

Plans for the A82 upgrade along Loch Lomond

Description



Access to pulpit Rock by the section of upgraded A82 with metal netting visible on cutting behind (see below)

Anyone driving along the A82 this summer will have seen the test drilling rigs in Loch Lomond. While the A82 along West Lomond north of Tarbet undoubtedly needs to be upgraded, Transport Scotland ruled out tunnelling right from that start on grounds of cost. This was a terrible decision, made without any proper public consultation. Because of fjord like character of the northern half of Loch Lomond it means that for most of the way the only option for an improved road is to build it along the side of the loch.

Loch Lomond is one of the most famous bodies of water in the world, renowned for its beautiful and mostly unspoiled landscape. Instead of conserving that, our public agencies are actively planning to wreck 16.5 kms of that by an upgraded route mainly along the lochshore. Is there any other country in the world which would allow this to happen?

Other mountainous European countries tunnel roads, we don't.

Instead of standing up for statutory aims of the National Park and its landscape, the Chief Executive's update report to the Board last Monday showed the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority has been co-operating with Transport Scotland's preferred option.

5.4. Transport Scotland – The detailed design for the upgrade of the A82 between Tarbet and Inverarnan on West Loch Lomond is at an advanced stage. The scheme is 16.5.km long. It will address a longstanding bottleneck on a lifeline route through the National park to the North West Highlands. Over many years the National Park Authority had engaged with Transport Scotland seeking a more strategic approach to the upgrade of the route rather than individual localised projects [Comment: the LLTNPA was right to argue for a strategic approach]. This would allow more informed decisions to be made about the overall impact of the upgrade and inform more appropriate and strategic mitigation of impacts. The quality of the road design should also reflect the status of the A82 as one of Scotland's most iconic scenic tourist routes. National Park staff had significant involvement in the design of the recent successful Pulpit Rock upgrade.



Its extremely concerning that anyone from the LLTNPA could describe the pulpit rock upgrade as a success. While getting rid of the infamous traffic lights, it does not even straighten the road out. A section of beautiful loch shores has been replaced by metal and concrete. Its ugly close up and ugly from the far side of the loch. The loch shore here is now inaccessible. An opportunity to improve access to pulpit rock, which should be a major attraction, has been lost. There is no proper provision for cars to pull off and it is dangerous to do so.

The steep cutting is now covered in iron netting. What's more the sound of traffic now carries even more clearly across the loch, spoiling the experience of walkers on the West Highland Way.

This approach is now to be applied to another 10 miles of loch shore:

5.5. The preferred upgraded road line will require significant off road line land take and, to achieve the necessary road standards, will involve impacts on the landscape and ecology of north Loch Lomond, including significant rock cuts and impacts on the loch shore and native woodland. Transport Scotland and the contractors doing the design works are working on completing the detailed design, EIA and Roads orders by the end of March 2019. Detailed mitigation and compensation for environmental impacts will be identified

through the EIA process and incorporated into the scheme requirements. National Park Authority Landscape and Ecology advisors continue to work closely on the scheme. It is proposed to bring a future report to the Board once a finalised design is being consulted upon.

(Excerpts from Chief Executive Officer report to Board 10/12/18)

All of these impacts could be significantly reduced by tunneling.

Why is the National Park not speaking out against “*the significant rock cuts and impacts on the loch shore and native woodland*” ? It was created to protect the landscape, wildlife and promote enjoyment of the countryside so why isn't it doing the job it was set up to do?

Campers were banned from enjoying the shore here – and every layby now has a no camping sign – on the specious grounds that some were leaving litter and numbers were causing erosion. Having decided those impacts were completely, the LLTNPA is apparently quite happy to see the lochshore turned into a concrete highway. The LLTNPA's priorities are completely warped.

It would of course be very difficult to tunnel the A82 all the way along the shore of West Loch Lomond from Tarbet to Inverarnan. There are a number of flat areas created by glacial deposits which would be difficult to circumvent and in any case tourists want to be able to get out of the car to experience the loch shore. The principle though should be to keep the main road away from the loch shore, leaving a smaller road or path for cyclists and walkers, and where the ground does not allow for this tunnel it.

To rule out tunneling, which is also needed at the Rest and Be Thankful, says something about how much the Scottish Government and its agencies care about our finest landscapes. They are obsessed with promoting scenic routes without any consideration of the impact poorly designed upgrades have on the landscape. People need to tell our politicians this is wrong before its too late because the National Park won't do it.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. access infrastructure
2. landscape
3. LLTNPA
4. Scottish Government

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