

Emma Harper MSP submission of 18 April 2023

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

Dear Jackson,

I hope you are well and taking care.

I'm writing to you regarding petitions PE1610 and PE1657, both of which make crucial points regarding the urgent need to improve South West Scotland's arterial routes – the A75 and A77. I would like to put my support on record for these petitions and request that the Committee do all it can to ensure the aims of these petitions are met.

As I am also sure you are aware through consideration of these petitions, people living across Dumfries and Galloway and the Scottish Borders face significant challenges when it comes to transport infrastructure and transport connectivity. Indeed, these areas requires urgent action and investment from the Scottish Government to benefit the lives of local people, to enhance the local economy and to attract people and business to the respective areas.

My region has challenges on the arterial A75 and A77 routes, with slow and infrequent rail journeys between Dumfries, Glasgow and Carlisle, as well as frequently cancelled and delayed train services to and from Lockerbie. Last year, the Scottish Government published the Strategic Transport Projects Review 2 (STPR2).

This document states that the A75 and A77 Will 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'. These pinch points include narrow structures or at stretches of older standard single carriageway, as well as realigning the road around the villages of Springholm and Crocketford and improving the road around the Cuckoo Bridge Roundabout.

The recommendations contained within the STPR2, once enacted, will be pivotal in improving the safety and efficiency of the A75 and A77, in

improving journey times and in attracting people and business to Dumfries and Galloway and wider South West Scotland. However, I understand that the Scottish Government's former Transport Minister recommended that the committee move to close these petitions, citing the STPR2 as reason.

While I understand and welcome the former Ministers position, particularly as STPR2 will improve the roads, I do feel there are grounds to keep both these petitions open. One of the key reasons for this is because we do not yet have timescales for the implementation of STPR2 – until that point, I firmly believe there are grounds for these petitions to remain open.

I have worked with the A75 and A77 Action Groups on the need to improve the A75 and A77 since my election. There have been numerous chamber and written questions and multiple cross-party members debates on the A75 and A77. This is one issue which South West Scotland MSPs agree that necessary investment in roads infrastructure is paramount for the prosperity of South West Scotland.

Indeed, this is a crucially important issue for my constituents, and I would appreciate the committee doing all it can to keep these petitions open.