

# Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

3rd Meeting, 2022 (Session 6), Wednesday  
23 February 2022

PE1906: Investigate options for removing and  
reducing the impact of the central Glasgow  
section of the M8

## Note by the Clerk

<b>Petitioner</b>	Peter Kelly on behalf of @ReplacetheM8
<b>Petition summary</b>	Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to commission an independent feasibility study to investigate scenarios for reducing the impact of the M8 between the M74 and Glasgow Cathedral including, specifically, complete removal and repurposing of the land.
<b>Webpage</b>	<a href="https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1906">https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1906</a>

## Introduction

1. This is a new petition that was lodged on 25 October 2021.
2. The petition highlights the ongoing commitment to maintenance of the elevated M8 and questions whether it has been evaluated since the power sharing agreement with the SNP and Green Party was made. The petition notes that the cooperation agreement states 'we will not build road infrastructure to cater for unconstrained increases in traffic'. It outlines Glasgow City Council's Regeneration Framework Objectives and provides evidence to support the petitioner's view that removal of similar roads has not brought the anticipated negative impacts and instead has brought economic, social and environmental benefits. A petition summary briefing can be found at **Annexe A**.
3. A SPICe briefing has been prepared to inform the Committee's consideration of the petition and can be found at **Annexe B**.

4. While not a formal requirement, petitioners have the option to collect signatures on their petition. On this occasion, the petitioner elected to collect this information. 1,570 signatures have been received.
5. The Committee seeks views from the Scottish Government on all new petitions before they are formally considered. A response has been received from the Scottish Government and is included at **Annexe C** of this paper.

## Action

6. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take on this petition.

### **Clerk to the Committee**

## Annexe A

# PE1906: Investigate options for removing and reducing the impact of the central Glasgow section of the M8

## Petitioner

Peter Kelly of @ReplacetheM8

## Date Lodged

25/10/21

## Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to commission an independent feasibility study to investigate scenarios for reducing the impact of the M8 between the M74 and Glasgow Cathedral including, specifically, complete removal and repurposing of the land.

## Previous action

We have contacted Paul Sweeney MSP and he has suggested that the petition should go ahead.

## Background information

It is not clear whether the commitment to ongoing maintenance of the elevated M8 has been evaluated in light of the new cooperation agreement between the SNP and Green Party which states "we will not build road infrastructure to cater for unconstrained increases in traffic".

- It is not clear if full removal of the central section has been considered by Glasgow Council or Scottish Government or Scottish Highways as a way of addressing GCC's Regeneration Framework Objectives which states:
  - Reinforce the city centre's economic competitiveness;
  - Re-populate the city centre;
  - Reconnect the City centre with surrounding communities and its riverside;
  - Reduce traffic dominance and car dependency;
  - Green the city centre and make it climate resilient;
  - Repair, restore and enhance the urban fabric.

- Evidence is plentiful showing removal of similar roads around the world does not have anticipated negative impacts and brings economic, social and environmental benefits (<https://www.cnu.org/our-projects/highways-boulevards>)

## Annexe B

The logo for SPICe, featuring the text 'SPICe' in a white, sans-serif font on a dark purple background.The text 'The Information Centre' and 'An t-Ionad Fiosrachaidh' in a white, sans-serif font on a dark purple background.

## Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on petition [PE1906](#): Investigate options for removing and reducing the impact of the central Glasgow section of the M8, lodged by Peter Kelly of @ReplacetheM8

### Background

The [M8 motorway](#) runs between Hermiston Gait in western Edinburgh and the West Ferry Interchange on the outskirts of Greenock. It is a significant element in Scotland's trunk road network, with the M8 at Harthill recording its highest daily traffic flows.

The central Glasgow section of the M8 cut through several existing communities, largely areas of high-density tenement housing, [as documented by the Glasgow Motorway Archive](#). It continues to present a barrier to movement for those living nearby and has been found to [limit walking and cycling by residents of such communities](#).

Several cities have successfully removed central urban motorways, including [Utrecht](#) (The Netherlands), [Seoul](#) (South Korea) and [San Francisco](#) (USA).

The transport network within Glasgow has been significantly reshaped in previous decades. In addition to the creation of the city's urban motorways themselves, these changes include:

- the closure of the Glasgow Corporation Tram network in 1962. This previously extended to 100 route miles and was served by over 1000 tram vehicles.

- the closure of St Enoch mainline railway station and several rail lines within the city following the publication of [The Reshaping of Britain's Railways](#) (“the Beeching Report”) in 1963.

## Scottish Government Action

The Scottish Government has not considered the removal of the central Glasgow section of the M8. However, it is worth noting that the [Scottish Government has committed](#) to reducing in the distance travelled annually by car by 20% by 2030. That is a reduction of 7.35bn kilometres, based on the distance travelled in 2019. [Research has shown](#) that reducing road space can be an effective measure for reducing car travel.

In addition, in the foreword to the [National Planning Framework 4 position statement](#), then Minister for Local Government, Housing and Planning, Kevin Stewart MSP, stated:

“By not always considering the needs of all people, irrespective of their age, gender, geography, disability or socio-economic status, it has become clear that decisions about our places that were made in the past have locked in future problems...National Planning Framework 4 will set out a new plan for Scotland in 2050. The strategy will have to make some big decisions about our future development. Our ambitious targets for addressing climate change demand a fresh approach and significant investment in infrastructure, as well as a new understanding of how zero carbon living might work.”

## Scottish Parliament Action

The Scottish Parliament has not considered the removal of the central Glasgow section of the M8.

**Alan Rehfisch**  
**Senior Researcher**  
25 October 2021

SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at [spice@parliament.scot](mailto:spice@parliament.scot)

## Annexe C

# Scottish Government submission of 13 January 2022

## PE1906/A - Investigate options for removing and reducing the impact of the central Glasgow section of the M8

Scottish Ministers are responsible for the motorway and trunk road network. Acting as the roads authority, Transport Scotland have legal responsibility for the safety, operation and maintenance of the network. With a gross asset value of £20.8 billion, the network carries 35% of all road traffic and 60% of heavy goods traffic in Scotland. Transport Scotland also has a statutory obligation to maintain the trunk road assets in a safe condition.

The section of M8 over which the petition refers to is broadly between junctions 15 and 20 of the motorway. This section of the motorway was originally planned as a part of the Glasgow Inner Ring Road in the 1940's and is unusual in its design, and amongst UK motorways, in that it directly serves a large urban area; that is Glasgow City Centre. This section of the M8 also contains the Kingston bridge which is among the busiest motorway river crossings of this type in Europe.

Given the comparatively short distance between junctions and the fact that the current speed limit over this section is 50 mph, means that this part of the M8 is classed as an urban motorway. As such it serves both as a route for longer distance trips travelling east – west through the city and also as a local distributor route for more local traffic movements.

If I can turn now to the specific request contained within the petition that a feasibility study be commissioned to consider reducing the impact of the M8 on this section of the city.

The Scottish Government, published its second National Transport Strategy (NTS2), in February 2020 [[National Transport Strategy 2](#)] which sets out an ambitious vision for Scotland's transport system for the next 20 years. The vision is underpinned by four priorities: Reduces Inequalities; Takes Climate Action; Helps Deliver Inclusive Economic Growth; and Improves our Health and Wellbeing.

NTS2 sets out our vision for transport and is clear about the need to reduce unsustainable travel. Reducing our reliance on private car use will significantly improve the places we live in and our quality of life. In the update to the Climate Change Plan we committed to reducing car kilometres by 20% by 2030. As transport is a derived demand, the way people live, work, learn and access goods and services are all key to the need to travel. Therefore achieving this commitment will take cross-sectoral effort which goes beyond transport, reducing people's need to travel with more local access to goods and services. The Scottish Government has already outlined a variety of measures which promote a place-based agenda and support localism, such as the 20 minute neighbourhood concept and the Work Local Programme. Local interventions will also play a key role in supporting the transformation, including taking account of the implications for transport when making spatial planning and land use decisions.

In this context and in order help deliver the strategy's vision, the second Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) [[Strategic Transport Projects Review 2](#)] commenced in 2019 with the aim of informing the Scottish Government's transport investment programme in Scotland over the next 20 years (2022-2042). The STPR2 imbeds the NTS's sustainable travel hierarchy and sustainable investment hierarchy. Therefore, first and foremost, transport investment looks at making the best use of existing assets, then what new infrastructure may or may not need to be built to meet objectives.

Within the STPR2 Phase 1 recommendations, published in February 2021, I would like to highlight the following projects as relevant to this Petition:

Transport's contribution to placemaking principles in neighbourhoods:-  
We are committed to work across Scottish Government and with other partners to deliver reallocation of road space away from the private car

towards active travel, and the creation of high-quality urban environments can be an effective way of creating better places by enhancing the attractiveness of towns and villages. ([Project 4 - Phase 1 - Strategic Transport Projects Review 2](#))

Maintaining our existing trunk road network:- With the evidence pointing to the fact that increased investment will bring a number of benefits: safety, economic benefits, jobs, connectivity, resilience, reliable journey times and customer satisfaction. A high quality, well maintained and efficient network also supports other Scottish Government programmes for Active Travel, development of Connected and Autonomous Vehicle infrastructure and Bus Priority Investment, and thereby contributes to the low carbon economy. ([Project 17 - Phase 1 - Strategic Transport Projects Review 2](#)).

Reallocation of Roadspace to Buses on the Glasgow Motorway Network:- it is critically important to ensure that people continue to use buses in a post pandemic world, this is even more important given the significant decline in patronage that has been seen. To help in ensuring that the bus remains a competitive choice, particularly in congested urban network the Scottish Government committed to over £500 million of long-term investment in bus priority in the 2019 Programme for Government. Transport Scotland are also progressing reallocation of roadspace on the motorway network through Glasgow, as committed within the Programme for Government. A number of measures are being considered in detail on the M8 through Glasgow and on the M77 and M80 approaches to Glasgow, which seek to make best use of the substantial asset in achieving our desired outcomes for transport. ([Project 10 - Phase 1 - Strategic Transport Projects Review 2](#))

I would also note the work that has been undertaken as part of Phase 2 of STPR2 and which is now nearing completion. In February 2021, Transport Scotland published the Glasgow Region: Initial Appraisal – Case for Change Report ([Initial appraisal: Case for Change - Glasgow City Region - STPR2 \(transport.gov.scot\)](#)). This formed a critical initial step in the wider transport appraisal process and helped identify the problems and opportunities related to the transport network in the Glasgow region. Appraisal work on a range of transport options contained within this report has progressed over the summer and a final set of draft recommendations will be published later this winter.

What is important to note is that the review has already considered a significant amount of evidence related to whole transport network across the Glasgow region, including the M8 corridor. This has been supported by a significant engagement exercise which to-date has not identified or proposed any significant change to the M8, beyond the work noted above, which in itself is a significant change.

In the wider planning sphere, I would note the following, significant changes in land use within an area and the impact of that on its surroundings and neighbouring areas should be considered as part of the local development planning process, which is the responsibility of the planning authority. This enables matters to be considered in the round, particularly in relation to future development and its relationship with existing places and communities.

Good placemaking will take into account local context and, where appropriate, may consider factors such as the careful reallocation of road space where this provides benefits for communities or the environment, balanced against other factors. Approaches such as the 20 minute neighbourhood concept can help identify potential benefits of the allocation of space to active travel and transport routes within local areas. Prioritising good connectivity that promotes active and sustainable travel is important in supporting action on climate change and public health. Each potential intervention will require careful consideration of context, and the bridge under construction over the M8 at Sighthill, which will link north Glasgow to the city centre, is an example of how investment can deliver improved connectivity for existing and regenerated communities.

Transport Scotland are aware of the aspirations of some in relation to the potential for an “M8 Cap” at Charing Cross and have been willing to participate in those discussions and will continue to in the future, both on the feasibility and the desired outcomes and how that would contribute to shared objectives.

In conclusion, I am confident that with the conclusion of STPR2 soon, and the publication of the recommendations for draft consultation, together with the planning and regeneration efforts that are underway in the city, there is currently no need for the Scottish Government to

undertake a separate piece of work in relation to this section of the M8 through Glasgow City Centre, unless this become a land use led proposal through the local authorities planning process.