Island Communities Impact Assessment - Review of Primary Destinations for trunk road signing

July 2024

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Step 1 - Develop a clear understanding of your objectives

What are the objectives of the policy, strategy or service?

What are the intended impacts/ outcomes and how do these potentially differ across the islands?

Transport Scotland proposes to update the list of "Primary Destinations" which are prioritised for trunk road direction signing. The list is currently published in Department for Transport circular LTN 1/94. The objective of these proposals is to align the list of Primary Destinations with the trunk road network, and reflect changes to the network which have developed since the list was last published in 1994. This will ensure clear guidance and consistency in signing the strategic trunk road (Primary Route) network.

It is emphasised that omission from the list of Primary Destinations does not prevent a location from being signed on or from the trunk road network. However it does prevent it from being identified as a "target destination" on the trunk road network, i.e. the forward destination identified at the top of a trunk road sign.

Figure 1 illustrates a typical PRN direction sign (green background), showing how the identification of a Primary Destination affects what is included on the sign. The target destination, displayed at the top, will be identified for each route or section of route, and will always be a destination that is listed as a Primary Destination. Intermediate forward destinations may or may not be listed as Primary Destinations, but Primary Destinations will be prioritised. Side road destinations may or may not be from the list of Primary Destinations, though where the side road is a trunk road it would be normal for the target destination on that route to be displayed.

Note that what is displayed on a non-primary route direction sign (white background) is not defined by the list of Primary Destinations.
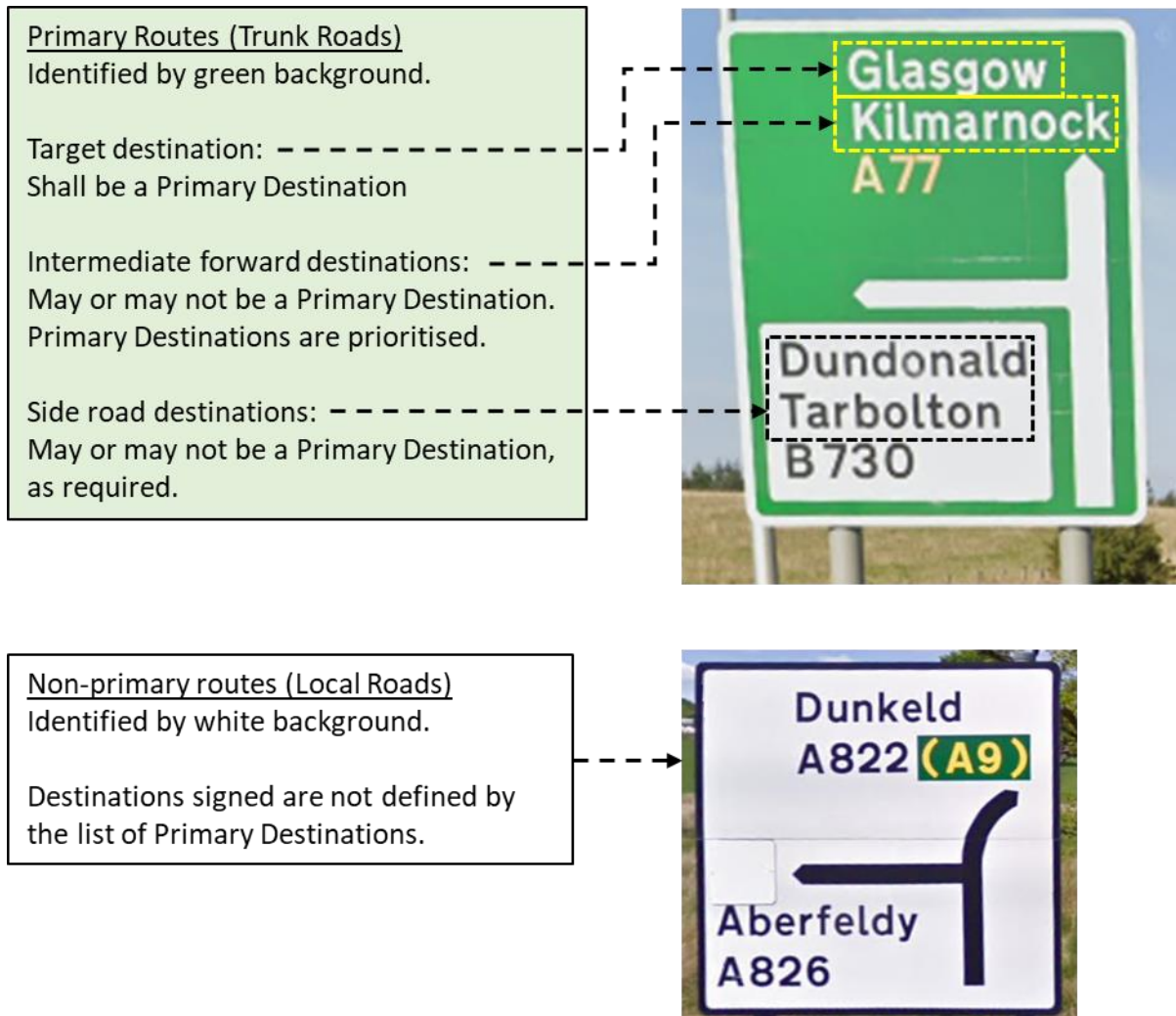
Figure 1: Photos of directions signs showing how Primary Destinations relate to these

Most of Scotland's islands do not have trunk roads on them and are not directly affected in this way. However the ports that serve the islands are significant nodes on the transport network, and these are accessed by strategic trunk roads. Therefore appropriate trunk road signing to these ports is essential to accessing the islands.

The following cities, towns and villages in Scotland are on the existing list of Primary Destinations, and directly serve ferry services to Scotland's islands. They also represent the end point of their relative trunk roads. The proposals would retain these as Primary Destinations, therefore there is no change relating to the signing of these listed destinations:

- Aberdeen (A90 and A96) – island destinations include Orkney and Shetland
- Mallaig (A830) – island destinations include Skye and South Uist
- Oban (A85) – island destinations include Mull, Barra and South Uist
- Thurso (for Scrabster) (A9) – island destination Orkney
- Ullapool (A835) – island destinations include Lewis and Harris

Island communities, particularly those located further south in Scotland, are also served by towns and villages which are located on the trunk road network (though not at an end point) and are not included on the existing list of Primary Destinations, most notably (but not exclusively) on the A78 which includes Ardrossan (for Arran), Wemyss Bay (for Bute) and Largs (for Cumbrae). Again, there is no proposal to change this situation and therefore no impact. It is noted that where the port is located close to the trunk road, as in these situations, the port can be adequately signed (with the inclusion of the ferry symbol where appropriate) without being on the list of Primary Destinations, as illustrated in the example at Ardrossan below.

Figure 2: Photograph showing a green direction sign on approach to Ardrossan ferry port

There are no proposals to change the way that Scotland's airports are signed on the trunk road network.

The Skye Bridge was opened in 1995, after the existing list was published. This resulted in the A87 trunk road being extended across the Isle of Skye to the port of Uig, which serves the ferries to Lewis and Harris and North Uist. Updating the list to reflect these changes in the network has been a key consideration in the proposals, and the only change that is considered to directly impact on signing to the islands. This is therefore further discussed in Step 2.

Road signing in the Gaelic language has significance to many of Scotland's island communities, including Skye and the Western Isles. While the proposed changes to the list of Primary Destinations do not affect policy regarding Gaelic language road signing, there are implications which are considered here.

Step 2 - Gather your data and identify your stakeholders

What data is available about the current situation in the islands?

Who are your key Stakeholders?

How does any existing data differ between islands?

Are there any existing design features or mitigations in place?

The most significant current data is the existing list of Primary Destinations, which was published by Department for Transport in 1994 in LTN 1/94.

The addition of the Skye Bridge to the network, and the extension of the A87 trunk road through the Isle of Skye to Uig, is the only development to the trunk road network affecting island communities which has been identified as requiring a change to the published list of Primary Destinations, which is the sole purpose of the proposals.

Other relevant data sources include:

- The current signing on the A87, which has been installed since the Skye Bridge opening.
- Feedback received on clarity of signing (e.g. from the public and road operating companies)

The existing list in LTN 1/94 includes Kyle of Lochalsh. At time of publication in 1994 Kyle of Lochalsh was the end point of the A87 trunk road, and a main ferry port for the Isle of Skye. This is no longer the case. The proposed change is therefore to:

- Remove Kyle of Lochalsh from the list of Primary Destinations,
- Add Uig to the list, as the end point of the A87 and a significant ferry port serving the Outer Hebrides,
- Add Skye Bridge to the list, as a significant node point on the A87 journey, linking the Scottish mainline with the Isle of Skye (and effectively replacing Kyle of Lochalsh).

This would result in the Skye Bridge being the target destination (the top destination listed) identified on northbound A87 road signs from the Scottish mainland, and on southbound A87 road signs within the Isle of Skye. Uig would be the target destination on northbound road signs within the Isle of Skye.

The current situation on the A87 illustrates quite an inconsistent picture, which demonstrates the benefit of updating the guidance on the Primary Destinations. Diagrams presented in Appendix A indicate:

- inconsistent inclusion of Skye Bridge on signs
- inconsistent inclusion of Gaelic language versions of Skye Bridge
- inconsistent ordering of destinations

- inclusion of Skye Bridge tourist sign (at Invergarry) to mitigate non-inclusion on the advance direction sign

The proposed change would clarify the advice, secure the Skye Bridge as a gateway to the Isle of Skye to be included on direction signs, and potentially reduce size sign and clutter by removing Kyle of Lochalsh as a requirement (though it could still be included where deemed appropriate). It is not intended that all trunk road direction signs will be updated immediately to align with the list, but a relevant and current list will allow new and replacement signs to be provided in a consistent way.

While the clarity and inclusion of destinations on road signs is a common line of communication in public queries to Transport Scotland, little has been identified on this issue around Skye (or access to the islands more generally).

Due to the modest nature of the proposals relating to what should be identified as a "Primary Destination", and the limited impact on the public, it was decided that a public consultation was not necessary. A targeted consultation relating to these proposals identified suitable stakeholders to include local authorities, trunk road operating companies, strategic transport partnerships, public transport and road haulage representatives, National Parks, Visit Scotland and Historic Environment Scotland.

Additionally, Transport Scotland contacted the Scottish Government Islands Policy Unit to discuss the proposals, which in turn led to correspondence with Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba relating to Gaelic language versions of proposed new "Primary Destinations" on the relevant routes (particularly Uig and Skye Bridge).

Step 3 - Consultation

> **Is there are information already gathered through previous engagements?**
>
> **How will you carry out your consultation and in what timescales? Public meetings/Local Authorities/key Stakeholders**
>
> **What questions will you ask when considering how to address island realities?**
>
> **Separate consultation events for Island communities/Local Authorities?**

The proposals were based on Transport Scotland's knowledge of developments in the trunk road network, and known issues where there were inconsistencies arising.

Changes to the list were only proposed where there were specific reasons identified. Due to the limited scope of the changes, and their relatively minor anticipated impact, a public consultation was not deemed to be necessary.

The targeted consultation with selected stakeholders included a paper outlining the proposed changes to the list of Primary Destinations, and an invitation for participants to comment. The comments period initially ran from 27th September 2023 to 24th November 2023. A reminder was sent to all participants on 8th November 2023. Included in the consultation were the six Scottish local authorities representing islands:

- Argyll and Bute Council
- Comhairle nan Eilean Siar
- The Highland Council
- North Ayrshire Council
- Orkney Council
- Shetland Council

Strategic transport partnerships, public transport and road haulage representatives, National Parks, Visit Scotland and Historic Environment Scotland were also among the organisations consulted. Where local authorities representing islands did not respond in the initial period, they were given an extended period and reminded of the invitation.

In total, 21 organisations took the opportunity to comment on the proposals, including those of particular significance to the islands listed below:

- Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (responded after the initial period)
- North Ayrshire Council (responded within the initial period)
- Orkney Islands Council (responded within the initial period)
- Shetland Islands Council (responded within the initial period)
- The Highland Council (responded after the initial period)
- VisitScotland (responded after the initial period)

Argyll and Bute Council is the only local authority representing islands which has not responded to the invitation.

The comments provided were generally supportive of the proposed changes. The only comments received relating to the islands came from Shetland Council and Visit Scotland, and both highlighted the importance of ferry terminals to island communities. This was acknowledged and did not result in changes to the proposals, as this significance is reflected in the proposals. No formal comments were received on the proposals relating to the A87 Skye Bridge and Uig.

A Primary Destination Review - Consultation Report has been prepared by Transport Scotland and is available on request.

In addition to the proposals to update the list of Primary Destinations, a request was received from a trunk road operating company to include the list of destinations which should include Gaelic versions, and to include the correct Gaelic version within the list. This was declined on the principle of a "single source of truth", i.e. these are already defined within the appropriate documents, may be subject to change, and we would not wish for the published list of Primary Destinations to duplicate or risk contradicting these sources. As a suitable alternative, it is proposed to make references to these sources, alongside the updated list. These are:

- The Scottish Government's Gaelic Language Plan, which identifies the trunk road routes which include bilingual Gaelic-English direction signing
- The website of Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba which provides the definitive Gaelic language versions to be used, at [Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba website](#).

The Scottish Government's Gaelic Language Plan 2022-2027 policy currently includes the A9, the A82 trunk road from Tarbet to Inverness and those trunk roads leading to the ferry ports at Kennacraig (A83), Oban (A85 and A828), Mallaig (A830), Uig (A87 and A887) and Ullapool (A835).

The principle of retaining these documents as the single source was discussed and agreed with the Scottish Government Islands Policy Unit and the Gaelic Plan Officer. This discussion highlighted that Skye Bridge is not included on the current list of Gaelic versions on the Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba website. As a result if this, Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba has been advised, and is engaging in a local consultation to determine the most appropriate version; Drochaid an Eilein Sgitheanaich, or Drochaid an Eilein. This will be published separately from the list of Primary Destinations, and does not directly affect the proposals relating to Primary Destinations.

Step 4 - Assessment

Does your assessment identify any unique impacts on island communities?:
- Demographic
- Economic
- Gaelic
- Social

> **Does your assessment identify any potential barriers or wider impacts?**
>
> **Are there mitigations already in place for these impacts raised?**

The proposals are considered to have minimal or no impacts on island communities, with the minor exception that trunk road signing to and within the Isle of Skye should, in time, be slightly clearer and more consistent. While the changes are likely to result in the Skye Bridge being included on more signs from the Scottish mainland, the reality is that most drivers heading in this direction will be aware of the bridge and are unlikely to change their trip based on these signs, so any economic or social impacts would be negligible.

The identification of a locally agreed Gaelic language version of Skye Bridge through Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba is a positive step, again mostly related to consistency and clarity, but not something that will impact the island significantly. The inclusion of this on the Ainmean-Àite na h-Alba website is outside of the scope of the changes to the list of Primary Destinations.

Is a full Island Communities Impact Assessment required?

> **You should now determine whether, in your opinion, your policy, strategy or service is likely to have an effect on an island community which is significantly different from its effect on other communities (including other island communities). To form your opinion, the following questions should be considered:**
>
> **Are there mitigations in place for the impacts identified and noted above from stakeholders and community consultations? (If further ICIA action is not required, complete the section below and publish).**
>
> **Does the evidence show different circumstances or different expectations or needs, or different experiences or outcomes (such as levels of satisfaction, or different rates of participation)?**
>
> **Are these different effects likely?**
>
> **Are these effects significantly different?**

> ## Could the effect amount to a disadvantage for an island community compared to the mainland or between island groups?

A full Islands Community Impact Assessment is NOT required.

In preparing the ICIA, I have formed an opinion that our policy, strategy or service is NOT likely to have an effect on an island community which is significantly different from its effect on other communities (including other island communities).

The reasons for this are discussed in the Step 4 Assessment.

The proposals are limited to a relatively small number of changes, which are intended to improve clarity and consistency of signing the trunk road network, by aligning the list of Primary Destinations with the current extents of the network. The impacts throughout Scotland, on the way that people travel and the destinations that they travel to, are likely to be negligible. The islands are affected (or not affected) similarly to the rest of Scotland in this respect.

Regarding the proposed change that directly relates to the islands, on the A87, the change reflects the development of the road network, specifically the opening of the Skye Bridge in 1995 and the extension of the trunk road to Uig. Signing on the network to and within Skye has already evolved to accommodate this. The proposed changes to the Primary Destination list should only ensure that this is done in a consistent manner, as new signs are prepared, and replacement signs installed through routine maintenance.

Screening ICIA completed by: Alan Oliver

Position: Senior Engineer - Standards Advisor

Signature and date: Alan Oliver, 27 March 2024

ICIA authorised by: Hugh Gillies

Position: Director of Roads

Signature and date: Hugh Gillies, 9 July 2024

Appendix A: Existing trunk road signing to and within Isle of Skye

The photographs presented in this appendix illustrate various direction signs on the trunk road network within and on approach to the Isle of Skye.
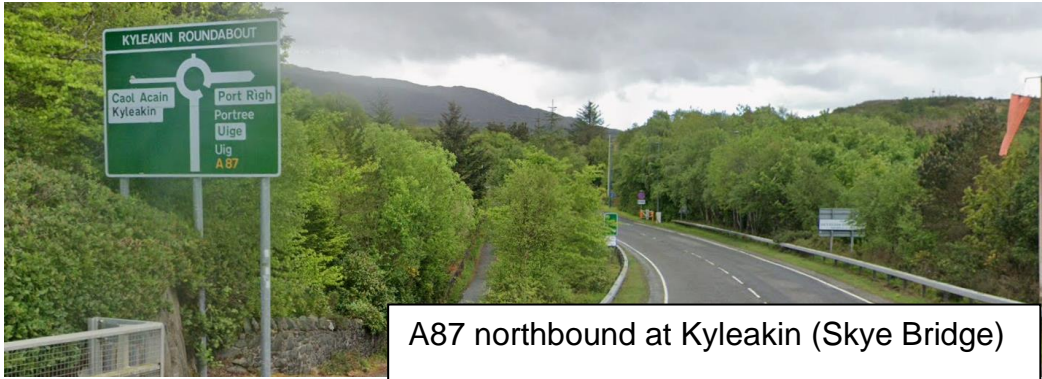

A87 northbound at Portree

A87 southbound at Portree

A87 northbound at Broadford

A87 southbound at Broadford

A87 northbound at Kyleakin (Skye Bridge)

A87 southbound at Kyleakin (Skye Bridge)

A87 northbound at Kyle of Lochalsh

A87 northbound at Bun Loyne

A887 westbound at Bun Loyne

A82 northbound at Invergarry

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