
STRATEGIC TRANSPORT PROJECTS REVIEW 2 (STPR2) – OUTCOMES

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) was developed to inform transport investment in Scotland for the next 20 years (2022-2024). STPR2 reviewed Scotland's transport network across a range of modes including walking, cycling, bus, rail and road plus wider island connectivity in an effort to identify future transport options which will support the delivery of Scotland's Economic Strategy and drive to net zero.
- 1.2 Argyll and Bute Council were a key stakeholder in the STPR2 process working collaboratively with Transport Scotland and their appointed consultants Jacobs / Aecom. This process included a number of key stakeholder workshops across Argyll and Bute including representation from the public and private sector.
- 1.3 A Regional Transport Working Group (RTWG), chaired by the Council's Head of Development and Economic Growth, was also established for Argyll and Bute and this included representation from the Council, Transport Scotland, the Regional Transport Partnerships, Public Transport operators, LLTNP and Enterprise Agencies. The RTWG were been instrumental in raising concerns over the [Case for Change Report](#) and Interventions that have been scoped out of a long list of transport options.
- 1.4 As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, STPR2 had a two phased approach, with Phase 1 reporting to the original timescale of Winter 2020/21. Phase 2 reported in 2021 and will informed the Scottish Government's future investment plans and spending reviews.
- 1.5 On 3 February 2021, Transport Scotland published the STPR2: Update and Phase 1 Recommendations report along with the associated impact assessment reports. These were the first STPR2 recommendations for transport investment and focus on transport projects or interventions that significantly contribute to STPR2 objectives, align well with NTS2 priorities, and can be progressed or delivered within the current spending period and will help support a green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

- 1.6 The final STPR2 report was published on the 8th December 2022 and included 45 recommendations 34 of which are claimed to be of benefit to Argyll and Bute these Regional Recommendations are set out in appendix 1 of this report.
- 1.7 Many of the recommendations have implications for Argyll and Bute however only 2 are specific to Argyll and Bute, (recommendation 29 and 41) with a further 4 applicable to multiple regions but will also have a particular benefit to Argyll and Bute (recommendation 18,24,42 and 44).
- 1.8 A more detailed look at the regional recommendations can be found in the main body of this report.
- 1.9 This report also contains officers' views on the Scottish Government's Strategic Transport Projects Review and expresses how disappointed Argyll and Bute Council are with the STPR2 process and its outcomes. This disappointment is further exacerbated by the failure of the STPR2 to address the proposed transport interventions identified in our draft Rural Growth Deal as there an assurance from the Scottish Government that these matters would be taken up by STPR2.

RECOMMENDATIONS

This reports recommends the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee considers the Transport Scotland review published on 8th December 2022.

STRATEGIC TRANSPORT PROJECTS REVIEW 2 (STPR2) – OUTCOMES

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) was developed to inform transport investment in Scotland for the next 20 years (2022-2042). Transport Scotland have recently published the final STPR2 on 8th December 2022.
- 2.2 In the final STPR2 report 45 recommendations were identified across Scotland for future transport investment that focus on transport projects or interventions that significantly contribute to STPR2 objectives, align well with NTS2 priorities, and can be progressed or delivered within the current spending period. The actions are also designed to help support a green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic the final summary report can be found [here](#)
- 2.3 From these 45 recommendation 34 regional recommendations 2 of which are specific to Argyll and Bute and 4 having cross regional benefits having particular benefit to the Argyll and Bute area.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 This reports recommends the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee considers the Transport Scotland review published on 8th December 2022.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 The Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) is the second review of Scottish Government transport investment over the next 20 years (2022-2042) this involved comprehensive engagement, policy review and data analysis being undertaken to identify and consider transport related problems and opportunities. This informed production of the national and regional STPR2 Case for Change Reports. These reports set out the Transport Planning Objectives (TPOs) which guide development of interventions throughout the rest of the STPR2 process.

- 4.2 The generation of the 'long list' of options for STPR2 has also taken place within the initial appraisal: Case for Change stage, informed by a range of sources and activities including:
- Re-consider those recommendations of the first STPR, which have not been delivered nor form part of a programme for design development or delivery
 - A review of Growth Deals
 - A review of regional and national policies, studies and business cases
 - 20 Regional Stakeholder Option workshops across all STPR2 regions
 - A review of shortlisted options from the three Advanced Studies
 - National workshops - a series of mode and sector-specific workshops covering a range of issues at a national level
 - The online public engagement survey.
 - Air which is fundamental mode of transport – removed/not included as part of the process – fundamental mode to our islands

- 4.3 It must be noted that with regards to the second point above 'review of growth deals we were advised by SG on 15th May 2019 to remove any transport related projects out of our Rural Growth Deal proposal as these would be addressed through STPR2.

'This project will be considered through the second Strategic Transport Project Review (STPR2), rather than through the Growth Deal process.'

- 4.4 It appears that the final report has disregarded the final round of consultation and that TS has focused on their assets (ferries/harbours/trunk road) rather than look at it strategically and consequently discarded all local authority transport assets for consideration of future investment.
- 4.5 The proposals removed from the Argyll and Bute Rural Growth Deal were Project 10 Transport Infrastructure (Local Roads) (£60.5M) and Project 11 Transport Infrastructure (Air) (£3.5M) totalling £64M of additional investment. You will see that from the regional recommendations that these proposals have not been included.

Individual regional recommendations starting with the 2 specific actions concerning A&B. (*Detail of recommendation taken from STPR2 [website](#)*).

4.6. **Recommendation 29 (Access to Argyll)**

- 4.6.1. Ongoing closures of the A83 due to landslides at the 'Rest and Be Thankful' or on other sections of the road in Argyll and Bute due to accidents, flooding or roadworks have a significant negative impact on the region and its economy. Closures at the 'Rest and Be Thankful' can add detours of up to 50 miles for residents, businesses and visitors.
- 4.6.2 New or improved road infrastructure to address these closures would improve the reliability of the route as a vital artery through Argyll, as a connection for both the Kintyre and Cowal peninsulas, and as one of only two trunk roads linking

Argyll and Bute to the Central Belt.

4.6.3 STPR2 recommends work continues on developing a more reliable route. A preliminary assessment of 11 route corridor options has been completed with the Glen Croe corridor emerging as the preferred option.

4.6.4 Work undertaken to date has been accelerated, with speed of delivery a key criteria for assessment.

4.6.5 It is considered that this recommendation should not have been included in this document as this was already a clear commitment long before STPR2 was commissioned. Also there is little evidence of this accelerated timescale by being included in STRR2.

4.7 **Recommendation 41 (Fixed link to Mull)**

4.7.1 The current ferry routes on the Sound of Harris, Sound of Barra and between Mull and the Scottish mainland face a number of issues and challenges. Replacing ferry services with fixed links (bridges, causeways and/ or tunnels) can improve reliability, connectivity, capacity and travel times and allow for the wider reconfiguration of ferry services.

4.7.2 STPR2 recommends that further work is undertaken on business cases to better understand the benefits, costs and challenges associated with these options. These studies would further consider the feasibility of improving island connectivity through additional fixed links by replacing existing ferry services currently delivered by CalMac Ferries Ltd as part of the Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services (CHFS) contract. These studies would also analyse in further detail the potential long term savings associated with the public sector funding required to maintain the ferry services and would involve input from communities that may potentially be affected.

4.8 Unfortunately, the inclusion of this recommendation provides further evidence that the final consultation responses were disregarded as it was requested that this recommendation be removed. In fact at no point in the whole process was this ever discussed by the Regional Consultation group as a possible option to consider. In addition the current infrastructure on Mull and the adjacent Scottish mainland is not suitable and there is no indication that STPR2 will address this. . Members will be aware that transport infrastructure on Mull currently struggles to cope due to the increase in vehicles since the implementation of Road Equivalent Tariffs (RET). It would appear that the only beneficiary is Transport Scotland given that this would appear as a cost saving exercise against the monetary maintenance burden of operating the ferries that currently operate the routes to Mull.

Further 4 actions that are stated will have particular benefit to Argyll.

4.9 **Recommendation 18 (Supporting Integrated Journeys at Ferry Terminals)**
One of the major barriers to public transport uptake has been connectivity and lack of convenient options that allow complete journeys. Improving access and

creating a better traveller experience at ferry terminals and interchange facilities would benefit rural and island communities as well as visitors. This would improve utilisation of available passenger capacity on ferries and, potentially, free up space on vehicle decks.

4.9.1 This would also provide more seamless travel choices and improve services, particularly for those not travelling with a car.

4.9.2 STPR2 recommends a detailed review of key ferry terminals to consider physical integration and accessibility. This would examine improvements in timetable information, signing, ticketing and other facilities required to deliver a seamless and integrated journey between different travel modes. The review would make recommendations on a programme of integration improvements to enhance the traveller experience and accessibility at ferry terminals.

4.10 Recommendation 24 (Ferry Replacement and Replacement and Progressive Decarbonisation)

In addition to reducing emissions, continued investment in ferry renewals would address the needs of rural and island communities by improving the resilience, reliability, capacity, accessibility and standardisation of ferries. Progressive decarbonisation of the Clyde and Hebrides Ferry Services (CHFS) and Northern Isles Ferry Services (NIFS) networks would support the 2018 to 2032 Climate Change Plan Update and the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Act 2019.

4.10.1 STPR2 recommends renewal and replacement of the CHFS and NIFS vessels including progressive decarbonisation by 2045.

4.11 Recommendation 42 (Investment in Port Infrastructure to Support Vessel Renewal and Replacement, and Progressive Decarbonisation)

Investment in port infrastructure, including power supplies, would complement the introduction of new and upgraded ferry vessels. This would help meet the needs of rural and island communities by improving the capacity, resilience, reliability, accessibility and standardisation of ferry services.

4.11.1 Investment in port infrastructure means that there can be progress to standardisation and interoperability of new and existing vessels, increasing network resilience. This investment would also contribute to reducing emissions across the ferry network and support Scotland's net zero carbon emission targets.

4.11.2 STPR2 recommends an investment programme in ferry port infrastructure, including shore power supplies to ferry vessels, to support Ferry vessel renewal and replacement and progressive decarbonisation.

4.12 Recommendation 44 (Rail Freight Terminals and Facilities)

Sufficient provision of rail freight terminals is critical to achieving a significant shift of freight from road to rail. This would improve the sustainability and competitiveness of Scotland's supply chain.

4.12.1 Rail freight is transported on a commercial basis carried by private sector freight operating companies and logistical providers. The role of Government is to put policies and strategies in place that facilitate growth – with Network Rail managing the core rail infrastructure and the regulator, the Office of Road and Rail (ORR), regulating compliance, safety and issuing of licences.

4.12.2 STPR2 recommends that Transport Scotland supports industry partners in carrying out an updated market study for rail freight growth in Scotland. Linked to the Industry Growth Plan for Rail Freight, this would include a review of rail freight terminals and hubs to confirm how to meet long-term requirements to shift freight from road to rail.

4.12.3 The Scottish Government currently supports a range of grants to help with the transfer of freight from road to rail and would continue to explore opportunities to provide support. This would involve working in partnership with freight companies to implement measures, identified in the market study that would provide a significant shift of freight from road to rail.

4.13 To date, the Council and wider RTWG throughout the whole process have raised a number of concerns relating to the STPR2 including:-

- The current transport policy network is increasingly complex and very difficult to understand. For example, we have a National Transport Strategy 2, STPR2 which will now be delivered in 2 phases, the Islands Connectivity Plan will be the successor to the National Ferries Plan and the a separate National Aviation Strategy.
- Governance of transport is also overly complicated with a lack of consistency around funding and roles / responsibilities.
- STPR2 focuses almost exclusively on infrastructure owned and operated by Transport Scotland with other infrastructure such as local authority roads and transport services considered out of scope.
- Local roads make up 94% of the road network and carry 65% of traffic in Scotland however the majority are out of scope of STPR2. Trunk roads also account for 50% of the national funding for roads maintenance resulting in huge challenges for the funding of local roads.
- Aviation – fundamental mode of transport for rural Scotland. Provides lifeline connections to Country's most fragile and remote communities and yet out of scope. How can a comprehensive national review of transport exclude a key mode?
- Definition of strategic airports focuses exclusively on city airports and those operated by the Scottish Government.
- No definition given of what constitutes a strategic ferry port in Scotland. This could have significant consequences for Argyll and Bute which has more inhabited islands than any other local authority.
- STPR2 should consider ferry Services operated by local authorities in addition to the CHIFS and NIFS networks as these are also lifeline connections to local island communities.
- Funding, Fares and Subsidy – funding of transport infrastructure and services is key barrier. Without adequate funding, we will see a continued contraction of rural public transport services.

- Active travel – funding models require to be revised as there is currently too much focus on challenge funds and LA's / RTP's are the key delivery agencies yet are required to bid via third parties and charities who manage funding on behalf of Transport Scotland. Active travel funding should be brought in line with funding models for other strategic transport infrastructure.
- The failure to address interconnectivity between rural areas and cities that provide additional essential services.

4.13.1 Scottish Government policy and grant funding for transport is often too focused on urban transport issues e.g. active travel funding and associated design criteria requiring, Bus Partnership Funding – focus on congestion, sustainable investment hierarchy priorities active travel infrastructure over investment in road infrastructure. STPR2 continues this trend and does not acknowledge the revenue pressures currently impacting on public transport.

4.14 These are some initial high level concerns and it should be noted that at the time of writing this report officers from the Strategic Transportation Team are still reviewing in detail the documents published most recently by Transport Scotland.

5.0 CONCLUSION

5.1 STPR2 will inform transport investment in Scotland for the next 20 years across all modes. Argyll and Bute Council has been very poorly served through the outcomes of this document despite initial assurances and having been fully engaged throughout the whole process.

5.2 Further details are to be sought into the justification behind removal of Transport related projects from our Rural Growth Deal after being advised that they would be addressed in STPR2.

5.3 Further discussions are to be sought with Transport Scotland and the Scottish Government into delivery of a permanent solution to the ongoing issue at the Rest and Be Thankful.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 Policy – STPR2 will set out the governments transport investment priorities over the next 20 years.

6.2 Financial – The Council fund local transport infrastructure and services including roads, active travel, bus, air and ferry services.

6.3 Legal – None at this stage.

6.4 HR – None at this stage.

- 6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty: (please refer to guidance on Hub) – transport is critical to inclusive growth in rural regions. We will lobby Transport Scotland for increased investment at part of the STPR2 process.
- 6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics – as above.
- 6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – as above.
- 6.5.3 Islands – STPR2 and the Islands Connectivity Plan will be critical to the connectivity of our island communities.
- 6.6 Climate Change – Officers will continue to secure external funding for Active Travel from various sources such as Sustrans and regional transport partnerships e.g. Sustrans/Hitrans.
- 6.7 Risk – There is a risk that current government transport policy is too focused on urban regions which may exacerbate issues such as depopulation of rural areas.
- 6.8 Customer Service – None at present.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix 1 - Regional Recommendations from STPR2

APPENDIX 1 – REGIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS FROM STPR2

The final STPR2 report was published on the 8th December 2022 and included 45 recommendations 34 of which are claimed to be of benefit to Argyll and Bute these Regional Recommendations are set out in the table below:-

STPR2 Regional Recommendations

Recommendation 1	Connected neighbourhoods
Recommendation 3	Village-town active travel connections
Recommendation 4	Connecting towns by active travel
Recommendation 5	Long-distance active travel network
Recommendation 6	Behavioural change initiatives
Recommendation 7	Changing road user behaviour
Recommendation 8	Increasing active travel to school
Recommendation 9	Improving access to bikes
Recommendation 10	Expansion of 20mph limits and zones
Recommendation 14	Provision of strategic bus priority measures
Recommendation 18	Supporting integrated journeys at ferry terminals
Recommendation 19	Infrastructure to provide access for all at railway stations
Recommendation 20	Investment in Demand Responsive Transport and Mobility as a Service
Recommendation 21	Improved public transport passenger interchange facilities
Recommendation 22	Framework for the delivery of mobility hubs
Recommendation 23	Smart, integrated public transport ticketing
Recommendation 24	Ferry vessel renewal and replacement and progressive decarbonisation
Recommendation 25	Decarbonisation of the rail network
Recommendation 26	Decarbonisation of the bus network
Recommendation 27	Behavioural change and modal shift for freight

Recommendation 28	Zero emission vehicles and infrastructure transition
Recommendation 29	Access to Argyll (A83)
Recommendation 30	Trunk road and motorway safety improvements to progress towards 'Vision Zero'
Recommendation 31	Trunk road and motorway network climate change adaptation and resilience
Recommendation 32	Trunk road and motorway network renewal for reliability, resilience and safety
Recommendation 33	Future Intelligent Transport Systems
Recommendation 34	Traffic Scotland System Renewal
Recommendation 35	Intelligent Transport System renewal and replacement
Recommendation 36	Strategy for improving rest and welfare facilities for hauliers
Recommendation 37	Improving active travel on trunk roads through communities
Recommendation 38	Speed Management Plan
Recommendation 41	Potential sound of Harris, sound of Barra fixed link and fixed link between Mull and Scottish mainland
Recommendation 42	Investment in port infrastructure to support vessel renewal and replacement, and progressive decarbonisation
Recommendation 44	Rail freight terminals and facilities