

PE1236/R

Dear Sir

I thank you for giving me the opportunity to respond to Transport Scotland's answers to questions raised at the most recent petition committee meeting. In my view, Transport Scotland have once again, blatantly, avoided answering the question regards costing of a flyover at Laurencekirk.

I have no desire to belittle the accident figures provided for Broxden, Inveralmond and Keir roundabouts, however the statistics fully demonstrate that there have been no fatalities at these sites in the last eleven years whereas there have been four within the three junctions at Laurencekirk. There is no doubt in my mind that Transport Scotland will respond to this by saying there have been no fatalities at the south junction since the 50 mph was implemented, however there has been one at the North junction. This fatality could have been avoided had a flyover been in place at the South Junction. There has also been a higher serious accident rate at Laurencekirk compared to these sites. Was one of the reasons given for the grade separation at Broxden, Inveralmond and Keir roundabouts the accident figures it is clear there is no evidence for this.

Furthermore, Transport Scotland also say that these sites have been chosen for grade separation to reduce congestion and journey times, well if this is the case the same principle must apply for the Laurencekirk Junction. Consequently given the fact that the accident figures would argue for Laurencekirk ahead of the other sites I would still wish to know why these sites were favoured ahead of Laurencekirk

In regards to the grant awarded to Montrose Port Authority for a deep water quay, I am absolutely astonished that Transport Scotland has suggested that there will be no impact on the south junction, this junction will provide the most direct and accessible route for hauliers approaching from the North, the impact on the junction will be horrific and anyone with local knowledge of the area knows this. In fact their response admits that the Laurencekirk junction was not even considered before awarding the grant. I find this absolutely unbelievable. It is clear to me that Transport Scotland has no wish or desire to alleviate the real problems that arise at the junction and that is the danger to crossing traffic, they have congested the area with additional signage and now the implementation of a slipway to the North junction, this will not save lives, prevent accidents, ease the frustration caused by congestion or, indeed, reduce journey times for commuters to this area.

I repeat that all the fatalities and majority of accidents at this site have involved crossing traffic and this problem needs to be addressed, Transport Scotland is hiding behind capacity studies which only takes in the population of Laurencekirk and never looks at the wider area to which this junction serves, this is surely a key factor to the congestion of the South Junction. The build up of queues are largely from the Montrose side, each fatality has involved traffic emerging from this side of the carriageway and it is clear from the issues raised by the minister and Transport Scotland that the effect of the traffic from the Montrose side of the junction has been

considerably understated and has never been looked at in the way it should (see appendix for a summary of evidence)

A friend of mine was witness to such an accident on October 15th 2010 where a car pulled out from the Montrose side in front of a van, both drivers involved were lucky and only slightly injured. Once my friend established that the driver of the car was alright she asked him why he had pulled out. His response was that he didn't know and thought he had time. Three days later there was another accident at the North Junction, how many more does there have to be, each of these accident could be another fatality.

I would like to know if Transport Scotland has used capacity studies of Montrose and surrounding areas when considering the upgrade of the South Junction at Laurencekirk.

At this point I would like to remind the committee of a response from Transport Scotland to a previous question raised about developments in Montrose where they responded by saying that "As a statutory consultee within the planning process, Transport Scotland is given the opportunity to consider the safe performance of the trunk road network in relation to the potential effects of development plan proposals and comment on development plans. In terms of the safe performance of the trunk road network, this includes issues such as safety and capacity. Similarly, Transport Scotland is consulted on relevant planning applications and makes recommendations and specifies conditions as part of an official planning response." They say this and yet over 550 new homes have just been built or have passed planning and are in development within the town, two deep water berths are about to be built, a new grain store and drying facility has been approved and an Industrial Estate has already expanded by 4 hectares allowing 8 new businesses to be developed, details of these can be found in appendix

For anyone to suggest that should the Aberdeenshire local development plan go ahead then the junction will be upgraded, and indeed I do believe that the Transport Minister, himself, brought this up before the Petition Committee. I would like to point out paragraph 3.7 of the North East Unit A90 Laurencekirk Road Safety Review 09/NE/0805/138 where they will find "Transport Scotland has advised Aberdeenshire Council that expansion of Laurencekirk on that scale would require upgrading of the junctions on the A90. This has been acknowledged in the main issues report. Depending on the location of the development, the upgrading is likely to take the form of grade separation at either the North or South A937 junctions with the closure of the central reserve gaps, This would provide significant road safety benefits. Transport Scotland has no plans for upgrading of these junctions on that scale and hence such improvements would need to be developer funded"

I would like confirmation from Transport Scotland of this.

In light of all this, I would like an explanation from Transport Scotland as to why the road safety of the people of this area has been ignored, we have proved time and time again that there is a real urgency for grade separation at Laurencekirk and we are told by Transport Scotland that there is no need. With this in mind I feel that they should be held responsible and accountable for every accident victim of the junctions at Laurencekirk.

Appendix

On one side you have Laurencekirk, on the other the A937 takes you through Marykirk, Craigo, Hillside, Montrose, Ferryden further down the coast is Arbroath. The junction serves all the above towns.

There are some major developments within some of these areas which will and are affecting the volume of traffic using the junction.

1. Montrose, itself with a population of 12,000 plus is rapidly becoming a commuter town with increasing numbers of homes owned by people travelling North daily. A current development in the town is currently building 200 new homes and I am led to believe planning has been passed for a further 350 at the site. The Forties Industrial Estate in the town has expanded by 4 hectares providing 8 new development plots for incoming businesses.
2. Montrose Port is about to get 2 Deep Water Berths which has even received a £3 million + grant from Transport Scotland. The Transport Minister Stewart Stevenson pointed out that this would remove lorries from the A90 but it is clear that this will direct many of them straight through the south junction at Laurencekirk. Therefore, crossing the junction to go North.
3. A new Grain Store and drying facility has also been authorised for Montrose Harbour, again with £2 million of government funding and again will only add to the congestion of crossing traffic at the South Junction at Laurencekirk.
4. At Hillside just to the North of Montrose, Sunnyside Royal Hospital is about to close and the plan is to build 360 new homes on the site. I live on the first development of houses on this site and I know that over 90% of homes on my street, alone, are owned by people who commute through the junction daily.