



north west
ConneXions

STAKEHOLDER NEWSLETTER

SPRING 2021



Welcome

Welcome to our Spring newsletter highlighting news from across Scotland's North West trunk road network.

The past year we've faced a new challenge as we have adapted our ways of working through these unprecedented times. As well as Covid-19 challenges we've faced a tough winter season which has seen over 81 snow days impact the network. Our winter teams have played a key role in monitoring and keeping Scotland's key trunk roads across the north west safe. Read all about our winter activity on page three.

We still have teams working round the clock at the ongoing situation at the Rest and Be Thankful. The main A83 carriageway remains open 24-hours a day with traffic lights helping to safely filter traffic past the ongoing construction work in the area during daylight hours with traffic then being convoyed overnight. Progress continues on the development of mitigation measures designed to help keep road users safe while travelling through Glen Croe. Find out more on page four about the progress of work and ongoing challenges.

It has been a busy start to the year for our Planned Maintenance team due to extreme cold temperatures and poor weather conditions impacting trunk roads and schemes across the network. Despite these challenges, we have still managed to carry out a full programme of work since April 2020 which has seen various routes benefit from an improved road surface. Our Bridges teams have also had a successful year with many complex projects completed as well as various ongoing schemes at some of the network's major structures. More information can be found on pages five and six about what areas received improvements.

We are also pleased to announce that BEAR Scotland and Scotland's Bravest Manufacturing Company (SBMC) won the Highways Partnership Award at this year's national Highway Awards. The award was in recognition of the ongoing partnership between the two firms, the results of which has helped support over 13 ex-forces members into employment. Read more about the partnership on page eight.

We're immensely proud of our teams who have not only shown a great amount of resilience and positivity throughout these times but have went above and beyond helping local communities most in need. Read more about BEAR's charity donations for 2020 on page nine.

I hope you find the newsletter an interesting read. As always, we would be delighted to receive feedback and answer any question you have.




Eddie Ross
*BEAR Scotland's
North West Operating
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Teams rise to the challenge of a difficult winter in the north west



The winter season was a challenging time for our teams as prolonged periods of adverse winter weather and extreme cold conditions impacted the network.

The Met Office declared January 2021 to be the coldest January since 2010, and with road temperatures reaching lows of -15.3°C as recorded on the A835 Aultgush, teams have been working continuously to ensure routes remained clear and safe.

Since our winter service officially started in October, winter teams have used over 35,000 tonnes of de-icing materials across trunk roads in the north west of Scotland to ensure routes were kept safe and clear with over 5,400 treatments carried out.

Adverse weather in January and February brought drifting snow to parts of the network. In early February snow drifts some 6ft high in places blocked the A835, with a collaborative effort involving teams from Fire and Rescue Service, Police Scotland, The Highland Council and BEAR working together to reopen the route.

Kevin Campbell, BEAR Scotland's North West Winter Manager said: "This winter season has been one of the busiest winter periods due to adverse weather conditions impacting all areas of the network and saw snow impact routes right up until early May.

"Fortunately, we have a great amount of experience within our winter teams when we have faced the challenges that adverse winter weather can bring. They have helped keep routes across the North West of Scotland safe ensuring motorists reach their destinations with minimum disruption.

"As our winter season officially comes to a close, our teams will reflect on the year and begin planning for next winter."

Top: The A835 was hit by major snowdrifts in February. **Middle, left:** The A9 cleared of drifting snow at Drumochter. **From Middle, right:** Clearing laybys on the A82 in Glencoe; A fast-trac tractor on the A9; A gritter convoying traffic on A835.



Landslip mitigation work continues at A83 Rest and Be Thankful

Teams continue to progress with landslip mitigation work at the Rest and Be Thankful to help ensure a safe route is available to road users through Glen Croe in Argyll. One lane of the A83 remains open to road users 24-hours a day when weather conditions allow, and teams are working round the clock to continue with work to develop mitigation measures in the area.

Since major landslips occurred at the Rest in August and September last year, teams have remained on site 24/7 to continue with work to install a programme of protective measures on the route. Geotechnical specialists also have been stationed on site daily to monitor and assess the hillside and weather conditions in the area to ensure the route can operate safely.

To help build resilience in the area, the installation of a protective bund next to the Old Military Road (OMR) local diversion route which runs parallel to the A83 was completed in early January. The 175m long, 6.6m high bund provides additional protection to road users of the OMR and greater confidence in being able to keep the local diversion route open during inclement weather conditions.

The A83 has been open to road users during daylight hours since January via a convoy operation which was replaced by a temporary traffic light system in April helping to reduce motorist waiting times when passing through the area. The convoy system remains in place for night-time road operation given the challenges of monitoring hillside conditions during the hours of darkness.

Good progress has been made with further mitigation measures at the Rest and Be Thankful including the re-erection of barriers impacted by the various landslides, the extension of a new on-road debris fence within the area covering the section impacted in August 2020 and some planned work to install a further debris catch pit.

Teams continue with daily monitoring and assessments of the hillside to determine if the forecast weather may have an impact in the area with a safe system of traffic management implemented accordingly. A further suite of work will continue through the spring/summer to install a further catchpit and improve drainage and hillside resilience.



Top left: Aerial view of the August landslips. **Top right:** Teams carry out slope assessments. **Above, top:** OMR temporary bund completed. **Middle:** Work continues with additional mitigation measures at the RaBT. **Bottom:** Traffic lights in operation after replacing the convoy system in April.

£29M invested in improving trunk roads across the north west



Since April 2020 over 330 projects have been carried out with a total investment of £29M made by Transport Scotland. This includes a wide variety of schemes ranging from road surfacing works to drainage upgrades and cycleway improvements to landscaping improvements. Teams also completed various road safety projects as well as carrying out improvements to traffic signs, footways, streetlighting, and road markings across the network, allowing for smoother and safer journeys for road users and pedestrians in the North West.

Surfacing improvements took place on a busy section of the A82 south of Drumnadrochit which involved teams resurfacing two sections of the route. The project saw upgrades to over 1km of carriageway, helping to improve the road. Due to the narrow carriageways on the A82, the work was completed under overnight road closures to help minimise disruption to motorists and the local community.

Seven locations on A83 between Drishraig and Ronachan benefited from a surfacing project that was carried out over four weeks. For safety, the project required a series of overnight road closures at some locations. Following severe cold weather causing rapid deterioration on some sections of road, the programme of works was expanded to include additional schemes that addressed a number of defects on the A83, helping to improve the safety of the route.



Other improvements took place on busy routes such as the A84 in Callander, the A87 at Tomdoun Junction and the A82 within the Fort William area, ensuring routes remain safe and reliable for motorists.

Sean Robertson, BEAR Scotland's North West Planned Maintenance Manager, said: "We are working in unprecedented times, and the safety of our staff, supply chain and local community is of paramount importance.

"We have carried out a significant number of resurfacing projects within a shorter timescale as all non-essential work paused in Spring last year due to Government Covid-19 restrictions. The investment from Transport Scotland has allowed our teams to carry out various improvements across trunk roads in the North West of Scotland ranging from the A9 in Golspie to the A85 at Lochearnhead. We remain committed to ensuring that the network remains at the highest of standards.

"We would like to thank motorists and local communities for their continued patience, whilst we aim to carry out any resurfacing works with minimal disruption, closures and diversions are often required but we consult with local communities in advance when disruption is anticipated."

Top: Teams carried out essential surfacing improvements on the A82 near Corrychurachan. **Middle:** Completed drainage improvements on the A83 between Tarbet and Arrochar. **Left:** The A85 at Lochearnhead and Glen Ogle received an upgraded road surface.



Essential maintenance carried out across north west bridges

A889 Dalwhinnie Rail Bridge

The A889 Dalwhinnie Rail Bridge, located just beyond the Dalwhinnie Distillery, received a £235,000 upgrade at the end of last year which involved a programme of essential maintenance work carried out to the structure.

The project involved teams replacing the temporary traffic signals and temporary safety barrier which had been in place with permanent traffic signals and vehicle safety barrier. The new barrier was accommodated by widening the embankment on approach to the structure. Teams also carried out surfacing improvements as well upgrading road markings in the area.

The measures implemented will improve the safe operation of the route as well as enhancing the traffic signal operation.

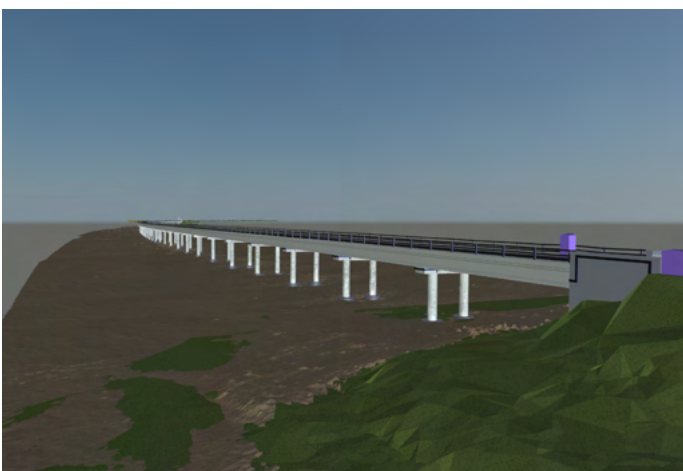
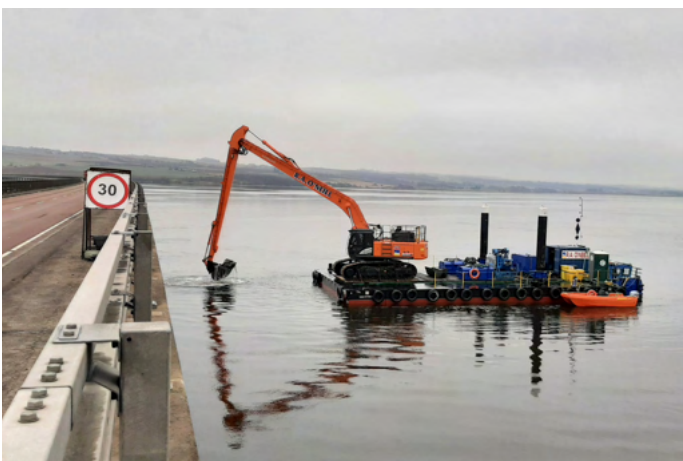
A9 Cromarty Bridge

A new maintenance project on the A9 Cromarty Bridge got underway in February which will ensure the bridge remains protected against scour for years to come.

The £1.3M investment from Transport Scotland involves the installation of rock armour around six of the bridge's pier foundations. Around 9,000 tonnes of rock will be installed around the piers using an excavator on top of a barge anchored to the seabed in the Cromarty Firth. The rock armour will offer protection from tidal erosion and ensure the bridge remains safe.

Before the project got underway, 3D survey images of the structure and the bed of the Cromarty Firth was conducted and was used in conjunction with diver surveys to identify the piers in need of scour protection.

Richard Cook, BEAR Scotland's North West Bridges Manager said: "We have carried out a variety of different structure and bridge maintenance projects across trunk roads in the North West of Scotland this financial year. These projects on A889 Dalwhinnie Bridge and A9 Cromarty Bridge are an example of different types of schemes and highlight our commitment to ensuring key routes continue to remain safe."



Preparing for your journey as travel restrictions ease

Travel restrictions have now eased in Scotland which has seen an increase in traffic flows across trunk roads in the north west of the country

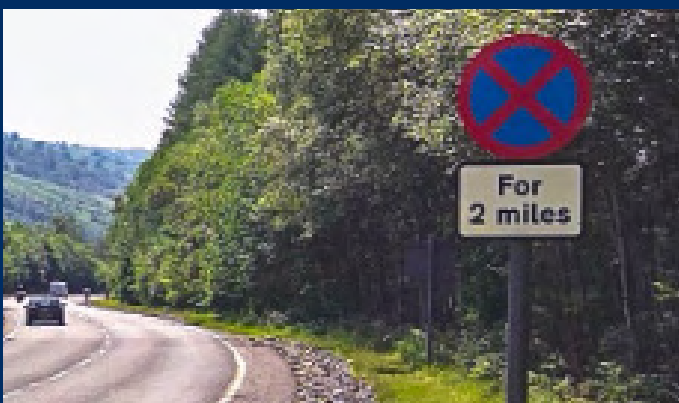
As the network includes the scenic Highlands of Scotland, Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park, beautiful west coast of Argyll as well as parts of the popular NC500 route in the north, high levels of vehicles and visitors are expected to continue throughout the coming months.

BEAR Scotland is encouraging people to plan ahead before setting out to ensure they can safely reach their destination with minimal disruption. Traffic Scotland provides real-time journey information for trunk roads across the country, and all road users are encouraged to visit their website – www.trafficscotland.org – or twitter page - [@trafficscotland](https://twitter.com/trafficscotland) – for live travel updates from Scotland's trunk road network.

To help ensure routes are kept safe, motorists are encouraged to only park in designated parking areas, and not on road verges or signed clearways. This ensures that traffic can safely pass through areas, and visibility is not compromised around sharp bends or at junctions and accesses. Importantly, clearways ensure that emergency vehicles have space to safely pass traffic when required to move quickly through the network.

BEAR Scotland will have additional monitoring on the network at busier times to ensure traffic is kept moving and to help try and address any issues on routes.

Finally, please play your part in helping to keep Scotland beautiful and ensure you take litter home. Litter-picking on trunk roads is a dangerous and completely-preventable task, so lets all work to keep Scotland litter-free.



What is a clearway?

A clearway is a section of the road network where parking is prohibited. They help reduce congestion and allow traffic to safely move through the area. It is illegal to stop on these sections unless it is an emergency. Clearways are marked by signs which are a round circle with a red cross through the centre, signalling to motorists that they are in a clearway zone.

Sections of the North West network which are clearway areas include the A84 near Loch Lubhaig, the A82 near Glencoe Mountain Resort and the A82 at Falls of Falloch.

Plan ahead with Traffic Scotland

Traffic Scotland provide's real-time travel information across Scotland's trunk road network to help you plan your journey. Visit them at:

- **Website:** www.trafficscotland.org
- **Mobile website:** my.trafficscotland.org
- **Twitter:** [@trafficscotland](https://twitter.com/trafficscotland)





BEAR Scotland partnership with veteran's social enterprise recognised at national industry awards

BEAR Scotland and Scotland's Bravest Manufacturing Company (SBMC) have won the Highways Partnership Award at this year's national Highway Awards for the ongoing partnership in support of Scotland's Armed Forces veterans.

Scotland's Bravest Manufacturing Company (SBMC) manufacture high-quality road signs as well as various other things from their base in Renfrewshire. They are a social enterprise and employ veterans from the Armed Forces and others with disabilities throughout Scotland who may need support adjusting to life after service.

BEAR was one of the first commercial companies to purchase road signs from the social enterprise, starting a partnership which has grown considerably since 2018, allowing SBMC to create secure employment opportunities for ex-forces members.

Iain Murray, BEAR Scotland's Managing Director said: "We are delighted that our ongoing partnership with SBMC has been recognised at the prestigious Highway Awards this year."

"We have long supported SBMC and are proud to be able to help support Armed Forces veterans in Scotland."

"We look forward to developing further ways of working together with SBMC helping to secure further opportunities for veterans."

Top: BEAR Scotland and Scotland's Bravest staff celebrate a year of trading in December 2019. Middle: Some of the signs created by SBMC for BEAR Scotland. Bottom: Scotland's Bravest staff explain to BEAR colleagues about the process of manufacturing road signs when BEAR staff visited SBMC base in December 2019.



Meet Snowlar BEAR, Gonnae Snow Dae That and the rest of the gritter gang!

This winter some new quirky-names were added to BEAR Scotland's 70-strong winter fleet thanks to the help of some local primary schools and competition winners.

Say hello to *Frosty* and *Snow Angel* who join the Kingussie depot, with *Sled Zeppelin* joining the ranks in Inveraray ready to keep the A83 clear.

Veruca Salt can be spotted in our Perth depot ready to help keep the A9 clear, with *Snowlar BEAR* working hard to keep the trunk roads around Corpach and Glencoe free of ice and snow.

In Inverness, *Gonnae Snow Dae That* has been helping to keep the A9 clear for all road users.

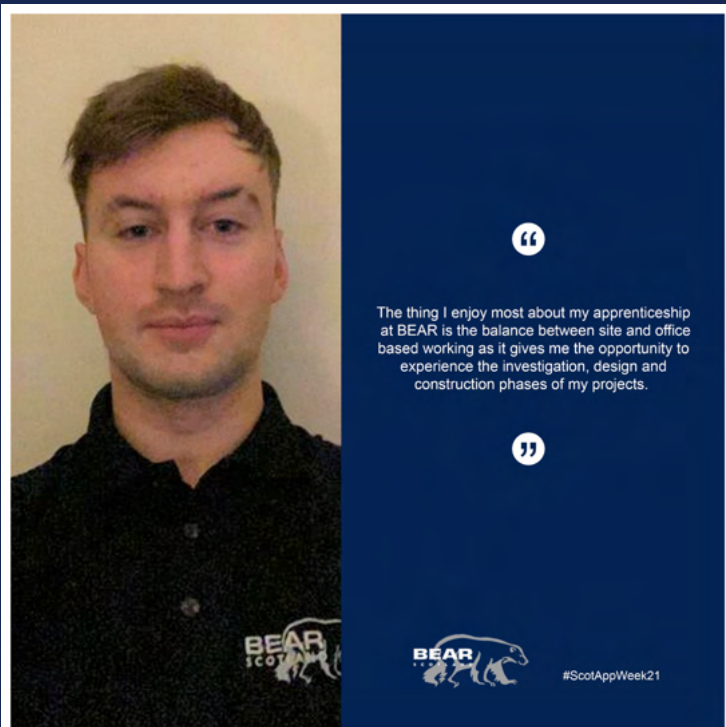
Head over to Transport Scotland's [gritter tracker](#) to view all of Scotland's trunk road gritters and see where they are in real-time.



Scottish Apprenticeship Week

Helping the next generation find ways into the engineering industry is incredibly important, and BEAR offer various apprenticeship opportunities to help people get involved. This year, BEAR supported Scottish Apprenticeship Week in March to celebrate and encourage people to consider an apprenticeship as a valuable route to a successful career. BEAR shared the journeys and experiences of some of those who have taken on an apprenticeship with BEAR.

Meet Connor, an Engineering Apprentice in the North West Roads team, who is currently studying for his HNC at Inverness College as well as working at BEAR Scotland. He was surprised at the amount of opportunities and the wide range of projects that he has worked on since joining the company which ranges from drainage schemes to signing improvement projects. Connor has been successful in balancing his studies with office-based as well as site-based working, an area that he feels has given him an all-round view of his projects



BEAR raise over £10,000 for good causes



cashforkids

Last year BEAR Scotland raised over £10,000 supporting over 15 different charities and this year we are looking to continue to support a wide range of local and national charities. So far, a staff raffle raised a fantastic £1,350 for Cash For Kids and there are plans for staff to take part in upcoming Kilt Walk to help raise funds for a nominated charity. We'll be helping more causes across the country as the year progresses.

www.bearscot.com
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