruption and this was only averted by direct intervention by the First Minister. It is hoped that a decision on this important public service is made soon to reassure our communities about the continuity of services in the future. Local communities have made it clear that there is also a need to address issues such as freight fares and reliability, as part of the delivery of any future public contract.

## **4.0 CONCLUSION**

Improving transport links across Argyll and Bute is a key part of delivering on our Single Outcome Agreement and will contribute significantly to bringing more people and more jobs to our area. Alongside our own investment it is encouraging to see, for example, the increase in passenger numbers at Oban, and the potential for the local economy which the new Campbeltown berthing facility brings. RET brings with it both benefits and challenges and we continue work on this with our partners.

## **5.0 IMPLICATIONS**

**5.1 Policy – None**

**5.2 Financial – None**

**5.3 Legal – None**

**5.4 HR – None**

**5.5 Equalities – None**

**5.6 Risk – None**

**5.7 Customer Service – None**

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**24<sup>th</sup> September 2015**