

**PE1540/B**

Head of Network Maintenance  
**Trunk Road and Bus Operations**

Buchanan House, 58 Port Dundas Road, Glasgow G4 0HF  
Direct Line: 0141 272 7342, Fax: 0141 272 7400  
Graham.edmond@transportscotland.gsi.gov.uk



Anne Peat  
Public Petitions Clerk  
Room T3.40  
Scottish Parliament  
EDINBURGH  
EH99 1SP

Your ref:  
PE1540

Our ref:  
A10505992

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Dear Anne

### **A83 Rest and be Thankful – Petition PE1540**

Thank you for your letter of 24 February to my colleague Bertrand Deiss about Petition PE1540.

The Scottish Government is acutely aware of the importance of the A83 to the communities of Argyll and Bute and has already invested over £9 million on the A83 around the Rest and be Thankful as a clear sign of our intent to find solutions to keep the A83 open and operational.

Transport Scotland commissioned an A83 Route Study to identify and appraise potential options to minimise the effects of road closures with the objectives of:

- reducing the impact on journey times by reducing the frequency and duration of road closures caused by landslides, and:
- reducing the economic impact to the A83 Study area by reducing the frequency and duration of road closures caused by landslides.

The study appraised a number of permanent solutions from online mitigation measures, shelters, viaduct, tunnel to a new road on the other side of the glen.

In addition, the A83 Taskforce was set up in August 2012 to provide leadership and direction and ensure the delivery of the A83 Rest and Be Thankful emergency diversion route and the A83 Route Study into the permanent solution to landslides in this area. The Taskforce is chaired by the Minister for Transport and Islands. Its members include, alongside others, local MSPs and representatives and officials from Argyll and Bute Council and indeed Councillor Philand, Councillor Kelly and Mike Russell MSP have all attended the Taskforce meetings. The Taskforce was set up with the following remit:

- to oversee delivery of actions to construct an emergency diversion route
- to oversee delivery of wider study into the permanent risk reduction measure for landslides at this area

- to ensure communications to wider stakeholders and ensure views of the wider stakeholder group are taken account in the study.
- to consider the options from the A83 Trunk Road Route Study and agree next action.

The A83 Route Study was presented to the Taskforce members on 14 December 2012 and a subsequent technical meeting was held to allow taskforce members to raise specific queries in relation to the study. The final A83 Route Study report was published on 22 February 2013. The online landslide mitigation works (Red Option) comprising debris flow barriers, measures to improve hillside drainage and hillside planting offered the best performance against the assessment criteria. The study concluded that the Red Option would deliver a cost effective way of reducing the impact on journey times and the subsequent economic impact as a result of road closures due to landslides at Rest and Be Thankful. The drainage and barrier works were taken forward through the 2013/14 and 2014/15 programme of works, with the debris flow barriers at the Rest and be Thankful being completed in May 2014. Works in relation to the hillside planting are continuing.

Since the publication of the A83 Route Study, a significant amount of works has been taken forward on the A83 including:

- Completion of the diversion route along the Old Military Road (OMR) in 2013.
- Significant improvement in the communication strategy employed during the response to a landslide event on the A83.
- Progress of landslide mitigation works at other known landslide areas including Glen Kinglas and Loch Shira.

At the 8th Taskforce meeting on 14 January 2015 there was discussion around the most recent landslide event that occurred on the 28 October 2014, the resilience of the OMR and the debris flow barriers.

The resilience of the OMR was raised as a consequence of it being flooded on two occasions during the most recent landslide event. Transport Scotland is currently investigating options for improving the resilience of the OMR in response to these flooding events.

There was also discussion regarding the capacity of the debris flow barriers in light of the magnitude of the most recent. The landslide at the Rest and be Thankful in October 2014 was the largest event that we have had in recent years. Of the 2,500 tonnes of material that came down the hill, 1,700 tonnes of soil and large boulders were caught within the debris netting undoubtedly keeping road users safe, protecting the road from significant damage and thereby reducing the impact to the road user. The debris flow barriers were designed based on a number of engineering parameters, including the magnitude of past events. As the magnitude of past events is a factor in the design of the debris flow barriers, Transport Scotland has commissioned a consultant to review the capacity of the debris flow barriers in light of the magnitude of the most recent event.

Over recent years, there have been a number of landslides on the A83, including 6 in 2014 that affected the road. Three of these were at the Rest and be Thankful and the mitigation measures including the debris flow barriers and local diversion road along the OMR worked well in keeping Argyll open. Importantly however, we need to note that there were three landslides that affected the A83 at Glen Kinglas. To keep Argyll open for business and have continuity of access, there is a need to focus attention onto the other known areas of landslide risk on the A83, as well as the Rest and be Thankful.

At the conclusion of the 8th Taskforce meeting on the 14 January 2015, the Minister for Transport and Islands considered the points raised and committed to improving upon the current mitigation measures by:

- improving the operation of the OMR to minimise the time take to bring it in operation and improve its resilience.
- reviewing the current debris flow netting in light of the recent events
- taking forward the hillside planting trial
- revisiting options available to give Argyll continuity of access

In response to these commitments Transport Scotland has instructed their consultant Jacobs to revisit the options available with the objective of delivering continuity of access to Argyll. This review will also consider the operation/resilience of the OMR and the capacity of the current debris flow netting in light of the recent events. This review is currently underway and it is expected that the findings of this review will be presented at the next A83 Taskforce meeting in June.

I trust the above is helpful.

Yours sincerely

**GRAHAM EDMOND**  
Head of Network Maintenance