

Notes of Meeting

Meeting Title A83 Taskforce Meeting 12

Meeting Scope A83

Venue: Three Villages Hall - Arrochar

Date: 14 March 2017, 09:30 am

Present: Humza Yousaf MSP - Minister for Transport and the Islands (HY)
 Scott Lees – Transport Scotland (SL)
 Jonny Moran – Transport Scotland (JM)
 Keith Murray – Transport Scotland (KM)
 Angus Corby – Transport Scotland (AC)
 Karen MacKinnon – Transport Scotland (KMack)
 Eddie Ross – BEAR Scotland (ER)
 John Wrigley – BEAR Scotland (JW)
 Mike Baxter – BEAR Scotland (MB)
 Jane Macleod – Mid Argyll Chamber of Commerce (JMacl)
 Jim Smith – Argyll and Bute Council (JS)
 Councillor Robert G MacIntyre – Argyll & Bute Council (RGM)
 Ranald Robertson – HITRANS (RR)
 Gordon Ross – Western Ferries (GR)
 Sara Melville (SM) Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park (SM)
 Ronnie McDonald – Arrochar, Tarbet and Ardlui C. C. (RMcd)
 Iain McInnes – Lochgoilhead Community Council (IMcl)
 John Hair – Forest Enterprise Scotland (JH)
 Kirsty Robb – Argyll Timber Transport Group (KR)
 Donald Clark – Mid-Argyll Chamber of Commerce (DC)
 Dougie Philand – Argyll and Bute Council (DP)
 Michelle Vanderstighelen – office of Brendan O Hara MP (MV)

Apologies: Michael Russell MSP, Jackie Baillie MSP, Brendan O’Hara MP,
 Councillor Donald Kelly A&BC, Councillor Ellen Morton, Alan Bell,
 Mike Story

	Description	Action
1	Welcomes, Introductions & Apologies	
	<p>The Minister opened the meeting with a round of introductions. Apologies were intimated above. He stated his delight at chairing the Taskforce meeting and that the A83 had come up a number of times during his first year in office.</p> <p>The Minister reminded all of the £2.85M spent on the A83 in the financial year 2016-2017.</p>	
2	Review of Minutes of Meeting of 7th September 2016	
	JM reviewed the actions from the previous meeting	

Notes of Meeting

- £2.0M of carriageway resurfacing works at 13 locations
- £95,000 of road restraint systems at 2 locations
- £101,000 of footway improvements at 3 locations
- £87,000 of drainage improvements at 8 locations
- £60,000 of signing and lining improvements
- £400,000 of works to widen the local Diversion Route

JW reported that since the last Taskforce meeting the Risk Reduction Measures contract has been tendered. Tenders were invited to address the High Frequency channels which were identified as the most likely to incur a landslide event through the study undertaken by AECOM on behalf of Transport Scotland but also with the instruction that tenderers undertook their own robust assessment of the hillside to provide flow paths, volumes and impact loadings.

3 tenders were returned offering a range of netting solutions and one with pit solutions. The barriers were up to 100m long and 9.2m high in places. While one netting solution provided the cheapest tender return price on assessment of the tenders returned the best long term value for money was found to be the pit option. On this basis the £1.84M tender has been awarded.

Other advantages of the pit solutions that came out of the assessment process were the better impact protection and being more aesthetically pleasing, which has been acknowledged during discussion with the LLTNP.

JW explained that although the contract has been awarded to provide a reduction in risk at the high frequency channels (Phase 5, 7 and 9) there is an option in the future to extend these pits to reduce risk at all other channels identified to be a medium and low risk.

The process of gaining the necessary approvals and authorisations to commence construction is now ongoing with the contractor on site today to undertake investigations to develop their detailed design.

Up to £5.5M of improvements planned for the A83 during 2017 – 2018.

- £1.84M at Rest and Be Thankful for High Frequency event risk reduction, as discussed above.
- Potential Protection Measures at Glen Kinglas (see note 1 below)
- £1.0M at Rest and Be Thankful for Low and Medium event risk reduction
- Strone Point Realignment (see note 2 below)
- £100,000 of Footway and Drainage Improvements between Tarbet and Arrochar

Notes of Meeting

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Carriageway resurfacing at a minimum of 11 locations with a total investment of £1.4M• Continuation of improvements to drainage, safety fencing, footways, signing and lining along the route. <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) JW explained that discussions are to take place with the landowner at Glen Kinglas about re-using the excavated material from Rest and Be Thankful to create bunds in Glen Kinglas to protect the trunk road from the risk of landslides which have occurred previously and closed the A83.2) JW explained that discussion were ongoing with the contractor for Strone Point regarding duration of the works contract period. <p>JW, on request of the Minister, stated that the current programme duration for the 3 high frequency phases would be approx. 20 weeks but would depend on the final design solution and the potential for further extension of the pits as previously described.</p> <p>GR asked if, due to works being undertaken over the summer period, the LDR could be opened to permit 2 way flow traffic flow while traffic management was in place. JW explained that when previous works on the Rest were carried out using single way working delays were minimal and it is likely that the time taken to follow the convoy vehicle along the LDR would be greater than waiting at the traffic signals. This was accepted however the Minister asked that delays during the works are monitored.</p> <p>ACTION</p> <p>RGM noted the likelihood of works at Strone Point, Rest and be Thankful and Glen Kinglas all being undertaken at the same time and expressed concern with potential for delays and impact on road users. JW responded to say works at Glen Kinglas, were they to progress, should generally be offline so there is little risk of significant knock on impact. He also noted that Strone Point and Rest and Be Thankful, are 13 miles apart and any cumulative delays would be monitored. The Minister thanked JW for the reassurances.</p> <p>IMCl asked why, if the proposals at RABT are considered to now be working towards a final solution, money is still being invested on improving the LDR. JW stated this was due to timing of the tenders and not knowing what solutions would be offered but also this approach gives assurance that this asset will be in place if needed. The Minister agreed this approach is eminently sensible.</p> <p>The Minister asked if there were examples of pits being used elsewhere across the UK. KM gave an example in the Highlands region, although couldn't recall exact location.</p> <p>RGM stated he is glad the issues between Tarbet and Arrochar are to be addressed to which the Minister expressed thanks for the comments. The timing of these works was requested and JW stated drainage works are provisionally programmed for May with resurfacing to follow, possibly in</p>	BEAR
--	------

Notes of Meeting

	<p>July. He noted however that timing would have to be considered to avoid traffic management clashes elsewhere on the route. i.e. Rest and be Thankful.</p> <p>The Minister thanked JW for his comprehensive presentation and reassuring responses to queries raised.</p>	
4	Rest and Be Thankful – Proposed Hillside Planting Trial	
	<p>AC gave a presentation on the proposals to provide significant planting trial on the slopes of Beinn Luibhean and invited the views of the taskforce on this significant investment.</p> <p>AC acknowledged the success of the catch fences as a reactive measure to landslide events. He went on to explain the proposals to plant the hillside could be, if the trial were to be successful, a pro-active measure in preventing landslide material from mobilising.</p> <p>AC explained that the hillside on the opposite side of the 'strath' is heavily vegetated with forestry and conventional wisdom says that the root structure would help in pinning the soils to the rock below. He described how a study had concluded the planting of the Beinn Luibhean is feasible.</p> <p>AC detailed how Deer fencing forms an important part of the proposal and along with protecting the newly planted tress etc from deer and livestock would also allow natural growth to be encouraged, in keeping with government and LLTNP policy.</p> <p>AC explained 3 potential benefits of planting the hillside:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Root binding – knitting together of roots from different species to reinforce the natural soils. 2) Canopy Intervention – Tree canopies can slow the rate rainfall arrives on underlying soils. 3) The root structure would also use the moisture in the soils to facilitate growth, thus removing the risk of over saturation. <p>AC explained how this trial could be the first in the world and the innovative solution could be a source of knowledge/date to assist similar issues around the world.</p> <p>The Minister asked for clarification on the required footprint of land to be purchased should the trial progress. AC explained that due to the economics of the farm land it would not be viable to purchase this area of land and expect the farm to continue operating as it does. As a result, it would likely be necessary to purchase land area in excess of that shown in the photo presented. This would permit an increase in the scope of potential natural regeneration of the area and allow planting of more native woodland elsewhere.</p> <p>The Minister asked if there is merit in monitoring the effectiveness of the pits, for 12 – 18 months before proceeding with installation of planting. AC explained the different approach to a reactive or proactive measure to</p>	

Notes of Meeting

	<p>mitigate landslides. The Minister was content to proceed with a 2 pronged approach</p> <p>SM gave the LLTNP support of the planting proposal and re-naturalisation of habitat.</p> <p>AC explained the proposal would require a capital investment of £1.2M over approx. 20 years, with the first 18 – 24 months including the purchase of land and sourcing appropriate local seeds for native species.</p> <p>IMcI asked if it is likely that trees would establish at the altitudes shown. AC responded that the trial process but the study carried out had concluded it would be feasible. JH added that he has knowledge that trees will establish at altitude as long as they are protected from deer etc. On this subject RMcD noted that there is a forested area above the A814 on very steep ground and is not aware of a landslide occurring here.</p> <p>The Minister stated that there should not be a fear of trying new things or being innovative as long as due diligence has been taken. RGM expressed concerns with large trees in close proximity to the road boundary. AC stated that any trees at low level would be kept distant from the road.</p> <p>On a query from JMacl it was confirmed that landowner is very supportive of both the proposals for planting the hillside and also for wider re-naturalisation.</p> <p>JM noted that the outcome of the trial could assist with appropriate landslide mitigation measures not only at Rest and be Thankful but also at Glen Coe, Glen Ogle and other areas of the transport network. JM also explained how trials and monitoring are already underway in conjunction with Newcastle University through BEAR Scotland which is providing information for a UK and wider European study.</p> <p>RMcD asked who the land and trees would belong to. JM confirmed they would belong to the Scottish Ministers and that the planting would not be for commercial benefit.</p> <p>JMacl asked when the proposal for planting would be funded. JM confirmed this could commence in the financial year 2017-18.</p> <p>The meeting agreed that the hillside planting trial should proceed.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">TS</p>
<p>5</p>	<p><u>Marketing sub-group update</u></p>	
	<p>JM reported that communications had improved during events and when BEAR were implementing emergency arrangements.</p> <p>Discussions are to take place to agree how best to agree the marketing strategy and whether this should be discussed at a sub-group. JM is to take this to Mike Story and RR agreed to assist in setting this up.</p> <p>MV passed on a request from Brendan O Hara MP for a meeting to be arranged to discuss tourism in Argyll. JM to pass on contact details for Mike Story.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">JM/RR</p> <p style="text-align: right;">JM</p>

Notes of Meeting

	RMcD raised an issue of a lack of car parking in Arrochar. HY suggested this was a matter for ABC to which RGM confirmed that this matter sits with ABC to develop a business case.	RGM
5	Discussion/ Q&A	
	<p>DC expressed his genuine optimism that a final solution is now being worked towards to which the Minister acknowledged the positive progress.</p> <p>This position was supported by the other group members, including DP who advised that, depending on the progress of the latest and planned enhanced mitigation works over 17/18 and 18/19, he may withdraw his petition for a permanent solution from the parliamentary committee. DP also praised the involvement of the Minister, Transport Scotland and BEAR Scotland representatives in the achievements made since the Taskforce was set up.</p> <p>IMcI expressed thanks to the Minister for writing to the bus company about the lack of use of the new bus turning area at the rest and Be Thankful but expressed disappointment in lack of communication from the bus company about when the area would be in use. He asked for further assistance from the Minister in this respect. HY acknowledging the frustration with the investment to an asset not in use suggested a meeting be arranged with the bus company and ABC where this matter should be raised. RR offered his assistance in setting up this meeting.</p> <p>IMcI noted the lack of progress on strategic info being provided on VMS across both TR and LA roads. JS confirmed that meeting is to be held on 27 March where this will be agreed and the strategy is to be reported to the Taskforce.</p>	RR JS
6	AOCB	
	None	
7	Summary and Date of Next Meeting	
	<p>HY thanked all for attending and concluded what was acknowledged as a positive meeting.</p> <p>HY suggested that a further meeting be held in September 2017.</p>	