

A82 Upgrade Plans for the Bonnie Banks Require Bolder Solution

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Scheme should match the best scenic routes in global family of National Parks

National Park conservation group, the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs has called for a much bolder and inspiring solution for the planned upgrade of the 17km stretch of the Loch Lomondside Road north of Tarbet which is more in keeping with the National Park setting and less environmentally damaging in such a sensitive scenic area.

Transport Scotland has recently unveiled plans for a long overdue £150 million upgrade of the strategically important A82 between Tarbet and Inverarnan, which is currently very narrow and dangerous as it winds its way through challenging terrain close to the lochshore and the West Highland Railway.

The current proposals include a series of large and highly visible rock cuts, lengthy sections of viaduct structures built out over the loch and removal of extensive areas of protected ancient oak woodlands to develop an upgraded route that is very close to the existing A82 but wider with fewer bends.

Friends Chair, James Fraser said: "We are disappointed that the current proposals fall well short of what is required in this sensitive National Park setting, notwithstanding the considerable engineering and environmental constraints that exist.

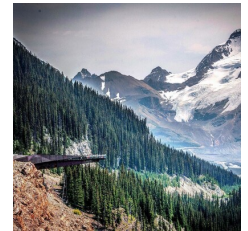
The design proposals follow the more 'minimalist approach' adopted for sections of the current A9 reconstruction between Perth and Inverness with many opportunities to capitalise on the unique settings of both of Scotland's National Parks not being fully realised compared to some scenic through routes developed elsewhere in European and North American National Parks where more is made of the special natural qualities with imaginative wildlife crossings, scenic lookouts and outdoor recreational infrastructure.

A more ambitious scheme that truly embraces the unique setting of the route in this part of the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park is required which is more aligned with the vision set out in the National Park Plan that recognises the importance of protecting the internationally renowned landscape of Loch Lomond for people to enjoy and appreciate the outstanding natural and cultural heritage."

The Friends consider the impact and benefits of the current preferred scheme could be greatly improved with the introduction some more ambitious landscaping solutions such as green canopies where higher rock cuts are planned, the greening of areas under viaducts, the greater separation of the planned cycleway from road verges with diversions and tiered structures and the construction of a roundabout and safer crossings in the Tarbet area where villagers suffer from high traffic volumes using both the A82 and A83.

They also contend that circumstances have changed significantly in recent years due to the climate emergency and the surge in popularity of Loch Lomond as a recreational resource as a direct result of COVID 19 and, consequently, a more ambitious solution is required. They consider there should be a brief pause to re-examine the optimal solution which will leave a better legacy for the benefit of current and future generations that is truly worthy of the unique setting of Loch Lomond and its place in the worldwide family of National Parks.

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