

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 discussions 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 end 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 for implementation in other areas like OLI. Further information on Pingo was provided to all members in a recent briefing note.
- 3.7 The team recently made a successful bid for £282,000 of funding from the Scottish Government's Bus Partnership Fund to implement bus priority measures designed to make local services quicker, more reliable and more attractive as an alternative to the car. Argyll and Bute Council working with HITRANS, the regional transport partnership for the Highlands and Islands and local bus operator West Coast Motors have been successful in applying for funding to improve bus services in Oban. The improvements include funding to explore the feasibility of a bus lane on the A85 Trunk Road through Oban and to upgrade existing traffic signals with adaptive bus priority that will help improve bus journey times and the reliability of services in and around the town. The funding will also see the establishment of a Bus Service Improvement Partnership for the Oban and Lorn area, which will look to bring together other key transport operators and organisations to improve local bus services.

Bridge Inspections and Capital Works

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

White lining

- 3.10 In response to recent enquires from local members a proactive briefing note on white lining 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 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 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 Bute and Cowal in recent weeks despite challenging weather conditions. Of course, like any other area of work, schemes are prioritized 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.

Ganavan Barrier

- 3.11 Following consultation with and representation from Members the proposed barrier at Ganavan will not be progressed. The design proposal for the barrier was such that it would allow larger vehicles access and the ability to use the car park as a turning head. Ultimately it was felt that the proposed barrier would not be a

suitable solution for that location.

Depot rationalisation

- 3.12 Following completion of the single depot scheme at Jackson's Quarry, with the assistance of colleagues in Estates, we are progressing arrangements for a tenant to move into part of the Mill Park site from 1st April. The remainder of the site will thereafter be marketed with a view to it being used for a similar purpose to its current use. We understand that interest is high. This aspect of the scheme is critical to the overall aims of the project in so much as it has opened up land for local business use, supporting business, securing and safeguarding jobs and providing tangible economic development outcomes. In terms of the Appin site there is an issue with the formalising of existing access rights which we are picking up. Once this matter is resolved we should see the site marketed.

LED project

- 3.13 Argyll and Bute Council has 14462 street lights as part of the adopted network of public roads. The vast majority of these have been changed over to LED. The final stages of the project were paused as a result of the COVID pandemic (falling into the non-essential works category). When restrictions were lifted we encountered resourcing issues associated to staff turnover, and a backlog of streetlighting maintenance meaning we were unable to run our normal maintenance works concurrently with the LED scheme. We intend to complete the remainder of the scheme utilising external labour. The final stage of the LED installations will be completed this year. This will see the final 1,000 old-style luminaries mainly in the Oban area changed over to LED. We are currently in the process of preparing the tender pack. The competition will run for 4-6 weeks. Once a contractor is appointed, and including the lead in period, we expect them to start in April/May. Works are expected to be phased over an 8 week period.

Correspondence

- 3.14 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 known
- 5.7 Risk – none known
- 5.7 Customer Service – none

**Executive Director with responsibility for Roads and Infrastructure Services
Kirsty Flanagan**

**Policy Lead for Roads and Infrastructure Services
Councillor Rory Colville**

February 2022

For further information contact:

Jim Smith, Head of Roads and Infrastructure Services