

ANNUAL STATUS AND OPTIONS REPORT 2025

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Annual Status and Options Report (ASOR) provides an overview of road infrastructure assets within Argyll and Bute Council based on 2023-24 and 2024-25 data for asset condition, previous investment, asset valuation and other relevant information. The report provides information, based upon current available data, on the condition of the asset and future options which can be considered in terms of investment.

The ASOR provides details on each of the following assets:

- Roads
- Footways
- Structures such as Bridges
- Street Lighting and Traffic Signals
- Street Furniture
- EV Chargers

- 1.2 The annual scanner survey programme measures several properties of the carriageway surface. The Road Condition Index (RCI) measures, Surface Texture, Cracking, Rutting (Transverse profile), 3m Longitudinal profile (potholes), 10m Longitudinal profile (ride quality). The RCI score is the cumulative value of these main parameters and consequently the higher the RCI score, the poorer the overall condition of that section of the network. It should be noted that in the past 3 years, the external Road Condition Index (RCI) report did not survey our full area with most of our Islands missed. A full survey was carried out in the second part of 2024 and details were received in December which officers have reviewed and analysed.
- 1.3 In future years, as officers are not getting the RCI scoring until late December and must analyse this prior to producing schemes and carrying out engagement with Elected Members at proposed business days, it is recommended we use the previous year's scoring to produce the Capital Programme Schemes for the following year (as was done last year). Provided

an annual survey is carried out by the external contractor, the RCI does not usually fluctuate to any significant degree, indeed it is normally based over a two year period; however, as this has not happened for the last three years, as well as the islands being our most vulnerable roads, we have seen a change from our RCI being 49.8% in the red/amber (needing work) to 50.7% over the past 4 years. However, this still shows a continued improvement overall, since 2018-20.

- 1.4 The ASOR appendix lists have used last year's figures as the most up to date RCI score. The report sets out the 2024 road and associated infrastructure condition and forecasts future condition based on different proposed levels of investment.
- 1.5 The ASOR demonstrates previous investment in the Roads Reconstruction Programmes has slightly improved the overall road condition, through support from Elected Members allowing an average budget of nearly £8M. Whilst the condition has improved slightly, without the increased investment from the Council, the road condition will continue to deteriorate, resulting in our road network being in an extremely poor condition. The condition surveys carried out nationally have a lag of 2 – 4 years (due to not all of the network being surveyed in one year). Argyll and Bute's condition survey is anticipated to worsen should there be a reduction in available investment. Currently Argyll and Bute Council are listed as having the highest RCI within our family group consisting of roads authorities with similar roads networks, effectively our roads index is the poorest of the 8 family group members for rural authorities in Scotland.
- 1.6 Within the ASOR report, the respective asset groups are identified with four investment options presented to allow members to consider appropriate future funding which will allow a more informed budget setting process for the maintenance and improvement of Roads and Infrastructure assets.
- 1.7 The ASOR links into the Priority Investment Plans (PIPs) (previously known as Service Asset Management Plan (SAMP)) which forms part of the overall Capital budget decision making process. The ASOR is a useful tool in assisting Elected Members to make informed strategic decisions regarding investment of our limited capital resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee:-

- Endorses the Annual Status and Options Report and the positive analytical feedback it provides and agrees to use the information for future budget setting.
- Agrees that going forward officers use the previous years RCI to programme the coming years programme.

ANNUAL STATUS AND OPTIONS REPORT 2025

2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 This report introduces the Annual Status and Options Report which makes an analytical assessment of the condition of the Council's Road Network and associated infrastructure as well as setting out projected conditions based on varying levels of investment.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee:-
- Endorses the Annual Status and Options Report and the positive analytical feedback it provides and agrees to use the information for future budget setting.
 - Agrees that going forward officers use the previous year's RCI to programme the coming years programme.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 The ASOR is a report which forms part of a suite of documents which are recommended by Scottish Collaboration of Transportation Specialists (SCOTS) for Local Authorities use. The documents have been developed in collaboration with all Scottish and Welsh authorities and aim to improve processes and continue the development and implementation of the wider use of recognised asset management techniques. When authorities have fully developed the use of these documents, they will enable better value for money to be delivered and prudent stewardship of the road asset to be demonstrated.
- 4.2 SCOTS have focused on carriageway condition including backlog value and steady state figures due to carriageways being the single most valuable Council asset.

- 4.3 The ASOR is also a tool which Elected Members can use to help set priorities for investing the limited resources available to the Council.
- 4.4 At the Argyll and Bute Council Budget Meeting in February 2025, an £10M investment programme for roads reconstruction was approved. This continued investment coupled with the level of revenue investment over the last few years will help to halt the decline in our roads network condition.

RCI for 2018-20 = 54.2% of roads needing improvement
RCI for 2020-22 = 49.8% of roads needing improvement
RCI for 2021-23 = 48.8% of roads needing improvement
RCI for 2023-24 = 49.8% of roads needing improvement
RCI for 2023-25 = 50.7% of roads needing improvement

Previous levels of investment have halted the deterioration of the surfacing and acted as a contributory factor in reducing the number of CAT 1 & 2 road defects.

- 4.5 The RCI survey data is utilised along with other relevant available data such as SCRIM (sideway-force coefficient routine investigation machine), Accident Statistics, Road Hierarchy, Inspection data and local engineering judgement to develop an initial list of suitable schemes for inclusion in the road reconstruction programme. The WDM pavement management system interrogates all the available data to identify and rank potential schemes. Once a draft list is compiled further analysis is carried out by local staff to establish scheme costs, treatment options etc this is then matched to available funding. The selection process is under regular review and has been steadily improved over time.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 This ASOR report has been developed in line with the SCOTS Asset Management Project and provides a useful resource aimed at providing relevant decision makers with information which will allow a more informed choice to be made in respect of future investment options.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy – The ASOR contributes towards policy for infrastructure and roads.
- 6.2 Financial – Current investment levels provide a steady state for the roads network.
- 6.3 Legal – None known.
- 6.4 HR – None known.
- 6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty: None known.
- 6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics – None known.
- 6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – None known.

- 6.5.3 Islands – The reduction in the Ferry Prices (RET) has increased numbers of vehicles on island roads which has caused more damage to the island road network.
- 6.6 Climate Change – The impact of climate change on key infrastructure is expected to increase in the coming years.
- 6.7 Risk – Road Network will deteriorate due to underfunding, as such we need to prioritise roads which may well affect island and more rural communities more.
- 6.8 Customer Service – None known.
- 6.9 The Rights of the Child (UNCRC) – None arising from this report.

**Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Infrastructure:
Kirsty Flanagan**

Policy Lead for Roads, Transport and Amenity: Councillor John Armour

February 2025

For further information contact:

Stephen Hall, Interim Head of Road and Infrastructure Services

stephen.hall@argyll-bute.gov.uk

Hugh O'Neill, Network and Standards Manager

hugh.oneill@argyll-bute.gov.uk

APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – ASOR Report

Appendix 2 – Photographs of work carried out to our network assets in 2023-24