

Low Road Plans for A82 still threaten Loch Lomond

Tuesday 19 November, 2024

On Wednesday 27th November the Scottish Parliament's Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee will again consider petition PE 1967 "To protect Loch Lomond's Atlantic oakwood shoreline by implementing the High Road option for the A82 upgrade between Tarbet and Inverarnan."

The petition is being jointly mounted by Helensburgh and District Access Trust (HADAT) and the conservation charity, *Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs (FOLLAT)* who are encouraging people to sign the petition and **"Save the Bonnie Banks of Loch Lomond!"**

Professor Lynne Pearce of Lancaster University and author of soon to be published *Britain's Changing Roadscapes: Mobility, Memory, Attachment, Loss* (Routledge, forthcoming), has backed the petition, saying; "The A82 along Loch Lomondside regularly tops surveys of 'Best British Drives', with the turn-off at Tarbet experienced by many drivers as the 'gateway to the highlands' (see Society for All British Road Enthusiasts [SABRE] website). However, rather less attention has been paid to the recreational and cultural significance of the road for the generations of day-trippers for whom the woodlands, beaches and viewpoints along the northern shores of the loch hold special memories and, arguably, a claim to stewardship."

FOLLAT and HADAT say that Transport Scotland's Low Road route selection was made without full and comprehensive cost benefit analysis of all options. They point out the following advantages of the High Road option:

- 17 kilometres of the old road, ancient oak woods, sections of historic General Wade's Road and unspoilt shoreline preserved, allowing wildlife to thrive and reconnect with the loch.
- Ecological impact of the High Road alternative would be minimal.
- Old road could continue to carry traffic during the construction period and afterwards would be available as a superb walking and cycling route with abundant opportunities for parking near the loch shore.
- The existing road would continue to be available for access to property and for occasional use as a diversion when necessary.
- The Three Lochs Way Great Walking Trail could be linked to the West Highland Way at Inverarnan, making a round Loch Lomond walking and cycling route possible.
- Tarbet and Ardlui by-passed by heavy traffic, improving quality of life for residents and alleviating road safety issues in the villages and at Arrochar Primary School;
- The higher, straighter route would be faster and safer than any loch side route could ever be.
- Alleviate visitor management pressures along whole length of the old road and in the congested Tarbet Bay area.
- A high road would give stunning views of Loch Lomond.

Chair of FOLLAT, John Urquhart, said he was delighted to learn that the petition was still attracting signatures which now totalled 764.

"Huge damage was already done to the oakwood lined western shoreline of Loch Lomond south of Tarbet in the 1980's road widening. Now, in these times of global warming, the last thing that should be happening is to inflict further damage to the shoreline woods north of Tarbet.

"The Petitions Committee has yet to fulfil its promise to visit the loch so they can see for themselves what we are talking about. I am hoping they do so this time."

The petition will be considered by the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee at its meeting at the Scottish Parliament on **27 November 2024**. To see the full history of the petition, go to

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Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs

T. 07496 433134

E. Info@lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk

W. <https://www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk>

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