

Petitioner submission of 13 February 2024

PE1916/H: Request a public inquiry into the management of the Rest and Be Thankful project

In June 2023 Transport Scotland published its preferred route to provide a permanent solution to disruption caused by landslides at the Rest and Be Thankful. On 2nd October 2023, at the Travelling Cabinet meeting, Humza Yousaf pledged a “firm commitment” to funding the preferred route and stated “There’s no point in making a commitment in spirit without the money, the money has got to be there.”

This all looks like a solution is in sight and we have the money and the Scottish Government’s backing to get the job done, however we do not believe this to be the case and have three points to put as the Committee considers our petition:

1. Is this the right solution?

- The tunnel and viaduct options seem to have inflated costs, at least double what it is costing HS2 to provide similar infrastructure, the green route planned away from any recent landslide risks has had so much protection added it has also been costed out of scope.
- The construction plans for the debris shelter included as a 30-minute convoy for the site for 3 years during the construction phase while other options are built offline so the existing road can function normally.
- If an offline route were selected this would mean the planned £30m spend on upgrading the Old Military Road could be spent on work to develop a permanent solution.

2. It’s taking so long to progress to a solution that any decision on spending priorities will be for the next administration and they will have different spending priorities.

- After the major flooding and landslides that cut Argyll off from the rest of Scotland on the 7th October, Argyll and Bute Council had to deal with 33 landslides, reroute a road around a major landslide on the A819, and replace 3 bridges. They did this within 2 months and now all major routes are running successfully.
- Argyll depends on the A83 and the Rest and Be Thankful for its survival, good communication links will help address the large

population decline in the area and prevent further businesses from leaving the area (the latest is the fish farm at Cairndow).

- We cannot afford for this to take another 2 years before a final decision is made and construction is started.

3. If decisions on a solution had been taken quickly after the major landslides of 2020, building an offline green route solution could have been developed, planned and constructed by now. The length of time taken to resolve the Rest and Be Thankful problem has taken since 2007, 25 A83 task force meetings chaired by the 10 Transport Ministers over the past 17 years.

Our fear is a small upgrade to the Old Military Road rather than a permanent solution is all we will end up getting.