

Section A: The Vision and Outcomes Framework

Four Priorities each with 3 Outcomes

Vision: We will have a sustainable, inclusive and accessible transport system, helping deliver a healthier, fairer and more prosperous Scotland for communities, businesses and visitors.

Promotes equality

Will provide fair access to services we need
Will be easy to use for all
Will be affordable for all

Takes climate action

Will adapt to the effects of climate change
Will help deliver our net-zero target
Will promote greener, cleaner choices

Helps our economy prosper

Will get us where we need to get to
Will be reliable, efficient and high quality
Will use beneficial innovation

Improves our health and wellbeing

Will be safe and secure for all
Will enable us to make healthy travel choices
Will help make our communities great places to live

1. Is the Vision that is set out for the National Transport Strategy the right Vision for transport policy over the next 20 years?

Yes No

Please explain your answer.

We broadly agree with the vision statement in particular the commitment to an inclusive and accessible transport system that results in a fairer and more prosperous Scotland. This is particularly significant in rural areas of Scotland which can suffer with high levels of access deprivation and social exclusion.

The draft NTS recognises that Scotland is a country of contrasts and it is therefore critically important to have a transport system that works for all areas. Whilst we are supportive of policies aimed at reducing the negative impacts of transport on the environment it is essential that these do not adversely impact on rural areas, many of which suffer with poor connectivity, high levels of access deprivation and declining populations. In some instances proposals aimed at growing rural economies may require increased investment in local road infrastructure to improve reliability and resilience on critical transport arteries. In rural areas such as Argyll and Bute, walking and cycling are not realistic options for many everyday journeys due to long travel distances and the nature of much of the local road network. Public transport services are often infrequent and there is limited rail coverage which results in high reliance on private cars.

It will be essential that there is significant investment by the Scottish Government to address the connectivity and cost disadvantages faced by remote and rural areas. At present lack of investment in key transport infrastructure, poor resilience on strategic transport arteries such as the A83 and disproportionate journey times between key settlements and the Central Belt are constraining opportunities to grow the local economy and contributing to a drift of population from some remote and island communities.

Transport is critically important to Argyll and Bute given that the region is the second largest geographic area of any Scottish Local Authority but with less than 2% of the total population of Scotland. The area is also characterised by its diverse geography with 23 inhabited islands and long peninsulas and as such, lifeline transport networks are essential to support a sustainable, well connected economy. Reliability and resilience of lifeline services is critical as communities are often completely reliant on these to access key services, education and employment opportunities. Lifeline transport services /networks must be reliable, high quality, affordable, flexible and futureproofed in order to meet the needs of our communities and enable growth in key employment sectors (tourism, food and drink, agriculture, aquaculture, forestry and renewable energy). An uplift in economic activity is vital to reverse the trend of declining populations in some of our rural and island communities and improved transport and connectivity is essential for these communities to thrive.

2a. Are the Priorities and Outcomes that the Strategy is trying to achieve the right Priorities and Outcomes for transport policy over the next 20 years?

Yes No

Please explain your answer.

We agree with the priorities and outcomes set out in the draft NTS however it should be noted that Scotland is a country of contrasts and there are different challenges facing rural and urban areas which makes a one size fits all approach to transport policy challenging.

Creating reliable, resilient and secure routes to market is a key priority for Argyll and Bute Council, our communities and the local business community. The principle way to do this is through our transport network. This is also consistent with the Scottish Government's aim to increase exports from 20% of GDP to 25% by 2029 however, to achieve this will require significant investment from the Scottish Government improving resilience and reliability on some of our key transport arteries. Resilient road connections are essential to move people and freight across Argyll and Bute however there will also be the requirement to explore alternatives to futureproof the local transport network for predicted increases in key exports. This will include utilising our significant network of ports and harbours to move more freight by water.

Local transport networks and services must accommodate the varying demands of local businesses however it is also essential that the requirements of local residents and visitors are met. This can be challenging in Argyll, particularly during peak summer months when there are capacity constraints on some of our key transport services due to seasonal fluctuations in visitor traffic. Haulage demands can place pressure on fragile local transport networks and, as such, Argyll and Bute Council have been working with key stakeholders to promote innovative solutions. For example timber in certain rural areas is now shipped directly from floating pontoons or using landing craft to avoid high frequency haulage operations on fragile local road networks and in addition the Scottish Government continue to support the Timberlink project where timber is shipped from Ardrishaig, Campbeltown and Sandbank resulting in approximately 8,000 less lorry journeys (roughly 1,000,000 less miles) on busy local roads on the west coast of Scotland. The Council supported by ERDF funding have also invested £12m upgrading road access, berthing and quay facilities in Campbeltown to support Kintyre's renewables industry. These projects are an example of how innovative solutions can be used to support local industry and jobs whilst limiting negative impacts on fragile local transport infrastructure which is also essential to local communities.

There is also scope to utilise digital technology to improve service delivery across rural areas however at present there are disadvantages faced by rural areas due to disparities between rural and urban mobile and broadband connectivity. It is essential that government investment in mobile and digital infrastructure is prioritised in rural areas where it is generally less viable for the private sector to invest.

2b. Are some of these Priorities and Outcomes more important than others or are they equally important?

Please explain your answer.

Priorities are likely to vary across the regions of Scotland depending on local conditions however the 4 priorities set out in the draft NTS2 are broadly similar to those of Argyll and Bute Council.

A prosperous and inclusive economy lies at the heart of Argyll and Bute Council's priorities and this is reflected in the Argyll and Bute Outcome Improvement Plan 2013 – 2023 that has been agreed with the Scottish Government. The overarching vision of the Argyll and Bute Outcome Improvement Plan is:

“Argyll and Bute’s economic success is based on a growing population.”

To achieve this overall objective, the Council and community planning partners have identified the following 6 long term outcomes:-

- The economy is diverse and thriving.
- We have infrastructure that supports sustainable growth.
- Education, skills and training maximises opportunities for all.
- Children and young people have the best possible start.
- People live active, healthier and independent lives.
- People live in safer and stronger communities.

It will be important that policies aimed at taking climate action and improving health and wellbeing are not prioritised at the expense of economic growth and development, particularly in rural areas. Creating a transport system that is accessible and affordable for all and addresses the disparities between rural and urban areas should be a priority of the NTS2.

3. Are the Challenges the Strategy highlights in Chapter 3 the key Challenges for transport, or are there others the Strategy should focus on?

Please explain your answer.

The critical challenge facing Argyll and Bute is reversing the trend of declining populations across the region and transport has a critical role to play in this. Scotland's urban areas are growing at the expense of rural regions on the West Coast which are experiencing a trend of ageing and declining populations. The Argyll and Bute Transport Connectivity and Economy Research Report commissioned by HIE (<http://www.hie.co.uk/regional-information/economic-reports-and-research/archive/argyll-and-bute-transport-connectivity-and-economy-research.html>) has identified the following five key transport issues in Argyll and Bute:-

- Long journey times by road between Oban and Glasgow;
- Uncompetitive journey times between Oban and Glasgow by rail;
- Poor resilience of journeys between Lochgilphead, Campbeltown and Glasgow by road due to impacts of landslides and accidents on the A83.
- Disproportionate journey times between Lochgilphead on Oban due to sub-standard geometry of the A816; and
- Disproportionate journey times for the distance across Cowal between Dunoon, Bute, (via Colintraive) and Kintyre (via Portavadie), where much of the road is single track.

The HIE report confirms that the transport issues identified above are constraining the economy of the area. Lack of resilience on strategic transport arteries such as the A83, A82 and A85 and disproportionate journey times between key settlements and the Central Belt are constraining opportunities to grow the local economy.

The draft NTS2 fails to recognise the significant challenges created by the continued squeeze on local

authority transportation budgets. This will make it increasingly difficult to meet the ambitious vision, outcomes and priorities of the NTS2. It is increasingly challenging for local authorities to invest in sustainable transport projects which is compounded in Argyll and Bute by the fragile condition of large parts of the local road network.

As discussed previously, another key challenge will be ensuring policies aimed at mitigating the environmental impacts of transport do not adversely impact on those aimed at growing the economy. This is particularly significant in rural areas which rely heavily on road transport, have limited public transport services and can suffer high levels of access deprivation.

Whilst the draft NTS recognises many of the key transport challenges we would like to see more detail of how the Scottish Government plans to work and invest to deliver solutions and improvements within the transport network.

Section B: The Policies to Deliver the NTS

Through the process to develop the National Transport Strategy, 14 policies have been identified that will deliver its Vision and Outcomes and address the Challenges. These are listed below:

- Plan our transport system to cope with the effects of climate change
- Continue to improve the reliability, safety and resilience of our transport system
- Embed the implications for transport in spatial planning and land-use decision making
- Integrate policies and infrastructure investment across the transport, energy and digital system
- Provide a transport system which enables businesses to be competitive domestically, within the UK and internationally
- Provide a high-quality transport system that integrates Scotland and recognises our different geographic needs
- Improve the quality and availability of information to enable better transport choices
- Embrace transport innovation that positively impacts on our society, environment and economy

- Improve and enable the efficient movement of people and goods on our transport system
- Provide a transport system that is equally accessible for all
- Improve access to healthcare, employment, education and training opportunities to generate inclusive sustainable economic growth
- Support the transport industry in meeting current and future employment and skills needs
- Provide a transport system which promotes and facilitates travel choices which help to improve people's health and wellbeing
- Reduce the transport sector's emissions to support our national objectives on air quality and climate change

4a. Are these the right policies to deliver Priorities and Outcomes of the National Transport Strategy?

Please explain your answer.

The list of policies is comprehensive and generally reflective of the priorities and outcomes identified however there is a lack of detail about how these policies and the associated enablers will be implemented and funded and further detail is required regarding future monitoring and evaluation.

A key challenge to policy implementation will be future levels of funding and the draft strategy does not acknowledge the difficulties of delivering the priorities and outcomes within the current economic climate. Continued reductions in local authority budgets, with health and education protected are placing significant challenges and pressures on already strained transport budgets such as roads maintenance and public transport. This is exacerbated in Argyll and Bute by other factors such as declining / ageing populations resulting in additional pressures on local services. In addition, dispersed and remote populations including 23 inhabited islands make delivery of transport infrastructure and services very challenging and expensive to deliver on the West Coast of Scotland.

4b. Are some of these policies more important than others or are they equally important? Please provide details.

All of the policies and outcomes are interconnected however, priorities will vary across the regions of Scotland. Policies aimed at providing a transport system that is equally accessible for all and improving access to healthcare, employment, education and training opportunities to generate inclusive sustainable economic growth are considered to be high priority for Argyll and Bute which currently suffers with high levels of access deprivation, social exclusion and poor resilience on a number of our key transport arteries.

Improving resilience on our key transport arteries is vital to the economy of Argyll and Bute as the region relies entirely on these for the movement of people and goods. The region has key sectors producing exports which are vital to the Scottish economy (aquaculture, whisky, tourism, timber) and it is vital that the transport network is futureproofed to accommodate predicted growth in these sectors and key routes to market are reliable and resilient. This is vital to enable local businesses to remain competitive, grow and create employment which will help to address the drift of working age population from rural to urban areas.

Increasing levels of active and sustainable transport should be a key priority of the NTS2 however this will require significant capital and revenue investment from the Scottish Government, particularly in rural areas many of which are very poorly served by public transport. This however has the potential to address a range of priorities including reducing poverty, improving access to health and employment and acting as a key driver for inclusive economic growth by helping to create and sustain accessible and connected places that are attractive environments in which to live, work and do business.

Section C: Transport governance – democracy, decision-making and delivery

5a. Are there specific decisions about transport in Scotland that are best taken at the national level (e.g. by Transport Scotland or the Scottish Government), at a regional (e.g. by Regional Transport Partnerships), or at a local level (e.g. by Local Authorities)?

Please explain your answer, by providing examples of where you believe transport related decisions should be taken.

Future transport governance arrangements should allow for local and regional variations to reflect the requirements of Scotland's different geographic regions. Transport interventions can often have cross boundary outcomes and as such, require joint planning and implementation. There may be opportunities to refine delivery models by reviewing the current arrangements of 32 local authorities, one trunk road authority with four main operating companies and 7 regional transport partnerships however Argyll and Bute Council would not support increased centralisation of transport decision making. It is considered that this would make it more difficult to respond to local conditions and risks exacerbating some of the transport and access inequalities currently faced by rural authorities.

Local authorities in particular are responsible for local spatial planning, economic development and the delivery of local transport infrastructure and services and can therefore ensure better alignment of these key areas. Local authorities also work closely with neighbouring authorities via RTPs which ensures regional collaboration.

Argyll and Bute Council would be supportive of a more regional approach to transport governance as recommended by the Roles and Responsibilities Working Group however any future regional governance arrangements will require to take cognisance of Argyll and Bute's reliance on efficient transport links with Scotland's Central Belt. The key transport arteries in Argyll and Bute connect the region with the Central Belt (A82, A83, A85, rail and air connections) these routes are vital for access to key markets, healthcare, education, international transport hubs, employment, leisure facilities etc. It should be noted that efficient links with the Central Belt are vital for all communities in Argyll and Bute including the regions islands. At present Argyll and Bute is unique as it sits within the boundaries of 2 RTP's (SPT and HITRANS). Any future regional transport governance arrangements will require to take cognisance of the geographic size of Argyll and Bute and range of transport requirements across the region and it is vital that the region is also included as part of the neighbouring city region areas given the significance of these areas as engines of economic growth.

5b. Should local communities be involved in making decisions about transport in Scotland? If so, how should they be involved, and on which specific issues should they be involved in making decisions on?

Please explain your answer, by providing examples of which transport decisions local communities should be involved in, also suggesting how they should be involved.

Argyll and Bute is an area defined by diversity of geography and of community. Engagement with and empowerment of our communities is essential to ensuring that Argyll and Bute Council and Community Planning Partners design, develop and deliver the services that our communities need. This is a key reason why the Council would advocate increased local and regional decision-making and powers as opposed to more decisions being made at a national level. It is considered that local authorities are best placed to ensure that communities are involved in decisions taken about transport. There are time and resource challenges associated with engaging communities and individuals across Argyll and Bute due to the large, diverse and, for the most part, remote geographic area. The local authority understand these challenges and have the experience and knowledge to ensure that everyone in the region has the opportunity to have their voice heard, and to influence decision-making.

Argyll and Bute Council has a proven track record of consulting local communities about key transport decisions and is a key stakeholder on a number of local and regional transport working groups, many of which include representation from community organisations. The local authority also have experience of consulting and engaging local communities via the Community Planning Partnership and local Community Councils. The Community Planning Partnership work with communities to:-

- Ensure that citizens and other key stakeholders in Argyll and Bute have a voice and are able to influence the development of policies and strategies that will affect their lives.
- Inform the way in which services in Argyll and Bute are planned and delivered.
- Inform the process through which change can be achieved.
- Develop relationships and ensure that our communication is open and clear, free from jargon and accessible to all.

Local authorities and Community Planning Partners are best placed to advise on the existing mechanisms available for local community engagement of which there are many including:-

- Citizens Panel;
- Focus groups;
- Multi-agency partnership groups;
- Community Council's;
- Community Development Trusts;
- Area Community Planning Groups.

Whilst we are supportive of community engagement and participation in local decision making, it should also be noted that the continued squeeze on local authority finances is placing pressures on already strained transport budgets. As a result, Argyll and Bute Council have been forced to make difficult decisions about the affordability and sustainability of some local services. Local authorities will regrettably at times have to make decisions to reduce levels of funding for transport infrastructure and services in order to balance budgets. These decisions can understandably be unpopular with the local communities affected however it is vital that the powers to make such decisions continue to rest with the organisations responsible for funding these services.

Section D: The Strategy as a whole

6. Does the National Transport Strategy address the needs of transport users across Scotland, including citizens and businesses located in different parts of the country?

Yes No

Please explain your answer.

The draft NTS2 acknowledges most of the key challenges in providing a transport system which will meet the needs of the citizens and businesses of Scotland if fulfilled however, this is a high level strategy which itself will not address the needs of transport users. It will be the subsequent investment decisions that will determine the success of the NTS2 in providing a transport system that meets the needs of transport users across Scotland.

The strategy acknowledges a number of the key challenges identified by the Roles and Responsibilities Working Group that need to be addressed and these include:-

- Financial constraints limiting investment at a regional and/or local level;
- Limited resource capability and skills;
- Lack of on-going maintenance of assets;
- Responsiveness to the conflicting pressures of business/public sector.

All of the issues listed above are barriers faced by local authorities and key transport stakeholders which will limit the impact and deliverability of the NTS2 if not addressed. Within the draft NTS2 there is no acknowledgement of the challenges associated with delivering the strategy within the existing economic climate. Pressure on local authority funding has resulted in less funding for transportation in local budgets with subsequent reductions in many rural transport services. We understand that the STPR2 will set out national investment priorities however, if the current trend of local authority funding continues then it will significantly impact the deliverability of the vision, priorities and outcomes of the NTS2 and exacerbate issues such as social isolation and access deprivation in rural communities.

Section E: Looking Ahead

7a. What aspects of the transport system work well at the moment?

Please provide details.

Argyll and Bute has an extensive transport network with a comprehensive local and trunk road network, ferry, air, rail and bus services and a growing network of active travel routes. There is therefore much to build on for the future however there are also significant challenges which will require to be recognised and addressed.

Partnership Working

Argyll and Bute Council are represented on 2 RTP's and also on numerous transport working groups which ensures strong collaborative working with neighbouring local authorities and key transport stakeholders.

By road Argyll and Bute has only one link with a neighbouring authority on the local road (council responsibility) network which is the A814 Cardross to Dumbarton. All other roads into and out of Argyll and Bute are trunk roads (A82, A85 and A828). The working relationship between the Council and the trunk road authority is strong with near daily contact with both Transport Scotland and their operating company BEAR Scotland. There are also quarterly meetings held with Transport Scotland, BEAR Scotland, Police Scotland and Argyll and Bute Council. The purpose of the quarterly meeting is to work to provide the traveling public with a single road network across the whole of Argyll and Bute with works being coordinated. These meetings are attended by the Council's Policy Lead for Roads and Infrastructure (elected member) as well as senior officers of the council.

Argyll and Bute continue to work with Transport Scotland to coordinate service provision on the trunk road in Kintyre (which was previously the responsibility of the local authority) and to provide mutual aid across the entire network during severe weather or storm events. We are also working with Transport Scotland on an initiative to share a depot in Kintyre.

Argyll and Bute are involved in a number of joint procurement initiatives with other authorities and Scotland Excel. These include winter maintenance weather forecasting, winter salt provision, coated roadstone, etc. The Council has formally signed up to the Northern Roads Collaboration and is an active member of the group which is chaired by the Council's Depute Policy Lead for Roads and Infrastructure. Continued close working though both the Northern Collaboration, Transport Scotland and its operating

company, SCOTS and other local authorities will continue to help reduce but not remove the negative effects of the reduction in roads spending.

Council officers are active members of SCOTS with officers contributing to numerous working groups and pieces of work. The Head of Roads and Infrastructure chairs the SCOTS Training and Development Group which provides an annual 3 day training event to 90 plus graduates and technicians from across Scotland.

Grant Funding

The Council work in partnership with key partners such as Sustrans, Paths for all and the RTP's to secure grant funding for active travel infrastructure and behaviour change projects. This funding has enabled the Council to significantly improve the active travel network across the region however grant funding also has challenges for local authorities such as match funding and future revenue costs.

Although Argyll and Bute Council are working to grow the local economy and encourage more visitors to the area we are also keen to limit the impact of increased levels of travel on our natural environment. As such, the council have been working with Transport Scotland to install a network of electric vehicle charging points at strategic locations across Argyll. As electric vehicles become more popular there will be a requirement to develop a consistent national and/or regional strategy regarding the responsibility to provide and maintain vehicle charging infrastructure. At present the Council meet the costs associated with electricity and after 3 years will meet all maintenance costs. This is considered to be unsustainable given existing pressure on local authority budgets.

7b. What practical actions would you like to see the National Transport Strategy take to encourage and promote these?

Please provide details.

National Scottish Air Services Review

The Scottish Govt held a Scottish Ferries Review **10 years ago** and are about to refresh this. Yet over the same decade there has not been a similar Scottish Air Services Review. Air services across rural Scotland are all continually being operated in small pockets in isolations from each other. **Argyll and Bute Council, Orkney Council, Shetland Council, Western Isles and Transport Scotland all have responsibility for subsidising air services and airports.** There is not a joined up approach – that could offer many savings in procurement advertising etc. Bundling the air services together will offer better opportunities to stimulate competition and offer linkages not currently being met. This is consistent with the draft NTS which states that *“to ensure we welcome a growing number of international visitors we need to retain our important air links and also develop new routes.”* This should apply to more rural areas in addition to the larger urban airports, it is vital that the Scottish Government assist rural authorities such as Argyll and Bute Council to make our vital air services and airports more sustainable (Argyll and Bute Council own and operate three airports Coll, Colonsay and Oban and support air services from Oban to Coll, Colonsay and Tiree). The current funding model for local authority air services is not considered to be sustainable and some of our fragile island communities have recently had air services significantly reduced due to budget pressures. This creates inequality between these islands and other communities where local air services are subsidised via the Scottish Governments PSO contract and airports are operated and managed by HIAL.

Oban Airport can easily accommodate the Scottish Governments newly purchased Twin Otter aircraft that are utilised on the Scottish Governments routes from Barra/Tiree connecting to Glasgow. The Tiree and Barra flights all fly over Oban at present without connecting and this is seen as a missed opportunity. We understand from Transport Scotland that their subsidised air services from Glasgow to Barra and Tiree already face capacity issues, especially during the summer months and that stopping these services in Oban 'is not viable within existing capacity levels. This contradicts the aims of the draft

NTS2 and would suggest that **if these routes are at capacity this would demonstrate the significant demand that exists to develop and support new routes.** Again another supporting reason why there needs to be a national Scottish Air Services Review, similar to the Scottish Ferries Review and likewise with the Scottish Ferries Review **when additional ferries are procured, additional aircraft should also be procured when capacity constraints are identified** on the national network and at a competitive price when compared to the investment in a new ferry.

Funding For Road Infrastructure

If current funding levels continue (approximately 50% of national maintenance budget is invested in local roads which account for around 93% of the network) there is likely to be a further decline in the local road network. For Argyll and Bute this would be significant with barriers to economic growth, tourism and the transportation of locally harvested products. It is suggested that a review of balance of maintenance funding between trunk roads and local roads is carried out and that allocation reflects RCI.

Furthermore, current funding allocation is based on road length and the number of vehicles that are registered in the area. There is no consideration for some of the challenges facing Argyll and Bute which are brought about due to geography. Also, a number of the larger vehicles which operate out of Argyll and Bute are actually registered in the central belt which brings no financial benefit to the council. Consideration should be given to a national condition ranking of associated roads asset groups such as bridges and retaining walls. The current ranking of road surface condition through RCI doesn't provide a full picture in terms of overall conditions and the value of backlog maintenance required across Scotland as a whole.

8a. What aspects of the transport system do not work well at the moment?

Please provide details.

- Lack of consistency in the provision of public transport services e.g. Local authorities are responsible for funding some air, bus and ferry services others are provided by Transport Scotland or the private sector;
- Pressure on local authority budgets is resulting in rural transport services being reduced or withdrawn and a reduction in budgets to maintain critical infrastructure;
- Commercially driven private sector bus provision results in rural services often being infrequent or financially unviable. It is not feasible for local authorities to subsidise loss making services given current financial pressures;
- Disparity of rural public transport provision when compared to more urban areas e.g. lack of rail connectivity in rural areas results in increased investment in the rail network predominantly benefitting more urban areas;
- Lack of rural rail connectivity and prevalence of single track, non-electrified railway;
- Reliance on the road network to transport freight – alternative modes should be encouraged e.g. rail, sea;
- Current funding mechanisms for active travel schemes are unnecessarily complex and onerous for local authorities to bid for. These are also reliant on local authorities providing match funding and taking on future revenue costs which is unsustainable in the current financial climate. Additional funding must be made available to cover maintenance and more funding should be awarded directly to local authorities via ring fenced grants e.g. Cycling Walking Safer Streets;
- Lack of resilience on local trunk road networks in Argyll and Bute e.g. A83 Rest and Be Thankful. Long diversion routes during road closures due to landslides and accidents which impacts on local businesses and residents;
- Current funding levels for road maintenance are unsustainable (approximately 50% of national

maintenance budget is invested in local roads which account for around 93% of the network);

- A review of air services is required in line with previous Scottish Ferries Review;
- High levels of access deprivation in rural areas – impacts access to health services, education, employment and results in social isolation;
- Higher fuel costs in rural areas contributes to high levels of fuel poverty;
- Lack of integrated ticketing and transport modes;
- Capacity constraints on key ferry services during peak season due to increased patronage due to RET and growth in tourism. Critical to manage demand to prioritise the requirements of island residents and businesses.

8b. What practical actions would you like to see the National Transport Strategy take to improve these?

Please provide details.

Given the importance of transport connectivity to the economy of the region, Argyll and Bute Council are seeking funding via the STPR2 and Rural Growth Deal (RGD) for a number of strategic transport interventions. Additional funding for transport is vitally important to the region and this is supported by the results of a recent consultation exercise undertaken by Argyll and Bute Council in which 96% of those surveyed listed roads/infrastructure as an area requiring development to support inclusive and accessible communities which can help deliver sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

Roads

The A82, A83 and A85 form the main traffic corridors for the transport of residents, visitors, goods and services in and out of West Highlands, from nearby islands and then south to Glasgow and the wider central belt. Much of the route fails to meet modern standards for carriageway width and this brings with it issues of maintenance, congestion, traffic safety and traffic flows which impact on the economic growth potential for the wider area. Significant investment and improvements to the A83/A82/A85 are therefore required to allow the proper functioning of the route as a strategic transport links serving the West Highlands and Islands.

The Council hope to secure funding to undertake a STAG assessment on the A83 trunk road corridor to investigate where enhancements could be made to improve road safety, resilience and journey times on these key arteries. The focus of the STAG assessment will be on where future investment is required to support growth in key sectors and such as tourism and food and drink production with a focus on exports and key routes to market for goods and services.

Similarly Argyll and Bute Council want to undertake appraisals/technical feasibility work for the re-routing of the A85 in Oban to allow for the future strategic housing and business development. This will include refreshing the STAG appraisal for Oban undertaken in 2010 which explored the transportation issues facing the town and options to realign the A85 with associated traffic management measures to:-

- Enable the efficient and reliable operation of the road network in Oban by reducing the occurrence of network problems like congestion, queuing and delays; and
- Allow all currently planned development in and adjacent to Oban to take place with no net detriment to the transport network.

Whilst the trunk road network is not maintained by Argyll and Bute Council we are committed to working

in partnership with the Scottish Government, Transport Scotland and key stakeholders to ensure that these critical arteries are safe, resilient and futureproofed to support the growth of our population and economy.

In addition to Trunk Roads, the Council are seeking investment for strategic local transport corridors that are critical to the local economy. For example the A816 is approximately 37 miles long and forms a main connection on the west coast of Scotland between Lochgilphead on the A83 and Oban on the A85. A STAG appraisal undertaken in 2008 identified a package of preferred measures to upgrade the route costing in the region of £10m that would result in benefits in excess of £28m.

There are many other strategic local routes that also require investment to futureproof them to accommodate growth in key sectors such as tourism, food and drink and forestry. For example upgrading single track sections of road on key tourist routes (**A848 between Salen and Tobermory** on Mull), and improving journey times on arterial routes to some of our key ferry ports and transport hubs.

With the current level of funding it is almost inevitable that road conditions will deteriorate. This will have a negative impact on road users, businesses, public services and the economy. With the rural and island nature of Argyll and Bute's geography, it is considered that Argyll and Bute is more dependent on a safe and reliable road network than urban areas. For this reason, the impact on road users, businesses, public services, and the economy is likely to be greater in Argyll and Bute than many other locations in Scotland. One of Argyll and Bute's priorities is to grow the population and without a safe and reliable road network, Argyll and Bute would be less likely to attract new businesses and individuals wishing to relocate to the area. Therefore, road condition will have a direct impact on road users, businesses, public services, and the economy. If spending continues at the current level the following consequences are high risk:

- Many roads are lifeline routes and may require essential work which could impact on other service that will have to see disinvestment to enable this.
- The geography of Argyll and Bute can make it expensive to locate and operate businesses in the area. Often the existing infrastructure will require businesses to invest more as part of planning approval which may result in businesses choosing not to locate in the area.
- Existing businesses may relocate out of the area if they feel that their access routes are not suitable or resilient enough.
- Numerous weight restrictions are already in place across Argyll and Bute's network. More routes may need to be restricted with requisite impacts on residents or businesses on that road. The current funding levels mean that the investment in bridge strengthening is not enabling sufficient bridge strengthening projects to be progressed.
- Visitor numbers may reduce if road condition is poor or roads are subject to restriction. Tourism accounts for 25% of private sector employment.
- Impacts on road safety and claims against the council.
- Impacts on journey time reliability.

Air

In addition to local road infrastructure, Argyll and Bute Council are seeking an investment via the RGD and STPR to further enhance Oban Airport as a West Coast of Scotland hub by:-

- Developing infrastructure at Oban Airport; and
- Supporting new air services to allow Oban Airport to achieve its full potential as a regional airport hub on the west coast of Scotland.

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The Scottish Govt. held a Scottish Ferries Review **10 years ago** and are about to refresh this. Yet over the same decade there has not been a similar Scottish Air Services Review. Air services across rural Scotland are all continually being operated in small pockets in isolations from each other. **Argyll and Bute Council, Orkney Council, Shetland Council, Western Isles and Transport Scotland** all have responsibility for subsidising air services and airports. There is not a joined up approach – that could offer many savings in procurement advertising etc. Bundling the air services together will offer better opportunities to stimulate competition and offer linkages not currently being met.

Rail

Argyll and Bute Council are committed to working with Transport Scotland, Network Rail and the Regional Transport Partnerships to investigate where local rail infrastructure can be upgraded to enable more frequent and reliable rail connections to some of our key towns. This includes options for more frequent / faster rail connections to Oban on the Highland main line and the potential introduction of rail services to HMNB Clyde in light of the MOD's £1.3bn Maritime Change Programme.

Ferry and Port Infrastructure

It is essential that there is investment in local ferry and port infrastructure to ensure this is futureproofed to meet to needs of fragile island communities whilst accommodating increased demand generated by the predicted growth in tourism and local industries such as food and drink including aquaculture and whisky. These sectors are critically important to Scotland's economy and it is therefore critical to invest in local transport infrastructure to address some of the existing barriers to economic growth in the region. In recent public consultations and studies consistent concerns have been raised by local communities and businesses regarding the reliability, capacity, and the timescales for vessel replacement on many of the main ferry routes in Argyll and Bute. In particular, there are concerns that the increasing age of much of the fleet across the CalMac network is exacerbating the unreliability of services such as the Kennacraig-Islay service, as vessels require to be removed from certain routes to cover for breakdowns or emergency maintenance on other services.

Recent studies suggest that car and commercial vehicle demand on ferry services to and from Islay (from both Scotch Whisky/Gin and the 'Other' sectors) are growing steadily and will need additional ferry capacity, if this growth is to be accommodated satisfactorily. Argyll and Bute Council are aware that the Scottish Ferries Plan is due to be refreshed imminently however, we would welcome discussions with Transport Scotland and key stakeholders regarding the requirement for additional vessels on this route including the potential for new freight ferry services. This is vital if we are to futureproof the ferry network to accommodate future growth in the whisky, gin and tourism markets which are essential to both the local economy and also the wider Scottish economy.

Additional public sector investment will in turn encourage increased levels of inward investment by the private sector stimulating growth in the local economy and generating positive rates of return to the Scottish and UK Governments from key sectors such as whisky, tourism, aquaculture, life sciences etc.

Active Travel Infrastructure

Argyll and Bute Council are committed to growing active travel within the region however, it should be noted that the remote geography, dispersed population and nature of much of the local road network (A and B class roads, national speed limits, unlit and narrow in places) in Argyll make growing the number of journeys undertaken by active travel particularly challenging.

We consider that there are too many different transport challenge funds for active and sustainable transport and we would welcome a more streamlined approach. Local authorities would welcome more

funding being awarded directly to Council's to deliver transport projects (similar to the current Cycling Walking and Safer Streets funding arrangements). The current arrangements of awarding increasing levels of funding to charities to then redistribute to local authorities via challenge funds is becoming less sustainable and more resource intensive and does not deliver best value for money. Whilst there is a role to play for active and sustainable travel charities it is ultimately local authorities who are responsible for delivering the majority of transport infrastructure and services and paying future revenue costs. As such, local authorities should be given a higher proportion of future funding directly which will streamline the delivery of active and sustainable transport projects and provide better value for money.

The key challenge to policy implementation is the continued pressure on local authority transportation budgets which is exacerbated by other factors such as declining / ageing populations creating additional pressures on local services and budgets. In addition, dispersed and remote populations including inhabited islands make efficient transport infrastructure / policy critically important but very challenging to deliver on the West Coast of Scotland. The existing NTS2 does not adequately acknowledge the critical funding challenges facing Scottish local authorities nor does it indicate how this might be addressed moving forward.

A full list of key transport priorities for Argyll and Bute is included in section 10 below.

9. Chapter 6 of the Strategy sets out immediate actions the Scottish Government will take in three key areas: Increasing Accountability; Strengthening Evidence; and Managing Demand. Is there anything you would like to say about these actions?

Please provide details.

We welcome the proposals to develop new transport governance arrangements and we would advocate more local and regional input to decisions on future transport investment.

With regard to strengthening evidence, this should include a focus on qualitative data such as feedback from local communities, residents and visitors regarding transport services and infrastructure. For example, in Argyll and Bute there are countless stories of the human impact of poor transport connectivity such as:-

- Long journeys to access essential medical treatment and appointments and the impact of service disruption and cancellations on this;
- Children's services affected, with already distressing situations exacerbated by travel delays, physical separation and missed contact visits;
- Disruption to essential supplies on island communities;
- Lost revenue to local businesses through lost trade and reputational damage as a result of road closures or service cancellations.

It is also important to ensure that future funding decisions are not predominantly based on evidence that might disadvantage more rural communities. For example basing investment decisions on head of population or AADT vehicle flows will generally disadvantage rural areas over more urban settlements.

Whilst the Council are supportive of efforts to promote more sustainable forms of transport, initiatives aimed at addressing issues such as congestion, air quality and reliance on fossil fuels should not negatively impact rural areas. The Sustainable Travel Hierarchy will prioritise active and public transport modes over private car however, this may not be appropriate in rural areas where public transport services are often infrequent and populations are typically smaller and more dispersed. Poor transport connectivity has been identified as one of the key barriers to economic growth in Argyll and Bute and much of this relates to lack of resilience and long journey times on the regions trunk and local road networks. Addressing these challenges is critically important to the region and this will require significant investment in our local and trunk road networks via the STPR 2 process.

Argyll and Bute Council will also seek funding via our Rural Growth Deal and STPR2 to develop air infrastructure and routes on the west coast of Scotland. This is consistent with the draft NTS which states that *“to ensure we welcome a growing number of international visitors we need to retain our important air links and also develop new routes.”* This should apply to more rural areas in addition to the larger urban airports, it is vital that the Scottish Government assist rural authorities such as Argyll and Bute Council to make our vital air services more sustainable. The current funding model for local authority air services is not considered to be sustainable and this creates inequality between islands served by local authority PSO air services and those islands where local air services are subsidised via the Scottish Governments PSO contract.

Whilst increasing levels of air travel might be contradictory to the proposed Sustainable Investment Hierarchy we believe that there are opportunities to utilise technology to limit or offset negative environmental impacts. For example given the relatively short flight distances and type of aircraft utilised to deliver local services there may be the opportunity to pilot the use of electric aircraft on routes in the west coast of Scotland. There are also opportunities to develop Oban Airport as a base for drone technology which can be used for environmental testing and monitoring. This is particularly significant given the airports proximity to the European Marine Science Park which includes the Scottish Association for Marine Science at Dunstaffnage and potential to work with Marine Scotland on opportunities for marine compliance and marine research.

Recent developments such as the local Transport Bill may provide local authorities with options to influence or improve bus services in their area however, it should be noted that this is considered unlikely in rural areas where services addressing social need are often loss-making and unattractive to commercial operators. It should be noted that within Argyll and Bute over 90% of the bus services are subsidised by the Council. In the current financial climate it is highly unlikely local authorities will be able to operate new or improved public transport services given the significant costs involved.

10. Is there anything else you would like to say about the National Transport Strategy?
Please provide details.

Top Transport Priorities Argyll and Bute to support economic growth and social inclusion	Issue	Action
ROADS		
A 82 Trunk Road - Road Upgrade	The A82 is a key economic driver for the West Highlands. There is a need to upgrade the Loch Lomond section of road Tarbet to Inverarnan section.	Ensure that the programme of works identified by the Scottish Government is implemented asap.
A 83 Trunk Road – Road Upgrade	The A83 is the primary transport corridor into much of Argyll from the central belt. There is a need for a comprehensive programme of investment to improve road resilience, safety and journey times.	<p>Produce a clear timetable of actions to deliver identified problem areas including.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strone point (Completed) • Erines • Dunderave • Balmore Rd. Tarbert <p>Need for enhanced capital/maintenance programme to tackle roads vulnerability to flood and frost damage.</p>
A 83 Trunk Road Upgrade – Rest and Be Thankful	Need for permanent solution for R&BT	Action to determine the best “once and for all solution” to address landslip risk public perceptions.
A85 Trunk Road Upgrade - Oban to Tyndrum/Oban Development Road	Relatively slow and busy road seen as a high priority for businesses and other stakeholders to improve with additional problems relating to congestion and lack of capacity to grow in Oban.	<p>To identify the range of improvements to reduce journey times and build road resilience by tackling pinch points.</p> <p>To re-examine the need for the Oban Development Road to address congestion issue and capacity to grow as a town.</p>
Pennygael Bridge Mull - structural repair/replacement required A848	Essential bridge serving the Iona community requiring significant investment.	Need to identify funding to repair/replace the bridge.
A816 Oban to Lochgilphead Road	Key link between Oban and Lochgilphead that suffers from	Identify key aspects of the road that need action to remove pinch

Upgrade	a long journey time due to poor quality road with poor carriageway width and alignment.	points, improve road alignment and excessive bends.
Dunoon – Colintrave – Portavadie Road Upgrade (B836/A8003/B8000)	Key route linking communities across Cowal, Bute and Kintyre (Mid Argyll) with Dunoon also a key timber haulage route.	To look at the feasibility of upgraded road to A road status incorporating physical upgrades to modern carriageway standards i.e. min. 6m wide carriageway with improved alignment to make it a safer and more reliable route.
A848 Salen –Tobermory Upgrade	Key route connecting main settlement on Mull with ferry terminal in need of widening to enable removal of passing places. Added pressure in summer from the success of RET.	Identify funding to enable works to proceed to final design and implementation stage.
Local road network	GAE levels are insufficient to meet expanding road maintenance needs.	To lobby for a revision of the GAE distribution criteria to ensure that areas of sparse population are better financed to maintain their high mileages of rural road networks.
RAIL		
West Highland Line between Oban and Glasgow	Excessive journey time in excess of three hours.	Need to lobby the rail investment programme for Control periods 6-7 (2019-2029). Need for a more detailed study to identify scope for journey time reduction. Refurbished 158s due on line in 2019.
Creation of new station at Shandon to service HMNB Clyde – or enhanced public bus service	Reduce reliance on the car and ease movement of personnel to the base that is currently expanding.	Need to lobby the Scottish Government and Scotrail on the need for this new facility or enhanced public bus service.
Oban Integrated Transport Hub	Combination of bus/rail and ferry terminals to ease transport transfer. An added benefit would be to create additional space for vehicle	Need to work with Hi Trans and other transport partners to design scheme and attract necessary funding from a range of partners.

	marshalling.	
FERRIES and PORTS		
Dunoon Town Centre to Gourock Town Centre Ferry Link	Need to improve ferry reliability from town centre to town centre and re-introduce vehicular option.	Continue to lobby Transport Scotland for a successful conclusion of the contract award.
Replacement of Council Ferries/takeover by Scottish Government	Ageing ferries on the Islay Jura route and Appin to Lismore. Loss making service serving four island communities.	Continue to work with and lobby Transport Scotland on the need to ensure the reliability/affordability of our internal ferries.
Extension of Ferry services	Need to make greater use of ferry services at key crossing points. For example, Tarbert - Portavadie ferry.	
Argyll and Bute Council Pier upgrades Fionaphort/Iona, Gigha/Tayinloan and Craignure Pier	Need to upgrade pier to take account of climate change/weather and capacity issues. Creation of berthing facility at Fionnphort.	Undertake STAG for Craignure Pier to assess future operations. Determine affordability of business cases through feasibility studies and attract external funding as necessary.
Improve capacity and resilience of ferry services across the network	Given the impact of RET and the expansion of the whisky and tourism industries there is growing demands on ferry services across Argyll.	Continue to lobby CMAL and Transport Scotland for suitable investment in the ferry network to ensure greater capacity at peak periods and reliability.
ACTIVE TRAVEL		
Helensburgh to Cardross/W. Dunbartonshire cycleway (Regional Route 42)	Need to complete this important route linking Helensburgh, Cardross and Dumbarton allowing active travel opportunities to connect to the main town and link into established routes to loch Lomond (John Muir Way)and the Three Lochs Way and routes to Glasgow.	Continue to work with landowners to acquire land, design works and implement sections of the route as funding is secured.
Provision of an off-road route for entire length of NCN78, The Caledonia Way, linking Campbeltown to Lochgilphead,	This is a key 'spine' route for the Council area and wider West of Scotland. In addition to the NCN longer distance route, shorter sections of the	Continue to work with Transport Scotland (for sections alongside A83/A85/A828 trunk roads & sections on old Connel to Ballachulish Rail Line), Sustrans

<p>Oban and Fort William.</p>	<p>route are heavily used for more local journeys, for example Ardrishaig to Lochgilphead, as well as part of other routes, for example the section from Kennacraig to Tarbert forms part of the popular 5 ferries route.</p>	<p>(as NCN route), local communities, landowners and other stakeholders.</p>
<p>Pilgrims Way: Iona – Mull – Oban – Tyndrum – St Andrews</p> <p>Entire route should be constructed to a suitable standard for walking and cycling.</p>	<p>This national walking and cycling route linking the international destinations of Iona and St Andrews, while also providing active travel links between local communities, requires significant focus to deliver, particularly given the distance and therefore cost and number of authorities and landowners involved.</p> <p>A&B Council is currently working with local communities in the Fionnphort area of Mull on the development and delivery of a cyclepath route which would provide approximately 1.9km of the route.</p> <p>Within Argyll & Bute the Pilgrims Way would also provide important links within Mull and between Oban and Tyndrum.</p>	<p>Continue to work with local communities, landowners, active travel bodies (e.g. Sustrans), Transport Scotland (for trunk roads, e.g. A85 Oban to Tyndrum) and the Scottish Government to develop and deliver sections of this nationally important route.</p>
<p>Active Travel Islay</p>	<p>Following the successful delivery and positive reaction by local residents, businesses and visitors to the 3 distilleries path on Islay there is a strong desire to build upon this success by the construction of active travel routes linking other key settlements, employers and tourist destinations on Islay.</p>	<p>Work with Islay Community Access Group, local communities, local businesses, active travel groups (e.g. Sustrans, walking groups), landowners and the Scottish Government to develop and implement a network of high-quality walking and cycling routes on Islay. These routes will provide an alternative to the private car for local residents and visitors.</p>

<p>Develop Cycle Tour routes, e.g. 5 Ferries route (Arran / Kintyre Peninsula (Clanaig – Kennacraig – Tarbert) / Cowal Peninsula (Portavadie – Colintrave) / Bute (Rhubodoch – Rothesay), to provide attractive, high-quality cycle route suitable for families/tourists.</p>	<p>There are a number of popular cycle tour routes within Argyll & Bute, most notably the 5 ferries route with dedicated ferry tickets available from CALMAC for the route. At present these routes are primarily promoted to keen sportive cyclists as a single day activity, however with each of the routes having a total distance of under 55 miles if correctly developed these would offer an attractive weekend/multi-day activity for families/less dedicated cyclists thereby bringing significant economic benefit to these areas. To be attractive to these groups the route would require to be entirely on high-quality segregated infrastructure or on [perceived as] safe, quiet and low speed minor roads.</p>	<p>Work with local communities, businesses, landowners, active travel bodies (e.g. Sustrans), Transport Scotland (for trunk roads, e.g. A83 Kennacraig to Tarbert), CALMAC and the Scottish Government to develop and deliver attractive, high-quality walking and cycling touring routes.</p>
<p>AIR LINKS</p>		
<p>Central Belt to Oban Air Service with potential link to Barra.</p>	<p>Need to establish a scheduled flight connection to the central belt to provide a faster transport alternative for local people and businesses together with visitors. Assist the delivery of economic growth in Oban, Lorn, Barra and Lochaber.</p>	<p>Continue to undertake feasibility work on viability of bid, speak to air operators and lobby for subsidy to enable this connection to be established</p>

About you

Please indicate how you wish your response to be handled and, in particular, whether you are content for your response to be published. If you ask for your response not to be published, we will still take account of your views in our analysis but we will not publish your response, quote anything that you have

said or list your name. We will regard your response as confidential, and we will treat it accordingly.

To find out how we handle your personal data, please see ou.

1. What is your name?

Pippa Milne

2. What is your email address?

Entering your email address allows you to return to edit your consultation at any time until you submit it. You will also receive an acknowledgement email when you complete the consultation.

Email (Required)

Pippa.milne@argyll-bute.gov.uk

3. Are you responding as an individual or an organisation?

(Required) Individual Organisation

4a. What is your organisation?

If responding on behalf of an organisation, please enter the organisation's name here.

Argyll and Bute Council

4b. If responding on behalf of an organisation, please indicate which category best describes your organisation.

- Local Authority
- Third sector or Community Groups
- Private Sector
- Regional Transport Partnership
- Transport Operator

- Academia/education
- Other Public sector
- Other

If other, please specify.

5. The Scottish Government would like your permission to publish your consultation response. Please indicate your publishing preference:

(Required)

- Publish response with name
- Publish response only (without name)
- Do not publish response

Information for organisations only:

The option '*Publish response only (without name)*' refers only to your name, not your organisation's name. If this option is selected, the organisation name will still be published.

If you choose the option '*Do not publish response*', your organisation name may still be listed as having responded to the consultation in, for example, the analysis report.

6. We will share your response internally with other Scottish Government policy teams who may be addressing the issues you discuss. They may wish to contact you again in the future, but we require your permission to do so. Are you content for Scottish Government to contact you again in relation to this consultation exercise?

(Required) Yes No

Evaluation

Please help us improve our consultations by answering the questions below. (Responses to the evaluation will not be published.)

How satisfied were you with this consultation?

Very
dissatisfied

Slightly
dissatisfied

Neither
satisfied nor
dissatisfied

Slightly
satisfied

Very
satisfied

Please enter comments here.

How would you rate your satisfaction with using this platform (Citizen Space) to respond to this consultation?

Very
dissatisfied

Slightly
dissatisfied

Neither
satisfied nor
dissatisfied

Slightly
satisfied

Very
satisfied

Please enter comments here.