

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

- 1.1.1. The A83 Trunk Road is one of the two east-west strategic trunk roads (the A85 being the other) that connect Argyll and Bute to the central belt of Scotland, making it a vital link in the region's transportation infrastructure.
- 1.1.2. The A83 is a 98 mile (158km) predominantly single carriageway road originating in Tarbet, where the A82 and A83 meet at a junction on the western side of Loch Lomond. It then terminates in Campbeltown, near the southern tip of the Kintyre Peninsula. The section of the A83 through Glen Croe, between Ardgartan and the Rest and Be Thankful (RABT) viewpoint at the A83 / B828 Glenmore junction, includes the highest point along the A83 at approximately 265m above ordnance datum (AOD) and the adjacent hillsides have a history of instability leading to frequent road closures and resultant traffic diversions.
- 1.1.3. The A83 as it passes through Glen Croe (hereafter, referred as “Proposed Scheme”) is shown in Volume 3, Figure 1.1 Proposed Scheme Location Plan. The Proposed Scheme extends for a length of 2.25km, predominately online of the existing A83 and can be split into five sections:
 - a southern tie-in to the existing A83 north of the existing bridge (Cobbler Bridge)
 - a debris flow shelter and catch pit over a length of 1.35km
 - a debris flow protection wall and catch pit extending c145m from the debris flow shelter
 - a northern tie-in to the existing A83 and
 - a B828 Glenmore local road junction and Rest and Be Thankful Viewpoint car park and bus stop / turning area.

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- 1.1.4. In addition to the permanent solution to address the landslide and debris flow risk to the A83, improvements to the Old Military Road (OMR) are proposed to deliver a safe and resilient diversion route to use while the A83 is closed while the long-term solution is delivered.
- 1.1.5. Further details of the Proposed Scheme are provided in Chapter 4 The Proposed Scheme.

1.2. Background to the Proposed Scheme

Strategic Transport Projects Review 2

- 1.2.1. In line with the recommendations of [Strategic Transport Projects Review 2](#) (STPR2) and following major landslide events at the RABT in Glen Croe in August and September 2020 (the largest recorded in the area), the then Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity instructed Transport Scotland to investigate a long-term, resilient, and sustainable solution to the challenges of landslides in Glen Croe.
- 1.2.2. As part of STPR2, an [Initial Appraisal: Case for Change Report](#) was produced for the Argyll and Bute region, which set out the importance of the A83. Due to the complexities of the route and the urgent need for a solution to the recurring landslide issues, it was decided that the A83 Access to Argyll and Bute should be taken forward in parallel with STPR2 to support early stages of project delivery.

A83 Access to Argyll and Bute

- 1.2.3. Through the Preliminary Engineering Services (PES) ([Design Manual for Roads and Bridges \(DMRB\) Stage 1](#)) assessment process, 11 route corridors were assessed with four further options proposed by members of the public also being assessed. On conclusion of the DMRB Stage 1 assessment, the Scottish Government confirmed that the existing corridor through Glen Croe was the preferred corridor (refer to Volume 2, Chapter 3: Alternatives Considered for further detail).

A83 Access to Argyll and Bute Strategic Environmental Assessment

- 1.2.4. In Scotland, Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) is legislated through the [Environmental Assessment \(Scotland\) Act 2005](#), which requires SEA for all public sector plans, programmes and strategies with the potential to present significant effects on the environment.
- 1.2.5. The assessment for the SEA has been carried out in two stages:
- Preliminary Assessment – an initial assessment considering 11 route corridors and four additional corridors suggested as part of public consultation in autumn 2020, with the objective of identifying if corridors can be removed from further consideration at that stage and any further assessment necessary to allow a recommendation on the preferred corridor to be made.
 - Detailed Assessment – detailed assessment of the residual corridor options remaining following the preliminary assessment (in this case only Corridor 1 – Glen Croe) undertaken in line with the SEA directive and appropriate guidance documents, considering environmental aspects.
- 1.2.6. The SEA was published in April 2021 and the emerging recommendation from the assessment was to retain route Corridor 1 as the preferred route corridor, for the following reasons:
- the environmental impacts within Corridor 1 would be significantly less
 - scheme objectives show some benefit, although other route corridors may perform better except in relation to environmental benefits
 - traffic and safety benefits are not significant overall, but improved resilience is noted
 - it is likely that a solution can be delivered most quickly and cost effectively
 - there are some engineering complexities, particularly geotechnical and structural but potentially less and different than other route corridors which have major challenges with bridges at the upper limits of technology and longer tunnels.

- 1.2.7. The [A83 SEA Post Adoption Statement](#) was published in November 2021 and outlines the following:
- how environmental considerations have been integrated into the project
 - how consultation feedback has been taken into account
 - alternatives considered and the decision-making process
 - a framework for the monitoring of the significant environmental effects identified and
 - the SEA Monitoring Framework sets a structure to clearly record how the key environmental constraints, identified by the SEA, have been considered and addressed through each later stage of the DMRB assessment process.

1.3. Site Location Overview

- 1.3.1. The A83 traverses through Glen Croe, which is flanked on both sides by various mountains namely The Cobbler, Cruach Fhiarach, The Brack, Ben Donich, Beinn Luibhean and Beinn an Lochain. The existing ground levels along the Proposed Scheme rise from circa 85m AOD at the south east extents of the corridor to a height of circa 265m AOD at the north eastern extents adjacent to the RABT viewpoint car park. Ground levels on the eastern side of Glen Croe rise steeply to the summits of The Cobbler, at approximately 884 metres AOD and Beinn Luibhean, at approximately 858 metres AOD. On the western side of Glen Croe ground levels again rise steeply to the summit of Ben Donich, at approximately 847m AOD.
- 1.3.2. The A83 has been noted for its cold and wet climate. The [Met Office Website \(2021\)](#) reported for Helensburgh (the nearest Met Office climate station) an annual average maximum temperature of 11.94°C and an annual average rainfall of roughly 1642mm compared to the Scottish averages of 11.07°C and 1573.32mm respectively.

- 1.3.3. Glen Croe, within which the Proposed Scheme is located within the Argyll Forest Park (which was established in 1935) and the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park (established in 2002). At the northern extent of the glen there is a viewpoint and car park known as the ‘Rest and Be Thankful’ viewpoint which offers a view south across the entire glen and is the site of a Category C listed structure – ‘Rest and be Thankful’ Stone.
- 1.3.4. [Beinn an Lochain Site of Special Scientific Interest](#) (SSSI) is located within the boundaries of the Proposed Scheme and is designated for siliceous scree (including boulder fields), tall herb ledge and upland assemblage, representing one of the best sites for these habitats in Scotland. Within the wider area, the [Glen Etive and Glen Fyne Special Protection Area](#) (SPA) is located c.1.8km to the north of the Proposed Scheme and is designated for supporting a population of European importance of golden eagle *Aquila chrysaetos*.
- 1.3.5. The Cobbler (Ben Arthur) Geological Conservation Review (GCR) site is situated to the east and north-east of the A83, with the boundary of the GCR situated approximately 580m to the north at its closest point.
- 1.3.6. Volume 3, Figure 1.2 Environmental Features presents the key environmental features located within the vicinity of the Proposed Scheme.

1.4. Statutory Context for Environmental Impact Assessment

- 1.4.1. The requirement for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) stems from the European Commission [Directive 85/337/EEC](#), as amended by [Directive 97/11/EC](#), regarding the assessment of the environmental effects of certain public and private projects (hereafter referred to as the EIA Directive) and [Directive 2003/35/EC](#) regarding public participation. The EIA Directive was updated and adopted on 15 May 2014 ([Directive 2014/52/EU](#)), which was transposed into UK legislation on 16 May 2017. In Scotland [The Roads \(Scotland\) Act 1984 \(Environmental Impact Assessment\) Regulations 2017](#) (hereafter referred to as the ‘EIA Regulations’) implement the requirements of the EIA Directive in relation to the construction of trunk roads.

- 1.4.2. The EIA Regulations categorise developments according to their requirement for an EIA. Annex I lists the types of developments where EIA is always required and comprises large scale and / or potentially high impact developments. Annex II lists developments that may or may not require an EIA depending on the potential for significant effects on the environment because of factors such as its nature, size or location.
- 1.4.3. The Proposed Scheme has an affected area of c.122ha (1ha being one of the thresholds set out in Annex II of the EIA Regulations) and is also located within the boundaries of two sensitive sites as defined by the EIA Regulations namely the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park, and the Beinn an Lochain SSSI.
- 1.4.4. The Proposed Scheme has therefore been subject to screening using the EIA Regulations Annex III criteria to determine whether a statutory EIA is required under the EIA Regulations. It was concluded by the screening exercise that an EIA was needed for the Proposed Scheme, as reported in Volume 4, Appendix 1.1 Record of Determination.
- 1.4.5. The assessments reported in the EIA have followed the guidelines set out in [DMRB LA 101 – LA 120](#). In addition to DMRB, other applicable guidance has also been considered, where relevant, and this is detailed within each chapter of the EIA Report, as necessary.

1.5. Environmental Impact Assessment Report

- 1.5.1. This EIA Report reports the findings of the EIA process undertaken for the Proposed Scheme. The following sets out the structure of the EIA Report and a summary of the content of each chapter, as defined by Schedule 1A of the Roads EIA Regulations. Where technical terminology is used, an explanation is provided in the text, and/or in the glossary at the front of Volume 2 (Main Report) of the EIA Report.
- 1.5.2. The Structure of the EIA Report is as follows:

- Non-Technical Summary (NTS) – Summary of the EIA Report in non-technical language
- Chapters 1 - 3 provide the project background including the need for the proposed scheme, the alternatives considered and the main reasons for the selection of the Proposed Scheme whilst taking into account the environmental effects
- Chapter 4 outlines the development of the Proposed Scheme design
- Chapter 5 provides an overview of the EIA assessment process, setting out the environmental topics considered, and explaining how the EIA was undertaken
- Chapter 6 provides a summary of the consultation and scoping process, identifying the key issues raised and how these have been considered in the EIA
- Chapters 7 through to 19 report the environmental topics assessed. These chapters are structured to include an introduction, approach and methods, baseline conditions, assessment of impacts, mitigation measures and residual effects. Each chapter includes consideration of relevant plans and policies as well as compliance with national, regional and local planning policy. Each chapter also includes an indication of any limitations to the assessment
- Chapter 20 details the overall (cumulative) impacts of the Proposed Scheme in relation to receptors affected by impacts from multiple disciplines and potential cumulative effects with other developments
- Chapter 21 lists the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce, and where possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment, as identified in each of the environmental topic chapters
- Chapter 22 lists the likely significant residual effects of the Proposed Scheme on the environment as identified in each of the environmental topic chapters.
- Volume 3 – Figures, illustrations and graphics supporting the EIA Report chapters, illustrating the Proposed Scheme and information relevant to the assessment topic. Each figure reference corresponds to the relevant EIA Report chapter (e.g. Figure 1.1 relates to Chapter 1).

- Volume 4 – Appendices, technical information supporting the EIA Report such detailed baseline data. Each appendix number corresponds to the relevant EIA Report chapter (e.g. Appendix 1.1 relates to Chapter 1).

1.5.3. Schedule 1A of the EIA Regulations sets out information for inclusion in EIA Report. Table 1.1 'Requirements of EIA Regulations' below highlights where the required information is located within this EIA Report.

Table 1.1 – Requirements of the EIA Regulations

Schedule 1A Requirement	Information Required	Location within EIA Report
1	<p>A description of the proposed project, including in particular:</p> <p>(a) a description of the location of the project,</p> <p>(b) a description of the physical characteristics of all the works covered by the application, including, where relevant, demolition works, and the land use requirements during the construction and operational phases,</p> <p>(c) a description of the main characteristics of the operational phase of the project (in particular any production process), for instance, energy demand and energy used, nature and quantity of the materials and natural resources (including water, land, soil and biodiversity) used,</p> <p>(d) an estimate, by type and quantity, of expected residues and emissions (such as water, air, soil and subsoil pollution, noise, vibration, light, heat, radiation and quantities and types of waste produced during the construction and operation phases.</p>	<p>(a) Chapter 1 Introduction</p> <p>(b) Chapter 4 The Proposed Scheme</p> <p>(c) Chapter 4 The Proposed Scheme, Chapter 11 Biodiversity, Chapter 12 Geology, Soils and Groundwater, Chapter 13 Material Assets and Waste, Chapter 15 Population and Human Health and Chapter 19 Road Drainage and the Water Environment.</p> <p>(d) Chapter 7 Air Quality, Chapter 10 Visual Effects, Chapter 12 Geology, Soils and Groundwater, Chapter 13 Material Assets and Waste, Chapter 14 Noise and Vibration and Chapter 19 Road Drainage and the Water Environment.</p>
2	<p>A description of the reasonable alternatives (for example in terms of project design, technology, location, size and scale) studied by the applicant, which are relevant to the proposed project and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for selecting the chosen option, including a comparison of the environmental effects</p>	<p>Chapter 3 Alternatives Considered</p>
3	<p>A description of the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment (baseline scenario) and an outline of the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the project as far as natural changes from the baseline scenario can be assessed with reasonable effort on the basis of the availability of environmental information and scientific knowledge.</p>	<p>Chapters 7 – 19 (Baseline Conditions)</p>
4	<p>A description of the factors specified in section 20B(3) likely to be significantly affected by the development: population, human health, biodiversity (for example fauna and flora), land (for example land take), soil (for example organic matter, erosion, compaction, sealing), water (for example hydromorphological changes, quantity and quality), air, climate (for example greenhouse gas emissions, impacts relevant to adaptation), material assets, cultural heritage, including architectural and archaeological aspects, and landscape.</p>	<p>Chapter 7 – 19 (Potential Impacts)</p>

Schedule 1A Requirement	Information Required	Location within EIA Report
5	A description of the likely significant effects of the proposed project on the environment resulting from, inter alia: (a) the construction and existence of the project, including, where relevant, demolition works, (b) the use of natural resources, in particular land, soil, water and biodiversity, considering as far as possible the sustainable availability of these resources, (c) the emission of pollutants, noise, vibration, light, heat and radiation, the creation of nuisances, and the disposal and recovery of waste, (d) the risks to human health, cultural heritage or the environment (for example due to accidents or disasters), (e) the cumulation of effects with other existing and/or approved development projects, taking into account any existing environmental problems relating to areas of particular environmental importance likely to be affected or the use of natural resources, (f) the impact of the proposed project on climate (for example the nature and magnitude of greenhouse gas emissions) and the vulnerability of the project to climate change, (g) the technologies and the substances used.	Chapter 7 – 20 (Potential Impacts and Residual Effects)
6	The description of the likely significant effects on the factors specified in section 20B(3) should cover the direct effects and any indirect, secondary, cumulative, transboundary, short-term, medium-term and long-term, permanent and temporary, positive and negative effects of the proposed project. This description should take into account the environmental protection objectives established at Union or Member State level which are relevant to the project	Chapter 7 – 20 (Potential Impacts and Residual Effects)
7	A description of the forecasting methods or evidence, used to identify and assess the significant effects on the environment, including details of difficulties (for example technical deficiencies or lack of knowledge) encountered compiling the required information and the main uncertainties involved.	Chapter 5 Overview of the Assessment Process and Chapters 7 – 20.
8	A description of the measures envisaged to avoid, prevent, reduce or, if possible, offset any identified significant adverse effects on the environment and, where appropriate, of any proposed monitoring arrangements (for example the preparation of a post-project analysis). That description should explain the extent, to which significant adverse effects on the environment are avoided, prevented, reduced or offset, and should cover both the construction and operational phases	Chapter 4 The Proposed Scheme, Chapter 7 – 20 (Mitigation) and Chapter 21 Schedule of Environmental Commitments.

Schedule 1A Requirement	Information Required	Location within EIA Report
9	A description of the expected significant adverse effects of the proposed project on the environment deriving from the vulnerability of the development to risks of major accidents and/or disasters which are relevant to the project concerned. Relevant information available and obtained through risk assessments pursuant to Union legislation such as Directive 2012/18/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council or Council Directive 2009/71/Euratom or relevant assessments carried out pursuant to national legislation may be used for this purpose provided that the requirements of this Directive are met. Where appropriate, this description should include measures envisaged to prevent or mitigate the significant adverse effects of such events on the environment and details of the preparedness for and proposed response to such emergencies.	Chapter 18 Major Accidents and Disasters
10	A non-technical summary of the information provided under points 1 to 9.	Volume 1 Non Technical Summary
11	A reference list detailing the sources used for the descriptions and assessments included in the EIA report.	References embedded as hyperlinks throughout Chapters 1 – 22, these have also been consolidated into a full reference list.

1.6. The Assessment Team

- 1.6.1. The EIA was undertaken and compiled by AtkinsRéalis WSP Joint Venture (AWJV), with additional specialist input to some technical assessments as identified within the relevant chapters. The relevant expertise and qualifications of the assessment team are provided in Volume 4, Appendix 1.2 Statement of Competency.
- 1.6.2. 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. In December 2022 the then Minister for Transport announced the preferred option for the MTS as interventions to improve the operation, safety and resilience of the Old Military Road (OMR). In June 2023, the then Minister for Transport announced the preferred route for the LTS, which consists of a debris flow shelter and catch pit on the line of the existing A83.
- 1.6.3. It should be noted that a separate EIA Report has been prepared assessing the Medium-Term Solution. The MTS Scheme is required to protect and improve the A83 trunk road at Rest and Be Thankful, Argyll and Bute by constructing emergency diversion lanes, by improving and widening the Old Military Road (OMR), and constructing landslip protection measures above and below the A83 trunk road

1.7. Review and Comments

- 1.7.1. A copy of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report may be inspected, free of charge, during normal opening hours from 13 December 2024 to 07 February 2025 at:

Transport Scotland, George House, 2nd Floor, 36 North Hannover Street,
Glasgow, G1 2AD

Three Villages Hall, Arrochar, G83 7AB

Campbeltown Library, Aqualibrium, Kinloch Road, Campbeltown, PA28 6EH

Dunoon Library, Queen's Hall, 9 Argyll Street, Dunoon, Argyll, PA23 7HH

Lochgilphead Library, Lochgilphead Community Centre, Manse Brae,
Lochgilphead, PA31 8XQ

- 1.7.2. Please note that normal opening hours might vary during this period
- 1.7.3. Copies of the EIA Report can also be obtained from Transport Scotland, George House, 2nd Floor, 36 North Hanover Street, Glasgow, G1 2AD at a charge of £150 for a hard copy. Requests for further information about the project may be sent to the same address.
- 1.7.4. A copy of the EIA Report is also available for inspection on [Transport Scotland's website](#).
- 1.7.5. Any person wishing to make any representations about the project and the EIA Report may do so in writing to the Director of Major Projects, Transport Scotland, George House, 2nd Floor, 36 North Hanover Street, Glasgow, G1 2AD. Any such representations must be received on or before 7 February 2025.
- 1.7.6. The Scottish Ministers will take into consideration any representations so made before deciding whether or not to proceed with the project with or without modifications.