Inverclyde Council supports the proposed Glasgow Airport Rail Link as it assists in the stimulation of economic growth in Inverclyde through increasing the capacity of the regional rail network; as the proposal complements the regeneration of the A8/Inverclyde Corridor by developing rail capacity; and, as it improves public transport access to Glasgow Airport for travel and for job opportunities.

Inverclyde Council has promoted major regeneration plans within the A8 Corridor (Riverside Inverclyde, below) and the Council recognises the connection between economic development and effective transport networks. The adopted Local Plan for Inverclyde addresses population decline which is the major challenge for our area and seeks to create and channel development within the A8 Corridor and identifies this as a high priority. The Council has a clear focus on the strategic planning for this area and, together with its Community Planning Partners, is investigating in a programme of major infrastructure investment and improved accessibility: the Council’s objective is to promote and sustain Inverclyde as a competitive, place of choice with accessibility to the Glasgow City region. The Glasgow Airport rail link assists the Council’s aspiration for good public transport systems with strong external links within the City region.

The Scottish Executive’s Regeneration Statement has identified Inverclyde as an area for Urban Regeneration Company status for its Riverside corridor. This major initiative which is called “Riverside Inverclyde” is promoting major development within the A8 Corridor involving planned 2,700 new houses with industrial and commercial site developments and increased job opportunities. This housing-led regeneration will be benefited by efficient transport networks.

Inverclyde Council is also supportive of GARL through its strategic partnerships within the Clyde Valley Community Planning Partnership, the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Structure Plan Group and through the joint transport strategy for Western Scotland.

The supplementary written Statement from the Glasgow and Clyde Valley Joint Structure Plan recognises the importance of Glasgow International Airport and the importance of its growth and expansion. Glasgow Airport is a national priority and in order to safeguard the future of the airport there is a strategic need to improve public transport access to the airport and particularly rail links thereto.

The Council is a member of the Clyde Valley Community Planning Partnership and has supported the strategic importance of the development of Glasgow Airport and its role in the Western Scotland economy. Glasgow Airport is a major employer; it has a key role in increasing national and international accessibility to Western Scotland; it contributes to the development of the tourism industry; and it assists the promotion of Western Scotland for inward investment. Inverclyde’s regeneration plans are assisted by the proximity and accessibility of our area to Glasgow Airport.
The Council has endorsed the Joint Transport Strategy for Western Scotland and this has identified the Glasgow Airport rail link as being important in the support of the growth of Glasgow Airport; in the provision of a fast and reliable service which would assist the reduction in road congestion; and, in its potential for improved services and accessibility to the rail network as a result of the upgrade to existing track.

The details of the proposed scheme involves the creation of a new junction on the Inverclyde line east of Paisley St James station for the new branch line to the Airport. The Council has noted the options appraisal for the various alternatives which have been considered over time and has noted that there is no proposed, viable alternative to the scheme which is the subject of the Bill. Passengers will be able to interchange from the Inverclyde and Ayrshire catchment areas at Paisley Gilmour Street. This interchange does open up greater travel choices from and to Inverclyde. A quality environment at the hub will be important for the rail travelling public. The Council recognises that GARL will allow the opportunity to develop extra services for Inverclyde by utilising the additional capacity that will be available after the works are completed.

The Council is keen to promote internal connections within the rail network and to promote modal shift by improving public transport integration in key corridors by the development of services, the creation of interchanges and improved infrastructure. The Council is promoting a major transport interchange as part of its area renewal programme within Gourock and this will be accessible from the rail network for purposes of improved connections to Argyll and Bute and the Cowal Peninsula.

It is important for the Council that GARL will not only serve movements directly from Glasgow but will provide a direct rail link for access to the Airport from east and west. In respect of benefit to Inverclyde, the GARL will be able to provide a choice of travel mode for passengers and employees which will encourage modal shift by reducing the number of car journeys through the provision of an easier and direct rail link from Inverclyde: resultant traffic volumes may reduce on the A8/M8 which will assist in reducing levels of pollution and travel times.

The Council supports the Joint Transport Strategy in its efforts to achieve a sustained shift in modal travel from the private car to public transport in order to reduce congestion, increase journey reliability and improve the environmental pollution impacts of growing traffic volumes. Importantly, the GARL supports economic and social activity in enhancing overall regional accessibility. The Council’s own Local Transport Strategy comments on the problem of poor levels of access especially by rail and public transport to Glasgow Airport for Inverclyde residents and businesses. The GARL is seen as an opportunity which would enhance accessibility to Glasgow Airport. In addition, it is recognised that Inverclyde can be promoted as a strategic location in relation to the airport.
The formation of GARL could have a significant effect on the ability of destination visitors to gain access to the public transport infrastructure and thus assist short break and business visitors to Inverclyde. It can be anticipated that Inverclyde could benefit from this but the overall economic assessment at this stage is unquantifiable.

In summary, improved rail access from the airport to the West of Scotland will benefit Inverclyde in our area’s aspiration to be a place of choice and readily available access to and from the Airport hub is seen as clearly being positive.