

REST AND BE THANKFUL UPDATE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The A83 including the Rest and Be Thankful is considered to be critically important economic infrastructure that serves a substantial part of Argyll and Bute. Following further landslips in August 2020 on the A83 at the Rest and Be Thankful, the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity committed to looking at options which provide a permanent solution.
- 1.2 In September 2020 Transport Scotland published 11 options, inviting public feedback. The Council responded to the consultation following a report in October 2020. In March 2021, the Cabinet Secretary announced that Route Corridor 1 – Glen Croe will be taken forward as the preferred corridor. This corridor consists of 5 main options with sub options.
- 1.3 In December 2022, the Transport Minister further announced improvements to the Old Military Road as a medium term solution to improve the resilience of the temporary diversion route to the A83, should it be closed again by landslips.
- 1.4 In June of this year, the construction of a debris flow shelter (Brown option) was announced as the preferred option for the long-term solution to address the challenges at the A83 Rest and Be Thankful.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that Members note and consider the Scottish Government's recent announcement on the long term solution for the Rest and Be Thankful.

3.0 DETAIL

- 3.1 Public exhibitions for the preferred route were held from 12th to 15th June 2023. These exhibitions gave local communities and road users the opportunity to see and comment on the preferred route. There is also an online exhibition which can be found on the following link:- [Access to Argyll and Bute A83](#)

- 3.2 Transport Scotland have confirmed that work will now be taken forward at pace to further develop the proposals, including the detailed development and assessment of the preferred option along with the preparation of an Environmental Impact Assessment, draft Road Orders and draft Compulsory Purchase Orders.
- 3.3 In line with major road schemes in the UK, Transport Scotland are working to the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB). Within DMRB there is a methodology used for scheme development and delivery which is summarised in the table below with indicative timescales for each of the stages. Note the construction time period will be determined by the delivery contractors method or works, programming and external factors such as weather events. At the Taskforce meeting on 25 January, the Minister and Transport Scotland officials confirmed that, where possible, the Stage 3 timescale will be compressed. To facilitate this a large engineering team, together with other specialist consultants, has been procured to progress the permanent route.

Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) process	Typical project timescale
DMRB stage 1 Feasibility, preliminary engineering studies	1-2 years Completed March 2021
DMRB stage 2 Route options, assessment	1.5 – 2 years Completed June 2023
DMRB stage 3 Design and assessment of preferred option	Currently at this stage now the permanent route has been announced.
Statutory process Publication of Environmental Impact Assessment, draft Road Orders, Compulsory Purchase Orders, planning etc.	Transport Scotland are aiming to have the Road Orders published by the end of 2024
Procurement, tender process and appointment of roads contractor	1 year subject to procurement route
Construction	Anticipated 3 – 4 year construction phase

- 3.4 The preferred option for the permanent solution consists of a debris flow shelter with a 6m wide catchpit to the rear. The debris flow shelter will have a maintenance access track allowing access to the top of the shelter and to the catchpits for removal of any material. Transport Scotland have confirmed that for the majority of flow events traffic will be allowed to use the road, It is understood that the existing unsurfaced route on the westerly side of the glen (through the forested area) will continue to be available for walkers, wheelers, cyclists and equestrian use. Cyclists will also be able to use the A83 should

they wish. More information can be found on Transport Scotland's website here: [Update on the long term solution for A83 | Transport Scotland](#)

- 3.5 At the same time as progressing the long-term solution, in December 2022, the Transport Minister announced improvements to the Old Military Road (OMR) as a medium term solution to improve the resilience of the temporary diversion route to the A83, should it be closed. Transport Scotland are looking to increase the resilience of the temporary diversion route along the existing Old Military Road, having identified the preferred route solution for it late last year. The first phase of implementing the medium-term solution will begin later this year with realignment of the southern end of the route. This will increase resilience of the temporary diversion route by reducing the likelihood of closures due to flooding, meaning more certainty for locals and road users if the A83 has to shut due to adverse weather conditions. The medium term works also include widening the OMR to allow much of the road to be double track with the north western section (where it connects with the R&BT car park) likely to continue to be operated by convoy/traffic signals. It is understood that the medium term works would have been progressed regardless of which permanent solution was progressed for works and resilience reasons.
- 3.6 It should be noted that the debris flow shelter covers the main area susceptible to land slips. There have been other recent landslips and debris flow events which have resulted in the A83 being closed out with these proposals.
- 3.7 The traffic appraisal that informs the consultation states that all the Scheme Options have a very low Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR). This is due to Traffic flows along the A83 corridor being generally low across the year with fluctuations in the Winter and Summer periods. All the Scheme Options marginally improve the journey length and thus the journey time between Inveraray and Tarbet and are comparable in that aspect.
- 3.8 Although the Brown (preferred debris flow shelter option) and Yellow Options have very similar BCR values, the Brown Option gives the lowest value of user benefits in comparison to all other options. This is due to the major disruption during the construction period where all traffic is assumed to use the medium-term solution (OMR local diversion) for a significant proportion of the year during the construction period. The Purple and Pink Options give the lowest BCRs and both contain tunnel sections, highlighting that tunnelling in this area is a very high cost process.
- 3.9 The economic assessment that accompanies the consultation does not contain much detail and further work is intended to be carried out at the next stage of the process. That said, the admission in the documentation that accompanies this consultation clearly states it does represent the greatest impact to traffic during the construction phase estimated to be in the region of three to four years following completion of the works to the Old Military Road. Transport Scotland is of the opinion that given the relatively low traffic flows on the A83 (Estimated at 4,400 vehicles per day). Whilst it is accepted that these traffic flows are modest in the national scale of traffic movements the A83 is a lifeline route for

much of Argyll and Bute and as such this long term disruption on the main line of the road could have significant impacts on our future economic viability and ability to attract population and additional investment. It is also worth considered what additional impact there will be on investment decisions on the A82 with programmed works along Loch Lomond. It seems very unlikely that work will be implemented on both Trunk routes simultaneously and further clarification on this important issue is urgently required as the A82 is a critical lifeline route for Argyll and Bute.

3.10 Transport Scotland are welcoming feedback and comments on the preferred route by 28th July 2023. Feedback and comments can be made on the form provided at the exhibition, sent to a83@transport.gov.uk or posted to A83 Access to Argyll and Bute Team, Transport Scotland, George House, 2nd Floor, 26 Hanover Street, Glasgow, G1 1AD.

3.11 Whatever option is taken it is inevitable that works of this size and nature will bring with them some disruption, including the closure of the A83 with traffic being diverted onto the OMR. It will be particularly important that a positive communications plan is in place making it very clear that Argyll and Bute is very much open for business during the works.

3.12 There are a number of points of detail which officers consider to be important leading up to and during the works. Officers will continue to engage with Transport Scotland and keep Members informed of progress over and above the Taskforce meetings which are expected to continue during the project. These points of detail including but not limited to:

- Transport Scotland's communication strategy
- Return to service plan in the event of the OMR not being available
- Tie-in details with the local road network
- Bus waiting facilities
- Evacuation and safety plan in the event of a collision, vehicle fire or other incident within the structure

3.13 A meeting of the A83 Taskforce is expected to be held in late June.

4.0 CONCLUSION

4.1 This report provides an update on the Scottish Government's recent announcement on the long term solution for the Rest and Be Thankful. The preferred option (Brown) is for a debris flow shelter along the line of the existing Trunk Road with a construction time of three to four years following improvements to the Old Military Road. This is considered the most deliverable option by Transport Scotland. The full implications of the economic and social impacts of this option need to be carefully considered by the council in its consideration of the best permanent solution for the Rest and Be Thankful.

5.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Policy – in line with the Council’s policy position in respect of the A83 Rest and Be Thankful which is seeking a long term permanent solution.
- 5.2 Financial – funding for the project to be met by Scottish Government.
- 5.3 Legal – limited for the Council relating to side road orders and tie-ins to the B828 to Lochgoilhead.
- 5.4 HR – none known
- 5.5 Fairer Scotland Duty: none known.
 - 5.5.1 Equalities – none known.
 - 5.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – none known.
 - 5.5.3 Islands – forms part of a lifeline route to islands and remote rural mainland locations.
- 5.6 Climate Change – due regard will be given to climate change with a view to minimising any climate change impact and these will be considered as and when they arise.
- 5.7 Risk – ongoing connectivity challenges for Argyll and Bute until a permanent sustainable solution is completed.
- 5.8 Customer Service – none known.

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