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Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd 's nan Eilean

Alison Wilson
Assistant Clerk
Public Petitions Committee
The Scottish Parliament
EDINBURGH
EH99 1SP

26th July 2012

Dear Alison

HIGHLANDS AND ISLANDS ENTERPRISE (HIE) SUBMISSION TO THE SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT'S PUBLIC PETITIONS COMMITTEE

PE1428 - *Petition by Councillor Douglas Philand on behalf of Argyll First calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to address the 4 key points which are currently impacting upon the communities along the A83 which are (1) issues relating to the Rest and Be Thankful; (2) pinch points at Inveraray and between Lochgilphead and Tarbert (Lochfyne); (3) safe crossing points at Ardrishaig and Tarbert (Lochfyne), and (4) formally trunk the road between Kennacraig and Campbeltown.*

Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) submits the following comment to the Public Petitions Committee to assist in its consideration of Petition PE1428. We have provided a response to the two questions for HIE arising from your committee meeting on 15 May 2012.

1. What are your views on what the petition seeks?

HIE shares the concerns that have been raised through this petition in relation to the A83. This is the primary route connecting communities from Inveraray to Campbeltown and the islands of Islay, Jura and Gigha with the Scottish Central Belt, and the closures experienced due to landslides at Rest and be Thankful have clearly caused significant disruption for businesses, residents and visitors to the area. Good, reliable transport access is a fundamental requirement for any economy, and whilst there may be alternative routes via the A82/A85/A819 or A815 via Dunoon, these add significant time and distance to journeys.

We are pleased to note that some progress is being made with regards to diversionary routes at Rest and be Thankful, but believe that a permanent solution, which will either remove or significantly reduce the risk of future disruption, is desirable. We recognise that any such solution is likely to be expensive and take a number of years to be completed, but this will give confidence to businesses in Argyll that the problems at Rest and be Thankful are being addressed.

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Further consideration should also be given to contingency planning for the planned 14-week closure of the A82 during the Pulpit Rock improvements, in the event that the A83 is affected by landslides during this period. We would encourage Transport Scotland to discuss contingency plans with stakeholders and communities prior to commencement of these works to ensure that any disruption can be minimised and to allow businesses to be prepared.

HIE would welcome a wider study and route action plan to consider all the issues raised in the petition and ensure the A83 is fit for purpose. Ideally, this would consider the whole route, including the non-trunked section between Kennacraig and Campbeltown.

2. Have you carried out any work to determine the possible economic impact of improvement works on the road to the local area?

HIE has not undertaken any economic studies in relation to disruptions experienced on or potential improvements of the A83, but we would be pleased to assist Transport Scotland with any such assessments.

Yours sincerely

CHARLOTTE WRIGHT
DIRECTOR
BUSINESS AND SECTOR DEVELOPMENT