

## **Report to Partnership Meeting 27 November 2015**

### **RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY**

#### **HIE Argyll and Bute Transport Connectivity and Economy Study**

##### **Purpose of Report**

To provide Members with an update on the study commissioned by HIE in relation to transport connectivity and the economy in Argyll and Bute.

##### **Scope of Research**

There are concerns that poor transport connectivity is having a negative economic impact in Argyll & Bute – particularly for the southern areas of Mid Argyll, Kintyre, Cowal and Bute, whilst transport constraints around Oban may also be restricting growth. In April 2015, HIE appointed Ekosgen, in association with Reference Economic Consultants to undertake research to assess the impact of current transport connectivity on economic performance in Mid Argyll, Kintyre, Cowal and Bute, and consider the scope for significant investments in transport infrastructure to produce transformative economic impacts.

Consultants were asked to:

1. Assess the extent to which transport connectivity between the five main population and economic centres (Campbeltown, Dunoon, Lochgilphead, Oban and Rothesay), and to these from the Glasgow/Inverclyde area, has a real impact on businesses, service providers, and the potential for future economic growth.
2. Consider the scope for major transformative investments in transport infrastructure to produce transformative economic impacts.

The focus of the study is therefore on the strategic transport network serving the five towns in the HIE / HITRANS area, and possible major improvements to these, rather than considering in detail every aspect of the transport network. The approach taken to the study is consistent with a STAG pre-appraisal, i.e. identifying economic / transport problems, developing objectives, and sifting options. This has been done through a combination of desk-based analysis of secondary data, and consultations with economic / business stakeholders and service providers. The study is being overseen by a small client group including officers from Argyll & Bute Council and HITRANS.

##### **Study Progress**

Over the summer, consultations with over 30 stakeholders, businesses and service providers were completed, along with most of the desk-based analysis. Some secondary data is still to be reviewed, but Ekosgen have provided emerging findings including economic / transport problems and strategic objectives. Further work is required regarding the sifting of options

which include a range of upgrades to trunk and non-trunk roads, rail services, plus fixed links and new ferry crossings.

### Emerging Findings

The following summarises the transport problems identified so far through the research (in no particular order):

- Long journey times between Oban and Glasgow by road and rail;
- Long journey times between Lochgilphead, Campbeltown and Glasgow by road;
- Long journey times for the distance between Oban and Lochgilphead;
- Long journey times across Cowal between Dunoon, Bute (via Colintraive) and Kintyre (via Portavadie) - road is mostly single-track;
- Poor resilience of the transport network to disruption from landslides, road traffic accidents, adverse weather conditions (trunk road network and some ferry services, including Dunoon-Gourock passenger ferry);
- Poor road conditions and driver experience (some sections of trunk road, plus Oban-Lochgilphead and Dunoon-Colintraive-Portavadie especially);
- Congestion and restricted capacity for growth in/around Oban.

Four strategic objectives have been suggested:

1. Enable improved economic performance of Cowal, Bute, Mid Argyll and Kintyre, and reversal of population decline in these areas;
2. Support opportunities for economic growth (e.g. in tourism, food and drink, aquaculture, renewables, research and higher education, construction, forestry);
3. Improve journey times (and resilience) between the study area and Glasgow;
4. Improve journey times (and resilience) internally between Argyll and Bute settlements.

The various (road, rail, fixed link, ferry) options will be assessed against these problems and objectives, also taking account of potential cost and feasibility in broad terms, and existing Transport Scotland commitments regarding trunk road, rail and ferry infrastructure.

### Recommendation

Members are invited to note the update.

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Impact</b>	<b>Comment</b>
<b>RTS delivery</b>	√	This work supports several strategic objectives of the RTS.
<b>Policy</b>	√	This work supports the development of the RTS Delivery Plan including policies S1, S7,S10 and R19.
<b>Financial</b>	-	There are direct funding implications resulting from this report.
<b>Equality</b>	-	Improvements to the strategic and regional transport network in Argyll offers many opportunities to address equalities issues and enable more inclusive growth within the local area and North West Highlands

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