



**Access to Argyll and Bute (A83) Preliminary Engineering Services and
Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)**

Screening Report

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SCREENING REPORT

STEP 1 – DETAILS OF THE PLAN

Responsible Authority:

Box 1. Transport Scotland – Major Projects Directorate

Title of the plan:

Box 2. Access to Argyll and Bute (A83) (*the plan*)

What prompted the plan:
(e.g. a legislative, regulatory or administrative provision)

Box 3. The key strategic drivers for the plan are:

- National Transport Strategy 2 (NTS2, 2020 update);
- Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 (STPR2) – emerging findings;

Plan subject:
(e.g. transport)

Box 4. Transport

Screening is required by the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005.

Based on Boxes 3 and 4, our view is that:



An SEA is required, as the environmental effects are likely to be significant: Please indicate below what Section of the 2005 Act this plan falls within



Section 5(3)



Section 5(4)



An SEA is not required, as the environmental effects are unlikely to be significant: Please indicate below what Section of the 2005 Act this plan falls within



Section 5(3)



Section 5(4)

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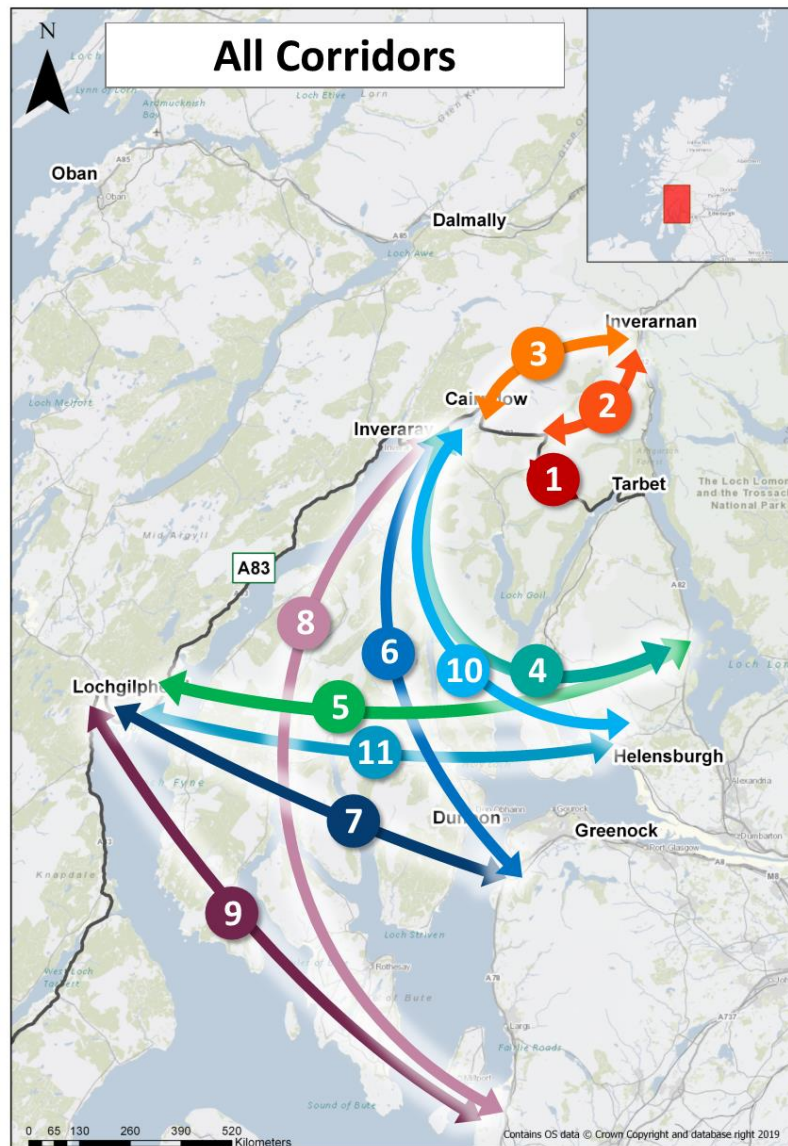
STEP 2 – CONTEXT AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PLAN

Context of the Plan:

Box 5.

The A83 is one of only two east-west strategic trunk road network connections between Argyll & Bute and the central belt. Accidents or incidents (e.g. roadworks, landslips, flooding) occurring on any part of the A83 in Argyll & Bute can effectively cut off parts of the region, significantly impacting residents, business and visitors due to the significant length of alternative routes and the travel times involved. Landslides continue to be a problem and key constraint associated with the Rest and Be Thankful area, a beauty spot on the highest altitude section of the A83. The transport connectivity challenges and socio-economic impacts associated with A83 road closure were also described in a study commissioned by Highlands and Islands Enterprise in 2016¹. As such, there is a need to consider the options available to improve resilience for strategic traffic currently using the A83. This includes examining, in conjunction with the existing corridor, alternative corridors, both to the north and south of the existing route, that could provide a suitable alternative route to the A83. Transport Scotland is currently consulting on eleven potential corridors options, until the end of October 2020². Figure 1 shows these corridors.

Figure 1: Route Corridor Options



The planning and policy context for the plan is summarised in the following key plans, legislation and processes.

- **Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2).** Transport Scotland is currently undertaking the second STPR to inform the Scottish Government’s transport investment programme in Scotland over the next 20 years (2022 – 2042). STPR2 takes a national overview of the transport network with a focus on regions and will help deliver the vision, priorities and outcomes that are set out in the new National Transport Strategy (NTS2)(see below). Transport options to address problems, opportunities and objectives for the Argyll & Bute region will be considered in STPR2, but given the poor resilience of the A83 corridor, proposals are to be

¹ HIE, 2016. Argyll and Bute Transport Connectivity and Economy – Research Report, June 2016.

² Transport Scotland consultation website: <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/project-corridor-options-access-to-argyll-and-bute-a83/>, accessed 7 October 2020.

developed concurrently with STPR2 and requires a discrete Preliminary Engineering Statement and impact assessment process.

- **National Transport Strategy (NTS2);** The NTS2 provides the national transport policy framework, setting out a clear vision of a sustainable, inclusive, safe and accessible transport system which helps deliver a healthier, fairer and more prosperous Scotland for communities, businesses and visitors. It sets out four key priorities to support that vision: reduces inequality; takes climate action; helps deliver inclusive economic growth; and improves health and wellbeing.
- **Emerging Rural Growth Deal (Argyll the Natural Choice);** which brings together public and private sector partners to identify where investment would provide the biggest catalyst for sustainable economic growth.
- **Regional Transport Strategies;** which set out the transport objectives and priorities for the Argyll & Bute region.
- **Other Regional and Local Policy Documents;** such as the Local Development Plans, and Regional Economic Strategies which set out non-transport specific objectives and priorities, but for which transport plays a key role in both the enabling and delivery of their outcomes.

Description of the Plan:

Box 6. A Draft Indicative Corridor Appraisal will be produced in the first instance, setting out problems, opportunities and objectives relating to the A83 corridor and strategic road network and an appraisal of the corridor options. This is anticipated to reduce the number of corridors under immediate consideration and set out the strategy for confirming those corridors that will be taken forward for further consideration in the Preliminary Engineering Services (PES) reporting. Technical feasibility is a significant factor and the commission requires a PES to be undertaken in parallel to the wider STPR2, to inform an assessment of potential corridors. The PES will set out the preliminary appraisal of potential corridor options, with the purpose of addressing the scheme objectives, as described in Box 5. As part of the PES work these corridor options will be sifted and consulted on, with the aim of identifying a preferred corridor option.

What are the key components of the plan?

Box 7. The key components of the plan are:

- Analysis of Problems and Opportunities/ Existing Conditions
- Setting scheme objectives
- Option Generation/ Option Sifting/ Description of Corridor Options
- Engineering assessment
- Environmental assessment
- Traffic and economic assessment
- Draft PES Report
- Public consultation
- Preferred Corridor confirmation

Have any of the components of the plan been considered in previous SEA work?

No – however, the STPR2 SEA will consider options for transport improvements for the Argyll & Bute Region, including the A83 corridor, as part of a Scotland-wide list of transport interventions. The plan SEA will consider the strategic alternatives to delivering improvements to the A83 corridor and if necessary, complementary improvements to other trunk roads such as the A82 and A85, and, alongside other processes, help inform the decision on a preferred corridor option.

In terms of your response to Boxes 7 and 8 above, set out those components of the plan that are likely to require screening:

Box 8.

- Alternative Corridor Options
- Shortlisted Corridor Options
- Preferred Corridor Option / high level design details

**STEP 3 – IDENTIFYING INTERACTIONS OF THE PLAN WITH THE ENVIRONMENT AND
CONSIDERING THE LIKELY SIGNIFICANCE OF ANY INTERACTIONS (Error! Reference source not found.)**

Plan Components	Environmental Topic Areas										Explanation of Potential Environmental Effects	Explanation of Significance
	Biodiversity, flora and fauna	Population and human health	Soil	Water	Air	Climatic factors	Material assets	Cultural heritage	Landscape	Inter-relationship issues		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative Corridor Options • Shortlisted Corridor Options • Preferred Corridor Option / high level design details 	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<p>Online corridor improvement options for the existing A83, or offline options that would create a new route corridor, are likely to lead to significant environmental effects. These effects would apply to each of the Environmental Topic areas listed in this table.</p>	<p>Potentially significant effects include:</p> <p>Biodiversity, flora and fauna – Biodiversity loss, including fragmentation of internationally and/or nationally designated sites.</p> <p>Population and Human Health – Potentially significant noise or air quality impacts from construction machinery and traffic or operational traffic but potentially significant positive effects through reduced landslide and accident risk.</p> <p>Soil – Potential loss of soil during construction, erosion, surface water pollution, compaction, sealing.</p> <p>Water – Potential effects on the severity of flood risk at specific locations or on water quality from pollution.</p> <p>Air – Impacts on air quality from construction activities and from traffic during operation.</p> <p>Climatic factors – Transport options have potentially significant implications for greenhouse gas emissions, either through vehicle traffic, embodied carbon in construction materials, or loss of carbon-rich soils such as peat.</p>



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Material assets – Different options will have implications for material assets, e.g. the economic viability of other built assets and key infrastructure.

Cultural heritage – potential direct or indirect impacts on designated or undesignated heritage assets or their setting.

Landscape – potentially significant landscape impacts and visual impacts, including within a National Park and National Scenic Area.

Inter-relationships – There are many inter-relationships between the SEA topics – for example, the loss of soils during construction could also entail the loss of buried archaeological assets.

STEP 4 – STATEMENT OF THE FINDINGS OF THE SCREENING

Summary of interactions with the environment and statement of the findings of the Screening:

(Including an outline of the likely significance of any interactions, positive or negative, and explanation of conclusion of the screening exercise.)

The PES will consider potential corridor options for a transport intervention that could have significant effects on the environment. Likely significant effects - both beneficial and adverse - could relate to all topics listed in the SEA Directive, as shown in Step 3 of the screening process. Although a project-level Environmental Impact Assessment will be required for the preferred transport intervention, Transport Scotland has taken the decision to undertake a SEA to ensure that the potential for significant strategic environmental effects has been assessed and strategic opportunities are identified. In this way environmental considerations will be taken into account at the strategic level, and the SEA and its recommendations will influence the indicative corridor option sifting process and preferred corridor option selection. Accordingly, the SEA will set the framework for the later EIA to flow from.

A strategic Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA) will be undertaken in parallel with the SEA, to identify if there are likely to be any likely significant effects on Natura 2000 sites, i.e. Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the Habitats Directive (92/43/EEC) and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) designated under the Birds Directive (2009/147/EEC). This will ensure the Plan complies with these EU Directives and the Scottish legislation that transposes them, the Conservation (Natural Habitats, &c.) Regulations 1994 (as amended). The HRA will inform the ecological baseline and assessment in the SEA and will also inform and signpost any future project-level HRA work that may be required.

A more detailed SEA methodology, including the assessment of significance referred to in Step 3 of this screening report, will be provided in the SEA Scoping Report.

When completed send to: SEA.gateway@scotland.gsi.gov.uk or to the SEA Gateway, Scottish Government, Area 2H (South), Victoria Quay, Edinburgh, EH6 6QQ.

