

LATEST NEWS

Following an unsatisfactory meeting of stakeholders in Tbilisi, June 2019 - in which time ran out before all could be heard, the National Trust of Georgia (NTG) emailed 20 unanswered questions to the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and European Bank of Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). By far the most important was,

Why had the Lakatkhevi valley, the next one down from Khada, never been considered as a possible route? And could they now examine it seriously, as it seemed to hold solutions to many of the current road's issues?

The NTG had stood up and asked this question at the meeting and received no answer then. Before responding to the email, the ADB announced on 1st August 2019 they had approved a loan of \$415 million for the Khada road – as if the stakeholders' questions were inconsequential to the decision.

In September 2019 the Banks finally responded to some, but not all, of the NTG's questions. Included in this was a new 7 page document entitled '*Assessment of Alignment Alternatives.*'

But again the Lakatkhevi route *was completely ignored.*

This is a further example of a marked lack of due diligence, poor research and a cavalier attitude by the Banks – resulting in the Roads Department of Georgia being improperly advised and the wrong route chosen.

The whole process carries strong echoes of a previous tunnelling project funded by the Banks at Shuakhevi power station in Ajara. Completed in 2016, the tunnels then collapsed and to this day, no power has been generated. Huge amounts of money were wasted, the landscape devastated and locals continue to suffer the consequences.

The NTG asks again that the Banks put this misguided project on hold while the alternatives are properly considered, like those presented below:

The Lakatkhevi Valley – potential route

We estimate the main tunnel would need to be 500 metres longer than the Khada route, but the rest of the development would be considerably easier and cheaper. Following our investigations this potential route for the road is by far more suitable because the valley is -

1. Uninhabited, save for a few houses right at the beginning and a high altitude village far away from any potential road.

Khada has a significant population. All will be disturbed. We have yet to find any who, when the road is fully explained, want it.

2. Has no historical monuments, save one tower at the beginning - easily avoided.
 Khada has 60 tower sites alone, many still standing.
3. Has no churches, just one small chapel and cemetery near the beginning – easily avoided
 Khada has two significant churches, one to the Archangel at Bekot Kari, much used. The road runs directly through its cemetery.
4. Requires no tunnelling.
 Khada has four tunnels (excluding the main one)
5. Requires only minor bridging
 Khada has three bridges, two will be among the largest in Georgia
6. Requires almost no compulsory land appropriation
 Khada has a significant amount and is already causing disputes
7. Starts before Kversheti, therefor would completely avoid all the current land compensation disputes and expenses.
 Many Kversheti villagers are already in dispute with the Roads Department.
8. The road section would be roughly the same length as the Khada road.
9. The main tunnel entrance would be roughly the same altitude as Khada's
10. The main tunnel would avoid the volcanic cone completely.
 The Khada alignment cuts very close into the mantle.
11. The Lakatkhevi route is fully treed the whole distance on both sides – indicating a significantly diminished risk of landslides and avalanches.
 The Khada route runs through several bare mountainsides with known avalanche risks
12. Building the road up Lakatkhevi would not destroy Khada as a favourite hiking, horse and bike riding venue for ever.
13. Would allow Khada to be preserved and developed as Georgia's prime eco-tourism valley, with easy access to Tbilisi.
14. Would greatly assist the hotel business economy in the Gudauri ski-resort, allowing more to stay open the year round
15. Would enhance Georgia's tourism presence long-term in the eyes of the world.