

ROAD AND INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES - Service Annual Performance Review 2021/22

DELIVERING OUR OUTCOMES – Our case studies help illustrate the positive contribution the Service has made to our communities and provides examples of good service delivery.

Corporate Outcome – We Have An Infrastructure That Supports Sustainable Growth

Business Outcome BO113: Our Infrastructure Is Safe And Fit For The Future

a) **Oban depot consolidation project**

The scheme to rationalise our depots in Oban was fully completed this year. This project sees the Council's existing roads depot and Jackson's Quarry, Oban, expanded and redeveloped as a single site for all Roads and Infrastructure Operations across Oban and Lorn to be delivered from.

This project reduces the Council's operating costs by moving from three depots to one, and has created local job/economic opportunities through subcontracts to the main contract delivered by Luddon Construction, as well as providing for support to the accommodation market in Oban with Luddon squads staying in Oban Mon-Thurs.

The depot consolidation project continues with focus now being given to both Lochgilphead and Islay.



b) Rothesay pontoons project

Scheme specification and procurement was carried out last financial year, with delivery of the scheme commencing in this financial year and in to the following year. This is a c. £900,000 project to provide around 20 pontoon berths for Rothesay, providing access to the town/Isle of Bute for leisure yachters. This is a significant and affluent market area, which will bring increased visitor numbers to Rothesay to spend money in local shops, restaurants, cafes etc. Developing access to the marine tourism market is a continuing theme, and this project comes off the back of the Campbeltown and Oban pontoon projects which have brought significant economic benefit to both of those towns.

c) Major marine transport connectivity schemes

Over the course of 2021/2022 we have progressed with a number of ambitious marine engineering schemes designed to guarantee safe and sustainable future transport connectivity for our island communities. These include:

Craignure

Developing the concept of this scheme towards a detailed design including significant public engagement where a community group is working with council on elements of the design process.

Fionnphort/Iona

At this location we are progressing a £20million scheme to replace/renew key pieces of marine infrastructure to allow for full and unfettered access to and from Iona.



d) Road reconstruction

During this financial year we carried out an ambitious programme of road improvements with an investment of over £10m of council funding together with additional monies from the Timber Transport Fund in the region of £1.4m. This allowed us to complete over 100 individual roads reconstruction schemes which will improve the overall road network, contributing to keeping Argyll and Bute open for business. As a result of this ongoing prudent investment and proportionate and appropriate engineering choices, the overall road condition continues to improve.



e) Bridge improvements

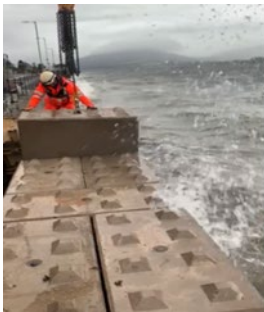
During the tail end of this financial year we were successful in securing a £5.5m grant for bridges and structures improvements/replacement. This will enable a number of bridges to be strengthened and/or replaced over the coming years, providing more resilience to transport infrastructure whilst also reducing some of the routine revenue maintenance work.



f) Bute seawall

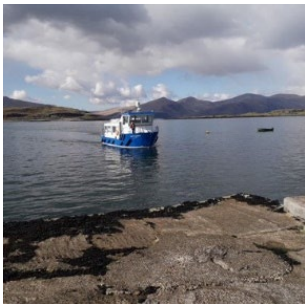
In December 2021 a combination of high tide and unusual easterly wind direction resulted in significant damage occurring to the seawall on the A886 at Ardbeg on Bute.

The damage was so severe that utility pipes cables and conduits were left exposed. With the wall having washed away significant further damage to the carriageway and highly probably private land beyond would have been caused. This is a key route into Rothesay and as such the council mobilised working with its own internal team and contractors to put in place a temporary sea defence utilising interlocking concrete blocks. In this financial year we are taking forward the design works for a permanent, lasting solution.



g) Lady Lismore, ferry services and Ports and Harbours

The council operates four lifeline ferry services as well as 39 ports and harbours across the council area. This financial year a new vessel was commissioned and built. Connecting Port Appin with Isle of Lismore. This new vessel came in to service in May 2022. The old vessel was replaced due to changes in safety requirements. The new vessel meeting current day Maritime Coastguard Agency and maritime requirements.



h) Oban Bay

The council's harbour board in December 2021 took a decision to progress the municipal port for Oban. This means the council will become responsible for the wider waters of Oban Bay and through a statutory process which includes a Harbour Revision Order which will provide powers to the council which will ensure that vessel movement within the bay can be safely managed



i) Winter maintenance

The council is responsible for carrying out winter maintenance, removal of ice and snow, to its 2,300km of road. There is a network of roadside weather stations which together with specialist forecasting surveys provide bespoke treatments across the council area utilising 32 separate routes.

Key facts from this winter season:

- 65 full fleet runs
- 2,049 individual vehicle runs
- Highest turned out route A819 Inveraray to Dalmally
- Total distance travelled 105,024 miles
- Salt used 11,303 tonnes
- Total spend £2,258,228.59



Business Outcome BO114: Our Communities Are Cleaner And Greener

a) Island landfill cells

Circa £1million investment in sustainable waste disposal and Gartbreck on Islay which is currently underway.

Over the course of the previous year the Mull scheme was progressed to ensure suitable landfill capacity for the island's general waste, ensuring that waste services can continue up until December 2025. Similar works commenced in this current year for Gartbreck and Islay which will provide landfill capacity for Islay and Jura's general waste up until December 2025.

Some landfill capacity will be required beyond the end of 2025 for items such as arisings from abattoirs and some building materials such as plaster board etc.



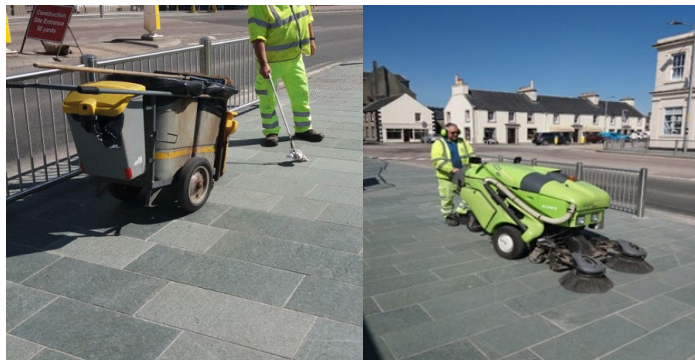
b) Preparing for 2025 Biodegradable Municipal Waste Landfill Ban

Collaborative work has continued with West Dunbartonshire Council regarding joint procurement for waste solutions post December 2025. This is likely to mean a joint contract for some of Argyll and Bute's waste material which would bring efficiencies due to economies of scale. It is likely however that Argyll and Bute will need additional transfer stations particularly in the Helensburgh and Lomond area to help create logistical efficiency.



c) Street cleansing

We continue to deliver our commitments under the Environmental Protection Act and have also been consistently achieving high marks in the street cleanliness index which is administered by Keep Scotland Beautiful. Street cleanliness contributes towards public health as well as providing a clean and attractive environment in which our communities, businesses and visitors can thrive.



d) Refuse collection and recycling

We collect refuse and recycling from over 48,000 households together and 3,400 commercial premises, as well as providing 11 civic amenity sites and 98 bring sites across the council area.



e) Decarbonisation projects

Over the course of 2021/2022 we have progressed a number of schemes which will contribute to the Council’s corporate goals to reduce our carbon footprint and provide for cleaner, greener transport options this includes:

Additional electric and hybrid vehicles, additional EV charging points, LED lighting replacements as well as carrying out proportionate low carbon roads repair techniques, such as surface dressing which has a significant reduction in carbon emission compared to traditional surfacing methods. In many applications surface dressing can be a more environmentally friendly surface treatment generating far less carbon per M² than laying a typical 40mm layer of asphalt material on a road. However, whole life costs need to be considered both in terms of carbon and finance. This means that often it is more cost effective and indeed necessary from a structural point of view to lay asphalt/bituminous macadam rather than surface dress.



TREATMENT TYPE	TYPICAL CARBON COST
Inlay	8.43kg per meter squared of CO ₂
Surface dressing	1kg per meter squared of CO ₂

SIGNIFICANT CHALLENGES – These are the significant challenges faced by the Service during 2021/22. These challenges either created pressures on the Success Measures or impacted on delivery. Specific additional activity or mitigating actions were carried out to reduce the negative impact on service delivery.

Corporate Outcome - People Live Active Healthier And Independent Lives

Business Outcome BO102: We Provide Support, Prevention And Opportunities To Help People Make Better Lifestyle Choices

a) Customer contact versus reducing capacity

Although significant progress has been made in this area of our work over the past few years, with increasing automation; availability of proactive information to reduce avoidable contact; improved business processes; and service redesign there continues to be a huge pressure in terms of correspondence. Although further resources have been committed to this area of work, it may be the case that should a further significant improvement in customer service and engagement be desired, that further investment is required. The pressure on back office teams to juggle a range of work streams continues to be a challenge.

Ultimately our goal is to continue with the process of channels shift, encouraging all customers to self-serve. This requires to be supported with the appropriate resources, information and expertise to provide an enhanced data set to allow for self-service.

Corporate Outcome - We Have An Infrastructure That Supports Sustainable Growth

Business Outcome BO113: Our infrastructure is safe and fit for the future

a) Continuing the trend of improvement/arresting the decline in our road network

Our Annual Status and Options Report sets out the benefits of continued investment in our road network and highlights the critical risk of underinvestment. Although our network has seen a welcome improvement in recent years, we would need to spend in the region of £10million annually to maintain a 'standstill' position, and significantly more to see continued improvements.

Year on year budget consultations and public feedback has shown the importance of roads to our communities – maintaining the required level of investment is likely to be challenging in future years given the predicted decline in available capital funding. This brings with it significant engineering,

economic, financial and reputational risks for the Council. We continue to deliver a range of different technical solutions that are designed to be proportionate for the use of the road and take into consideration the island and rural geography of Argyll and Bute. As an example, we have made extensive use of in situ recycling which is where the existing road surface is excavated then re-laid at a new level – this has both environmental benefits and also helps us overcome some of the logistical challenges in getting new materials to some of our harder to reach areas.

b) The sustainability of our current cemetery provision

There are significant ongoing pressures on the Council's cemeteries, with some critical sites in Kintyre and on Mull approaching their capacity. The Council will require to take a view on potential future reductions in cemetery availability and options for our customers or make a significant [likely to be in the tens of millions] financial allocation to allow for significant expansion, environmental compliance, future proofing etc. of the current provision.

This is the subject of an ongoing consultation and review exercise, which will be reported to EDI over the course of this financial year.

c) Delivering the Craignure and Iona/Fionnphort marine infrastructure schemes

Financing and delivering these once-in-a-generation marine engineering schemes will pose significant resource challenges over the course of the next financial year.

Business Outcome BO114: Our Communities Are Cleaner And Greener

a) Working towards the 2025 BMW ban and the end of the Waste PPP contract in 2026

While these significant changes are some years in the future the planning is already underway. The BMW ban will pose a significant and ongoing financial risk to the Council – Officers are currently engaged on a number of fronts working with Scottish Government and neighbouring local authorities to plan for/reduce the impact, and to provide Members with advice and support for any lobbying activities that they may wish to undertake.

b) Increasing the pace of change to deliver on decarbonisation objectives

Of particular concern in this area of work is the impending legislative changes and the move away from petrol and diesel vehicles. It is expected that the new Transport Scotland Electric Vehicle Strategy will set ambitious national goals, with the expectation that local authorities will deliver the bulk of the infrastructure to allow for the necessary modal shift.

While we are advanced in our planning for a future EVC network it is expected that the pace of delivery of schemes will need to increase to match demand. It appears likely that a rolling programme of multiple annual installations will be required. This will need to be appropriately resourced. Even if the Council appoints a term contractor for EVC installations, this will require to be contract managed and reported on. At present it is expected that there should not be any particular financial issue for the Council, as EVC development and associated project management costs are likely to be covered by Transport Scotland/ Scottish Government funding. There is however a significant challenge in delivering the infrastructure to support a transport revolution, and ensuing reputational risk.

There will be similar pressures to replace the Council's fleet. In this aspect of decarbonisation work it is critical that we recognise that we must not instigate change simply for its own sake – continuity of service delivery needs to be first and foremost throughout this process. At the moment, although there have been trials of electric and electric/hybrid heavy vehicles, it remains to be seen if the current market offering is robust and resilient enough to deliver our services to the current quality specifications and frequencies.

Corporate Outcome - Getting it right

Business Outcome BO115: We Are Efficient And Cost Effective

a) **Inflationary price increases**

During this current financial year it has been noted that tenders are being returned with higher than estimated prices together with increases in material costs and some items of specialist equipment/parts becoming increasingly difficult to source. The specific impact of price increases on individual projects is being regularly reported through the Council's committee process e.g. recent report to EDI on the roads reconstruction programme.

Business Outcome BO117: We Encourage Creativity And Innovation To Ensure Our Workforce Is Fit For The Future

a) **Workforce planning**

Putting mechanisms in place to succession plan and to reduce the overall age profile of our workforce, providing attractive career/growth opportunities and the ability to 'grow our own'. In particular we have had historically poor retention of graduate engineers, although with recent changes to the structure and progression pathways within our Design Team we are hopeful of having better retention in this area of the business going forward.

Of particular concern though is the age profile of our operational squads and within our middle management positions. In addition there are increasing challenges relating to recruitment and retention of staff due in part to more attractive remuneration packages being offered by competitors.

CONSULTATION AND ENGAGEMENT - WE ASKED, YOU SAID, WE DID....The following are all the consultations and resulting actions that the Service has carried out during this period.

- a) During this period the council through its EDI committee agreed to carry out a consultation exercise relating to EV chargers, this consultation is due to commence during 2022.
- b) Cragnure Pier – we consulted on both the short and long term options earlier this year. As a result of feedback we are developing further 3D projections of the possible options to allow communities to better understand the proposals.
- c) We Asked... Traffic Regulation Orders often result in significant representation received by the Council. This brings with it a level of demand that needs to be prioritised which can often result in other less urgent tasks having to be postponed.