

RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

PRE-BUDGET/FINANCIAL SCRUTINY ON ROADS MAINTENANCE IN SCOTLAND

SUBMISSION FROM DAVID MOSS

I write as a retired roads engineer having worked in roads maintenance with Dumfries and Galloway council and, in the past, West Yorkshire council. Also as a keen cyclist and road user.

I have observed a marked deterioration in the roads over recent years, both minor rural roads and main routes and in the Dumfries urban area.

From a cycling perspective, there are many defects which may be less noticeable for motor vehicles, but which force cyclists to move out and chain line with the consequent danger of being hit by passing traffic.

I sense that there has become a tendency to apply surface dressing on some road surfaces that are very uneven and road. whilst this may preserve the integrity of the road, it leaves a bumpy surface particularly noticeable for a cyclist.

I note many dedicated cycle paths rendered unusable due to lack of maintenance. often covered in debris. cycle paths require regular sweeping since loose stones etc. do not get removed by passing motor traffic, which does happen on the open roads. I recently had cause to use the A9 cycle path, this seems to have been completely neglected. i wonder how the prioritisation of funds that leads to this neglect squares with the supposed policies of encouraging healthy lifestyles.

One observation I have made is that defects are often stem from previous utility reinstatements, sometimes several years after the works are completed. Probably due to poor compaction of backfill and poor quality control of the final surface. I believe utilities works should be better supervised and that utilities should be accountable for longer for their excavations.

In the long term, the cut backs on road maintenance is false economy and will lead to either a sever deterioration of road condition or much increased costs to bring them back to an acceptable standard.

There is no saving to the public as the reduced maintenance spend simply leads to greater repair bills and insurance costs for road users.

I firmly believe that road users would happily pay more to have better roads. I would suggest that a way should be found to isolate roads spending from the other financial pressures such as health, social work and education. Perhaps a road authority operating in a similar way to Scottish water (could they even be combined into a public infrastructure body ?). finding a way to finance this I can imagine to be a tricky problem both politically and practically (that's what we pay you for).