

Briefing for the Public Petitions Committee

Petition Number: [PE1853](#)

Main Petitioner: Councillor Donald Kelly & Councillor Douglas Philand

Subject: Introduce a lifeline ferry service from Campbeltown to Ardrossan

Calls on the Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to provide an all year-round freight and passenger ferry service from Campbeltown and Ardrossan.

Background

The A83 trunk road at the Rest and be Thankful has been subject to [a series of lengthy closures](#) during 2020 and early 2021 due to land slips and concerns about further ground movement during periods of heavy rain. The “Old Military Road”, previously upgraded by Transport Scotland to provide a diversionary route in such situations has itself been subject to closures and limited operational hours for the same reasons. The alternative diversionary route via Tarbet and Inveraray along the A82, A85 and A819 adds 58.8 miles to any trip.

Scottish Ministers have committed to delivering a permanent engineering solution to the issue of land slips on the A83 at the Rest and be Thankful through the [Access to Argyll \(A83\) project](#). Given the challenging ground conditions and scale of the project, this will take several years to deliver. Work is currently ongoing to strengthen existing land slip mitigation measures and to improve the reliability and availability of the Old Military Road.

The petitioners have called for the introduction of a year-round ferry service between Campbeltown and Ardrossan, to increase resilience in travel to and from Argyll and provide an alternative to the lengthy diversionary road route when the A83 is closed.

CalMac Ferries, operating under contract to Scottish Ministers, already provide a limited, [summer-only service on the Campbeltown-Ardrossan route](#). This service was [suspended in summer 2020](#), in part due to issues affecting the Ardrossan-Brodick (Arran) ferry service, which shares a vessel with the Campbeltown service. The service is due to resume on 29 April 2021.

Any extension of the existing service would likely require an amendment to the contract between Scottish Ministers/Transport Scotland and CalMac Ferries and additional financial support. It would also be dependent on a

suitable vessel being available during the winter months and the agreement of Argyll and Bute Council, owners of Campbeltown harbour, and Clydeport (Peel Ports) which owns Ardrossan harbour.

Scottish Government Action

The Scottish Government has not taken any substantive action to establish a year-round ferry service between Ardrossan and Campbeltown.

Scottish Parliament Action

The Scottish Parliament has not taken any substantive action on this issue.

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