



Dear Mr Brannen,

I write to you as Chair of The Rest and Be Thankful (RABT) Campaign, a group of key Argyll business leaders who want a resolution to the crisis at the Rest.

You may be aware that after writing to Michael Matheson twice over the past two months and were advised by him to hold a meeting with Jo Blewett who leads your A83 project team, which we have now done.

The main objective of this meeting was for our group to understand the progress being made by Transport Scotland to deliver a “rapid” solution at the RABT as urged by Michael Matheson in March.

We learned that Transport Scotland are planning three initiatives.

1. A 10-point plan to build in more resilience and mitigation measures for the OMR.
We feel this is over complicated, if it is only going to be used for a short while, apart from straightening the bends in the road, we would do the minimum to keep it open and save money on further mitigation measures.
2. To build a medium-term solution with 3 options along a similar route to the Forestry road.
We think this should be a temporary solution to remove the safety risk and continued cost of mitigation from landslides on the existing A83. Either upgrade the existing road to two lanes or use it as one lane up and the OMR down. We do not need another adoptable standard road; this is wasting time and money on solutions that should just be temporary.
3. To build one of 5 long-term options through Glen Croe.
The choice of route should be driven by the data, the safest route given the stability of the ground conditions. We understand that Transport Scotland have not yet evaluated the geology of the Glen necessary for any of the routes being considered, which will take 3 months to tender for a contractor to assess the terrain, despite it being evident this was required months ago.

We also learned with growing realisation and utter disbelief that it is going to take 18 months to evaluate the ground conditions before any options are selected then an unbelievable 5-10 years to build. If people using the M74 or M8 were forced to operate a convoy system, which was closed when it rained or sent on an hour’s detour, we would not be waiting 3 months to appoint people to assess what can be done.

The crisis at the RABT is a an economic, social, and safety disaster for the area, which this is not being taken seriously enough by Transport Scotland or the Government. We have 3 questions for you and your management team.

1. During the last landslide, a bus load of passengers was 2 cars away from being swept off the road. If the next landslide, or subsequent diversion along the equally inadequate A82, results in a fatality who will be held accountable?
2. If the A83 was a business site with the threat of a landslide outside its doors, would it still be allowed to operate, or would it be shut down?
3. Who is responsible for the social and economic impact on the people and businesses of Argyll while we wait another 10 years for something permanent to be done?

All we are asking for is to cut through the “business as usual” approach and appoint someone who can build 2km of safe road within the next 3 years, which stays open when it rains.

We would be happy to discuss what can be done to resolve the crisis at the RABT and look forward to hearing from you soon.

John Gurr

Chair of The Rest and Be Thankful Campaign

<https://therestandbethankfulcampaign.com/>