

## **PE1657/S**

Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity submission of 10 September 2019

Thank you for your letter of 12 August 2019 regarding the consideration of Petitions PE1610 and PE1657 on the A75 and A77 respectively.

The Scottish Government is fully committed to the A75 and A77 and the key role they play in supporting communities and businesses in the region and across the country.

Since 2007, we have invested over £50 million in six road improvement projects along the length of the A75, and around £35 million in four road improvement projects along the A77, providing additional overtaking opportunities. Further planned investment for a bypass at Maybole with estimated construction costs of £30 million will provide better journey time reliability for motorists and businesses accessing Cairnryan. This is in addition to over £151 million invested in the maintenance and upkeep of the A75 and A77.

A number of road surfacing projects are planned for both routes in the year ahead.

Transport Scotland has a robust and well established process for monitoring the condition of trunk roads such as the A75 and A77 through inspections and testing. We fully fund the inspection and repair of defects, including potholes, on the trunk road network.

Our Operating Company will continue to complete weekly inspections to identify safety critical defects and undertake timely repairs to maintain road safety.

Transport Scotland, with the support of the Performance Audit Group, routinely review our Operating Companies' performance, taking appropriate contractual action if standards are not met. We will continue to engage with stakeholders to gather feedback and provide information and details on trunk road maintenance.

## **THE SOUTH WEST TRANSPORT STUDY AND THE A75/A77**

The Scottish Government gave a commitment in the 2017/18 Programme for Government to commence work for the second Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) in the Dumfries and Galloway area. Responding to this commitment, consultants AECOM and Peter Brett Associates (PBA) were appointed by Transport Scotland to research the case for investment in transport interventions in the South West of Scotland through the "South West Scotland Transport Study Initial Appraisal: Case for Change. (SWSTS)". It is the intention that the final report will form part of the evidence base for STPR2.

The key aim of the work was to consider the rationale for improvements to road, rail, public transport and active travel on key strategic corridors in the South West of Scotland, including those served by the A75, A76, A77, A701 and A709 as well as the railway corridors to Stranraer and Carlisle via Kilmarnock/Dumfries with a particular focus on access to the ports at Cairnryan.

Stakeholder engagement has been a key element of the study and included three day long workshops with a range of stakeholders undertaken during 2018, two briefing sessions for elected members and local councillors held in winter 2018/19, an online public survey (with over 3200 responses) and a series of in-depth stakeholder telephone interviews.

It was initially anticipated that the study would be completed in winter 2018/19, with the draft report to be provided in the first quarter of 2019. Due to the longstanding stakeholder interest, political interest and the sheer volume of responses, it was considered that

extending the programme slightly to enable thorough analysis would be beneficial to this work, and to the wider STPR2 engagement process going forward.

The SWSTS was published on 27 June for an 8 week period of review by stakeholders and anyone with an interest in the outcomes of the study. The original date for the online response was 23 August, however due to a number of requests from interested parties, it was agreed to extend this by 4 weeks until Friday 20 September. Following this extended survey timescale, and allowing time to review comments, edit and finalise the report, it is expected that the final document will be published in late 2019.

The delivery of the wider STPR2 project has been running in parallel and is on track to complete in the course of this Parliament as scheduled.

## **VEGETATION AND POTHOLE ISSUES**

Finlay Carson MSP raised the issue of vegetation on the A75. Following a route tour undertaken by officials with Mr Carson in December of last year, he was advised that our operating company Scotland Transerv would be undertaking a programme of landscaping works that would address his concerns as follows:

- A75 West Landscaping - Completed in March.
- A75 Rowan Glen – Programmed for November.
- A75 Auchenlarie to Cairn Holy - Programmed for November.
- A75 Skyreburn - Programmed for November.
- A75 Castle Douglas – Programmed for December.
- A75 Newton Stewart - Programmed for December.
- A75 Castle Kennedy to Inch Church - Programmed for March 2020.
- A75 Palnure – Design underway for completion in fourth quarter of 2019/20.

In addition to the above larger scale vegetation clearance works, any safety issues will be addressed within contractual timeframes. Also, any minor landscaping issues including sign clearance are being recorded and works completed as part of an ongoing programme of works.

Brian Whittle MSP raised issues regarding potholes on both the A77 and A75. Since 2007 the Scottish Government has invested over £66.2M in maintaining the A77 and £85.5M maintaining the A75.

Our operating company Scotland Transerv have a resurfacing programme in place for those areas of carriageway showing the greatest signs of deterioration as follows:

A77 trunk road:

- A77 Grassyards to Milton Rd – Completed in June
- A77 Hansel Village – Completed in July
- A77 Rosemount to Symington – Completed in August
- A77 Whatriggs to Craigie Road – Programmed end of August
- A77 Haggstone Climbing Lane – Completed in August
- A77 Auchenblane – Completed in August
- A77 Dalquat to Minnybae – Programmed for September
- A77 South of Doonholm Road – Programmed for October

A75 Trunk road:

- A75 Drumflower to Planting End – Completed in June
- A75 Muirfad - Completed in July
- A75 Barlae to Knockinshee - Completed in July
- A75 Bettyknowes to Barfil - Completed in August
- A75 West of River Annan – Programmed for September
- A75 Springholm – Programmed for October

We have also instructed Scotland TranServ to proceed with sacrificial hand-patching schemes at some locations which were not planned for resurfacing schemes in the near future namely A77 Carlock Hill. A resurfacing scheme on the A77 in Stranraer was accelerated and completed in May due to increased local complaints.

## **ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN THE SOUTH OF SCOTLAND**

The Scottish Government is committed to furthering the sustainable economic and social development of the South of Scotland, and that is why we are establishing the South of Scotland Enterprise (SOSE). In doing so we recognise the unique circumstances of the South of Scotland and the need for a fresh approach to tackling them.

The South of Scotland Enterprise Act received Royal Assent on 12 July 2019 and SOSE will be operational from April 2020. The new agency will operate across the local authority areas of the Scottish Borders and Dumfries and Galloway, and will focus on the needs of the area, driving inclusive and sustainable growth, supporting communities and capitalising on its people and resources.

SOSE will work closely with other local and national organisations, including Transport Scotland, to align activities behind an agreed strategic economic vision. We recognise that there are particular transport challenges in the south and it is intended that SOSE will work collaboratively to ensure that national activity meets the needs of the South, and to complement other sources of existing investment and support.

Further to the establishment of SOSE, we are working to deliver two significant regional growth deals in the areas surrounding the A77 and A75. This year I have signed Heads of Terms agreements for both the Borderlands and Ayrshire Growth Deals, confirming that the Scottish Government is prepared to invest up to £85 million and £103 million respectively.

The Borderlands Partnership involves five local authorities - Dumfries & Galloway, Scottish Borders, Carlisle, Cumbria and Northumberland - all working together to promote inclusive economic growth in the South of Scotland and North of England. The Ayrshire Growth Deal is an agreement between both Governments and the three local authorities and will be overseen by the Ayrshire Regional Economic Partnership, delivering a range of projects that will have a transformative impact on the local economy

I hope that the Committee finds this response helpful.