

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 23 April 2025
7th Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

PE1916: Request a public inquiry into the management of the rest and be thankful project

Introduction

Petitioner Cllr Douglas Philand and Cllr Donald Kelly

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.

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

1. [The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on 2 April 2025.](#) At that meeting, the Committee heard 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
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage.](#)
4. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
5. [The Scottish Government gave its initial position on this petition on 23 December 2021.](#)
6. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 3 signatures have been received on this petition.

Action

7. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

Clerks to the Committee
April 2025

Annexe A: Summary of 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.

Annexe B: Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE1610, PE1657, PE1916, PE1967 and PE2132 on 2 April 2025

The Convener: Agenda item 2 is consideration of existing petitions, beginning with an evidence session on a compendium of petitions with the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Fiona Hyslop. I am delighted that she is with us along with Transport Scotland officials: Lawrence Shackman, the director of major projects, whom I think we have had the pleasure of meeting before at some point; Nicola Blaney, the head of strategic transport planning; and Alasdair Graham, the head of design, procurement and contracts. I warmly welcome you all. Thank you very much for attending the meeting.

The committee recognises that we are moving into the last year of the parliamentary session, so, in order to expedite a number of petitions, we hope to meet with cabinet secretaries in different disciplines to try to work our way through the petitions. Otherwise, we will not be able to do justice to them in the time that we have left.

PE1610, which was lodged by Matt Halliday, calls 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.

PE1657, which was lodged by Donald McHarrie on behalf of the A77 action group, calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to dual the A77 from Ayr's Whitletts roundabout south to the two ferry ports located at Cairnryan, including the point at which the A77 connects with the A75.

PE1916, which was lodged by Councillor Douglas Philand and Councillor Donald Kelly, calls on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to instigate a public inquiry into the political and financial management of the A83 Rest and Be Thankful project to provide a permanent solution for the route. The petition has stretched across various parliamentary sessions and, in a previous session, I and, I think, David Torrance paraded around the ground ourselves to see what was what.

PE1967, 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 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 Inverarnan, and to replace the design manual for roads and bridges-based assessment with the more comprehensive Scottish transport appraisal guidance.

Finally, PE2132, which was lodged by the Inverness Courier, 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, and to ensure that that timeline is made public by Easter 2025. We would be going some, I suppose, to achieve that.

My eyesight is never quite clear, but I think that we are joined by petitioners in the public gallery. We are also joined by two of our parliamentary colleagues, Jackie Baillie, who has had an on-going and particular interest in PE1916 and PE1967, which is on the A82—

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): The A83.

The Convener: Which one?

Jackie Baillie: The Rest and Be Thankful.

The Convener: That is the one.

We are also joined by Emma Harper, who has an interest in PE1610, on the A75, and PE1659, on the A77.

Members who join us have no automatic right to ask questions, but I will invite them to follow on and ask questions at the end, if everybody is agreed. It has been my practice to encourage as much active participation and engagement from MSPs on petitions in which they have a constituency interest. I am less interested if they are coming as party spokesmen, but if they are here because of a constituency interest, I am keen to hear from them.

Cabinet secretary, in the light of all that, I understand that you would like to say something to us in advance of our beginning our questions. Rather than the meeting becoming a free-for-all, one colleague will lead a discussion about each of the different petitions, and I know that you will bring in your colleagues as and when you think that would be most helpful.

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport (Fiona Hyslop): Thank you, convener. Good morning. I have opening remarks to provide a bit of context, which might be helpful. I thank the committee for inviting me to discuss the petitions relating to the A75, the A77, the A83 Rest and Be Thankful, the A82 between Tarbet and Inverarnan, and the A96 Inverness to Nairn bypass.

The Scottish Government recognises the crucial role of transport infrastructure in supporting sustainable economic growth and access to essential services, and we are committed to improving transport infrastructure across Scotland. The Scottish Government has a strong record of delivering major infrastructure projects, including the £745 million Aberdeen western peripheral route and the £1.34 billion Queensferry crossing on the Forth estuary, which was a complex engineering feat that put our workmanship to the front and centre of global engineering. We have also delivered the Borders railway and electrified the rail route between our two largest cities through the Glasgow to Edinburgh improvement programme. In addition, since 2012, we have invested more than £475 million in the A9 dualling programme, which has enabled statutory processes to be completed for 10 out of the 11 projects, delivered the first two projects into operational use and supported procurement on the third and fourth contracts.

On the A82, a new viaduct has been built at Pulpit Rock on the side of Loch Lomond, which has helped to remove traffic signals that had been there for nearly 30 years,

and a much-needed bypass at Crianlarich has reduced traffic in the town by half. Both improvements benefit road users and local communities along the A82.

At a total cost of £64 million, we have completed five major improvements on the A77, including the £29 million Maybole bypass. We have also completed six major roads improvement projects on the A75, with a total value of more than £50 million.

Following an initial meeting with the A77 campaign team in November, I met A75 and A77 campaigners, including the two petitioners, on Friday 21 March. I am happy to report that my offer to establish a regular six-monthly meeting to bring them together with Transport Scotland and Amey was accepted.

Although the United Kingdom autumn budget marked a step in the right direction, it did not make up for 14 years of underinvestment—austerity cannot be undone in one year. We still face significant pressures on our capital budget, which are significantly affecting our ability to maintain investment in all Scotland's transport infrastructure.

Despite the significant pressures on our capital budget, we continue to progress improvements to the trunk road network. That includes dualling the A96 from Inverness to Nairn—including the Nairn bypass—and the procedural steps for the acquisition of land have now been concluded, which has delivered a further key milestone for the scheme. We continue to progress work to determine the most suitable procurement option for delivering the scheme, after which a timetable for delivery can be set.

Development work on the A83 Rest and Be Thankful continues at pace, with draft orders having been published last December for medium-term and long-term solutions. In addition, following the allocation of funding from the UK Government, we have wasted no time in progressing the design and assessment work to consider the options for realigning the A75 trunk road at the villages of Springholm and Crocketford, with almost 180 people having attended the meet-the-team events that were held three weeks ago.

I thank the committee for giving me the opportunity to make those opening remarks, which provide a bit more current context, and I will be happy to answer any questions that committee members have on the petitions.

The Convener: Thank you very much. It has been a while since I have been up the A82—has the 30-year-old traffic light finally gone?

Fiona Hyslop: That is my report to the committee.

The Convener: That is very exciting news from my point of view, although I have not been up that road in a while.

I will ask some general questions first. It is interesting to note that Scotland's trunk road network is the single biggest asset that is owned by the Scottish Government. It is 2,179 miles long and is worth about £20 billion. It includes a 10-lane section of the M8 and rural carriageways through the west to the Highlands. It is an extraordinary thing.

There is no single document that sets out the Scottish Government's programme of trunk road upgrades or the delivery milestones and associated budgets. Current plans, such as the second strategic transport projects review and the infrastructure investment plan, provide only a partial picture of the planned improvements. Is there a reason for not having all that in a single document, or is there an argument for having a single document that could pull all that together?

Fiona Hyslop: There is the matter of action versus bureaucracy. There is that tension for everybody in producing reports—we can get criticised for producing too many reports.

We do regular asset management, and there are two issues in that regard. First, members and constituents are probably more interested in the additional improvements and enhancements, but a lot of what we do involves running the basic system and ensuring care and maintenance. Despite the pressures on capital budgets, I have worked hard to improve the maintenance budget. Why is that important? It is important for safety. You are right about the roads being assets. People take them for granted until something happens, and then there is obviously concern.

Secondly, climate change is here. There are real issues about the stability of land and in ensuring that we maintain all our assets—that applies to rail as well as to roads. Across Transport Scotland, I am taking forward analysis of climate change impacts.

We are developing work on roads in vulnerable locations—we had done some work on that previously, but we are paying it more attention now. For example, on 21 March, I visited Carlock wall and Carlock hill, on the A77. The hill was subject to landslips. People thought that they could put up wires and catch pits a bit like what has been done on the A83. However, following ground investigation, they realised that they would have to drill in and have nailing for more security. We have to be aware of the increasing need to take care of our major assets.

On bringing all that together, I see an asset assessment annually. I might bring in Lawrence Shackman on that. I regularly see material that tells me the state of the assets. However, because people are interested, there is an issue around what we make more public in relation to enhancements, improvements, additional drilling and so on. You are, I think, asking whether we bring all that together. That might be a big effort, but we could probably signal where everything is if people wanted to find it.

Lawrence Shackman (Transport Scotland): An annual asset management plan is published. Yearly, it summarises what has happened on the trunk road network in relation to maintenance and operations and what will happen in the year to come. It sets out where the pressures are and where the investment has been targeted.

When it comes to projects, we have the infrastructure investment plan, which is a published document that is due to be refreshed in the coming year. It is an excellent summary of the status of the projects that will come into the programme or are already in the programme. Between those two documents and others—the Transport Scotland website, for example, has a plethora of information on maintenance, operations, projects that are currently on the books and projects that have been

completed—a host of information summarises maintenance, operations and the projects.

The Convener: The process for authorising trunk road developments is long established—it is 40 years old. Some would argue that the pace of some recent approvals for projects has been slower than it might have been. Is there any plan to change the process—in particular, if a project has broad public and political support—in order to expedite things?

Fiona Hyslop: The Scottish transport appraisal guidance is central. It was published for consultation in July 2001 and formally published in 2003. A major update was made in May 2008, and the next major update involved a refresh of the guidance in January 2022, so there has been progress during that period. When it comes to that provision, a balance needs to be struck in relation to people’s legal rights. Does the majority view prevail over the minority—perhaps landowner—interest?

A lot of the variation happens at the stage of our issuing draft orders. The existence of any objections makes a major difference in how things can progress. On some issues, we are trying very hard. An awful lot of input goes into trying to ensure that there are no objections, because a public local inquiry can obviously take a lot of time. For example, there has been a huge number of responses and enormous public input in relation to the Sheriffhall roundabout. If landowners or others have key interests, there is a balance to be struck. Even though everybody and their granny might want something, if a few individuals do not—for good and understandable reasons—we have to carry out due process.

The reason for the difference in the speed of how things have progressed is that there can be objections. As I have said to officials, we have had some success, particularly with some of the more recent proposals, such as on the A9, to which there have been no objections, which has allowed us to move to completion. It is key to complete that statutory process, because, once we do that and avoid a public inquiry, if we can, we can move to action through procurement and delivery.

The Convener: I can understand that. I seem to recall that, when you had responsibility for culture, you and I had a similar discussion about the Pentland film studios—at the end of the day, a single landowner was, potentially, frustrating a major project that could have proceeded at that point.

What is the Government’s current thinking about the mutual investment model as a method for funding trunk road improvements?

Fiona Hyslop: We have been very clear about that. Indeed, my predecessor Màiri McAllan made a statement announcing that we would actively consider the mutual investment model, particularly in relation to the A9. We are currently discussing that model through a market consultation, which started on 24 February.

There are obviously value-for-money issues. We understand that the project will be revenue costly, and I have relayed the constraints on our capital budget, but there is an opportunity to find a balance. I have ensured that the market consultation that is taking place for the A96 project from Inverness to Nairn includes the potential for that model, although I am not saying for definite that it will be used.

My officials are working actively with exchequer colleagues on the A9, and the mutual investment model is actively being pursued as the mechanism for that project. I am working very closely with the Cabinet Secretary for Finance and Local Government on that—it is live and active. That is for just two of the sections of the A9. We are actively looking at that. Of course, private investment and different models have been involved in road projects previously, including those for the Aberdeen western peripheral route and the M8.

The Convener: I have just a final thought. In response to my first question, you referred to the fact that a large part of the responsibility is the care and maintenance of the existing estate. I am interested in those cases where something goes wrong. For example, there is suddenly a need for a major injection of capital to resolve the issue at the M8 Woodside viaduct, and we have had, and considered, petitions suggesting that it be grassed over and various other things. What impact might that have on the other projects that you are seeking to pursue?

Fiona Hyslop: It has a big impact. We can plan as well as we can, but we also have to try to manage the budget across a whole range of projects while not necessarily knowing how long they will take. For example, there might or might not be a public inquiry delaying us from our original intention, but that is part and parcel of the process.

I am glad that you have mentioned Woodside. When I went to see it, the engineering aspect of it was explained to me; my colleagues could probably give you more of an explanation, but the erosion of the steelwork within the pillars is really problematic. People do not see it, because obviously the pillars are propping up the M8 as it goes through the city centre, but it is an issue that clearly had to be addressed. I ensured that local councillors and MSPs were invited to see the work to understand what was happening.

People do get frustrated at the lane reductions and so on, but it is all about safety and ensuring that the weight is reduced while the work gets done. An important issue, as those of you who are familiar with Glasgow will know, is the subway that runs underneath and, potentially, mines, too. It is a serious piece of work that needs done, and we therefore have to stage and manage it—and to do so within a budget, which is very problematic.

Things can happen in different areas, as is clearly the case with the A83, for example, in relation to landslips. Thank goodness we put in the catch pits there. You saw the major closure that we previously had, and work was done to address issues arising from the warm, wet weather there. We have to react as well as maintain, and we have to improve, too. That is the balancing act that we have to perform with all our budgets—we have to try and spread them over time.

The Convener: Committee members have gone out to see these things, and we understand the geological challenges that sometimes present themselves, as well as the safety issues, as you have said. It is perfectly apparent from bridge collapses elsewhere what happens without a proper care and maintenance programme. It is essential.

Thank you for all of that, cabinet secretary. We will now move on to discuss the various roads. Maurice Golden will speak to petition PE1657 on the A77. Emma Harper, if you want to ask a question, I will invite you in after colleagues.

[a section of Official Report not related to this petition has been removed]

The Convener: We move on to petition PE1916, which is on the Rest and Be Thankful. Rested and thankful is David Torrance.

David Torrance (Kirkcaldy) (SNP): Thank you, convener.

Good morning. Cabinet secretary, I believe from your opening statement that the access to the Argyll and Bute project would be funded from the capital budget. As you know, the committee has a long-standing history with the Rest and Be Thankful going as far back as session 4 of the Parliament. We have visited the site and seen improvements to catchment nets, to the stabilising of the hill and to the old military road. What assurances can you give that the capital budget that is in place will deliver long-term solutions?

Fiona Hyslop: The project has short, medium and long-term aspects. The option that will be proceeded with has been chosen and we are now embarking on its initial design, which is going through the processes that are set out in the design manual that we talked about earlier.

Some of the short-term improvements relate to the catchment area. Funnily enough, we were in Inveraray at an A83 task force meeting—I think that Jackie Baillie was one of the MSPs who dialled into that meeting—that took place just before Storm Babet, so we were hearing directly from Amey about what was going to happen with the rainfall that was expected, and, a couple of days later, we saw the consequences. There have been some landslides in areas beyond the areas that were initially identified, so, in the short term, there has been investment in those areas.

Significant work has been done on the medium-term aspects, which involves strengthening the old military road and improving bends on it. Quite a lot has been invested in the old military road to help with the current diversions and in relation to what will be required for the final design as part of the long-term project, which involves the covering that will ensure the long-term sustainable future of the A83.

In terms of capital budgets, the committee will be aware that we do not keep pots of money aside and say, “That’s marked for the A83 and is only to be opened at such a time as it will be invested.” We are only starting with the initial aspects of the DMRB. We have just issued the draft orders—perhaps my colleagues can remind me when that took place.

Alasdair Graham (Transport Scotland): We issued them in December.

Fiona Hyslop: Yes, the draft orders went out in December, and the process ended in February. I probably should not say too much about it just now, but we are going through the process of looking at that.

I hope that there will not be a public inquiry, but, if there is, the capital funding that you asked about will not necessarily be required in the next year or the year after; it could take a bit longer, and there will still be statutory processes to conclude. The capital allocation will be required at some point. The major capital allocation for the construction will be required going forward. It is important to put on record that we have the funding this year to progress the items that need to be carried out this year, but part of what we are doing—other MSPs regularly ask about this—involves trying to manage the budget well in advance and having those funds ready for when they need to be deployed.

The six-monthly task force report is open to all councillors and all MSPs. They do not always attend meetings about it—sometimes send researchers instead—but there is an openness there, and people can hear about what is happening. BEAR Scotland provides a lot of helpful updates on current aspects and improvements, and we also get to hear from our engineers and consultants about how they are progressing with the next stages.

I have probably covered quite a lot there, but, realistically, part of the planning is to ensure that capital funding is available when it is needed, and that is what we will be doing with the A83.

David Torrance: The petitioners have argued that the development of a route on the opposite side of Glen Croe would be preferable to the current interim measures, which are focused on the old military road. Will you explain why that option has not been taken forward?

Fiona Hyslop: Again, that is a historical issue. At the time when different options were put forward and major consultations took place, some people insisted that they wanted a different route to the one that was finally decided on, and, to varying degrees, some still argue that, but there were problems with all the various options. We are now quite far on in the final design stage of the option that, I think, was agreed in June 2023—is that correct?

Alasdair Graham: That is correct.

Fiona Hyslop: So, it was agreed quite some time back, and there are problems with the alternatives that people have suggested. That is a challenge for the committee, because you are looking at something that has a long history—you have probably been involved in the A83 longer than I have been Cabinet Secretary for Transport.

I would be concerned if anybody, in holding out for an option that was investigated, consulted on and rejected some time ago, wants to hold up the current provision. In such a case, I would really worry for the people of Argyll. This is essential work that has to be done to make sure that there is a sustainable future for the economy and for the communities of Argyll. I can understand and appreciate where that suggestion came from at the time, but we have moved on from that now.

David Torrance: The petitioners have questioned the usefulness of the proposed long-term solution for Rest and Be Thankful and have argued for a tunnel or a viaduct. Why have those suggestions not been taken on board?

Fiona Hyslop: I will ask Lawrence Shackman to respond, if that is okay.

Lawrence Shackman: Five main options were considered before deciding on the debris flow shelter on the existing road, which is the preferred option for the long-term solution, as published in the draft orders. We considered a tunnel, a viaduct down the valley, a route on the other side of the glen, and a hybrid option. All those options were assessed against a host of criteria, including environmental impact, stability, engineering work, cost and buildability. The tunnel and viaduct options had some merits, but not to the extent of those of the proposed debris flow shelter, which is why those options were rejected. Fully accessible reports are available on Transport Scotland's website, which anyone can look at to see the reasoning behind our decision.

The Convener: I was not sure whether the cabinet secretary was suggesting that Mr Torrance had been involved with the road longer than she has, or whether he had been involved longer than the road had been there. Jackie Baillie, which you like to augment any comments about the route?

Jackie Baillie (Dumbarton) (Lab): I think that the road outstrips us all.

The petitioners' third petition, PE1916, calls for a public inquiry into the "political and financial mismanagement" of the A83. Things have moved on substantially, but I note that their first petition was lodged in 2012, so we have been at this for a long time, and we are at the foothills of something starting to happen. I think that we all appreciate the petitioners' frustration.

In focusing on the future, could the cabinet secretary provide some indicative detail on how much money will be needed and when? I assume that you have profiled the capital. Assuming—touch wood—that the draft orders go through and that there are no objections or a requirement for a full inquiry, what will the likely timeline be?

Fiona Hyslop: I am circumspect about the draft orders and public inquiry, because we are in a live situation, and I ask you to respect that.

Jackie Baillie: Sure.

Fiona Hyslop: The estimated cost for the permanent long-term solution is between £408 million and £510 million in quarter four 2024 prices. We will need to identify how long the construction will take. There has been significant investment in the old military road, which I have inspected and which anyone who is driving on that road will be able to identify. As I said, even with the improvements that have been made, there are on-going issues in the short term, with challenges such as increasing wet weather and ground saturation. A lot of science has been involved in monitoring the water levels, which also allows us to activate in advance the old military road when it is required.

I want to say publicly that we are also working very hard with the BBC and STV so that, when they make announcements about the impact of weather, they indicate that the A83 is still open, even if the old military road is being used as a diversion, which is important. In the past—and this still happens sometimes—they have said "The A83 is closed", which implies that Argyll is closed, but it is not. As I said, things

such as that can also make a difference, although I acknowledge that that addresses a different point to your question.

My officials might be able to talk about what is required and when with regard to the roll-out of spend.

Lawrence Shackman: Currently, we are continuing with ground investigation works, and there are costs associated with that. We are trying to ensure that, when we get to the construction phase, as much information as possible is known about the ground conditions. In civil engineering, most of the issues are with things that you cannot see, such as what is in the ground. In this case, that involves issues such as ensuring that we know where the rockhead is for the foundations of the debris flow shelter.

Taking cognisance of what the cabinet secretary has said about the objection and representations period that we are in at the moment, once that and a public inquiry, if it is necessary, is out of the way, we will be able to move on to the procurement stage. We will then finalise the type of contract that we will put in place, bearing in mind that there is an active hillside, which will mean that the contractor will face strong challenges throughout the construction period.

Procurement could take a year or 18 months or so, depending on how we factor in those particular concerns. During the construction period—of probably three or four years—that will follow, we will try to maintain traffic flows, using the old military road to a large extent. We hope that we will get contractors with a good eye for innovation, to make sure that the period of disturbance to local users is minimised as much as possible, and that they build the works in a safe and appropriate manner.

Jackie Baillie: If I have picked you up correctly, you are saying that, with a fair wind, the timeline could be six years.

Lawrence Shackman: Yes. Obviously, it will depend on the particular contractors and how well they do, as well as what the weather is like during construction. If there is a landslide, that would have an impact.

Fiona Hyslop: Part of that is about the momentum and making sure that things keep moving. To reassure you, there is £18.5 million for this financial year as part of the medium and long-term solutions.

The Convener: That brings us to petition PE1967, which relates to the A82.

[a section of Official Report not related to this petition has been removed]

The Convener: We have covered a range of petitions, and it has been very helpful to the committee to take forward a number of them in the time that we have left. There might be some other petitions—there is still controversy ahead.

Would you like to add anything further, or do you feel that you have managed to convey everything that had to be said in the time that we have spent together?

Fiona Hyslop: I just want to say thank you. I know that everybody wants their part of the county to be seen as a priority. The south-west wants to be seen as a priority, as

do other parts of the country. The challenge for any cabinet secretary, particularly the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, is that members feel passionately about their area and want to pursue the best for their constituents. I know that I cannot please everybody all the time, but I reassure the committee that, since becoming the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, I have given every attention to getting momentum and making progress in a number of areas, including the ones that you have identified in these petitions.

The Convener: I thank Lawrence Shackman, Alasdair Graham, Nicola Blaney and the cabinet secretary for their time this morning. I also thank Jackie Baillie and Emma Harper, who joined us to take forward the consideration of the assorted petitions.

I suspend briefly to allow the witnesses to leave.