

Finlay Carson MSP submission of 5 April 2023

PE1610/QQ: Upgrade the A75 and PE1657/NN: A77 Upgrade

It is my understanding that the Transport Minister has written to the Citizens Participation and Public Petitions Committee asking that the petitions PE1657 and PE1610 be closed.

Unfortunately I will not be in parliament when petitions PE1657 and PE1610 will once again be heard, but I would strongly make the case these petitions are continued given the powerful evidence provided by the publication of an Economic Impact Assessment carried out by the European-wide transport consultancy company SWECO.

This report was commissioned by three local authorities – Dumfries and Galloway Council, South Ayrshire Council and Mid and East Antrim Councils – and only published on 30th March 2023. It is fair to say that this is a crucial, in-depth piece of work and it is only right that the committee is made fully aware of it.

Among the findings is the conclusion that dualling the A75 and A77 trunk roads linking Scotland and England with Northern Ireland would bring £5 billion of positive benefits to the UK economy as well as significant environmental gains, including CO2 emissions reduction.

Benefits range from reduced journey times and vehicle operating costs of approximately £700 million to combine carbon dioxide savings of around £95 million.

As the constituency MSP for Galloway and West Dumfries, I believe the impact assessment report clearly shows that STPR2 simply does not go far enough and, furthermore the commitment from the previous Transport Minister and the First Minister to improve transport infrastructure in the south west corner of Scotland has clearly not been delivered.

Despite promises of round-table discussions this has not happened and, the timetable of STPR2 has still not happened and with no proposed date either.

We also have an indication that Transport Scotland and UK Government are having positive discussions on producing a business case for both Governments' funding improvements on the A75 on the back of The Union Connectivity Review, however information is difficult to come by.

In a response to my letter to Jenny Gilruth the former Transport Minister dated 15th March 2022, confirmed that Transport Scotland would consider the EIA in full when published. There has not yet been any public response to the EIA.

I fully support the letter from Donald McHarrie and given the findings of the EIA report I think it is only right and proper that both petitions remain active.