

Councillor Aileen Morton

Leader



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Nicola Sturgeon MSP, First Minister
Michael Matheson MSP, Cabinet Secretary
for Transport, Islands and Connectivity
The Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh, EH99 1SP

Our Ref: AM/AMcN/A8310082020

Open letter by email to:
firstminister@gov.scot and CabSecTIC@gov.scot

Your Ref:
10th August 2020

Dear Nicola and Michael

A83 – keeping Argyll and Bute connected

The issue that never fails to unite politicians at all levels of government and of all party persuasions is the need to ensure Argyll and Bute stays connected and open for business through a permanent, robust solution for the A83 Rest and Be Thankful – a solution that works.

Last week's landslip continues to close the Rest and the Old Military Road, which itself was out of action for a period, will be shut again tonight at 9pm due to weather conditions. This continuing impact is why all of Argyll and Bute's elected representatives have been united in pressing, once again, for urgent action.

Our local Members of the Scottish Parliament, Michael Russell, Jackie Baillie and Donald Cameron, have been swift to engage with us and to add their own voices to these calls. They join us in writing to you, together, to reinforce that request for action on behalf of the people of Argyll and Bute.

We are asking you to convene an urgent special meeting of the A83 Taskforce (on a virtual basis if needs be), as soon as possible to focus specifically on outline options for a permanent solution and for that meeting to consider and agree the following timescale for the same:

- a) Nature of permanent solution to be identified and confirmed by 31st March 2021
- b) Contract to construct permanent solution to be awarded by 31st December 2021
- c) Work to start as soon as possible thereafter with completion by 31st December 2023 at the latest

We know that this requires a very tremendous effort from all involved, including Transport Scotland which would have to commence work on this immediately in order for it to succeed. Argyll and Bute Council will do all that it can for its part in this to co-operate and to encourage all other partners, from all sectors, to do likewise. We believe that if the will is there, on all counts, to deliver a permanent solution, then this can certainly be achieved – because the risk of failing to do so is far too great and there is evidence of innovative, viable solutions of similar scale being established in other regions with similar geography and rurality.

The threats to Argyll and Bute’s economic success and to the contribution it makes to the national economy are well known, as are the various personal impacts on those who live and work in our communities and who find their business, social and health-related activities disrupted without warning when landslips close the Rest.

Our biggest concern now, though, given the scale of last week’s incident, is continued public safety – it truly is a miracle that no one has been seriously injured or even killed to date. We simply cannot afford to wait any longer – the risks are too great.

We stand ready to do anything that we can to ensure that Argyll and Bute and its communities finally get the solution they deserve for the Rest and be Thankful.

Yours sincerely



Aileen Morton
Council Leader



Michael Russell MSP



Gary Mulvaney
Depute Leader



Jackie Baillie MSP



Sandy Taylor
SNP Group Leader



Donald Cameron MSP



Dougie Philand
Argyll First Group Leader