
2. Need for the Proposed Scheme

2.1. Introduction

- 2.1.1. This chapter outlines the national context for the interventions to the Old Military Road (OMR), 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 Chapter 1: Introduction, the Proposed Scheme aims to deliver a safe, proportionate and more resilient diversion route along the OMR when the A83 Trunk Road is closed due to landslide and debris flow risk.
- 2.2.2. At present, the privately owned OMR is used as a diversion route by way of an agreement with the current landowner when the A83 Trunk Road is, or has the potential to be, impacted by a landslide or debris flow event.
- 2.2.3. The OMR diversion (including both convoy operation and two-way running) provides a shorter route than the alternative diversion via the A82, A85 and A819. For the longer diversion, travelling from Tarbet to Inveraray, this adds around 26 miles onto a 23-mile 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 onto a 13-mile journey and can take approximately 80 minutes, which is approximately 60 minutes longer than when the A83 is fully open to traffic.
- 2.2.4. The frequency and severity of landslide events affecting the A83 has increased markedly since 2012 due to the frequency of heavy, intense periods of rainfall. As a result, there has been a significant increase in the number of days traffic has been diverted onto the OMR. Between 2012 and 2017, diversion via the OMR was required on 13.5 days and 13 nights, however between 2018 and 2023, traffic was diverted via the OMR on 169 days and 228.5 nights.

- 2.2.5. The increased frequency and severity of landslip events has also given rise to an increased risk of damage to the OMR. In recent years, various works and measures, such as the construction of a HESCO barrier, have been carried out to prevent landslide material from reaching the OMR.
- 2.2.6. Further to the announcement in March 2021 of the preferred route corridor for the A83 Access to Argyll and Bute project (i.e. the Long-Term Solution which is subject to a separate consenting and assessment process), the then Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity announced a commitment to develop in parallel a Medium-Term Solution (MTS) as a proportionate response to improve resilience of the temporary diversion route for when the A83 is closed at the Rest and Be Thankful due to landslides or risk of landslides.

2.3. Proposed Scheme Objectives

- 2.3.1. The MTS objectives are:
- increase resilience of a temporary diversion route by reducing the likelihood of closure due to landslides, flooding, or other incidents
 - maximise the operational benefits of a temporary diversion route, for all vehicles, by providing a route that achieves a proportionate balance of time to implement, cost and impact and
 - reduce the likelihood of accidents on a temporary diversion route.
- 2.3.2. The purpose of the MTS is 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 existing OMR, and constructing landslip protection measures above and below the A83 Trunk Road.
- 2.3.3. Through the introduction of these interventions, improvements will be made to safety, operational capacity and resilience, and reduce journey times during period of debris flow risk compared to the current situation on the OMR. There will also be an increase in the operational capacity of the OMR which is achieved by the road widening and bend improvements for vehicle tracking to improve journey times and journey time reliability for the route.

- 2.3.4. Safety measures include the landslide mitigation measures of a HESCO barrier, bunds and fences to provide a barrier to any potential future debris flow or landslide events and provide a safer environment for either a diversion or the clean-up of the event.
- 2.3.5. In addition to the safety measures that are to be included, the interventions improve the resilience of the route by upgrading drainage and watercourse crossings to provide additional capacity to allow the route to operate under a 1-in-50 year storm event.

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 [National Transport Strategy 2 \(NTS2\)](#), [Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 \(STPR2\)](#), [National Planning Framework 4 \(NPF4\)](#), and [National Transport Strategy 2 \(NTS2\)](#). Other relevant PPS, including the [Scottish Government Infrastructure Investment Plan \(IIP\)](#) and Local Development Plans (LDP) 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 Environmental Impact Assessment (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.
 - Improve 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 Proposed Scheme would improve the safety of the transport system; a key aim of NTS2. The Proposed Scheme would improve the reliability of transport connections, which would help people and goods get to where they need to.
- 2.4.7. 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)

- 2.4.8. The 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, 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.
- 2.4.9. In line with key recommendation 29 in STPR2 and following major landslide events at the A83 Trunk Road in Glen Croe in August and September 2020, Transport Scotland started progressing proposals for a long-term, resilient, and sustainable solution which included the Proposed Scheme which is required to facilitate the construction of the LTS.
- 2.4.10. The AWJV project team, commissioned in September 2022, have been tasked with developing a resilient and sustainable road to Argyll and Bute to address the landslide issues faced at the Rest and Be Thankful (RABT) 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 Trunk Road 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 Proposed Scheme objectives and the 'Spatial Planning Priorities', given the Proposed Scheme will mitigate the impacts of landslides on key transport routes 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*". It 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. The A83 is a key area for strengthening connectivity, with the Proposed Scheme increasing the safety and resilience of the OMR diversion route.

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.

Fitting Landscapes: Securing More Sustainable Landscape

- 2.4.25. 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.
- 2.4.26. 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).
- 2.4.27. 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.

Local policy – Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Local Development Plan

- 2.5.2. 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 Proposed Scheme including natural environment and transport policies.

Safety

- 2.5.3. 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.

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 Annual Average Daily Traffic (AADT) for the most recent year available (2019), traffic levels between Tarbet and Lochgilphead were between 3,100 and 5,300 vehicles per day. Along the A83 at the RABT, the AADT value from the latest available year (2019) was observed to be 4,400 vehicles. During times of closure of the A83 when traffic is diverted onto the OMR, it can be assumed that traffic levels utilising the diversion route are comparable to those recorded along the Trunk Road Network, however it is noted that some vehicles may choose to utilise the wider diversion via Inverary rather than the OMR itself.
- 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 which aligned to the NTDS data:
- 30 October 2023 – 12 November 2023 and
 - 27 February 2024 – 11 March 2024.

Tourism, Recreation and Commuting

- 2.5.7. The Proposed Scheme is situated in Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park (LLTNP) and Argyll Forest Park, 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 OMR during closure of the A83, including walking/hiking, cycling/mountain biking, swimming, shooting, fishing and birdwatching.
- 2.5.8. A Walking, Cycling, Horse-Riding Assessment Report (WCHAR) has been prepared, in accordance with [DMRB GG 142 Walking, Cycling and Horse-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 Trunk Road within the extents of the Proposed Scheme is also used by road cyclists, mostly for recreation and leisure activities.
- 2.5.9. The A83 Trunk Road forms part of the route of three bus services, two services providing links to strategic and regional destinations, and one a regional service. These services use the OMR when the diversion route is in operation during closure of the A83 Trunk Road. The bus stop is currently located immediately north of the RABT car park within a bus turning area off the B828.