

## **RURAL ECONOMY AND CONNECTIVITY COMMITTEE**

### **PRE-BUDGET/FINANCIAL SCRUTINY ON ROADS MAINTENANCE IN SCOTLAND**

#### **SUBMISSION FROM NORTH AYRSHIRE COUNCIL**

I refer to the Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee request for views on road maintenance and respond as follows.

1. How have recent spending decisions on roads maintenance affected the quality of Scotland's roads, road users, businesses, public services, and the economy?

The financial pressures facing local authorities are well documented. North Ayrshire Council's budget for 2019/20 will enable £3.8 million of investment in carriageway resurfacing/improvements. It is recognised that this is insufficient to improve our road network. Trunk road condition within the area has also declined.

This has road safety implications and claims for damage/personnel injury are increasing as a result of poor road condition. This has a negative impact on the attractiveness of the area for businesses, tourism and as a place to live. It also has a negative impact on bus services, active travel and accessibility.

The Inclusive Growth Diagnostic identified transport as a barrier to inclusive growth at a local level. In particular it was identified as a limiting factor to and preventing people from accessing employment and training opportunities. A number of contributing factors were identified including the: frequency of transport; connections between transport modes; cost; and shift patterns exacerbating transport constraints. The provision of high quality opportunities for active travel and public transport for everyday journeys is therefore vital to local communities, inclusive growth and supporting modal shift to sustainable travel.

2. If spending on roads maintenance continues at current levels, what could be the likely effects on the above groups?

If spending on road maintenance continues at current levels this is likely to mean further deterioration of the road network across Scotland. This will result in an increased negative impact on businesses, tourism, active travel and accessibility. Road safety may also be further compromised with further increases in third party claims. A further concern is a likely rise in maintenance backlog figures which stores up challenges for the future.

3. How could any negative effects of reduced road spending best be addressed?

Where grant funding is provided for specific objectives e.g. improvements to town centres, cycle routes, public transport routes, then the whole life cost of these works need to be considered and appropriate maintenance funding allocated accordingly.

4. Is the current model of funding and delivering roads maintenance, which is split between Transport Scotland and local authorities, the most economic and efficient option?

The current model of funding and delivering road maintenance Does not optimise local accountability and the impact of works on the local economy and events is not fully considered. Under the current operating arrangements there has been a decline in the quality of trunk road repairs despite a disproportionate expenditure on trunk roads compared with local roads. Additional costs are also being incurred by local authorities associated with maintenance at trunk road boundaries incurring additional traffic management and disruption to road users.

I hope the above response will be helpful.