

RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE

PRE-BUDGET/FINANCIAL SCRUTINY ON ROADS MAINTENANCE IN SCOTLAND

SUBMISSION FROM KEEP SCOTLAND BEAUTIFUL

Introduction

Keep Scotland Beautiful is the charity that campaigns, acts and educates on a range of local, national and global issues to change behaviour and improve the quality of people's lives and the places they care for.

We are committed to making Scotland clean, green and sustainable.

We work with organisations, schools, communities and individuals to help reduce carbon emissions, improve the quality of local environments and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

We welcome the opportunity to respond to the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee call for views on the efficacy of the current approach to roads maintenance in Scotland and the adequacy of current associated expenditure levels.

Response

Our response will focus on the issue of roadside litter, which we believe is inadequately considered when looking at road maintenance. Roadside litter is a persistent and noticeable issue and must be acknowledged as a significant part of maintenance duties. We believe that more resources should be allocated specifically to cleansing operations as part of the roads maintenance budget alongside provisions for more effective litter management arrangements.

Roads maintenance duties include cleansing operations, in line with the duty to keep them clear of litter and refuse so far as is practicable (Environmental Protection Act, 1990). We note with interest that litter is not mentioned in any of the previous investigations into road maintenance issues although it is clearly listed in Schedule 7.1 Section 4.34 of the 4G contract for management and maintenance of the Scottish trunk road network. We question whether there are specific provisions in the budget allocated for this stream of work.

There is evidence that roadside litter is not being adequately managed, posing a persistent and noticeable problem, despite the vast amounts of litter lifted:

- 1,300 bags of litter, almost seven tonnes, of rubbish gathered from the sides of the M8 and M9 each month (Scot Gov, 2019).
- 85.9% of the verges of non-special roads under local authority responsibility recorded a presence of litter (Local Environment Audit and Management System (LEAMS) 2018/19).

- 86% of Scottish adults agree with the statement "I think that there is a problem with the amount of roadside litter in Scotland" (YouGov, 2018).
- 65% of Scottish adults disagree with the statement "I think there is currently enough action being taken to reduce the amount of roadside litter in Scotland" (YouGov, 2018).
- 91% of Scottish adults agree with the statement "I think roadside litter creates a negative impression of Scotland." (YouGov, 2018).

Impact of clearing roadside litter

Litter maintenance on roads is both dangerous and resource intensive. Improper management in the short term, often caused by insufficient resources and inadequate prevention measures, leads to build-up and an increasingly challenging issue in the long term. As a result of this, it is essential to ensure adequate investment in roadside litter management.

We are aware of some feedback that current litter management arrangements for roads and trunk roads are not working for all duty bodies involved. APSE has laid out some of the issues in a briefing document available here: <https://www.apse.org.uk/apse/index.cfm/members-area/briefings/2018/18-19-litter-management-on-the-trunk-road-network/>.

Roads maintenance funding and delivery model

With regards to the question of whether or not the current model of funding and delivering roads maintenance, which is split between Transport Scotland and local authorities, is the most economic and efficient option, we believe the model has some issues relating to roadside litter. We believe the model would be improved if transport operators monitored and reported on roadside litter in the same way as local authorities currently do for the roads which they are responsible. We believe this would allow for consistency and provide a more efficient system.