

PE1428/C

Scottish Parliamentary Public petition PE1428 – A83 Improvements

At its Meeting held on 22 May 2012, Argyll and Bute Council considered a Motion and made the following decision:

Decision

After discussion and with additional wording added, the Council unanimously agreed the terms of the Motion as detailed below.

In light of the decision taken by Scottish Government's Public Petitions Committee on the 15th May 2012 to unanimously support the Argyll First Groups „SIGN FOR THE A83 CAMPAIGN“, the Council is now asked to formally recognise and fully endorse the aims of the petition.

Namely that the Scottish Government

1. Identifies and develops a permanent solution to the landslide problems which currently exist at the „Rest and be Thankful on the A83“;
2. Removes the pinch points on the A83 at Inveraray and between Ardrishaig and Tarbert;
3. Provides safe pedestrian crossing points on the A83 at the villages of Ardrishaig and Tarbert;
4. Develop a business case for trunking the A83 between Kennacraig and Campbeltown.

Background

Much of Argyll and Bute could be considered as remote given its island and peninsula geography and low/dispersed populations resulting in an economic disadvantage over more central locations in Scotland. Communities served locally by the road network include some of the most fragile in the country, with these roads often providing the sole means of access to vital lifeline services. Poor conditions and long journey times along the routes can place a significant constraint on the ease and comfort with which residents can access employment and lifeline services such as health, education, retailing and banking. At the same time, the poor condition of the network also acts as a barrier to growth among local businesses by adding to journey times, increasing the cost of transport, increasing vehicle operating costs and restricting labour catchment areas. The quality of the road infrastructure is also a determining factor in regards to the area's ability to attract inward investment.

Within Argyll and Bute's Local Transport Strategy and its Economic Development Action Plan a key objective is to encourage a growing and sustainable economy in Argyll and Bute. Key aims are to:-

- generate sustainable economic growth at the local level that will benefit the wider Scottish economy,

- support our local economy through the provision of an efficient, reliable and affordable transport network,
- facilitate the growth of regional transport hubs as economic generators for the whole of Argyll and Bute.
- recognise the importance of road based travel in much of Argyll and Bute and thus the vital importance of maintaining and developing road based infrastructure.

Freight Transportation organisations within Argyll and Bute are significantly dependent on the conditions of the road network to transport locally produced goods such as whisky, timber and wind turbines which are all vital to the local economy. Furthermore, the closure and uncertainty relating to the A83 could potentially undermine the Campbeltown / Machrihanish location as a key centre in the Government's National Renewable Infrastructure Plan (a location that has recently attracted millions of pounds of private and public sector investment relating to the renewables industry). In addition, local industries such as agriculture, fish farming, construction and tourism are also reliant on the local road network and in particular trunk road links to the Central Belt. Any works that could improve the pinch points at Erines and Strone Point and provide better traffic flow with fewer road closures would be of great value. Any time delays or long detours caused by accidents or failures in the road render the journey financially unviable. The partial closure from 1 December 2011 of the A83 at the Rest & Be Thankful due to a landslide is a prime example.

The Council has recognised the strategic importance of the A819 as the "link road" between the A82/A85 and the A83. In terms of strategic planning, the Council has recognised the requirement to not only upgrade the running surfaces on these routes, but also to make targeted road improvements in terms of road width and improvements to sight lines; such as the £600K allocated to improve the swept path on the A83 at Muasdale which will better allow the transport of wind turbines, and the road widening and sight line improvements on the A819 as a diversionary route for trunk road traffic during the future A82 upgrade works at Pulpit Rock.

Proposed Diversion Route

Transport Scotland is considering options for a diversion route for the A83 in the event of a further landslide event. Council Officers prefer the Glen Croe forestry route over the Military Road. It is considered that the Military route would be affected by a significant landslide event. The Glen Croe forestry route offers additional resilience due to its position and reduced chance of being affected by any further landslide.

The scope of works to upgrade the Glen Croe forestry route to an appropriate, fit for purpose, single track road can offer a compromised alternative diversion route in the short term. In the longer term, sustainable solutions relate to either developing the Glen Croe forestry route into an appropriately engineered component of the A83 Trunk Road or putting in place the physical improvements and upgrades that will reduce the risk of landslide on the existing A83 to a negligible level.

Pulpit Rock Works – A82

The Council has been in discussion with Transport Scotland regarding a return to service plan for the A82 during the planned closure of A82 for the realignment works. In the unfortunate event of a landslide closing the A83 during this proposed closure of the A82 at Pulpit Rock the „standard“ diversion route would not be available. The Council is keen to see the development of a return to service plan covering the potential of A83 not being available during the planned closure of the A82.

Recent Works on the A83 – Argyll and Bute Network

Please find below link to a report which details the works completed and proposed on the A83.

http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk/sites/default/files/transport-andstreets/A83_Report_10_May_2012.pdf