

# Emma Harper MSP submission of 19 December 2023

## PE1657/SS: A77 upgrade and PE1610/VV: Upgrade the A75

I am writing to provide a submission as part of the committee's consideration of the above-mentioned petitions in relation to the A75 and A77 arterial routes within my South Scotland Region. As you will be aware, since my election in 2016, I along with colleagues and constituents, have championed essential and overdue upgrades to these routes.

I want to start by putting my thanks on record to the work of the petitioners, Matt Halliday and Donald McHarrie, as well as to the A75 and A77 Action Groups, and the wide array of constituents from Dumfries and Galloway and East and South Ayrshire who have campaigned for upgrades. Their vital work is appreciated and will lead to upgrades being taken forward.

As is noted in the committee papers for this session, and since the committee's last consideration of these petitions, there has been welcome movement on the cause of upgrades for the A75 and A77. The Scottish Government has published, in full, the Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 (STPR2) which is a key milestone for transport planning in Scotland, setting out, for us in the South West, important recommendations to the A75 and A77.

The document states that the A75 and A77 would benefit from improving junctions, enhancing overtaking opportunities or climbing lanes at appropriate locations where slow-moving traffic leads to risky overtaking manoeuvres, and widening or realigning carriageways to alleviate 'pinch points' such as narrow structures or at stretches of older standard single carriageway. Specifically, on the A75, the STPR2 also recommends realigning the road around the villages of Springholm and Crocketford and improving the road around the Cuckoo Bridge Roundabout.

Moreover, after lobbying and constructive working between the Scottish and UK Government's, £8 million has now been made available for a feasibility study to produce options for bypassing the villages of

Springholm and Crocketford. However, this does not go far enough in enacting the change which is required to both the A75 and A77.

The Scottish Government has stated that, due to the pressures on its fixed budget, and as a result of the UK Government's Autumn Statement, Scotland is likely to face a reduction of 9.8% in its capital budget for infrastructure spending between this year and financial years 2027/28. This, of course, will have a knock-on impact on the implementation of the STPR2 recommendations.

Given this, I would request that the committee keep these petitions open and consider writing to the Scottish Government to request information on how it will prioritise commitments within the STPR2, to ensure the A75 and A77 are not left behind other parts of Scotland in receiving overdue transport infrastructure spending.

I would also be interested in hearing whether the committee could consider seeking information from the Scottish Government on any discussions it has held with the UK Government over additional funding to implement the STPR2 in relation to the A75 and A77, particularly as the UK Government recognised the importance of the A75 in its Union Connectivity Review.

I would be more than happy to answer any questions the committee have based on this submission. I look forward to hearing the outcome of the committee's discussion.