

# Finlay Carson MSP submission of 12

December 2023

PE1657/RR: A77 upgrade and PE1610/UU:  
Upgrade the A75

Unfortunately I am unable to attend the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee in person as it clashes with the Rural and Islands Committee which I convene.

I would, however, voice my strong support for the continuation of petitions PE1610: Upgrade the A75 and PE1657 A77 upgrade, having spent years campaigning actively to see these key routes improved to an acceptable standard.

As you are aware both roads contribute enormously to both the local, Scottish and national economies yet, they have been starved of any significant investment despite repeated commitments by the Scottish Government. Promises have been made but failed to be delivered, leaving motorists and hauliers who use this road that serves the ports at Cairnryan, both frustrated by its reliability and safety record.

In the past five full calendar years there have been seven fatal collisions on the A75, the most recent being only a few weeks ago. At the same time there have been countless accidents that have resulted in serious injuries.

The road has been closed 18 times in 2023 for unplanned incidents, road traffic collisions, other incidents and flooding. It has also been closed 13 times for planned road maintenance works which adds further to the poor unreliability record.

Various economic reports have highlighted the growing need to improve the A75, in particular, that transports £17 billion worth of goods every year.

Commissioned by Dumfries and Galloway, South Ayrshire and Mid and East Antrim Councils and undertaken by independent transport consultancy Sweco, the [Strategic and Economic Impacts Report](#) looks at seven options - from bypasses of key towns and rail improvements to full dualling It outline how dualling the A75/A77 trunk

roads linking Scotland and England with Northern Ireland would bring £5bn of "positive benefits" to the UK economy. Other benefits range from reduced journey times and vehicle operating costs (£700 million) to combined CO<sub>2</sub>e (carbon dioxide equivalent) savings of around £95 million. (<https://www.dumgal.gov.uk/A75-A77>)

The economic significance of the A75 was also recognised in Sir Peter Hendy's Union Connectivity Review who singled out the need for investment given the key role it plays in transporting goods from the UK and Europe and vice-versa. Initially the Scottish Government refused to get involved in the review, although now, thankfully, they are now reported to be working alongside the UK Government.

The UK Government has committed to providing £8m to the Scottish Government to develop options to improve the A75 and committing further funding to deliver targeted improvements, such as alleviating pinch points, following the Scottish Government's identification of a preferred option – bypassing the villages of Springholm and Crocketford. This is a welcome move it remains imperative that the Scottish Government works collaboratively with its UK counterparts to ensure progress is, at last, made in improving a road that is often described as a goat track.

This should be seen as the green light for kick-starting work by Transport Scotland to finalise plans for the identified improvements.

The UK Government funding commitments in relation to the A75, which strictly speaking is a devolved funding responsibility, will have the knock on effect of reducing the STPR2 budget commitments made by the Scottish Government. This budget saving should be redirected to accelerate improvements on the A77, with the Scottish Government at least matching the A75 funding from the UKG.

I would urge the committee to request that a stakeholder meeting is held in Holyrood or preferably in Dumfries and Galloway to hear first hand from the Transport Minister and Finance Minister, their timescales for implementation of the improvements. It is my understanding that this was a previous request made from the committee.

It is time for the petition committee to press the Scottish Government for committed timescales for delivery of STPR2 commitments on the A75 and A77 particularly now that the economic and social arguments have

been made so clearly and undeniably in favour of urgent upgrade to the A75 and A77.