

Open letter 17 March 2021

Dear Mr Matheson,

As chairperson of the Rest and Be Thankful Campaign I wrote to you on the 08 March to ask for a meeting sadly this request has fallen on deaf ears, so I am now writing this open letter in the hope we can open a dialogue.

Road access at the RABT is a huge concern from both a safety and economic point of view and immediate action is required.

We are asking why the Scottish Government is not recognising improved and sensible measures are required to seriously address the landslides and slips at the Rest and Be Thankful, especially following the fatal landslide at Stonehaven last year.

In August last year the RABT experienced debris (described as boulders as big as cars) slide onto the road. This severe landslide thankfully did not result in anyone being injured. However, when a life link road is increasingly closed because it's raining (in the west of Scotland) alarm bells ring.

Our members represent over 1,000 local businesses in Argyll, 6% of the Scottish economy from farming, tourism, transport, whisky production to forestry. We have the support of - all party - local councillors, MSP' and MP as well as the Road Haulage Association and the NFU Scotland.

Since August 2020, we have faced an astonishing 220 days of disruptions at the RABT through road closures and lengthy diversions.

With a lack of serious action, we wonder if the Scottish Government appreciates the incurring cost to businesses when those disruptions occur. Whether it's a detour via the A82, a night closure, a convoy system on the A83 or a diversion on the OMR, local business operating costs continue to increase. This cannot be sustained and action to implement an immediate short-term solution needed.

To give you an idea:

- Our haulage businesses have each faced costs of over £100,000 since August.
- Tankers are stuck in the OMR diversion, which impacts the £700m whisky industry, fuel deliveries into the region and milk transport to the nearest dairy in Ayr.
- Delays and diversion impact farming and the movement of livestock is creating animal welfare concerns.
- Public transport provides a life link to the likes of the QEUH and other medical hubs. Ongoing road closures and 60mile detours result in missed appointments and lack of confidence in public transport. In the past year, over 170,000 extra miles have been recorded by bus operators as well as an additional 53,000 litres of fuel.
- The diversion along the A82 route is not only costly it a safety risk with increased HGV traffic on a road not wide enough to travel safely.
- The regions tourist industry is facing a double whammy from C19 and visitors to the area as it is increasingly too difficult, unpredictable or unsafe to travel.

We need action now, a commitment to a permanent road into Argyll, that can open when it rains and in the dark within the next three years. We also need a safe temporary route away from the threat of landslides. We need the Scottish Government to "invest in the rest".

We look forward to your response.

John Gurr

Chair of The Rest and Be Thankful Campaign



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