

## A83 Taskforce Meeting 18 Minutes

**Venue:** Teams Meeting online

**Date:** 27 August 2020, 10:15 – 11:30 am

<b>Present:</b>	Michael Matheson MSP (MM)	Scottish Government
	Jackie Baillie MSP (JB)	Scottish Government
	Michael Russell MSP (MR)	Scottish Government
	Maurice Corry MSP (MC)	Scottish Government
	Anisah Ijaz (AI)	Scottish Government
	Brendan O'Hara MP (BO'H)	UK Government
	George Fiddes (GF)	Transport Scotland
	Scott Lees (SL)	Transport Scotland
	Jonny Moran (JM)	Transport Scotland
	Fiona Brown (FB)	Transport Scotland
	Martin Polland (MP)	Transport Scotland
	Neil MacFarlane (N MacF)	Transport Scotland
	Paul Junik (PJ)	Transport Scotland
	Ryan Gilbert (RG)	Transport Scotland
	Cllr Aileen Morton (AM)	Argyll & Bute Council
	Cllr George Freeman (GF)	Argyll & Bute Council
	Cllr Dougie Philand (DP)	Argyll & Bute Council
	Cllr Sandy Taylor (ST)	Argyll & Bute Council
	Jim Smith (JS)	Argyll & Bute Council
	Chief Exec Pippa Milne (PM)	Argyll & Bute Council
	Cllr Roderick McCuish (RMc)	Argyll & Bute Council
	Cllr Gary Mulvaney (GM)	Argyll & Bute Council
	Kirsty Flanagan (KF)	Argyll & Bute Council
	Ruth Crosbie (RC)	Argyll & Bute Council
	Eddie Ross (ER)	BEAR Scotland
	Mike Baxter (MB)	BEAR Scotland
	Euan Scott (ES)	BEAR Scotland
	John Hair (JH)	Forestry & Land Scotland
	Neil MacLean (NMacL)	Georope
	Clair McMurchy (CMcM)	Highlands & Islands Enterprise
	Iain Catterwell (IC)	Argyll Timber Transport Group
	Ronnie MacDonald (RMacD)	Arrochar, Tarbet & Ardlui CC
	Iain MacInnes (IMacI)	Lochgoil CC
	Dianne Paton (DP)	Lochgoil CC
	Alan Bell (AB)	Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park
	Robby Anderson (RA)	Freight Transport Association
	Fiona Bartels (FB)	Freight Transport Association
	Iain Jurgensen (IJ)	Wild About Argyll / AITC
	Gavin Dick (GD)	Wild About Argyll / AITC
	Lucy Sumsion (LS)	NFU Scotland
	Ranald Robertson (RR)	The Highlands & Islands Transport Partnership
	Neil Macrae (NMac)	The Highlands & Islands Transport Partnership
	Gordon Ross (GR)	Western Ferries
	Alastair McLundie (AMcL)	Western Ferries
	Kirsty Robb (KR)	Ridings Sawmills
	Jane MacLeod (JMacL)	Mid Argyll Chamber of Commerce
	Morag Goodfellow (MG)	Argyll and the Islands
	Jane Ireland (JI)	Slanj Restaurant
	Gordon Blair (GB)	Jacobs
	Helen Gregory (HG)	Jacobs
	Graeme McKendry (GMcK)	Jacobs
	Chris Holt (CH)	Jacobs
	Scott Brown (SB)	Jacobs

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	<b>Description</b>	<b>Action</b>								
<b>1</b>	<b>Welcomes, Introductions &amp; Apologies</b>									
	<p>GF opened the meeting by thanking everyone for attending the meeting. GF then introduced MM and invited him to give opening remarks.</p> <p>Apologies received in advance</p> <table border="0" style="width: 100%;"> <tr> <td style="width: 30%;">Mags Simpson</td> <td>Freight Transport Association</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Martin Reid</td> <td>Road Haulage Association</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Gordon Watson</td> <td>Loch Lomond &amp; Trossachs National Park</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Ian Stewart</td> <td>Bear Scotland</td> </tr> </table>	Mags Simpson	Freight Transport Association	Martin Reid	Road Haulage Association	Gordon Watson	Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park	Ian Stewart	Bear Scotland	
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<b>2</b>	<b>Michael Matheson MSP opening remarks</b>									
	<p>MM thanked everyone for attending and for giving him the opportunity to provide an update regarding Transport Scotland and Bear Scotland's activity relating to the A83 adjacent to the Rest and Be Thankful.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MM stated that he remains committed to helping keep Argyll and Bute open for business and is acutely aware of the importance of the A83 trunk road to the communities and economy of the Argyll and Bute area.</li> <li>• Confirmed that since the task force decision in February 2013 to progress with the Red Option measures, that these measures have been successful by helping to keep the A83 open for 48 days, almost 7 whole weeks, when it would otherwise have closed.</li> <li>• After recent events across Scotland's transport network he is now of the view that we need to move beyond the landscape mitigation strategy. MM is no longer content to pursue a mitigation response only, but that until an alternative solution can be completed, that further mitigation will be installed on the A83.</li> <li>• We will look at options which provide an alternative solution, which increases the resilience of links to Argyll and Bute and increases confidence of connectivity for those living and investing in this part of Scotland.</li> <li>• Confirmed that MM has instructed officials at Transport Scotland to accelerate our work on to consider alternative infrastructure options for the A83 and have established a dedicated team to do more detailed assessment work in parallel with the Strategic Transport Projects Review.</li> <li>• Stakeholders will be involved in this development process over the coming months.</li> <li>• Alternative options (11 No) will be made available for public consultation by Dec 2020 and will then be subject to the normal statutory process of 12 weeks.</li> </ul> <p>MM then invited Bear Scotland to take us through the current works taking place on site to be then followed by Fiona Brown to take us through the Transport Scotland presentation on the alternative options being considered.</p>									

## A83 Taskforce Meeting 18 Minutes

<b>3</b>	<p><b>BEAR Scotland presentation – Eddie Ross</b></p> <p>Eddie Ross gave an overview of ongoing works on site and some background into extent of the current slip and engineering challenges on site.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Largest slip to date, some 6000t of material involved.</li> <li>• Pit has caught, as designed, some 2000t which would otherwise have covered the A83.</li> <li>• Planned opening of A83 is likely to be Mon 7<sup>th</sup> Sept although this is very much weather related and may change.</li> <li>• Plan that road will open under 2 way lights with 1 lane operating.</li> <li>• Construction of new pit will run currently with ongoing works, this pit has been designed and planned prior to latest slip.</li> <li>• Erection of deer fence around hill side planned for later this year.</li> <li>• Planting of hillside due Autumn 2021.</li> <li>• Further details of planned resurfacing/drainage etc. works were provided and link to Bear website which shows works planned.</li> <li>• <a href="https://maphub.net/BEARScotland-NorthWest/BEARNW">https://maphub.net/BEARScotland-NorthWest/BEARNW</a></li> </ul> <p>Confirmation given that presentation will be emailed out along with minute of meeting.</p> <p>MM thanked ER for detailed overview then invited FB to give presentation on options being considered to alternative options on new route</p>	
<b>4</b>	<p><b>Transport Scotland presentation Fiona Brown</b></p> <p>FB confirmed that Transport Scotland are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Looking at an appraisal of accelerated package of works relating to the A83.</li> <li>• That the appraisal will provide Transport Scotland with early advice on the merit of different corridor options to address the problems associated with the A83 (taking cognisance of the particular constraints at the Rest and Be Thankful).</li> <li>• Some 11 different options currently being explored which will come out for public consultation in Dec 2020.</li> <li>• Although STPR2 is a national review, we recognise that the A83 area needs addressing early in the process.</li> <li>• Confirmed that a dedicated design team will take this forward, learning from lessons on the A9 works, which should speed the process up and deal with issues as reasonably as possible.</li> <li>• Following consultation exercise of later this year we will look to have a chosen option by March 2021 which will then progress to detailed design and other requirements.</li> <li>• Benefits of dedicated design team mean that we can continue engagement from now until final design. Assists in narrowing down options. Can help with necessary environmental assessments and also allows preliminary design works to commence.</li> </ul> <p>Confirmation that presentation will be emailed out along with minute of meeting.</p> <p>MM thanked FB for her presentation. GF then invited elected members to then ask any questions then after will take further questions.</p>	

## A83 Taskforce Meeting 18 Minutes

<b>5</b>	<p><b>Questions/Points raised at meeting</b></p> <p><u>Q - Cllr Aileen Morton</u></p> <p>Whilst initial timescales are welcomed I refer to the promises made in STPR1 which have never been delivered. I still have concerns over the proposals and we seem very far away from the permanent timescales?</p> <p><i>MM confirmed that a dedicated design team will be set up to take forward detailed design early in the project which will help speed up the process. MM doesn't accept the point, and confirmed he is unsure of how long any objections to preferred chosen route will take. MM confirmed an assurance of pace will be offered and that he will look to deliver this road in next parliamentary session</i></p> <p><u>Point Raised – Michael Russell MSP</u></p> <p>First of all a thanks to everyone involved in the clear up operation and also confirmed he deplored the abuse noted by road workers whilst undertaken works which is unacceptable. MR referred to the letter from the joint group received and spoke about lack of confidence in the current route. MR also noted that additional sailings have been provided which has helped the situation.</p> <p>The permanent option solution by the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020 is welcomed. Speed is of the essence for the construction of the new road and the commitment from MM that a solution will be delivered within next parliamentary session is welcomed.</p> <p><i>MM – A new design framework contract will be in place from January of next year which will help speed up the process. I recognise the concerns of residents using the road hence why further mitigation is now required until new road can be delivered.</i></p> <p><u>Q – Jackie Baillie MSP</u></p> <p>First of all I would echo my thanks to everyone involved in the clean-up operation. I would like to see a timetable, looking for tighter timescales if possible? I also welcome the confirmation that further investment for resurfacing works to be undertaken on other parts of the A83.</p> <p><i>MM – The timeframe will be dependent on the route that is finally chosen. After March we will be in a better position to confirm.</i></p> <p><u>Q – Brendan O'Hara MP</u></p> <p>Noted the heroic effort of the workforce on the clear up operation. The future of communities is key with the proposed new road. Please speak to the people of the Faroe Islands where a tunnel was recently delivered, this needs to be examined and costed for tunnel options. Some guarantee should be given that these people will be spoken to.</p> <p><i>MM – The consultation that will go out has 11 options for the community to provide feedback on. None of these options are a tunnel. All communities will be invited to provide feedback on options</i></p>
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## A83 Taskforce Meeting 18 Minutes

<p>Q – Cllr Freeman</p> <p>Thanks to BEAR for the regular updates and thanks to MM for taking this forward. From listening to GMS, the idea of tolls was raised, is this something being considered as clearly the communities of A+B would be unhappy? We have got to look at an option for the RaBT as part of the process? Signage still seems to be an issue, can TS sit down with Community Council's and agree all locations?</p> <p><i>MM – I can confirm there are absolutely no plans to introduce any tolls. The community will have an opportunity to express their views as part of the consultation exercise. ER confirmed that a sign proposal had been put to group but no response. BEAR will arrange to sit down and agree what signs are required at each location</i></p> <p>Q – Cllr Philand</p> <p>I would like to congratulate Bear publicly for the clear up works being undertaken at the RaBT. I was responsible for the 2015 petition that went forward and it's great to hear progress. Whoever is elected next year will this keep going?</p> <p><i>MM – I can confirm that this will be a clear commitment for me if we are elected next term.</i></p> <p>Q – Maurice Cory MSP</p> <p>My thanks also go to BEAR for their works on the clear up operation. The comments from MM hearten me and I would also concur that speed of delivery is important. The signage on the M74 did not correspond with further signage on the M8 gantries, can someone look at this for future please?</p> <p><i>GF – We will investigate and take action where needed, confirmation that message needs to be consistent.</i></p> <p>Q – Lucy Sumsion</p> <p>Local businesses have been significantly affected by road closures, has there been a change in approach with weather events?</p> <p><i>ER – There has been no change to criteria and we rely on a detailed forecast for the area. It's not all about weather at the time and the condition of the hillside after wet periods are considered as well. We monitor Met Office weather warnings and also our local forecast to assist making decisions. Last weather warning OMR stayed open throughout.</i></p> <p>Q – Jane Ireland</p> <p>Thanks for the great announcement and hard work currently being undertaken. Ongoing issue of signage needs to be addressed Can you make sure we can get agreement to where signs are to go.</p> <p><i>ER – We can confirm that we will speak to Jane separately and are open to any ideas to try and assist.</i></p>	<p>BEAR</p>
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## A83 Taskforce Meeting 18 Minutes

	<p>MM offered closing remarks at this point and left the meeting for previous engagement, further questions then followed.</p> <p>Q – Alan Bell</p> <p>Loch Lomond National Park is very important and we need to keep an eye on the route chosen. Can further catch pits be accelerated to keep road open?</p> <p><i>GF – Further catch pit planned for next month – we will then look at further options for future financial years.</i></p> <p>Q – Ian Jurgenson</p> <p>I am concerned over winter season and where traffic will have to wait to get through works under traffic lights. Where will the traffic be stopped during works to ensure they are safe?</p> <p><i>ER – We are conscious that further pits are required to mitigate further risks. We have previously avoided summer to allow visitors to pass unhindered. The survey of the hill will identify any further risks and position of traffic lights located to suit. ER confirmed he is happy to work with Ian to look at any specific issues.</i></p>	
<b>6</b>	<b>MM closing remarks</b>	
	<p>MM confirmed that BEAR, TS and Argyll and Bute Council will look, where required, at any points made during the meeting.</p> <p>MM emphasised that the project team is now being put together, learning from the A9 works, which will help speed up the process as swiftly and reasonably as possible.</p> <p>MM confirmed that once further details are known and final route has been chosen, a timetable thereafter will be produced and shared for completion of route. MM thanked everyone for their valued input into the meeting.</p>	<p>TS/BEAR/A&amp;BC</p> <p>TS</p>
<b>7</b>	<b>Review of Minutes of Meeting of 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2020</b>	
	<p>Minute of meeting from last task force have now been published and can be found following this link.  <a href="https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/meeting-minutes-taskforce-22-january-2020-a83-improvements/">https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/meeting-minutes-taskforce-22-january-2020-a83-improvements/</a></p>	
<b>8</b>	<b>Date of Next Meeting</b>	
	<p>GF confirmed that next meeting will be held some 6 months from now and date and location will be confirmed in due course. GF thanked everyone for their attendance and meeting closed at 11.30</p>	