

A83 Petition – Response by Mid Argyll Chamber of Commerce

Members of the Mid Argyll Chamber of Commerce are very grateful to the Scottish Parliament Public Petitions Committee for considering the Petition by Councillors Philand, Kelly and McAlpine calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to ensure a permanent solution for the A83 at the Rest and Be Thankful is found ensuring that the vital lifeline route is not closed because of landslides.

The Petition which was considered by the Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2015 is the second Petition to be presented by the three Argyll and Bute Councillors, each Petition seeking a permanent solution for the A83.

Businesses in Argyll and Bute are seriously disadvantaged each time a landslide occurs closing the A83. The three Councillors explained to the Petitions Committee that the A83 is an arterial route into Argyll and Bute. It has to be emphasised that the route services not only communities in Mid Argyll but also Cowal, Kintyre, the Oban area and, of course, the Inner Hebrides.

A Task Force was set up in 2012 to investigate and agree a solution to mitigate landslides. The Task Force brought about the opening up of the Old Military Road as a diversion route during closures and the installation of netting on the hillside as well as monitoring to predict landslides.

Councillor Philand did, of course, point out that landslides are unpredictable and, while the netting can take a landslide of up to 1000 tonnes, a slip of approximately 2500 tonnes was experienced last year.

It takes some time to open up the Old Military Road. The result can be that visitors and commercial traffic are reluctant to use the A83 when there are warnings, by way of media and flashing lights, that landslides are possible.

In the event that the diversionary route by the A82 has to be used traffic is involved in a 65 mile detour which has a knock-on effect on the ability of drivers of commercial vehicles governed by Tachographs to complete their journeys. The additional cost to hauliers and bus companies is considerable.

The Public Petitions Committee on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2015 heard from the three Councillors and also from Mike Russell, MSP and Jamie McGrigor, MSP. All three spoke of a need to find a permanent solution pointing out that the request for a permanent solution is made by all parts of the community of Argyll and Bute as well as those who may not live in Argyll and Bute but who travel there on a regular basis or on holiday.

The Petitions Committee was told of what is being described as the “Donald Clark option”. Donald Clark is a member of the Mid Argyll Chamber of Commerce and has attended at least two of the Task Force meetings. Donald Clark’s family have been in business in Inveraray, where they operate The George Hotel, for decades. His is a prime example of a business affected by road closures. Donald has been

promoting the construction of an overhanging canopy for approximately 400m of the A83 as a permanent solution stating that the design should be kept simple, safe and basic and, if not over-specified, the canopy might cost no more than £3M to £5M. The design would involve 400m x 4.5m wide x 5m high, the outer edge being closed at the 4 problem gullies thus guaranteeing the road and in the event of a slip the clear-up can proceed unhindered. A plan of the position of the suggested canopy is attached.

Mike Russell, MSP referred to the possibility of improving a Forestry road which runs on the opposite side of Glen Croe. While he did not state it, it has been felt by other people that if that Forestry road could be improved, were there to be a landslip there would then be a series of choices which could be made. In the event that one lane of the A83 could be left open another lane could be opened up on either the Forestry road or the Old Military Road. If the A83 was completely closed traffic could run one way on the Old Military Road, the other way on the Forestry road. In the event that a landslip closed both the A83 and the Old Military Road there would still be the option of convoying traffic on the Forestry road. All of these choices would avoid the lengthy detour.

The Scottish Government and Transport Scotland have done a lot of work to help improve the A83 but there is still more to be done and the members of the Mid Argyll Chamber of Commerce support the Petition and would echo the call for the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to ensure a permanent solution for the A83 at the Rest and Be Thankful is found.

**A83 – REST AND BE THANKFUL  
PROPOSED COVERED SECTION**



Jane MacLeod

Secretary, Mid Argyll Chamber of Commerce

12<sup>th</sup> March 2015