

ROADS AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES UPDATE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report provides an update on Roads and Infrastructure Service activities in recent months.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Area Committee note and consider the contents of this report.

3.0 DETAIL

Continuing COVID precautions

- 3.1 Although we are seeing the easing of some COVID restrictions, we are continuing to see some staff absences as a result of COVID/self-isolation rules. We are continuing to operate our bin collection service with follow on vehicles where necessary to keep staff separate and hopefully reduce the likelihood of the virus spreading amongst our teams.

Capital Roads Reconstruction Programme

- 3.2 This year Roads and Infrastructure Services are delivering one of the largest capital programmes in roads reconstruction which includes £10M worth of capital investment announced as part of the budget process in February, £1.29M of Strategic Timber Transport Funding and £900k of active travel and footway improvement schemes. Please see the full programme and details on progress here: [Roads Capital Programme \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](https://argyll-bute.gov.uk/roads-capital-programme) In summary, the carriageway works are largely complete and works are ongoing with the footway programme. Information on the progress of footway schemes is also available online at: [Footways Capital Funding Programme \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](https://argyll-bute.gov.uk/footways-capital-funding-programme)

Waste Strategy

- 3.3 Work continues on the Council's Waste Strategy which is taking into consideration the BMW ban which comes into place at the end of 2025, the 25 year PPP contract with Renewi which ends in September 2026, the Deposit Return Scheme and the Household Waste Recycling Charter. Discussions continue with civil servants from Scottish Government regarding the above and discussion continue with neighbouring local authorities with a view to maximising collaboration opportunities.

Winter Policy Update

- 3.4 Winter maintenance standby rotas commenced on Friday 29 October. This follows the current in season policy agreed at the September meeting of the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee. The first three months of the winter standby period saw 34 equivalent full fleet runs against an annual budget allowance for 62 full fleet runs. This equates to a commitment of 55% and now gives a direct correlation in statistical activity, in 55% of the standby duration to date. The salt tonnage used as at end of January was 5,528 tonnes, equal to the lowest volume recorded as used in the first 3 months of any season, since weekly recording of activity began in 2009-10, Salt stocks remained steady at around 8,600 tonnes.
- 3.5 Members will be very much aware of the national shortage of HGV drivers. Whilst we have not lost a significant number of drivers, this does have an impact on recruitment of HGV drivers. This is being compounded by some absence being experienced through Covid.

Public Transport

- 3.6 Officers are currently liaising with West Coast Motors on roll out and implementation of Pingo app-bookable bus service. The Pingo app funding is provided by HITRANS for up to a year's trial, however, the app is being tested on two Council contracted demand responsive services - Cowal DAB and Kintyre Ring n Ride. Subject to a satisfactory trial, this system is likely to be rolled out more widely. One of the key considerations for the potential future of this service is how Members and users can be consulted in terms of the review of the pilot and the possible next steps. Certainly we will try where possible to provide Members with updates on any changes to bus services which need to be made for operational reasons. Members will note from the recent briefing note on public transport though, that services can change on an almost daily basis across the 80 different services managed by our small public transport team, so it may not always be possible to provide real-time updates. Further information on Pingo was provided to all Members in a recent briefing note.

Bridge Inspections and Capital Works

- 3.7 The Infrastructure Design team continue to carry out bridge inspections to all approx 900 structures on a rolling programme across Argyll and Bute to ensure they are safe and fit for purpose. This inspection regime identifies remedial

works which are programmed for delivery.

- 3.8 The team were also successful in a highly competitive bidding process for bridge funds totaling £5,5million. We are currently in the process of putting a capital programme in place to utilise this welcome funding. The fund will be used to undertake proportionate works on bridges in need of repair, identified through our inspection programme/records and in line with the bid process.

White lining

- 3.9 In response to recent enquires from local members a proactive briefing note on road marking work was issued to all members which provided answers to various FAQs. In particular there have been a number of enquiries about the reason for delays, and these can be summarised as follows:

- There are a multitude of reasons that can result in delays being experienced for road markings being laid. These include but are not limited to:
 - availability of the lining contractor along with availability of their accommodation, availability of ferries (this has been a particular issue for us for Islay and Mull this year),
 - weather conditions (road markings are dependent on dry and salt free road surfaces). The increase in staycation this year has been an added pressure for contractors trying to complete work in the area with less accommodation availability.

There also needs to be a certain period of time following surface dressing to allow the new surface to bed in before lining can be applied – this will vary on the specification of surface dressing and the volume of traffic. Essentially what this means is that the stone chips need to be fully embedded prior to the lining being applied, on roads with limited traffic volumes, this embedment will take longer than on roads with higher volumes of traffic. Some notable progress has been made in MAKI in recent weeks despite challenging weather conditions. Of course, like any other area of work, schemes are prioritised in accordance with the road hierarchy and roads asset management plan, so outstanding lining schemes on high speed strategic routes will be prioritised ahead of refreshing give way markings in quiet residential streets, for example.

B8001 Skipness Road

- 3.10 Works are now scheduled to start on site in late Spring/Summer for repairs to this lifeline section of road in 2022. The road surface has been badly damaged by the landslip which has 'ripped' the road's surface and caused a level difference due to ground movement. Visually this does look quite severe. However, our team continue to monitor the road condition to ensure that the route is available and safe. The road is restricted in width by traffic management/traffic lights to keep traffic from the slip area.

Design options have been prepared and assessed for a speed or repair,

longevity/sustainability etc and it has been concluded that it is better, long term, to realign the road to move it a short distance away from the slip edge. This will provide a more reliable road long term, also be more cost effective and importantly provide a better solution for our communities/travelling public. We are carrying out further designs to the realignment and the toe of the slope along the stream. Designs being prepared for land purchase to facilitate the realignment/remedial works. This amended approach is taking slightly longer than the original proposal to stabilise the slip and resurface the road on its current alignment. However, this amended approach which has evolved through the design process will provide a much more resilient route long term.

Correspondence

- 3.11 We are aware that there have been some issues with information flow in this area recently and we are putting measures in place to ensure an improvement in the timeliness of responses to queries. This will form part of a wider programme of refresher training and a review of our processes and procedures. We will be contacting Members directly before the end of this Council.

4.0 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 This report provides a general update to local members on recent Roads and Infrastructure activities.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Policy – various policies referred to within the body of the report
- 5.2 Financial – none
- 5.3 Legal – none known
- 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 – none
- 5.7 Risk – none known
- 5.8 Customer Service - none

**Executive Director with responsibility for Roads and Infrastructure Services
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