

2. Need for the Proposed Scheme

2.1. Introduction

2.1.1. This chapter outlines the national context for the A83 through Glen Croe, between Ardgartan and the Rest and Be Thankful (RABT) viewpoint (hereafter referred to as the 'Proposed Scheme'). It establishes the need for, and commitment to improving access to Argyll and Bute.

2.2. Background

2.2.1. As outlined in Volume 2, Chapter 1: Introduction, the Proposed Scheme aims to develop a resilient and sustainable road to connect Argyll and Bute to the central belt of Scotland in response to a recommendation from the [Strategic Transport Projects Review 2](#) (STPR2) and major landslide events within the Proposed Scheme extents in 2020. The STPR2 identifies the importance of the A83 as a key transport corridor in urgent need for a solution to the recurring landslides issues.

2.2.2. During landslide events which close the A83 trunk road through Glen Croe, the Old Military Road (OMR) is used as a predominately convoy controlled single lane emergency diversion route. When a landslide results in the closure of both the A83 and the OMR, traffic is diverted via a much longer diversion to the north using the A82, A85 and A819. Travelling from Tarbet to Inveraray, this adds around 26 miles (42km) onto a 23-mile (37km) journey and can take approximately 60 to 70 minutes, which is approximately 25 to 35 minutes longer than when the A83 is fully open to traffic. For journeys between Cairndow and Tarbet it adds around 46 miles (74km) onto a 13-mile (21km) journey and can take approximately 80 minutes, which is approximately 60 minutes longer than when the A83 is fully open to traffic.

2.2.3. Previous studies undertaken by various parties have been significant in shaping the project to date. Key studies are summarised below:

- [Scottish Road Network Landslide Study: Implementation, Transport Scotland, 2008](#)

- [A83 Trunk Road Route Study, Jacobs, 2013](#) - The A83 Route Study was undertaken to identify and appraise potential options to minimise the effects of road closures.
- A83 Glen Kinglas Options Report – 2019 Update, Jacobs, 2019. This report was prepared for BEAR Scotland by Jacobs to assess the risk due to debris flow landslide hazards along the A83 Trunk Road in Glen Kinglas and identify areas where future work could be focussed. This was an update to a report prepared in 2014 to assess the impact associated with changes to the hillside during the intervening period including remedial measures implemented and deforestation.
- [STPR2: Initial Appraisal: Case for Change – Argyll and Bute Region Report, February 2021](#) – this document constitutes the first phase of Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) and sets out the evidence base for problems and opportunities linked to the strategic transport network across Argyll & Bute. This report is supported by a [national level Case for Change](#) report which sets out the overarching vision for transport investment in Scotland and the challenges that must be addressed.
- [STPR2: Update and Phase 1 recommendations Report, February 2021](#) - The Phase 1 process has resulted in 20 interventions being recommended, against eight themes with the A83 Access to Argyll and Bute being identified as Intervention 18 under “Enhancing safety and resilience on the strategic transport network”.
- [Access to Argyll and Bute \(A83\) – DMRB Stage 1 Assessment Report, April 2021](#) – refer to Chapter 1 Introduction for further details.
- [A83 Strategic Environmental Assessment \(SEA\) Post Adoption Statement, November 2021](#) – refer to Chapter 1 Introduction for further details.
- [Access to Argyll and Bute \(A83\) – DMRB Stage 2 Assessment Report, June 2023](#) - This report sets out the option development and assessment process for a permanent long-term solution to the challenges at the Rest and Be Thankful. Five Scheme Options were considered for assessment within the Preferred Corridor with the Brown Option (debris flow shelter) recommended as the Preferred Option.

- 2.2.4. In conducting these studies, Transport Scotland and its consultants engaged in significant early consultation with key stakeholders and the wider public. A preliminary assessment was undertaken on the eleven route corridor options identified as part of STPR2 as well as four additional route corridor options proposed by members of the public during the consultation held in September and October 2020.
- 2.2.5. AtkinsRéalis WSP Joint Venture (AWJV) was appointed in September 2022 to progress both the medium-term and permanent long-term solutions (MTS and LTS) to the issues faced at the RABT in Glen Croe. The preferred route for the LTS, which consists of a debris flow shelter and catch pit on the line of the existing A83, was announced in June 2023 (refer to Volume 2, Chapter 3: Alternatives Considered).

2.3. Proposed Scheme Objectives

- 2.3.1. The Proposed Scheme objectives were defined in the [Access to Argyll and Bute \(A83\) DMRB Stage 1 Assessment Report \(Strategic Environmental Assessment \(SEA\) and Preliminary Engineering Services \(PES\)\)](#). The objectives were developed based on the problems and opportunities relating to the strategic road network through an extensive review of existing studies. Additional cognisance was taken of public and stakeholder feedback obtained through consultation in September and October 2020. The scheme objectives were defined as:
- Resilience - Reduce the impact of disruption for travel to, from and between key towns within Argyll and Bute, and for communities accessed via the strategic road network.
 - Safety - Positively contribute towards the Scottish Government's Vision Zero road safety target by reducing accidents on the road network and their severity.
 - Economy - Reduce geographic and economic inequalities within Argyll & Bute through improved connectivity and resilience.
 - Sustainable travel - Encourage sustainable travel to, from and within Argyll & Bute through facilitating bus, active travel and sustainable travel choices.

- Environment - Protect the environment, including the benefits local communities and visitors obtain from the natural environment, by enhancing natural capital assets and ecosystem service provision through delivery of sustainable transport infrastructure.

2.3.2. Key issues associated with the A83 comprise:

- a cold and wet climate, with a reported annual average rainfall of roughly 1643mm in Helensburgh (located around 12.4 miles (20km) south east of the Proposed Scheme)
- significant issues with debris flow (sand and rockfall) events from the west facing slopes of Beinn Luibhean, with multiple historical landslides recorded
- long diversions as a result of landslides or other events closing the A83 and OMR
- large areas on both glen sides having a high probability of active landslide activity in the future
- impacted driver visibility over short distances due to existing rock cuts, tight bend radii and minimal verge provision
- a cross-section that is mostly that of a rural, un-kerbed single carriageway road with no hard strip provision and constantly varying verge widths, with no or notionally no verge at some locations and
- existing lay-bys that do not conform with current design standards.

2.3.3. The purpose of the Proposed Scheme is to protect and improve the resilience of the A83 trunk road at the Rest and Be Thankful through the provisions of a debris flow shelter, road upgrades, junction improvements and by improving the resilience and reliability of the existing diversion route for the A83 trunk road at Rest and Be Thankful, Argyll and Bute by improving and widening the Old Military Road (OMR), including constructing landslip protection measures above and below the A83.

2.4. Policy Context

2.4.1. The Proposed Scheme is supported by several plans, policies, and strategies (PPS) at the national and regional strategic levels in Scotland. At the national level, those most relevant and closely linked are the [Strategic Transport Projects Review](#)

[2 \(STPR2\)](#), [National Planning Framework 4 \(NPF4\)](#), and [National Transport Strategy 2 \(NTS2\)](#). Other relevant PPS, including the Local Development Plans (LDP) and [Scottish Government Infrastructure Investment Plan \(IIP\)](#), are also summarised below. This section provides context and an initial assessment of the Legislative and Planning Context for the Proposed Scheme considered within this EIA Report.

- 2.4.2. This EIA Report provides a comprehensive analysis and assessment of the Proposed Scheme, having regard to all relevant PPS, as required by [The Roads \(Scotland\) Act 1984 \(Environmental Impact Assessment\) Regulations 2017](#). This report also includes consideration of the aforementioned PPS, regulatory guidance or advice notes, and any relevant local authority guidance that are in place.

National Context

- 2.4.3. The Proposed Scheme is supported through the following national transport and planning policies.

National Transport Strategy 2 (NTS2)

- 2.4.4. NTS2 is a strategy for change. It recognises the key role that transport has in reducing inequalities, delivering inclusive economic growth, improving our health and wellbeing, and tackling the climate emergency. At the heart of NTS2 is the recognition that we need to deliver a step-change in behaviour and provide attractive, affordable, accessible, and sustainable travel options. The actions to take forward the NTS2 are also outlined in the annual delivery plan.
- 2.4.5. The four key priorities outlined within Section 2 ‘Our Vision’ of NTS2 identify that the Scottish transport system should:
- Reduce inequalities through the provision of fair, easy and affordable access to transport services.
 - Take climate action by ensuring Scotland’s transport system helps deliver the Scottish Government’s net-zero carbon emission target by 2045, adapts to the effects of climate change and promotes the use of sustainable travel options.

- Deliver inclusive economic growth by ensuring Scotland’s transport network and services will be effectively integrated with spatial and land use planning and economic development, adapt to the changing requirements of citizens, businesses and visitors, provide reliable journey times, and use new and innovative products, services and technologies.
- Improving health and wellbeing by prioritising the prevention and reduction of incidents, promoting active travel and creating cleaner and greener places and networks within the transport system.

- 2.4.6. The existing A83 Corridor, where the Proposed Scheme will be located, would fall under the 2nd tier ‘Maintaining and safely operating existing assets’ of the ‘Sustainable Investment Hierarchy’ (page 44). The Proposed Scheme would improve the safety of the transport system; a key aim of NTS2.
- 2.4.7. The Proposed Scheme would help address the NTS2 priorities, primarily by delivering inclusive economic growth. The Proposed Scheme would improve the reliability of transport connections within the rural area of Argyll and Bute, as well as between the wider region and the cities located in the central belt, which would help people and goods get to where they need to.
- 2.4.8. A core part of the NTS2 delivery plan is STPR2, the outcomes from this three-year review address the challenges outlined above by identifying how and where we should make changes to our transport networks.

Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 (STPR2)

- 2.4.9. STPR2 was published by the Scottish Government in December 2022 and considers the transport needs of Scotland’s people and communities. STPR2 examines active travel (walking, wheeling, cycling), bus, ferry, rail and motorways and trunk roads, as well as passenger and freight access to major ports and airports. These needs are reviewed from national and regional perspectives to reflect their different geographies, travel patterns and demands.
- 2.4.10. In line with key recommendation 29 in STPR2 and following major landslide events at the A83 in Glen Croe in August and September 2020, Transport Scotland started progressing proposals for a long-term, resilient, and sustainable solution.

The AWJV project team was commissioned in September 2022, charged with developing a resilient and sustainable road to Argyll and Bute to address the landslide issues in Glen Croe.

National Planning Framework (NPF4)

- 2.4.11. The NPF4 was adopted by the Scottish Government in February 2023 and includes all aspects of national planning policy, as per the provisions of the [Planning \(Scotland\) Act 2019](#) which amended the principal planning act; [Town and Country Planning \(Scotland\) Act 1997](#) ('the Act'). The Act includes a broad range of changes that have or will be made across the planning system.
- 2.4.12. NPF4 forms part of the statutory Development Plan and sits alongside the Local Development Plan ("LDP") prepared by the relevant Local Planning Authority (in the context of the Proposed Scheme this refers to the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA)).
- 2.4.13. NPF4 Part 1 – 'A National Spatial Strategy for Scotland 2045' details the Scottish Government's long-term plan for Scotland up to 2045. It sets out, through Spatial Principles, where development and infrastructure are required across Scotland to enable the investment and development that we will need, but in a way that benefits business and communities, our health and wellbeing and the environment. Part 1 also includes Regional Spatial Priorities for regions across Scotland, with the North region including the relevant part of Argyll and Bute. The priorities for the area are focussed on how this region can continue to make a strong contribution towards net zero and nature positive country by how assets can be used and managed to secure a more sustainable future. The strategic aims are:
- Protect environmental assets and stimulate investment in natural and engineered solutions to climate change and nature restoration, whilst decarbonising transport and building resilient connections.
 - Maintain and help to grow the population by taking a positive approach to rural development that strengthens networks of communities.
 - Support local economic development by making sustainable use of the areas' world-class environmental assets to innovate and lead greener growth.

- 2.4.14. The National Spatial Strategy map on Page 20 within NPF4 identifies several ‘strategic connections’, one of which is the connection through Argyll and Bute and onwards to Islay and Jura. The A83 is a key arterial route for this region and should therefore attract significant weight towards maintaining its operational integrity, which would be supported by the Proposed Scheme.
- 2.4.15. NPF4 Annex C provides further detail on the Regional Spatial Strategy, outlining key ‘Spatial Planning Priorities’, for the North region. NPF4 recognises that transport systems in the area will need to be planned and support a shift to sustainable solutions, while existing links are maintained to markets and facilities. NPF4 recognises that *“roads will continue to be arteries upon which local communities and businesses depend”*, and that *“there will be a need to adapt key routes due to the impacts of climate change”*. Investment in the area will be made in accordance with the sustainable investment hierarchy, focusing development on locations to make best use of existing infrastructure and connections to existing facilities – such as access to larger settlements, rail and ferry connections and facilitating the movement of goods. To achieve this, it is recognised that *“there is an urgent need for improvements to the A83 to ensure the resilience of the economy and communities of wider Argyll, as well as resilience challenges for other key routes such as the A82”*.
- 2.4.16. NPF4 Part 2 – ‘National Planning Policy’ provides a new national policy context, which now forms part of the Development Plan. These policies are therefore directly relevant to the Proposed Scheme. These policies have been developed with regard to the Spatial Principles and are presented under the sustainable places, liveable places and productive places themes to deliver the national Spatial Strategy. Table 1 within Part 2 provides summaries of each theme, to highlight key policy links within the themes and across the other themes and the cross-cutting policy connection with other relevant PPS (such as NTS2, STPR2 and the IIP).
- 2.4.17. NPF4 policy has an overarching policy objective to address the climate emergency, through reducing greenhouse gas emission, and promoting and securing biodiversity, and addressing the nature crisis is central to policies. NPF4 Policy 1: ‘Tackling the climate and nature crises’ is relevant to these objectives. Policy 2:

‘Climate mitigation and adaptation’ seeks an outcome for making our places more resilient to climate change impacts. A summary of the cross-cutting outcomes and policy linkages for these policies, and the interrelationship with several other NPF4 policies, is provided to underpin the importance of these objectives.

- 2.4.18. Policy 3: ‘Biodiversity’ policy’s intent is to protect biodiversity, reverse biodiversity loss, deliver positive effects from development and strengthen nature networks. Policy outcomes: biodiversity is enhanced and better connected including through strengthened nature networks and nature-based solutions. This accords with the environmental scheme objective ‘Protect the environment, including the benefits local communities and visitors obtain from the natural; environment by enhancing natural capital assets and ecosystem service provision through delivery of sustainable transport infrastructure’.
- 2.4.19. Policy 13: ‘Sustainable transport’ is of specific relevance to the Proposed Scheme. While the primary policy intent is to encourage, promote and facilitate developments that prioritise walking, wheeling, cycling and public transport for everyday travel and reduce the need to travel unsustainably, one of the key policy outcomes is investment in transport infrastructure supports connectivity and reflects place-based approaches and local living. As an existing arterial route which is identified as a ‘Strategic Connection’ in the National Spatial Strategy, safeguarding of the A83 will support this policy outcome, and Policy 13 also states that proposals “*that build in resilience to the effects of climate change*” will be supported. This accords with the scheme objectives and the ‘Spatial Planning Priorities’, given the Proposed Scheme will mitigate landslides which have become more frequent as a result of climate change.
- 2.4.20. It should be recognised that the NPF4 policies must be considered as a collective, and the stated intent and outcome for each policy must be considered. However, the Proposed Scheme would accord with the aims, vision and policy principles of NPF4.

Scottish Government Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP)

- 2.4.21. The Scottish Government's IIP states that they are "*committed to an infrastructure solution to address the A83 Rest and Be Thankful landslip risks*". Delivery of a permanent and resilient solution is recognised as a priority infrastructure investment, and therefore delivery of the Proposed Scheme is supported by the IIP. The IIP also outlines that it is important to deliver a safe and sustainable, integrated and resilient strategic transport system and the A83 RABT is key area to strengthening connectivity in.

UK Forestry Standard (5th edition)

- 2.4.22. The [UK Forestry Standard \(5th edition\)](#) ("UKFS5") has been published and applies after 1 October 2024.
- 2.4.23. UKFS5 sets out the approach of the four governments of the UK, and defines the requirements and provides guidance for foresters on how to practise sustainable forest management in the UK. UKFS5 sets out general forestry practice including the requirements relating to the EIA regulations where an EIA required and that considerations should be given to all environmental impacts.

Control of Woodland Policy

- 2.4.24. The Scottish Government's [Control of Woodland Policy](#) (CWP) aims to provide direction and establishes principles for decisions linked to woodland removal. This includes providing a more strategic framework and to support climate change mitigations. The CWP would also apply to any woodland removal associated with the Proposed Scheme.

Local policy – Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Local Development Plan

- 2.4.25. The Proposed Scheme is located within the Argyll and Bute Council administrative area; however, it is also entirely located within the LLTNPA area. The LLTNPA is the Local Planning Authority for the area, and the [LLTNPA Local Development Plan \(LDP\)](#) forms part of the Development Plan, alongside NPF4. Within the LDP there are no specific policies for the Proposed Scheme. Given the nature of the Proposed Scheme and the scope of the EIA, there will be planning policies that will

be relevant, due to the potential impacts of the proposal including natural environment and transport policies.

Fitting Landscapes: Securing More Sustainable Landscape

- 2.4.26. The [Fitting Landscapes](#) policy document defines Transport Scotland and the Scottish Government's commitment to provide good landscape design along transport corridors, promote sustainable travel objectives and deliver transport infrastructure that fits with its surrounding landscape.
- 2.4.27. The overarching vision is to "promote the more sustainable design, implementation, maintenance and management of the transport estate and ensure that the landscapes we create and manage are of high quality, well integrated, bio-diverse, adaptable and deliver a meaningful contribution to national sustainability targets" (page 13).
- 2.4.28. This guidance has also been used to inform the landscape and visual assessments of the Proposed Scheme as reported in Volume 2, Chapters 9 and 10 – Landscape and Visual Effects.

2.5. Local Context

- 2.5.1. In addition to the national context outlined above, the following local context considerations contribute to the need for the Proposed Scheme.

Safety

- 2.5.2. When a landslide results in the closure of both the A83 and the OMR, traffic is diverted via a much longer diversion to the north using the A82, A85 and A819. Travelling from Tarbet to Inveraray, this adds 26 miles (41.8km) onto a 23-mile (37km) journey and can take approximately 60 to 70 minutes, which is approximately 25 to 35 minutes longer than when the A83 is fully open to traffic. For journeys between Cairndow and Tarbet it adds 46 miles (74km) onto a 13-mile (20.9km) journey and can take approximately 80 minutes, which is approximately 60 minutes longer than when the A83 is fully open to traffic. This leads to longer time on the roads, increasing driver stress and collision risk.
- 2.5.3. In local proximity to the proposed scheme, between Arrochar and Cairndow over a 12.4 mile (20km) length, there are a range of stopping opportunities consisting of

both lay-bys and non-emergency stopping provision. Within the Proposed Scheme extents, there are two existing lay-bys, one northbound in the vicinity of the B828 Glenmorelocal road junction and one southbound approximately 250m north of the Cobbler Bridge. The Rest and Be Thankful car park and viewpoint also provides an opportunity for non-emergency stopping provision. The existing lay-bys do not conform with current design standards and the Proposed Scheme includes provision to remove these laybys. The overall lay-by provision in local proximity to the proposed scheme is sufficient and complies the relevant design standard ([Design Manual for Roads and Bridges \(DMRB\) CD 169 'The Design of Lay-bys, Maintenance Hardstandings, Rest Areas, Service Areas and Observation Platforms'](#)).

Traffic Conditions

- 2.5.4. Information on traffic volumes has been provided by Transport Scotland from the National Traffic Data System (NTDS) for the period between 2015 and 2019.
- 2.5.5. Based on Average Annual Daily Traffic (AADT) for the most recent year available (2019), traffic levels between Tarbet and Lochgilphead were between 3,100 and 5,300 vehicles. Along the A83 at the RABT, the AADT value from the latest available year (2019) was observed to be 4,400 vehicles.
- 2.5.6. The data from the NTDS has been supplemented with traffic surveys that have been undertaken in 2023 and 2024. Two sets of surveys have been carried out in the following periods:
- 30 October 2023 – 12 November 2023 and
 - 27 February 2024 – 11 March 2024.

Collision Statistics

- 2.5.7. An analysis of personal injury accident data has been undertaken. This has enabled an assessment of current road safety conditions by establishing the number and severity of accidents and the accident rate in relation to traffic flow, allowing comparison with national trends. Personal injury accidents are classified as fatal, serious or slight dependent on the most severely injured casualty while the accident rate is expressed as the number of personal injury accidents per million vehicle kilometres travelled.

- 2.5.8. Accident data supplied by Transport Scotland, from their Accident Data Manager Database, covering the period between January 2014 and December 2023 confirm there were two accidents recorded within the Proposed Scheme extents (one serious and one slight. There were a further three accidents recorded immediately out with the Proposed Scheme extents, one to the south (near the access to the OMR) and two to the north (adjacent to Loch Restil) – all serious.
- 2.5.9. The Proposed Scheme aims to improve the safety of the A83 through Glen Croe, which will reduce accident rates and severity.

Tourism, Recreation and Commuting

- 2.5.10. The A83 provides access between Argyll and Bute and the central belt of Scotland, acting as an essential link for travellers looking to visit various regions of Scotland.
- 2.5.11. The Proposed Scheme is situated in Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park (LLTNP), an area of significant value for tourism and natural heritage. This area surrounding the Proposed Scheme offers recreational activities and tourist attractions, which are supported by the A83, including walking/hiking, cycling/mountain biking, swimming, shooting, fishing and birdwatching.
- 2.5.12. A Walking, Cycling, Horse-Riding Assessment Report (WCHAR) has been prepared, in accordance with [DMRB GG 142 Walking, Cycling and Hore-Riding Assessment and Review](#). The WCHAR study area covers the area wider than that of Glen Croe and the Proposed Scheme, extending to Tarbet in the east and Cairndow in the west. Within this study area, there are various core paths, local paths, long distance walking routes, hillwalking routes and cycling routes. In the immediate vicinity of the Proposed Scheme there is one [Core Path](#) and several local paths. The corridor of the A83 within the extents of the Proposed Scheme is also used by road cyclists, mostly for recreation and leisure activities.
- 2.5.13. The A83 forms part of the route of three bus services, two services providing links to strategic and regional destinations, and one a regional service. The bus stop is currently located immediately north of the RABT car park within a bus turning area off the B828 Glenmore.