

PE1540/Z

Scottish Government submission of 6 August 2019

Thank you for your letter of 04 July requesting in relation to your consideration of Petition PE1540.

Please find an update on the matters which you requested below. I have also attached an Annex which includes some background information on Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) which should hopefully provide some context.

Argyll & Bute Engagement on STPR2

In accordance with the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity, Michael Matheson's commitment to the A83 Task Force in November 2018, to give priority within the project programme to the Argyll area, stakeholder workshops for STPR started there first. Four stakeholder workshops were held: at Helensburgh (3/5/19), Tarbert (8/5/19), Dunoon (15/5/19) and Oban (30/5/19). A further workshop was held for Members and Senior Officers in Lochgilphead (17/6/19).

Invitations were issued to organisations with an interest in transport issues in the area. These include local authority departments, Regional Transport Partnerships (RTPs), organisations representing all modes (active, bus, rail, ferry, air and freight), business and community groups. It also included campaign groups with a specific interest such as the Cowal Fixed Links Group.

At the workshops, Transport Scotland (TS) and its consultants gave an introduction about the NTS and STPR2, with some socio-economic and transport facts and figures as context. There was an open discussion on the transport problems and opportunities in the area, moderated and recorded by the consultants.

A83 Rest and Be Thankful

In addition to issues such as the declining and aging population, bus and ferry services, and the road network in general, the A83, particularly the Rest and Be Thankful, was raised as a serious issue. Therefore a specific session was held with the Taskforce members in June 2019. Delays and diversions are a cause for concern for people and business, as is uncertainty over travel

times. These are seen as disincentives to investment in the area, exacerbating the perception of remoteness.

Next Steps

STPR2 is being progressed in line with the approach set out in the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG):

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/our-approach/industry-guidance/scottish-transport-analysis-guide-scot-tag/#42948>

Our consultants are completing their analysis of the problems and opportunities along with a wide range of data, to develop transport planning objectives and identify an initial long list of potential interventions. This will be followed by a further round of stakeholder engagement to

provide input prior to the option appraisal stage, which will take place in 2020. The option appraisal includes shortlisting options which meet the objectives and priorities at both a Scottish national and regional level then appraising them to establish their benefits and impacts before providing priorities for Scottish Ministers to consider for investment. The study is due to be concluded in late 2020 and published early 2021.

Progress made by the A83 Taskforce

The latest Taskforce meeting was held on Wednesday 5th June 2019.

Since 2007, the Scottish Government has invested £75 million in the maintenance of the A83 trunk road. This includes £12.5 million at the Rest and Be Thankful on landslide mitigation measures and improvements to the local Old Military Road diversion. These measures represent a cost effective way of reducing the economic and journey times' impacts of landslides.

With the installation of the Red Option measures over 2013 and 2014, plus the subsequent supplementary measures (additional catchpits, covered below), it is estimated that these works helped keep the A83 open for at least 48 days when it would otherwise have closed. This includes the October 2018 landslip event, the largest on record, which intercepted approximately 3,200 tonnes of material reaching the A83.

Cabinet Secretary Michael Matheson fully appreciates the requests of the Taskforce regarding a permanent solution and the STPR is a key element of this process. Stakeholder updates will be given at future STPR engagements and at the A83 Taskforce meetings.

As discussed with the Taskforce at the last meeting, following completion of recent roadside catchpit works, on 31 July the temporary traffic lights at the Rest and Be Thankful were removed. Completion of the works were brought forward to help return the road to two-way traffic, following concerns from stakeholders on the impression the ongoing works gave to potential tourists and businesses.

The three pits (bringing the total number of pits to four), along the installed debris nets, help to further reduce the impact of landslides in the area, providing further resilience to the network. Together the pits provide a storage capacity of over 13,000 tonnes. Further works are being considered and updates will be reported at future Taskforce meetings.

Planned hillside planting as part of landslips prevention work.

The purchase of the ground has now been completed for the planned hillside tree planting works (further landslide mitigation). Plans are in place for the commencement of tree planting works in September 2020 through to March 2021.

It is proposed that a further Taskforce meeting is held in November of this year, the date of which has still to be confirmed.

I hope you find this information useful. Should you have any further queries please do not hesitate to get in touch.

STPR2 Background

The second Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) will identify required transport investment by undertaking a Scotland-wide appraisal of strategic transport options to inform investment priorities for the next 20 years, that are required to deliver the outcomes and visions that emerge from the National Transport Strategy.

STPR2 will be a multi-modal appraisal, that is objective-led and evidence-based, and will have both a national and a regional focus. The scope of the review will extend to the strategic road and rail networks as before (STPR, published in 2008), however, this time it will also include national infrastructure investment to support active travel, island connectivity, buses and ferries. It will be delivered by the end of 2020.

Transport Scotland is committed to a collaborative approach as STPR2 moves forward and key engagement will be via Regional Transport Working Groups (RTWGs) and stakeholder workshops. The RTWGs are now in the process of forming and meeting to establish their role and remits. We are building upon existing relationships with local authorities and regional transport partnerships, to understand their transport issues, objectives and priorities for strategic transport in their area.

Current Stage

The initial stage of STPR2 focuses on identifying problems and opportunities on the network, gathering evidence, developing transport planning objectives and generating and sifting a range of potential options, this is the work being done throughout the course of 2019. To assist in this process, a series of stakeholder workshops have been held across the regions to identify and discuss problems and opportunities. As well as the RTPs and local authorities, the invitees have included a wide range of stakeholders with an interest in transport issues in the region.

As part of the engagement process national workshops on specific modes of transport are taking place, also online surveys, seeking views on problems & opportunities from stakeholders such as community councils and the public, will be available later this summer.