

Petitioner submission of 7 February 2024

PE1657/UU: A77 upgrade and PE1610XX: Upgrade the A75

Since the Petitions Committee last met, we have seen huge changes and increased activity to see the A77 and A75 improved and brought up to dual carriageway standard.

On the 29 January the two ferry companies operating out of Cairnryan Ports, Stena Line and P&O, along with Belfast Port Authority, hosted a Transport Summit under the banner of South West of Scotland Transport Alliance. This was attended by businesses, Dumfries and Galloway and South Ayrshire Councils, NHS Dumfries and Galloway, the Road Haulage Association, local Councillors and South of Scotland MSPs, and both A77 Campaign Team and Dual the A75 Group. The Summit was Chaired by Liz Cameron, Scottish Chamber of Commerce.

Everyone who spoke at the Summit had the same message being that the A77 and A75 needs its share of investment to improve the safety of the trunk roads, upgrading to dual carriageway standards for economic benefits, and to contribute toward Climate Change with a daily saving of 2 tonnes of CO₂ emissions per road. So, by doing both A77 and A75 there is annual saving of 1460 tonnes of Co₂ prevented from going into the atmosphere. The benefits to this saving of CO₂ emissions and the bypassing of the 7 town and villages on the A77 will be felt by the environments who are currently being subjected to the existing massive emissions from vehicles travelling through these villages.

Adding to this Transport Summit, we have seen the reopening of the Northern Ireland Assembly following the cross political party agreement to a shared Administration of the Assembly.

The catalyst to this Assembly Agreement was the agreement between the DUP and UK Government's agreement on cross border movement of goods. This was significant and a huge step forward to securing the reopening of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

This DUP/UK Government agreement could bring tremendous economic benefit to the Ports of Cairnryan with more businesses wanting to

relocate, and hauliers using the short sea crossing to Northern Ireland and further into Southern Ireland from the EU18 and EU16 routes. But it also means this could accelerate the development of the Scottish Government's Enterprise Zone in the West of Dumfries and Galloway Council at Cairnryan and surrounding area. This would greatly boost the local economy and bring very much needed jobs to the southwest of Scotland.

In addition to the above activities, the Galloway National Park Association has submitted a bid to the Scottish Government to become the next National Park. This bid covers all of the Galloway Hills that stretches across Dumfries and Galloway and Ayrshire. If successful, it will bring increased traffic numbers to both the A77 and A75.

The A77 Campaign Team has been conducting traffic movements around Ayr Bypass that suffers from serious congestion problems for most of the working day. Unless this is looked at now with strategic planning being considered for a proper road infrastructure commitment before yet another housing development is considered, we believe it is only storing up traffic movement problems for the future as these housing developments are to the east of A77.

The A77 Campaign Team request we make a presentation to the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee to highlight the added activities, and illuminate the opportunities with all the potential opportunities from the above-mentioned developments. We further request the Committee to take the time to travel the A77 to experience the difficulties of this trunk road.

Just as all 5 of our South of Scotland MSPs echoed at the Summit meeting, we need the A77 to be raised to National status and not considered as a southwest of Scotland issue. The A77 is a crucial link between the central belt of Scotland's warehouses to and from Northern Ireland delivering anything from bread to teabags, and everything in between. Stena Line has already intimated that it is to purchase two new ships for the Heysham/Belfast sea crossing routes where we could see warehouses relocate to Northern England. It is essential to see investment on the A77 and A75 with these trunk roads upgraded if we are to protect the 24/7 North Channel sailings.