

**Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee**  
**Wednesday 2 April 2025**  
**6th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)**

## **Road Petitions**

### **Introduction**

1. [At its meeting on 27 November 2024, the Committee agreed to invite the Cabinet Secretary for Transport to give evidence on petitions focused on roads.](#)  
The Committee subsequently agreed that the evidence session would focus on the following petitions –
  - PE1610: Upgrade the A75
  - PE1657: A77 upgrade
  - PE1916: Request a public inquiry into the management of the rest and be thankful project
  - PE1967: Protect Loch Lomond's Atlantic oakwood shoreline by implementing the High Road option for the A82 upgrade between Tarbet and Inverarnan
  - PE2132: Publish a timeline for the dualling of the A96 between Inverness and Nairn by 2025
2. Petition summaries for each petition are included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of each petition is included at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received new written submissions from the Cabinet Secretary for Transport on petitions PE1610 and PE1657, and from the Petitioners for petitions PE1610, PE1657, and PE1967, which are set out in **Annexe C**.

### **Today's Meeting**

4. At today's meeting the Committee will hear evidence from –
  - Fiona Hyslop, Cabinet Secretary for Transport
  - Nicola Blaney, Head of Strategic Transport Planning, Transport Scotland
  - Alasdair Graham, Head of Design, Procurement and Contracts, Transport Scotland
  - Lawrence Shackman, Director of Major Projects, Transport Scotland

## **Action**

5. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take on these petitions.

**Clerks to the Committee**  
**March 2025**

## **Annexe A: Summary of petitions**

### **PE1610: Upgrade the A75**

#### **Petitioner**

Matt Halliday

#### **Petition summary**

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to upgrade the A75 Euro-route to dual carriageway for its entirety as soon as possible.

#### **Previous action**

A previous petition was running on Change.Org and an action group has been set up on social media to fight for this cause. A meeting was arranged with Joan McAlpine MSP who recommended lodging a petition with the Scottish Parliament.

#### **Background information**

The A75 is not only the road to Stranraer and the ferry ports of Cairnryan but, as such, is also the road to Belfast, one of the UK's capital cities.

Due to the current design of the road and previous fact, it is a road where many differing vehicle types are thrown together often at highly differential speeds. The volume of HGVs in convoy travelling east when the ferries dock combined with the 40mph limit for those vehicles causes very high level of congestion upon the A75, a volume of traffic that was never envisioned when the current road was designed.

Throw in even slower moving agricultural vehicles, faster moving traffic, such as cars and motorcycles, and a large amount of tourist traffic unfamiliar with the vagaries of the A75, and it is easy to see how frustration can brew carelessness on the road. A change to dual carriageway would help negate the causes of this while also preventing a conflict between vehicles travelling east with those travelling west.

For the same reasons, the local economy would benefit by being more accessible to tourists, commerce and improved links with Northern Ireland and England. This is not to mention the benefits to the local populace in improved safety and reduced journey times, especially when there is more centralisation of health services to Dumfries resulting in journeys of up to 90 miles for some in the west of Dumfries & Galloway.

I have come to these conclusions as a regular user of the A75 and I know for a fact that I am not alone in holding these opinions.

**Webpage:** <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1610>

#### **Committee Consideration**

1. The Committee has received new written submissions from Cabinet Secretary for Transport and the PE1610 Petitioner, which are set out in **Annexe C**.

2. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage.](#)
3. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
4. [The Scottish Government gave its initial position on this petition on 17 October 2016.](#)
5. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 2,871 signatures have been received on this petition.

## **PE1657: A77 upgrade**

### **Petitioner**

Donald McHarrie on behalf of A77 Action Group

### **Date Lodged**

18 June 2017

### **Petition summary**

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to dual the A77 from Ayr Whitlett's Roundabout south to the two ferry ports located at Cairnryan, including the point at which the A77 connects with the A75.

### **Previous action**

The A77 Action Group has been formed on Facebook and we have now had a number of public meetings. The group has contacted Mr Brian Whittle MSP for advice on how to go forward with a petition.

### **Background information**

The A77 is the main arterial route from the central belt to the south west of Scotland. On the way it also provides connections to a number of towns and villages. It also provides the road connection between our capital city Edinburgh via Glasgow to Northern Ireland's capital city Belfast and the Republic of Ireland's capital city Dublin beyond that. So from an economic perspective, as well as a cultural view point, the A77 is a strategic road, nationally and internationally.

The line of the road often reflects its design history harking back centuries to the days of coach and horses. From Edinburgh to the notorious Whitlett's roundabout at Ayr the journey is relatively straight forward on motorway or dual carriageway. From this point south the road not only narrows to a single carriageway, it also passes through eight communities all with urban speed limits ranging from 40mph to 20mph. It has very few dedicated safe passing places to overtake slower moving vehicle types that use this road.

We as a country need to build on the investments already implemented in the area, such as the £77 million, spent on the A77 & A75 from 2008 (the A77 improvements being the Symington and Bogend Toll improvements relating to safety improvements and on sections of dual carriageway north of Ayr). The design work and planning of Maybole's bypass that is scheduled to commence August 2018 is also included in this figure.

#### Existing pressure on the road

- The pulse of vehicle numbers associated with the HGV traffic coming off the ferries results in long convoys in a platoon effect travelling along the road, making passing these vehicles dangerous.
- There is a large proportion of tourist traffic, which is unfamiliar with the snaking, twisting nature of the road.
- There is a mix of slow (agricultural vehicles) and fast-moving traffic (cars and motorcyclists), which can cause delays and lead to driver impatience in the form of rash and often near fatal errors of judgement.
- In some places the road width does not allow two HGVs to safely pass each other without one giving way to the other.
- The road width also does not allow road work to be carried out in a safe way without closing the road (eleven closures occurred for this reason in 2016/17), which results in lengthy diversion routes on even more unsuitable roads.
- There is increased traffic travelling south via the A77 south of Ayr to get to the North Channel ferries operating out of Loch Ryan as a result of the withdrawal of the Troon to Larne ferry service.

#### Potential benefits of an upgrade

The National Planning Framework Strategy Map unequivocally demonstrates the economic and social significance of both A77 and that of A75 to Scotland and the rest of the United Kingdom in equal measure. The local and national economy would benefit by being more accessible to tourists, commerce and improve the links between Scotland and Northern Ireland and its neighbour and EU country the Republic of Ireland.

The A77 Truck Road had nine road closures south of Whitlett's roundabout at Ayr in 2016/17 alone due to road traffic incidents. If the road was wider and upgraded, then these closures would be less frequent, so the communities along the diversionary routes could be left without the thundering traffic disturbing their idyllic settings.

The bypasses and improvements we seek are not that dissimilar to the project benefits of the A737 Dalry bypass in that these upgrades it would serve to separate local from strategic traffic. This in turn would encourage improved economic & employment opportunities through better journey time reliability for both motorists and businesses along the length of the A77.

An independent study commissioned by South Ayrshire Council stated that the benefit to Scotland of events, such as the 145th Golf Open that was held at Royal Troon, was £110m as a whole. The world famous golf course and holiday complex at Turnberry owned by President Trump is being starved of such events due to the lack of investment in the road structure. The action called for in the petition could therefore have positive economic implications for Scotland as a whole.

### Conclusion

South West Scotland needs a fit for purpose road infrastructure in order to sustain and grow with the greater community of Scotland, the United Kingdom and within whatever relationship it has with Europe.

The A77 Action Group is not alone in holding these opinions, as many people use the A77 every single day for work, or for social and domestic purposes, and have supported this campaign.

**Webpage:** <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1657>

### **Committee Consideration**

1. The Committee has received new written submissions from the Cabinet Secretary for Transport and the PE1657 Petitioner, which are set out in **Annexe C**.
2. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage.](#)
3. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
4. [The Scottish Government gave its initial position on this petition on 19 October 2017.](#)
5. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 3,309 signatures have been received on this petition.

### **PE1916: Request a public inquiry into the management of the Rest and Be Thankful project**

#### **Petitioner**

Cllr Douglas Philand and Cllr Donald Kelly

#### **Date Lodged**

2 December 2021

#### **Petition summary**

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to instigate a public inquiry regarding the political and financial management of the A83 rest and be thankful project which is to provide a permanent solution for the route.

### **Previous action**

We have raised 2 petitions at the Scottish Parliament calling for a permanent solution. We have the support of our local MSP Jenni Minto, our Local MP Brendon O'Hara and the previous cabinet secretary Michael Russell. We undertook a petition in 2012 and had more than 400 businesses and over 10 thousand signatories for a permanent solution. We advocated for an A83 Task force which is currently in process.

### **Background information**

The 2 petitions raised with the committee are freely available to view with all the actions well documented at the Scottish Parliament. It is important to state that on the hillside presently there is 100.000 tonnes of unstable hillside which could fall at any time. If this were to fall it would be devastating for the connectivity of the area. This problem has been well documented over the years and how serious a problem this is. The work by the Scottish government to date whilst welcome has not and will not provide stability to the only lifeline road in and out of Argyll and it can be said confidently if the M8 between Glasgow and Edinburgh were to constantly be blocked it would not take 19 years to find a permanent solution. Since the petitions were launched with the backing of 10,000 signatures the cost of the mitigation exercise has been in the region of £90 million since 2007 with no permanent solution in sight.

**Webpage:** <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1916>

### **Committee Consideration**

1. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage.](#)
2. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
3. [The Scottish Government gave its initial position on this petition on 23 December 2021.](#)
4. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 3 signatures have been received on this petition.

### **PE1967: Protect Loch Lomond's Atlantic oakwood shoreline by implementing the High Road option for the A82 upgrade between Tarbet and Inverarnan**

#### **Petitioner**

John Urquhart on behalf of Helensburgh and District Access Trust and The Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs

## **Date Lodged**

22 September 2022

## **Petition summary**

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to reconsider the process for selecting the preferred option for the planned upgrade of the A82 between Tarbet and Inveraranan, and replace the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) based assessment with the more comprehensive Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance.

## **Previous action**

We have held face to face meetings with Ross Greer MSP and Jackie Baillie MSP.

A campaign has been conducted aimed at informing officials, politicians and the public about the issues posed by the A82 upgrade proposal. This has included letters to the press, an article in the Glasgow Herald's 'Agenda' column and a deputation to the board of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park.

We have also submitted Freedom of Information (FOI) requests, which revealed that route selection was made without full and comprehensive cost benefit analysis of all options.

## **Background information**

Reflecting Loch Lomond's National Park status and outstanding natural beauty as well as taking into account wider long term environmental, recreational, economic and social benefits, we feel that pursuing the high road option would offer the following advantages:

- Oak woods and shoreline preserved, allowing wildlife and people to reconnect;
- Old road could continue to carry traffic during the construction period and afterwards would be available as a walking and cycling route;
- The existing road would continue to be available for access to property and for occasional use as a diversion when necessary;
- The Three Lochs Way Great Walking Trail could be linked to the West Highland Way at Inveraranan;
- Tarbet and Ardlui would be by-passed by heavy traffic, improving quality of life for residents and alleviating road safety issues at Arrochar Primary School;
- The higher, straighter route would be faster and safer than any loch side route could ever be;
- Alleviating visitor management pressures along whole length of old road and in the congested Tarbet Bay area;

- A high road would give stunning views of Loch Lomond.

**Webpage:** <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1967>

### **Committee Consideration**

1. The Committee has received a new written submission from the Petitioner which is set out in **Annexe C**.
2. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage.](#)
3. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
4. [The Scottish Government gave its initial position on this petition on 24 October 2022.](#)
5. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 907 signatures have been received on this petition.

## **PE2132: Publish a timeline for the dualling of the A96 between Inverness and Nairn by Easter 2025**

### **Petitioner**

The Inverness Courier

### **Date Lodged**

13 December 2024

### **Petition summary**

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to publish a clear timeline for the dualling of the A96 between Inverness and Nairn and the construction of a bypass for Nairn, ensuring that this timeline is made public by Easter 2025.

### **Background information**

For decades, people in Nairn and surrounding areas have called for a bypass to take traffic from the A96 trunk road out of its town centre.

In 2011 the Scottish Government pledged to complete the dual carriageway network between all of Scotland's cities – including the dualling of the A96 and Nairn Bypass, with a preferred route published in 2014.

In March 2024, Made Orders were published and the process for the acquisition of land required for the scheme started in May 2024.

At present there is no timeline for when the project is set to be delivered.

After more than a decade of delays, local communities continue to face worsening traffic congestion, pollution, and road safety risks.

With significant developments set to bring thousands of new residents and workers to the area, urgent action is needed to address these growing challenges which will further impact the livelihoods of communities affected.

**Webpage:** <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2132>

### **Committee Consideration**

1. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage.](#)
2. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
3. [The Scottish Government gave its initial position on this petition on 14 January 2025.](#)
4. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 487 signatures have been received on this petition.

## Annexe B: Extracts from Official Reports

### Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE1610 and PE1657 on 30 October 2024

**The Convener:** Welcome back. Our consideration of continued petitions continues with PE1610, on upgrading the A75, and PE1657, on the A77 upgrade. The petitions call on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to upgrade the A75 Euro route to dual carriageway for its entirety as soon as possible and to dual the A77 from the Whitletts roundabout in Ayr south to the two ferry ports located at Cairnryan, including the point at which the A77 connects with the A75. We are joined this morning by our colleague Brian Whittle MSP—welcome, Brian—and I think that Mr Carson is sitting in for these petitions, too.

We last considered the petitions last December, when we heard that prioritisation of the strategic transport projects review 2 recommendations would feed into a delivery plan. That delivery plan was due to be published in late 2023, and colleagues will recall that we requested an update on when it would be published. The then minister and now Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Fiona Hyslop, responded to the committee in late January 2024, noting that it was a complex piece of work, with consultation on-going across the Scottish Government. However, she did not give an indication as to when the delivery plan would be published. The Scottish Government at that time had a commitment from the previous United Kingdom Government to provide multiyear funding of £8 million for improvements on the A75.

The petitioner for PE1657, Donald McHarrie, has provided a submission highlighting developments since we last considered the petition. He states that a summit was held on the issue, with the key message focusing on the need for investment in the A77 and A75 in order to provide economic benefits and to reduce carbon dioxide emissions on the roads. He calls for the improvement of the A77 to be raised to national status and not to be considered just as an issue for the south-west of Scotland.

We have also received a written submission this morning from our colleague Elena Whitham. She is unable to attend the meeting, but her submission reiterates support for PE1657 and emphasises that the A77 and A75 are vital strategic routes for Ayrshire and Scotland, supporting both communities and businesses.

Before we move to comments from members, I ask Mr Whittle whether he has anything further to contribute to our consideration.

**Brian Whittle (South Scotland) (Con):** Thank you, convener. I really appreciate having another opportunity to support these petitions.

Having been here several times before, I have tried to find something different to say today and, as a result, have had a wee look specifically at the A77, which is in my region. I know that Mr Carson will speak to the issue of the A75.

I looked at the A77 trunk road and the number of times that it had been closed with diversions in place. Those diversions go along a B road where it is difficult for two cars to pass, let alone a convoy of 44-tonne trucks, and I know from speaking to one

of the haulage companies that whenever there is a diversion on to that road, its trucks get damaged. Indeed, a few of them have been tipped into the field trying to pass each other. Between January 2023 and this September, the road had been closed with that diversion a total of 214 times.

I do not know how else we can frame this. Given that this is a trunk road and an arterial route to Cairnryan, the third busiest port in the UK, and given that 45 per cent of goods coming in from Northern Ireland come through that port, the route cannot be seen as anything other than very important. Driving down that route, especially at certain times of the day, will definitely give you an indication of why this is such a pressing issue.

What is more, we can now evidence what happens when action is taken, because of the bypass at Maybole. The huge impact that that has had on the town of Maybole and on the time that it takes to get down that route is evidence enough. We should, at least, be able to bypass Girvan, where you get a massive hold-up in traffic. These convoys of trucks used to go straight through the centre of Maybole. I have had the opportunity to go down the route in a 44-tonne truck; it is not something that I would advise, to be quite honest, but it is certainly illuminating.

As you have indicated, convener, STPR2 was supposed to have delivered a plan. It has been going on for as long as I can remember in this Parliament, and each time it gets watered down. The way that things are going, I fully expect the next one to say that the grass verges will be cut every second year or something.

This work has to be done. The cost of the Maybole bypass was £30 million, which I know is a lot of money, but I would just note that something like 0.4 per cent of the transport budget has been spent in the south-west of Scotland over the past 10 years. We are definitely not looking for special treatment, but we would like a little bit of parity and a little bit of understanding.

I was interested in the previous petition that you heard, which concerns the economic issues that the south-west of Scotland faces. We need to get some answers on the issue, which has been going on for as long as I have been in the Parliament. The can keeps getting kicked down the road and the solution keeps getting watered down by the Government. We have absolute evidence as to why it is imperative that the A77 gets the treatment that it deserves.

**Finlay Carson:** I am a bit like Mr Whittle. I do not want to repeat a lot of what was said, but let me begin with the late Alex Salmond, who, in November 2011, 13 years ago, spoke at the opening of the new ports at Cairnryan, and talked about the three Rs of Scottish Government support for the region, which were roads, rail and regeneration. The then First Minister even announced the creation of a Scottish Government task force to work with local councils and other partners to explore the potential for the future of Stranraer. Sadly, that all fizzled out, like many other promises.

The First Minister, John Swinney, pledged to improve journey times on the road back in 2016. He has been followed by a succession of transport ministers. Humza Yousaf, Jenny Gilruth, Michael Matheson, Kevin Stewart, Màiri McAllan, Graeme Day and the current transport secretary, Fiona Hyslop, have all pledged action to

upgrade this key artery between the UK and Europe. Eight years since petition PE1610, to upgrade the A75, was first lodged, we are still waiting for action.

The route was recognised in Sir Peter Hendy's union connectivity review as one of the most financially beneficial roads in the UK, carrying billions of pounds-worth of goods every year. Talks are now, thankfully, finally being held between the respective Governments in the UK and Scotland. I hope that today we will find out whether the UK Labour Government is continuing with the commitment to fund studies on the A75 and to follow that up with funding to develop upgrades.

The chronic failure to invest in the A75 is shown tragically in the number of human lives that we have lost, and the safety record of the road is quite appalling. Brian Whittle touched on closures on the A77. To give you some examples, between January and September this year, the A75 was closed on nine occasions due to serious road traffic accidents. In the same date range, the road was closed, with diversions in place, on 11 occasions as a result of roadworks or storm damage. Those diversions resulted in hundreds of miles of detours on roads that are not fit to carry the traffic. Even scheduled closures are now overnight. They have to be overnight closures or full closures of the road because the trunk road is not wide enough to allow upgrades to be made to the surface and traffic to safely pass by, so it is a bit of a double whammy.

It is clear that we need to stop talking about this and get action to upgrade the A75, which has been identified as one of the most important roads in the whole of the UK. That needs to be done as a matter of urgency.

**The Convener:** Thank you, Mr Carson. We were expecting an update nearly a year ago, but that has not been forthcoming. I think that Mr Torrance has some suggestions to make.

**David Torrance:** Would the committee consider writing to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport to note the delay in the publication of the strategic transport projects review 2 delivery plan and to ask when it will be published, and to ask whether the new UK Government has reaffirmed its commitment to provide multiyear funding to improve the A75?

**The Convener:** Mr Carson just made a point about that in his submission. Yes, it seems like an extraordinarily long time for a delay and for nothing to be forthcoming. Those suggestions seems entirely reasonable. Are colleagues content that we keep the petition open and that we pursue those two suggestions and try to get some definition as to what is happening?

**Members *indicated agreement.***

### **Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE1916 and PE1967 on 27 November 2024**

**The Convener:** Do members agree to consider the next two petitions together? I propose that we discuss each petition in turn, with a common suggestion for how we might go forward.

**Members indicated agreement.**

**The Convener:** PE1916, lodged by Councillors Douglas Philand and Donald Kelly, calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to instigate a public inquiry on the political and financial management of the A83 Rest and Be Thankful project, and to provide a permanent solution for the route. We are joined by our MSP colleague the indefatigable Jackie Baillie, who is a regular contributor to our proceedings and maintains an interest in this and our subsequent petition, as well as other petitions.

We last considered the petition at our meeting on 21 February 2024, when we agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, who has responded to the committee. The cabinet secretary states that

“delivery of a permanent and resilient solution is a priority”,

with the publication of draft orders expected by the end of the year. Time is running out. The Scottish Government estimates that the cost of the permanent long-term solution will be between £405 million and £470 million, with a more accurate estimate of the cost expected as work to progress stage 3 of the design manual for roads and bridges develops. The cabinet secretary has also provided information about the medium-term solution, including improvements to the old military road, which is expected to take 12 months to complete once construction gets under way, subject to weather conditions.

We have also received a submission from the petitioners detailing the concerns of the Rest and Be Thankful campaign group. Those concerns include Transport Scotland’s unwillingness to provide a two-way road as part of the medium-term solution; the continued threat of landslides on the route and whether that risk has been properly evaluated; and concerns that funding decisions are made annually, which means that there is no guarantee that the money will be in place when it is needed to complete the project.

Before we consider anything afresh, I invite Jackie Baillie to address the committee.

**Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab):** Thank you, convener, and thank you for your kind words, which I hope will be sustained throughout the meeting.

The petitioners are calling for a public inquiry, born out of frustration at the on-going lack of progress. Discussion about the A83, never mind the petition, has been going on for years. It strikes me that, at this rate, the planning will take longer than the building. I and others look forward to the draft orders at the end of the year, but seeing is believing.

In May, Transport Scotland promised at the A83 task force meeting that a permanent fence would be constructed to protect the road from falling rocks and that the road would be returned to two-way use in the autumn. Clearly, autumn is a loose concept. We are now in November, and there is no fence or two-way road use. I could paper my office with emails advising that the old military road will be used because of bad weather.

The petitioners remain unconvinced that the best solution is being progressed in the short, medium or long term, and they feel that money is being wasted on activity that has not succeeded in opening the road to two-way traffic. They also point out that, at the most recent task force meeting, the cabinet secretary said that the Government was committed to funding the project. However, as you rightly pointed out, convener, Transport Scotland is nervous about the fact that decisions are made only on an annual basis and wonders about future commitment. Therefore, it would be helpful to know whether the Scottish Government is truly committed to the project. I invite the committee to keep the petition open until we are clear about that point.

I have a final comment. If rural Scotland is to thrive and survive, it needs infrastructure to avoid depopulation. Whether it is about ferries or roads, it seems that rural Scotland is being left behind.

**The Convener:** This petition runs through the parliamentary DNA of David Torrance and me because we have lived with it parliamentary session after parliamentary session. We have stood on various sites and looked at the different options, so I feel that I know more about the A83 and the intractability of many of these problems than I do about the subjects of many other petitions. The fact that there is even a nominal solution is progress of sorts.

We will come back to that in a moment. In the meantime, we will consider petition PE1967, which is on protecting Loch Lomond's Atlantic oak wood shoreline by implementing the high road option for the A82 upgrade between Tarbet and Inverarnan. The petition, which was lodged by John Urquhart on behalf of Helensburgh and District Access Trust and the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, calls on the Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to reconsider the process for selecting the preferred option for the planned upgrade of the A82 between Tarbet and Inverarnan, and to replace the design manual for roads and bridges-based assessment with the more comprehensive Scottish transport appraisal guidance.

This is another petition that concerns Jackie Baillie's constituency, so she is with us for it. We last considered the petition on 6 March 2024, when we agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport. The cabinet secretary tells us that the Government is progressing detailed development and assessment work on the scheme but is not yet in a position to confirm a timescale for the publication of draft orders and the associated statutory consultation period. In response to our questions about the estimated cost of the time required to complete a STAG appraisal of the A82 Tarbet to Inverarnan corridor, the cabinet secretary tells us that that would likely take 12 to 18 months, but that doing so would return the project to the very start of the process, resulting in several years' delay to the scheme as well as significant additional cost. It is the cabinet secretary's view that that would unnecessarily repeat work that has already been carried out and would not provide any value for the Scottish taxpayer.

We have also received a submission from the petitioner, which draws our attention to the construction of a new timber extraction road along the line of the proposed high road, which the petitioner suggests demonstrates the feasibility of that option.

The submission also raises concerns about the accuracy of cost estimates that have been used to compare the high road and lochside proposals.

Jackie Baillie, would you like to contribute any thoughts?

**Jackie Baillie:** I welcome John and Anne Urquhart to the public gallery; their presence shows the importance of the petition to the local community.

I have invited the committee to enjoy a sunny day at Loch Lomond to have a look at the situation. I cannot promise the sunshine just now, but I think that such a visit would be instructive. The offer of a guided tour is still very much on the table and would help to illustrate to the committee the damaging implications for the local and wider economy that the Scottish Government's planned upgrade to the A82 would have.

As you have said, convener, the Scottish Government has reiterated its view that the STAG-compliant assessment has already been completed, but so much time has now passed between the costing and design work that the petitioners feel that the assessment is out of date and irrelevant.

There is a continuing feeling that Transport Scotland should carry out a full and proper STAG appraisal, but, at the very least, an update of its existing appraisal would be preferable. If Transport Scotland will not do that, the petitioners feel that the Parliament should conduct an inquiry into the issue.

**The Convener:** I am surprised that you cannot promise sunshine—I thought that Labour was promising sunshine for all.

**Jackie Baillie:** If it will bring you out to the A82, I will promise sunshine for you, convener.

**The Convener:** Colleagues, I am looking at both the petitions and I think that we are now driven in a similar direction as to how we might take them forward. We are going to keep both petitions open.

**David Torrance:** This is the third Parliament session during which I have been involved in discussions about the Rest and be Thankful. I say to Jackie Baillie that it was a sunny day when we visited previously.

**The Convener:** It was.

**David Torrance:** I chaired a meeting of the Public Petitions Committee there.

This has been an on-going issue for the local community and all the measures that have been put in place there so far have failed to keep the road open. I would like to invite the Cabinet Secretary for Transport to give evidence on both these petitions, and on others that focus on road transport, at a future meeting.

**Fergus Ewing:** I support Mr Torrance's suggestion. I was also struck by the petitioner's most recent submission, of 12 November, which I hope the cabinet secretary will respond to at any such evidence session, and in particular, what might be regarded as a bull point, or the bull point, that

“We are amazed that anyone would try to build a road on the existing route under constant threat of landslides from 200,000 tonnes of unstable material. Work will constantly be stopped every time there is movement on the hillside, increasing building costs, and delay delivery of a solution.”

The submission goes on from there. Incidentally, the petitioner’s original submission, in December 2021, referred to a figure of 100,000 tonnes, which seems to have grown to 200,000.

No matter what the tonnage is, there is an awful lot of material. I am familiar with that particular area from the Munro-bagging days of my long-distant past and we all know that there is a constant threat of landslides in that area. I am mystified as to why that route could be chosen, particularly after it has gone through the process of preferred route selection. I am not as experienced, or as long in the tooth, as the convener and deputy convener when it comes to this petition—I am just a junior—but I find it baffling that we would spend £400 million or more on a solution that seems patently flawed. I wanted to make that point ad longum, as m’luds might say, because that has not been explained to me and I would like to know the answer.

My final point is that the argument will not disappear. Jackie Baillie and I have been around for quite a long time and we know that serious arguments, which can seem to the ordinary punter to be unassailable, do not go away. They just fester and that festering process results in disillusion with Governments and Parliaments. I wanted to make that point as best I could.

**The Convener:** I am grateful for that broadcast to the nation, Mr Ewing, and I commend you, as I always do, for delivering it with impeccable grammar from start to finish.

Does that mean that you concur with the suggestion of bringing the cabinet secretary to a future meeting?

**Fergus Ewing:** I certainly concur.

**The Convener:** Are we agreed?

**Members *indicated agreement.***

**The Convener:** That is what we will do. I hope that, by that time, we will have the orders that we have been promised and will be able to investigate the matter that Fergus Ewing spoke about, which is that a high road appears to be being delivered on a temporary basis.

We will keep both petitions open and will ask the cabinet secretary to address them at a subsequent meeting.

## **Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE2132 on 19 February 2025**

**The Convener:** That brings us to the last of the new petitions. PE2132 was lodged by the Inverness Courier and calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish

Government to publish a clear timeline for the dualling of the A96 between Inverness and Nairn and the construction of a bypass for Nairn, by Easter 2025. I presume that the Inverness Courier is known to Mr Ewing, given his earlier intervention.

As the background to the petition reminds us, the Scottish Government committed in 2011 to dualling the full length of the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen by 2030. At that time, the expectation was that work to dual the A96 would follow the completion of the dualling of the A9, which, as the committee knows all too well from our inquiry, has not progressed as originally timetabled—to put it mildly.

In 2018, a public inquiry was held to consider objections to specific proposals in the draft orders for the section of the road between Inverness and Nairn. The outcome of the public inquiry was that Scottish ministers agreed that the orders could be made subject to amendment. The road orders and compulsory purchase order were subsequently made on 22 February 2024, signalling the completion of the statutory process for dualling the A96 between Inverness and Nairn.

In its response to the petition, Transport Scotland referred to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport's statement in November 2024, in which she confirmed that the Government's favoured position is to fully dual the A96, and it stated that the dualling process from Inverness to Nairn, including the Nairn bypass, is under way. Transport Scotland's response also states:

“work is also underway to determine the most suitable procurement option”—

heavens—

“for delivering the A96 Inverness to Nairn including Nairn bypass dualling scheme ... It is expected that the work ... will take a further 12 months”

and will be closely aligned

“with the Mutual Investment Model ... assessment work being undertaken on the A9 Dualling”.

Transport Scotland is appearing to suggest that is only after the procurement option is identified that a timetable for progress can be set.

Well, well. Do members have any comments or suggestions for action? Do I need to even look up before I call Mr Ewing?

**Fergus Ewing:** I am pleased that the Inverness Courier, in its wisdom, has chosen to lodge the petition. I thank it for doing so and for championing the issue, which is of massive concern to everyone in Nairn as well as the wider north-east. In one way, it is quite a modest ask. It is not demanding that the whole project be completed by a certain time. It is simply asking for the Government to publish a clear timeline for the dualling of the A96 between Inverness and Nairn, and for the construction of a bypass for Nairn.

You have outlined the sad history of the work to dual the A96 by 2030. Thus far, £90 million has been spent on preparatory work for the dualling of the A96, but not one

centimetre of tarmac has been laid. Many people, including me, find that almost incomprehensible.

In the Government response in defence of the lack of a timeline, a number of points are made, which I will cover briefly, in the hope that the cabinet secretary might appear before us to give evidence on that and other transport measures, as we might have mooted before. I hope that that will give her some indication of the issues with which she will be concerned and which will certainly be put to her.

The first point is on the made orders, which are an important milestone in the statutory process to determine which properties require to be compulsorily purchased and which ancillary roads need to be adjusted to fit in with the new road. Those are the two main made orders, although there are subsidiary ones. The response says that they were made on 12 March 2024, which is quite true.

There is something that the response does not say, however. I have a document here—I believe that we are not allowed to brandish documents, otherwise I would do so right now—from Transport Scotland. It is a 2016 document, which states that the made orders were expected to be published later that year. Well, that was 2016; we then got to 2024. What happened?

It used to be that draft made orders were displayed on the Transport Scotland website. They were displayed in draft, and they were ready for ages in draft. The year in the provisional date on this draft was 2-0-1-blank. In other words, it was planned that this work would be done nearly a decade ago. It was also promised in the 2011 manifesto and slightly before that by Alex Salmond.

The first point that I want to make is that no explanation has ever been given as to why there was a delay of eight years, which is the longest delay ever in respect of reaching this important stage of the proceedings. That is point 1.

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport has a personal enthusiasm for taking the issue on, to be fair to her. She is the fourth transport minister that we have had in four years, which is not terrific. Setting that aside, the submission says that the reason for the delay is that

“It is fundamental that ... authorities allow sufficient time to properly consider the range of procurement routes available”.

How much more time do they need? I do not want to be too political, but the Government has had four years of this parliamentary session, and I have raised the issue, as members will appreciate, fairly frequently during those four years. That is point 2.

There are two final points that I want to make. I do not want to go on forever, convener—I have a habit of doing that.

**The Convener:** Is there a proposal in all this?

**Fergus Ewing:** There is a proposal, which is that fair notice be given to the cabinet secretary.

**The Convener:** She is coming to the committee to address a tapestry of transport issues.

**Fergus Ewing:** Yes—a rich tapestry of transport issues.

On a practical level, Nairn is really a one-horse town, in the sense that there is one road in and one road out. There are various rabbit runs, which contain diverted traffic and cause danger, because people drive far too fast on them, particularly in the south of Nairn. However, it is basically a one-road town and, in the summer, with tourism and an increased number of visitors, it can take up to an hour to get from one end of it to another, which is about a mile and a half. I do not know whether there is another town in Scotland that has such a serious congestion problem. Nairn feels that it is a forgotten town.

The final point that I want to make—this is important, and I have put it to the cabinet secretary, but we have not really had an answer—is that the cabinet secretary says that she cannot announce a plan because the Government has not decided how to fund it. Well, it has announced a plan and a timeline for the A9, but it has not decided how to fund those sections north of Drumochter, for exactly the same reasons as for the A96. If the argument is that it cannot publish a plan because it does not quite know how it should be financed, I note that the A9 is in exactly the same position as the A96. Ergo, that argument is plainly fallacious. I am afraid that, locally, there is cynicism that that argument is just a pretext, because it is dragging its feet.

I believe that the main parties—not the Greens—support dualling. With the commitments to dual the rest of the A9 under question, unless there is a clear timeline, there is a concern that, after the 2026 election, the Inverness to Nairn section commitment will be dropped like those for the rest of the A9. I am sorry to take up so much committee time on a constituency matter, but I cannot allow that to happen. I cannot remain in my current position unless there is a timeline; that is not compatible with my standing up for my constituents. It would be a betrayal, and I am not prepared to be part of that betrayal. I just wanted to put that on the record.

**The Convener:** Thank you, Mr Ewing. No doubt the cabinet secretary will take note of the Official Report when we flag up issues that might be raised with her when she gives evidence. I note that Nairn is a one-horse town with rabbit runs and that the traffic moves at the pace of a tortoise, but we will try to move beyond all those metaphors and analogies.

Are we content to include the petition as part of the forthcoming evidence session with the Cabinet Secretary for Transport on the various road transport petitions that we have before us?

**Members *indicated agreement.***

## Annexe C: Written submissions

### Cabinet Secretary for Transport written submission, 2 December 2024

#### PE1610/ZZ: Upgrade the A75 and PE1657/WW: A77 upgrade

Thank you for your letter dated 6 November 2024 regarding *PE1610: Upgrade the A75* and *PE1657: A77 upgrade*. You will be aware that both petitions have been under consideration by the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee since 2016 and 2017, respectively. The petitions call on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to upgrade the A75 and A77 to dual carriageway in their entirety. I refer you to previous responses which set out the position of the Government on this matter in full.

Transport Scotland published the South West Scotland Transport Study in January 2020 which formed the STPR2 Initial Appraisal: Case for Change for the South West region. This robust, evidence based appraisal does not recommend taking forward the option for full dualling of either the A75 or A77. Instead, STPR2 recommends that targeted road improvements on both routes are taken forward for further consideration.

The issues raised during recent Committee Meetings on this matter, and the subsequent requests for evidence, no longer align with the original intention of either petition, instead focusing on timescales and funding for the recommendations we have set out in STPR2. It appears that the Committee understand the position of the Government with regards to full dualling. On that basis, I would therefore reiterate the call from the previous Minister for Transport for the Committee to accept this evidence, together with that previously provided, and move to close both petitions which call for the full dualling of both routes.

However, answers to the specific questions asked within your letter are as follows.

STPR2 is a long term ambitious framework for investment in transport. Development of the STPR2 Delivery Plan is underway. This takes account of the current financial climate and is examining existing schemes across all modes, in addition to the longer term STPR2 recommendations.

The latest Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecasts, following the UK Government Autumn Budget Statement, show an improved medium term outlook for capital. The Scottish Government will continue to consider its longer-term infrastructure plans after we receive clarity from the UK Government over our multi-year capital funding envelope in the Spring.

As referred to within your letter, the new UK Government through its Autumn Budget has announced that it will fulfil the commitment made by the previous Government to fund initial design work for improvements to the A75 at Springholm and Crocketford with the provision of up to £5 million funding in 2025-26.

Following the previous UK Government's commitment, Transport Scotland officials had progressed a robust procurement process to appoint technical advisors to take

forward the initial design and assessment work to consider appropriate options for realigning the A75 trunk road at Springholm and Crocketford. This process was paused whilst the new UK Government re-confirmed the commitment made by the previous UK Government.

The recent announcement of funding for next financial year has allowed Transport Scotland to complete this procurement process with more certainty. On 15 November 2024, I announced our intention to award the contract to undertake this work to Jacobs UK Ltd, subject to completion of a 10 day standstill period.

I am pleased that we can now get on and commence the initial design and assessment work for by-passing these two villages on the A75. This design and assessment work will be the first step for this project as we seek to improve the critical link between Ireland and the markets in the rest of the UK and Europe by improving connectivity between the port at Cairnryan and the wider trunk road network. Transport Scotland will be engaging with members of the public, road users and other stakeholders in the coming months as the improvements project progresses.

The provision of £5 million for next financial year is in addition to funding received this year. As a result of the delay to the procurement process during the UK spending review, we have been unable to spend any of this years' funding until this point. My officials at Transport Scotland are working closely with UK Department for Transport counterparts to ensure a shared understanding of the updated cost profile for future years. This is a complex piece of work which will require multi-year spending, and I will therefore continue to work with the UK Government to fulfil the commitment in future years within Phase 2 of its multi-year spending review.

To conclude, this Government has a firm commitment through STPR2 Recommendation 40 to invest in the safety, resilience and reliability of the A75 and A77. The evidence I have set out here, and within previous responses, clearly signals this Government's intent for the improvement of both the A75 and A77. Whilst the recommendation is not to dual either road, the robust evidence based approach that has been taken by the South West Transport Study and STPR2 in coming to this recommendation ensures that the proposed alternative supports regional transport objectives, whilst more proportionately meeting the Sustainable Investment Hierarchy set out in the National Transport Strategy. This supports our commitment to delivering transport projects which will help us to create the conditions for an inclusive and net zero emissions economy.

Yours Sincerely,

**FIONA HYSLOP**

## **Petitioner (PE1610) written submission, 10 December 2024**

### **PE1610/AAA: Upgrade the A75 and PE1657/XX: A77 upgrade**

With yet another tragic fatality on the A75, the the National Speed Management Review (NSMR) was announced with a view to equalising the speed limits of various

road users i.e. increasing HGV speed limits to 50mph while reducing car and motorcycle limits to that same speed on single carriageway roads.

While the increased HGV limit has proven successful over the trial on the A9 for the last few years, and as such cannot be objected to, the lowering of other limits on single carriageway roads will have significant negative repercussions for the A75 in its current state. As a main arterial A road, reducing the speed limits will exacerbate the problems already faced by road users. Frustration caused by the road's current configuration combined with the make-up of the typical traffic situation are arguably bigger causes of road traffic collisions (RTCs) than high speed.

Where this impacts the petition is that when/if these changes come into force, the likelihood is that the problems we are asking to be fixed by upgrading the road will instead be magnified manifold, unless a major comprehensive suite of upgrades is started upon without unnecessary haste. By that I mean the problems of accidents and road closures with lengthy diversions and making our ports more unattractive to users with the attendant risk to jobs.

We have already seen a great number of road closures as the A75 is deemed not wide enough to remain open while maintenance is carried out with lengthy diversions on even narrower unsuited roads. There have already been several occasions where the A75 and A77 have been closed at the same time due to maintenance on one and RTCs on the other, with a 90+ mile diversion in one case. I cannot express strongly enough why upgrades are required. Time is of the essence.

Yet again we have a Cabinet Secretary who is trying to remove a powerful campaign tool for those fighting for improvements to the A75 (and A77). The last attempt to do this was spoken against by the Committee, as these petitions are vital if the desperate need for improvement to these essential connections are to remain on the Government's radar. Calling for their dismissal in my view is nothing but an attempt to silence the debate.

While the ultimate aim of the campaigns for both roads are the eventual dualling of the routes, we have always been pragmatic in the reality that this will not happen all at once. In the case of the A75, one of the prime tenets that campaigners have preached is that while any and every upgrade is to be welcomed, they have to be subject to joined up thinking and futureproofed, with a view to eventually connecting each one together to provide a road fit for all who rely on it. The Cabinet Secretary's letter implies that we all accept the findings of STPR2 as the be-all and end-all for the A75, and while some parts of it are to be welcomed, it quite simply does not go far enough to rectify the many issues resulting from the road being designed for the 1960s/70s and not for the present day, let alone the years ahead. In the simplest terms, when the majority of the A75 was designed, the amount and make up of current traffic or indeed the size of a lot of the vehicles which use it was not foreseen. In its current form, it very poorly serves the communities, the industries and the road users who rely upon it.

It must be noted as well that the recent announcement on the review of speed limits on single carriageway roads makes the need for upgrading the route all the more urgent, given the lack of dual carriageway on the route. While we welcome the proposed increase of the limit for HGVs to 50mph as a step towards easing the

frustration that causes so many of the accidents, the subsequent reduction to the limit for all other vehicles will nullify any benefit. When paired with average speed cameras as suggested by the First Minister at Crocketford yesterday, this will only increase frustration, given the severe lack of safe overtaking opportunities on the A75. Bear in mind there are no alternative dual carriageway routes this far out of the central belt. Given that this seems to be the way the wind is blowing as far as the Government is indicating, speed reduction and enforcement as a solution to the problem of the A75 rather than meaningful improvement of the infrastructure, I plead that the petition is more relevant and indeed as vital as ever.

## **Petitioner (PE1657) written submission, 14 December 2025**

### **PE1657/YY: A77 Upgrade and PE1610/BBB: Upgrade the A75**

This is my response to the Cabinet Secretary's latest response to the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee. The South West Scotland is feeling like it's the forgotten, ignored, neglected, deprived corner of Scotland. This is despite the STPR2 hints to improve the South West trunk road network. This framework has been extremely slow to deliver, sat on or held back by almost as many Transport Ministers as bypasses the A77 needs.

Action has been watered down by total ineptitude, and diluted further by total waffle and inaction by successive Cabinet Secretaries and First Ministers since the petition was lodged in 2017. It's not a 1950s Bewitched sitcom where Endora can click a finger and it's all gone away, we in the very South West get that. Then they all try to use the desperately needed bypass at Maybole that was first designed in the 1930s. That action was just the sticky plaster when open heart surgery is required on the A77.

The A77 is important to the Scottish economy. All goods totalling circa £10m per day from Scotland to Northern Ireland from the M8 industrial corridor have to travel on the A77 to the Ferry Ports at Cairnryan. This makes the A77 one of the most important trunk roads in Scotland for goods travelling to and from Northern Ireland. The A77 also links 4 major cities - Edinburgh, Glasgow, Belfast and onward to Dublin making the A77 the most important connectivity between Scotland and Northern Ireland for all aspects of the transport of goods and tourism.

The data we have is from the ferry companies and South West Transport Alliance indicates that around 1.75m passengers, almost 500,000 cars, and 400,000\* freight vehicles on an annual basis go through the North Channel ferry routes.

\*This is five times more than CalMac handles across all its routes. Does anyone in Scotland need a gentle reminder of that ferry fiasco? When Transport Scotland was involved in that, it was producing STPR2. The question is, can the Scottish taxpayer trust its robustness or reliability to do the STPR2 properly, considering it could squander so much of taxpayers' money on the commissioning of new ferries for Calmac, without robust questioning and checking? I would seriously ask the Committee to bring that into the consideration process going forward.

So the A77 road should be a Scottish Government priority, you would think! But it clearly is not. No allocation of budget, or any clear plan to ask the UK Government

for additional funds to improve connectivity with other parts of the United Kingdom. At one time these projects on the road could qualify for European help with funding. So the Scottish Government has the civic duty to ask the UK Government to seek funding for such a strategic infrastructure. This road serves not only Scotland and Northern Ireland but also the ROI thus the European Union.

Since the dawn of the Scottish Parliament the ferry operators P&O and Stena Line have invested in the routes from Cairnryan roughly to the tune of £422m. On the other hand, the Scottish Government in the two roads that service the ports at Cairnryan investment has been a paltry £83m. The UK Government has given the Scottish Government an additional £5m to do a feasibility study for the last two villages on the other road that goes to England while the A77 from Ayr to Stranraer, a largely un-engineered road, is left to crumble. The layout can go back to the 1700s, it is not fit for the 21st century, so not designed to withstand 44 tonne HGVs pounding it.

In 2011 the late Alex Salmond, when First Minister, opened Stena Line's new state-of-the-art port facility and boldly promised in front of Northern Ireland's First Minister that this project deserved the 3 Rs Rail, Road, and Regeneration. This was all while Northern Ireland's First Minister had already delivered to the North Irish Ports at least dual carriageways. In the A77's case within its first 28 miles it has been down to a single lane under traffic control lights for more than 3000 plus days and counting. For the last ten years the A77 has had traffic control at various sites between Cairnryan and Girvan that have been there because of landslides or there are risks of landslides happening. However it doesn't get highlighted like the A83 Rest N' Be Thankful by the media. The local users have christened the A77 The Patch-It and be bloomin' grateful! The A77 is the shortest route to our European colleagues in the Republic of Ireland from Scotland and is one of the most modern ferry ports in Europe. We understand that the current problem site is set to go into 2025 before the carriageway is a proper single carriageway again.

The A77 is the slowest trunk road in Scotland with the average speed from Ayr where the dual carriageway stops and a road for donkeys begins to go towards the port is 37.8 miles per hour. It's no wonder because you have 6 villages and a town to go through with urban speed limits. That's travelling south in the space of 56 miles. When travelling north from the village of Minishant, the last urban limit to the next village on the A9 before another urban speed restriction is 266 miles.

Road closures by year:

- 19 - 2020
- 67 - 2021
- 66 - 2022
- 50 - 2023
- 167 - 2024 (up to September)

No action from Scotland's Government and no detailed plan for the future, just a vaguely half hearted Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 plans that's been sat on by various Cabinet Secretaries or held back. The Economy of Scotland is being held back!

Capital infrastructure investment in the South West of Scotland's trunk roads over the past decade has been insufficient and the A77 has been reduced to a single lane carriageway for 3000 days out of the possible 3652 days of those years.

I ask the Committee to travel the A77 in a larger vehicle from Ayr to Stranraer, preferably a ride in a 44tonne wagon, to appreciate the ask and the urgency of the petition. Bring the Cabinet Secretary and First Minister with you I know enough coach companies or haulage companies who would be very eager to assist you with that!

## **Petitioner written submission, 19 March 2025**

**PE1967/M: Protect Loch Lomond's Atlantic oakwood shoreline by implementing the High road option for the A82 upgrade between Tarbet and Inverarnan**

### **STAG and DMRB**

#### **1. Background**

We are demanding Transport for Scotland conducts a full STAG Appraisal of the A82 Tarbet to Inverarnan Project as required by Law. This request has been agreed by the Committee but has been rejected by the responsible Minister on the grounds that an equivalent/comparable analysis has already been undertaken. The petitioners dispute that the DMRB based studies are compatible with Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) approach, which has a much broader scope including impacts that are of particular significance for such a huge infrastructure investment in the heart of the National Park. As an example, the TEE (Transport Economic Efficiency) is a key metric in a DMRB based appraisal but STAG (as opposed to the DMRB) also requires consideration of the Wider Economic Impact. The petitioners believe there will be a significant impact on local tourism if the High Route is chosen over the Shore Route, and argue that it must be part of the appraisal to comply with the law and ensure a robust decision.

STAG also requires a two stage Appraisal; a comprehensive Preliminary Options Appraisal and a second stage Detailed Appraisal. Where a route is clearly inferior on all grounds, then it can be excluded at the Preliminary Stage (as with the Glen Loin route) but otherwise all routes should be appraised in detail. Specifically, "For each rejected option there should be discussion of its performance against the Transport Planning Objectives and any other reason for rejection". No reasons for the rejection of the High Route have been given other than back of the envelope calculations of cost (which can be shown to be hopelessly biased and erroneous).

It seems unlikely that Members or Ministers will have read [the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance](#) and even less likely that they will have studied the [Technical Guidance](#), which covers areas like the costs associated with unreliability or frustration. Below we show the difference in scope between STAG and DMRB and the need, both legally and for good decision making, to carry out a STAG based Appraisal.

#### **2. Extracts from STAG Guidance**

## “1.2 When Should STAG be Used?”

An appraisal using STAG is required whenever Scottish Government funding, support or approval is needed to change the transport system. It may also offer a suitable framework for other funders.

## 1.3 STAG and the Place Principle

The Place Principle is an approach to change based on a shared understanding of what a particular place is for and what it wants to become. **It aims to ensure investment is people and community focussed** [*emphasis added*].

## 1.4 How does STAG Fit with Other Transport Assessment Guidance?

STAG is applicable to all transport interventions, regardless of the transport modes affected.

## 2.2 Key concepts

- **Objective-led rather than solution-led**

An objective-led process avoids pre-conceived solutions. Appraisals are expected to explore location-specific problems and opportunities, set objectives, and demonstrate how options perform against them.

- **Evidence-based**

The foundation of all appraisals is a clear evidence base.

- **Collaborative**

- **Proportionate**

- **Does not prioritise between options**

...it is important that the appraisal outcomes are revisited ...

## 3.2 Problems and Opportunities

Location-specific **problems or opportunities** should be the rationale for any appraisal. [*emphasis added*].

... should identify problems and opportunities for specific groups of people, such as those with disabilities, women, and young people.

## 3.5 Participation and Engagement

Your appraisal will need effective participation and engagement to demonstrate to decision makers the impact of problems and opportunities on people and businesses in the study area.”

Our comment: real participation and engagement has never occurred.

#### **“4.1 Option Generation**

You will need to refer to both the Sustainable Travel Hierarchy and the Sustainable Investment Hierarchy when identifying options.”

#### **STAG Criteria**

##### Environment

The Environment criterion includes eight sub-criteria,

- Biodiversity and Habitats
- Geology and Soils
- Land Use (including Agriculture and Forestry)
- Water, Drainage and Flooding
- Air Quality
- Historic Environment
- Landscape
- Noise and Vibration

##### Climate Change

The Climate Change Criterion comprises three sub-criteria:

- Greenhouse Gas Emissions
- Vulnerability to the Effects of Climate Change
- Potential to Adapt to the Effects of Climate Change

##### Health, Safety and Wellbeing

The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Criterion comprises four sub-criteria:

- Accidents
- Security
- Health Outcomes
- Access to Health and Wellbeing Infrastructure
- Visual Amenity

##### Economy

The Economy Criterion has two sub-criteria, which together should summarise the full extent of economic impacts.

- Transport Economic Efficiency (TEE) covers the benefits ordinarily captured by standard cost-benefit analysis – including traffic volumes, journey times, user frustration or travel time reliability
- Wider Economic Impacts (WEIs) refer to any economic impacts which are additional to transport user benefits. How might the option help

attract new jobs, help existing businesses, open up appropriate land for development?

Appraisals have traditionally focussed on the TEE assessment with less emphasis placed on WEIs. To ensure an effective economic assessment, both should be addressed.

### Equality and Accessibility

The Equality and Accessibility criterion includes five sub-criteria.

- Public Transport Network Coverage
- Active Travel Network Coverage
- Comparative Access by People Group
- Comparative Access by Geographic Location
- Affordability

For each rejected option there should be discussion of its performance against the Transport Planning Objectives and any other reason for rejection.”

### **3. Failure to comply with the law**

Transport Scotland believe the A82 project is a series of road straightening and widening engineering tasks. The reality is that it as a major project that will define the future of north Loch Lomond for generations to come. It is conceivable that a difference in estimated costs will not be balanced by the size of the undoubted benefits of the High Route and we are insistent this must be tested properly in line with the legal requirements, including taking into account the National Park’s newly announced “Future Nature Landscape Connections Initiative” as it relates to the need to preserve the beautiful loch shore as an essential landscape connection in terms of its cultural, recreational, and economic significance, as well as its ecological role as a wildlife corridor and ecotone vital for the preservation and promotion of biodiversity.

We note that without any promotion whatsoever, the petition continues to gather support and now stands at 904 signatures.