

DISCUSSION PAPER – REST AND BE THANKFUL

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report is a discussion paper for the Environment Development and Infrastructure Committee to enable a comprehensive response to be made to Scottish Government and Transport Scotland in relation to the A83.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the report and:

- Agree to the Council facilitating a discussion with all appropriate interests/stakeholders in advance of the next Task Force meeting to get a solid and agreed position from Argyll and Bute.
- Agree the Elected Members who represent the Council at future Task Force meetings.

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 Following two recent events, one at Butterbridge between 23/02/14 and 24/02/14 and one on the Arrochar side of the Rest and be Thankful between 06/03/14 and 10/03/14: the Rest and be Thankful Task Force was recalled and met on Tuesday 18th March 2014. The March meeting was essentially a debrief on the mobilisation and use of the Old Military Road diversion and an update regarding the position to date.
- 3.2 The Task Group met on a number of occasions previously. Through the Task Group Scottish Government made provision for the Old Military Road to be upgraded and to be used as a diversion route when the A83 is not available between the Rest and be Thankful and Ardgarton. Scottish Government has also committed to the provision of additional catch netting and other mitigating measures along the A83, some of which are under construction currently.
- 3.3 An A83 Marketing Group has been formed that feeds into the Task Force. Whilst the Marketing Group have carried out some excellent work which has been

complemented by the Council's in-house communications team it was disappointing to note that, during the recent landslide events, some national media broadcasts were publicising a 60 mile diversion route and effectively putting out a negative message. Further work is required to be done to ensure that all media outlets are making it clear that Argyll and Bute is open for business at all times, including when diversion routes are in place.

- 3.3 Jacobs carried out two studies on behalf of Scottish Government, study 1: http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/files/A83_Trunk_Road_Route_Study_Report_Part_A_Final_.pdf considered a number of options at the Rest and be Thankful and study 2: http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/files/A83_Trunk_Road_Route_Study_Report_Part_B_Final_.pdf (considered other emergency works on the A83 between Tarbet and Kennacraig. It is understood that Transport Scotland has extended the scope of the second study to incorporate the section of the A83 between Kennacraig and Campbeltown. This section of road is due to be Trunked in the coming weeks. Slides will be presented to the Committee on the day detailing the extent of works completed and the works outstanding.
- 3.4 Argyll and Bute Council considered a report (Appendix 1) at its January 2013 Council meeting. The Council decision is detailed at (Appendix 2). The Council's option at the January 2013 meeting was for the Green Option to be progressed.
- 3.6 It is proposed that the Council facilitates a discussion with all appropriate interests/stakeholders in advance of the next Task Force meeting to get a solid and agreed position from Argyll and Bute. This discussion to include: summary of the Council's position, open discussion with stakeholders, representations to the Task Force.

4. CONCLUSION

- 5.1 This report is a discussion paper for the Environment Development and Infrastructure Committee to enable a comprehensive response to be made to Scottish Government and Transport Scotland in relation to the A83.

6. IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy – Reliable access into and out of Argyll and Bute is essential for the economy of the area. The A83 forms a principal lifeline route.
- 6.2 Financial – Lifeline routes are essential to maintain the local economy.
- 6.3 Personnel – Not significant.
- 6.4 Equal Opportunities – Lifeline routes are essential for goods, services and transport links for all.
- 6.5 Legal – None known

7. APPENDIX:

- 1 – Council Report January 2013
- 2 – Extract of Minute from Council Meeting

Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure

March 2014

For further information contact: Jim Smith – Head of Roads and Amenity

ARGYLL & BUTE COUNCIL

COUNCIL

**DEVELOPMENT &
INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES**

24 JANUARY 2013

TITLE: A83 TRUNK ROAD ROUTE STUDY

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report summarises the report commissioned by Transport Scotland, regarding the A83. The study, completed by Jacobs, has been carried out in two parts. Part A – A83 Rest and Be Thankful and Part B – A83 Tarbet – Lochgilphead – Kennacraig. Transport Scotland’s team involved in producing the reports will be in attendance at the Council meeting on 24 January 2013 to give a short presentation.
- 1.2 The final report will be presented by Transport Scotland to the A83 Taskforce meeting due to be set for February/March 2013. Transport Scotland will then consider the next steps following feedback from the A83 Taskforce.
- 1.3 This report recommends the Council’s proposed formal response to Transport Scotland.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Council responds to Transport Scotland as follows.

Argyll and Bute Council:

- a. Supports the proposed installations of the additional landslide mitigation measures as defined within the Red Corridor Option.
- b. Requests that Transport Scotland progress the installation of further landslide mitigation measures to reduce the likelihood and impact of a landslide at the hazard areas identified in 3.5 below.
- c. Requests that Transport Scotland progress the development of the Green Corridor Option to the next stage of the design process, involving detailed topographical, ground investigation surveys and Environmental Impact Assessments to provide a better understanding of cost, risk, environmental impact and deliverability.
- d. Requests that Transport Scotland review the current communications protocol by way of risk assessment for the “wig wag” warning signs with

the presumption that they are replaced with conventional fixed signage in accordance with 3.7 below.

3 DETAIL

- 3.1 The Jacobs study has been carried out in two parts. Part A – A83 Rest and Be Thankful and Part B – A83 Tarbet – Lochgilphead – Kennacraig. Summary drafts of the part A and part B reports were sent to all Members in December and are appended to this report.
- 3.2 Jacobs are seeking comments from all stakeholders regarding the Draft Reports. Stakeholder comments will be considered by Jacobs when they produce the final reports to Transport Scotland. A technical workshop was held on 18 January 2013. This meeting was attended by the Depute Council Leader, Lead Councillor for D&I and Head of Roads and Amenity Services. Transport Scotland will then consider the next steps following feedback from the A83 Taskforce.

Part A Report

- 3.3 The report considered a number of possible alternative routes, such as bridging Loch Long to meet the A815 and using various other glens north of the Rest to meet the A82. These options were considered as part of a desk based assessment. These have all been ruled out in the report and 6 further options (all using the same Glen Croe valley route) were considered in more detail using a ground model to determine initial horizontal and vertical alignment and historical survey data where available. Outline descriptions of all 6 options along with cost estimates ranges based on 2012 prices, excluding VAT are detailed below. The next stage of the design process, involving detailed topographical and ground investigation surveys and Environmental Impact Assessments would be required to enable a better understanding of cost, risk, environmental impact and deliverability for each of the options.
- (i) The **Red Corridor** maintains the existing alignment of the A83 and includes a range of landslide mitigation measures such as: additional 440 metres of debris flow barriers at locations where the landslide hazard is considered highest, improved hillside drainage adjacent to and under the road, and; introduction of vegetation and planting on the slope. This option would significantly reduce the frequency of occurrence of landslide debris reaching the A83 Trunk Road causing a full road closure and offers the potential for implementation in phases. It is not considered to have any significant environmental effects. The cost estimate for this option is in the range £9-10 million. This option will be one of the quicker options to implement although the vegetation and slope planting could take up to 25 – 30 years to become fully established.
 - (ii) The **Brown Corridor Option** closely follows the alignment of the existing A83 and involves the construction of a debris flow shelter over a length of 1km to protect the road and road users in the event of future debris flow events. With this option the likelihood of landslide debris reaching the road,

over the length of the debris flow shelter, would be negligible. The introduction of debris flow shelters could have impacts on the local landscape and views, although the significance of these impacts would depend on the appearance and extent of the shelters. The cost estimate for this option is in the range £105 – 120 million and there would be significant disruption during construction, including periods of full road closures

- (iii) The **Yellow Corridor Option** provides a new 1.5km single carriageway alignment offset slightly from the existing A83. Around 1.2km of the new alignment is constructed on viaduct following a similar profile to the existing road with an average climbing gradient of 5%. The viaduct structure would be set at a sufficient level to permit debris flow events to pass below the A83 and the likelihood of road closures due to landslides, over the length of the viaduct would be negligible. The introduction of a viaduct could have impacts on the local landscape and views, although the significance of these impacts would depend on the appearance of the viaduct and how well it is integrated with the surrounding landscape from a visual perspective. The cost estimate for this option is in the range £83 – 95 million.
- (iv) The **Purple and Blue Corridor Options** begin further down Glen Croe and generally run parallel to the Old Military Road until they reach the property at High Glencroe. The **Purple Corridor Option** continues northwards in tunnel and re-joins the existing A83 in the vicinity of Loch Restil. A short 600m single bore tunnel was initially considered, however the steep gradient of this design was considered unacceptable. A route alignment with a maximum gradient of 4% is considered feasible, resulting in a 1.9km twin bore tunnel. With this option, the likelihood of road closures due to landslides is considered to be negligible. Potentially significant environmental impacts are anticipated in relation to ecology, landscape and visual intrusion. The cost estimate for this option is in the range £460 – 520 million.
- (v) The **Blue Corridor Option** generally runs parallel to the Old Military Road and curves steeply at a maximum gradient of 8% around the top of the glen before joining the alignment of the green option which passes to the west of the Rest and Be Thankful car park and re-joins the existing road before Loch Restil. The road alignment of this option is below desirable minimum standards for a new Trunk Road and potentially significant environmental impacts are anticipated in relation to ecology, landscape and visual intrusion. With this option, the likelihood of road closure due to landslide is considered negligible. The cost estimate is in the range £66 – 75 million.
- (vi) The **Green Corridor Option** provides a new 4.0km single carriageway and follows the opposite side of the valley to the existing A83. While the alignment generally follows the line of existing forest tracks, significant engineering measures would be required to form a new single carriageway road on this hillside, including measures to reduce the landslide hazard in this corridor. The cost estimate range for the Green Option is £27 – 91million. This is a wide cost range and reflects a varying level of protection to landslide. At the low end of the cost range (£27 – 30million), without significant landslide protection measures, the route may be as susceptible to closure due to landslide as the existing A83. The higher end of the cost

range (£81 – 91 million) represents costs to provide a route where the likelihood of closure due to landslide is negligible (compared to the Brown and Yellow corridor options). This option may result in impacts on ecology and the local landscape and views, although the significance of these impacts would depend on the form and alignment of this route.

- 3.4 The report's conclusion is to recommend the Red Corridor Option which is the lowest cost option, can be deployed most quickly and can address the current risk level most expeditiously in the short term. This option proposes additional landslip preventative and mitigation measures such as netting along the existing route and will allow the A83 to remain open during construction. The cost of these works is estimated at £9-10m (the Red Corridor Option).
- 3.5 The preventative measures detailed in 3.3 (i) above are welcomed and will improve the reliability of this lifeline route into and out of Argyll and Bute. However, there is still risk of landslide closing the road along other sections of the A83 not protected (9 other locations on the A83 with a landslide hazard ranking classification of High/Very High covering a route length of around 31km have been identified) in particular Glen Kinglass, Cairndow, and Loch Shira. Actions to address the ground related hazards at these locations should be progressed to achieve comparable levels of risk reduction along the whole route.
- 3.6 There is also potential for the protected Red Route not being available should materials have to be removed from the netting following any landslide event. With this in mind it is recommended that the Council Requests that Transport Scotland progress the development of the Green Corridor Option to the next stage of the design process, involving detailed topographical, ground investigation surveys and Environmental Impact Assessments to provide a better understanding of cost, risk, environmental impact and deliverability for the Green Corridor Option. This would enable more informed consideration to be given to the Green Option being progressed.
- 3.7 The report commissioned by Transport Scotland confirms that the A83 route has been closed for an average of 5 ½ days per year based on the last 6 events, however the perception is different. There are numerous reports on traffic news bulletins stating there is an increased risk of landslide on the A83 from time to time. This reinforces the perception that "A83" and "Landslide" go together. There should be a more positive message given that Argyll and Bute is open and available for business. To assist with this it is suggested that through a risk assessment process consideration be given to the flashing warning signs being removed as these are considered to add to the negative message regarding the availability of the Rest and Be Thankful. It is proposed that these be replaced with conventional fixed signage. Should there be a high level of risk associated with landslide; this should be dealt with using the normal procedure, any road closures would be agreed between the Police and Transport Scotland.

Part B Report

- 3.8 The report examines the issues along the length of the A83 Trunk Road between Tarbet and Kennacraig and presents the results of the transport appraisal in

accordance with Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance. The Part B report excludes consideration of landslide issues at the Rest and Be Thankful.

- 3.9 The report has considered 30 options put forward by stakeholders. These options have been reduced down to 13 options which have been assessed and tabulated in Appendix 2. The table presents the options in the following Themes: Pedestrian Measures, Minor Improvement Schemes, Measures to Improve Information, Safety Improvement Measures and Speed Control Measures. Each option has an estimated cost, a ranking ranging from major benefit to major negative impact and the potential delivery term (short, medium and long).

Trunking of A83 Kennacraig to Campbeltown

- 3.10 Following correspondence between the Depute Council Leader and Lead Councillor for D&I and Minister Keith Brown, a business case framework is being drawn up between officers of Development and Infrastructure and Transport Scotland to consider the Trunking of the A83 between Kennacraig and Campbeltown. This on-going work and future reports will be brought to Council to update on progress.

3.11

4 CONCLUSION

- 4.1 This is a covering report to Transport Scotland's reports regarding the A83. This report makes recommendations for the Councils formal response to Transport Scotland to the draft reports.

5 IMPLICATIONS

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| 5.1 Policy | Officers are in discussion with Transport Scotland regarding the potential to Trunk the A83 between Kennacraig and Campbeltown. Further updates will be provided. |
| 5.2 Financial | TS's report states that the additional annual costs to the A83 economy from previous landslide episodes at the Rest and Be Thankful are estimated to be £286,300 (in 2010 prices) for the road to being closed for 5 ½ days over the year (the average duration of the past six events). |
| 5.3 Legal | None |
| 5.4 HR | None |
| 5.5 Equalities | None |

5.6 Risk Risk to the economy as detailed in 5.2 above. Risk to the travelling public during a landslide event.

5.7 Customer Services None

Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure

January 2013

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**MINUTES of MEETING of ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL held in the COUNCIL
CHAMBER, KILMORY,
LOCHGILPHEAD
on THURSDAY, 24 JANUARY 2013**

(d) A83 TRUNK ROAD ROUTE STUDY

The Council heard a presentation by Graham Edmund of Transport Scotland and Graeme Herd of the Jacob's team on the A83.

The Provost adjourned the meeting at 1.50pm and reconvened at 2.30pm.

Councillors Devon and MacDonald left the meeting at this point.

The Council considered a report which summarised the report commissioned by Transport Scotland, regarding the A83 and contained the Council's proposed formal response to Transport Scotland.

Decision

Agreed to delegate to the Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure in consultation with Councillors John Semple and Duncan MacIntyre to finalise the Council response to Transport Scotland.

(Ref: Report by Executive Director of Development and Infrastructure Services dated 24 January 2013, tabled)