

RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

PRE-BUDGET/FINANCIAL SCRUTINY ON ROADS MAINTENANCE IN SCOTLAND

SUBMISSION FROM A77 ACTION GROUP

A75 and A77 carry a substantial amount of freight tonnage. The National Statistics published in 2017, when you combine the freight tonnage carried by ferries in and out of the ports at Cairnryan, this puts the 'Short Sea Crossing' second to the English Channel Corridor, above the Irish Sea Central Corridor between Holyhead and Dublin despite that central route carrying more vehicles and passengers when it relegates the Irish Sea Northern Corridor/ Short Sea Crossing to third.

This ferry traffic is all in a pulse formation, resulting in platoons of heavy traffic going along what are mostly single carriageway's. It is also competing with local rural traffic, as well as any other through traffic.

Given these factors, these two roads are deteriorating badly. Some repairs last only days, when the surface breaks up again. When repairs do take place, the norm is road closures with lengthy diversions on even less fit for purpose roads. Most rational people get the Health and Safety aspect for the maintenance personnel to be protected like this but these diversions do add additional cost and time to all users. This certainly will cut into businesses profitability, be they in the public or private sector.

All the other comparable ports in the rest of the United Kingdom are at least dual carriageway or motorway to them, they effectively take half the pounding than the single carriageways in South West Scotland.

South West of Scotland's main economic centres is agriculture, forestry, and tourism. Visitors and locals are saying that they are reluctant to travel on the trunk roads of the South West due to the fear of damage to their vehicles, or awful journeys on buses. Something is seriously amiss here, with the road infrastructure and the maintenance of it. If there ever was the case for change its now and without delay.

May we point you to the recent South West Transport Study Draft Appraisal: Case for Change Draft Report. Particularly the quality of the road surface and the dissatisfaction felt by users, as well as the diversionary routes. Page 57, Figure 5-6 Satisfaction with quality of road surface by road corridor. Page 60, Figure 5-10 Satisfaction with diversionary routes by road corridor.

A75 86% of the respondents were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the quality of the road surface.

A77 94% of the respondents were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the quality of the road surface.

A75 58% either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the diversionary routes.

A77 81% either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with the diversionary routes.

To us, at A77 Action Group this is actually understandable but certainly not at all surprising to us. We create no disillusion, users of the two strategic arterial routes are not happy with the performance of Scotland Transerv.

Another aspect with having roads like a poorly maintained A77 is the effect on the transportation of live animals be it to market, or between farms. The topography of these roads means they are at best at risk of being traumatised by the journey, or more than likely be injured. If they are going for sale, this will affect the price they make. Worst still they may be injured so badly they have had to be put down. Coming from a rural community this certainly will harm the economic viability in the agricultural sector. It is known some of these livestock lorries being involved in RTC's resulting in the vehicles overturning, without going into a gory description, suffice to say with devastating results.

Over the past three years that A77 Action Group has been running a Facebook page, we have countless posts from our +5k audience of burst tyres, buckled wheels, broken suspension running well into hundreds if not thousands of pounds. With a very indifferent attitude from the Maintenance Company, who deny their responsibility. Leaving the road user out of pocket, sometimes without transport for a period while vehicles are repaired to a roadworthy condition. If roads are causing this level of damage the roads are simply unsafe for people to use, after all the user of the vehicle has an obligation to maintain their vehicle. It is the Scottish Government's obligation to maintain the roads in a manner that does not cause damage to vehicles being used within the laws to use them.

Some of the road users that know where the damage inflicting road sections are but for other reasons such as surface water or something else like other road users has distracted them from concentration on looking out for these unrepaired sections. Indeed, a follower of our page who regularly drives the A77 in different vehicle types from a 44tonne HGV, through an LGV, Car, Motorcycle each requiring remembering where and what potholes affect each type of vehicle. We had countless motorcyclists having tyres ripped open, front wheels and forks buckled, we even had one go flying over the handlebars due to the poor condition of the surface. This group is astonished that no motorcyclist has been killed due to the poor surfaces on the A75 or A77.

However, the A77 Action Group team aren't confined to the South West of Scotland, we are brave sorts and take our vehicles to all corners of the British Isles. We have seen better-maintained trunk roads almost everywhere else bar our forgotten corner of Scotland.

We need to see a change and urge this committee to do something for the rural economy of the South West of Scotland and aid its failing connectivity!