

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

Petitioner written submission, 7 November 2024

We are delighted that our petition is to be considered again by the Committee.

New evidence has emerged with the publication of historian Lynne Pearce's book, 'Journeying Through Britain's Changing Roadscapes' which identifies the road's significance in terms of the human and cultural geography of the area - particularly the road's significance for many people's perception of "place".

Also, Forestry and Land Scotland has recently constructed a new timber extraction road along the line of the proposed "High Road", thereby demonstrating that what we have been suggesting is entirely feasible. Significantly, so far as we are aware, there have been no complaints about the scenic impact of this new road.

Furthermore, the Petitions Committee is still to take up our offer of a guided tour of the area so that they can see first-hand the evidence we have been trying to bring to their attention.

Again, we would remind the Committee that, as the main access from the west of Scotland into the Highlands, the A82 between Inverarnan and Tarbet is one of Scotland's main strategic routes and the closure and delays which would accompany Transport Scotland's widening exercise would have major damaging implications for the local and wider economy. Again, we emphasise that the root of the problem is that a full analysis using the Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidelines (STAG) has never been undertaken (although it is required whenever Scottish Government funding, support or approval is needed to change the transport system). Widening the loch side road using viaducts over the bays and cantilevering along the beautiful shore would be a major and very costly mistake because destroying a beautiful loch shoreline with concrete walls, pillars and platforms would be completely inappropriate in a National Park. The chance to consolidate and preserve the Oakwoods, survivors of the Temperate Rain Forest, will be lost. The remnants of General Wade's Military Road will finally disappear.

Finally, it was clear to us that the figures in the comparison of high and lochside roads were, at best, back of the envelope guesstimates, many inaccurate, and, even those reasonable when undertaken, are hopelessly out of date now. For example, road traffic forecasts for 2030 were passed last year (2023). Most significantly, the omission of the cycleway from the lochside road costings became even greater last year. The design now requires a 3m carriageway and a 2.5m verge, which for long sections will need to be a concrete platform overhanging the loch. Any existing engineering design will have to be redone to make it applicable. As time has gone on, any costing and design work previously undertaken has become more and more irrelevant.

None of this has been considered in the Appraisal although required by law. Instead Transport Scotland have persisted in arguing that a Strategic Transport Plan

published in the last century was directly comparable to a STAG for this route to be built in 2030. This is nonsense!

The request in the petition was to ask the Committee to require Transport Scotland to carry out a STAG Appraisal. The Department appears to have simply refused to undertake that appraisal. At this stage we would therefore now like the Committee to demand that Parliament conduct an inquiry into the issue.