

Rail campaigners hit out at delay in payment for study

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The St Andrews rail campaign has come to a standstill because Transport Scotland owes the group tens of thousands of pounds.

Members of the St Andrews Rail Link Campaign (StARLink) have revealed they have been waiting five months for the Scottish Government agency to pay the bill for an appraisal study.

The group's Scottish Transport Appraisal (Stag) has been in process since 2020, with their latest submission completed in May.

"You are talking about six-figure costs," said Jane Ann Liston, StARLink convener.

"You would have to do an

awful lot of jumble sales and coffee mornings to make enough money for that."

The StARLink campaign has secured funding through the Local Rail Development Fund to complete the appraisal.

This fund helps campaigns to tackle transport issues across the country.

But the group cannot progress with their bid until Transport Scotland "wakes up," processes their submission and pays the consultants who carried out the work - Stantec.

That means, Jane Ann says, that Stag has come to a standstill.

"Not only have they not come up with their comments yet, they have

not paid StARLink, so we cannot pay our consultant.

"So every so often an email comes (from Stantec) asking what's happening because they need £66,000.

"The StARLink campaign has £500 in the bank, so we can't do anything about that. Now we have to wait until the middle of October until they sign things off - that's disgraceful."

A Transport Scotland spokesperson admitted that there have been delays with processing the submission, as well as providing the payment.

They said: "We empathise with the campaigners' position and acknowledge that there have been some delays.

"We have committed to StARLink to respond to

their Stag appraisal by October 18 and we are progressing any grant payments due to them."

However, this is not good enough for the StARLink campaigners, who have been waiting since 1989 to see their plans come to fruition.

Secretary Dita Stanis-Traken said: "I will be happy when the funds are confirmedly lodged in the StARLink bank account to allow us to make payment to the transport consultants, Stantec."

"At least we have a date," Jane Ann said, "but five months in total is still far too long for a response.

"Let us hope there are no more delays."

We have approached Stantec for comment.