

AYRSHIRE ROADS ALLIANCE

WRITTEN SUBMISSION

Scotland's most innovative public sector partnership, the Ayrshire Roads Alliance, delivers shared Council roads and transportation services to communities across East and South Ayrshire.

The Alliance is governed by a Joint Committee of elected members from the two Councils, with the service being led by East Ayrshire Council. It delivers roads services including roads maintenance, winter maintenance, design and infrastructure, traffic and transportation and road safety.

The shared service ensures a consistent standard of service delivery while improving service efficiency and resilience, against a backdrop of reducing public sector budgets.

The Ayrshire Roads Alliance is responsible for:

- maintenance of public roads, bridges, footways and footpaths
- street lighting
- traffic calming and road safety
- roads design and structural design
- parking enforcement and mobility
- bus infrastructure and interchange facilities
- winter maintenance

The Ayrshire Roads Alliance is the first of its kind in Scotland, and it reflects the recommendations of the Christie Commission, which, in 2011, published its report on the future of public services.

The report made strong recommendations for public services to concentrate on preventative measures into the future and for public sector bodies to work closely to counter inevitable deep spending cuts, stating "unless Scotland embraces a radical, new, collaborative culture throughout our public services, both budgets and provision will buckle under the strain".

The Scottish Government supports East Ayrshire Council and South Ayrshire Council's approach to shared services and their commitment to supporting the findings of the Christie Commission.

The Ayrshire Roads Alliance is a radical, sector-leading partnership expected to yield savings of more than £8m over the next ten years, through reduced management and administrative costs plus better deals for larger orders.

Both East Ayrshire Council and South Ayrshire Council's sit within the SPT Regional Transport Partnership. SPT is the Regional Transport Partnership for the west of Scotland, established by the Transport (Scotland) Act 2005. SPT is a partnership of 12 councils and has a range of planning, operational and project delivery responsibilities. For planning, SPT prepares the statutory Regional Transport Strategy, which guides transport development and

investment in our area. Operationally, SPT runs the Subway and various bus stations across the region, including Scotland's biggest, Buchanan Bus Station. SPT also manages and provides support for socially necessary and demand responsive bus services. Regarding project delivery, SPT's key current initiatives are: Subway Modernisation, a £290m programme of improvements across the Subway network; Fastlink, a high quality bus system between the centre of Glasgow and the New South Glasgow Hospitals campus; and the Bramble Smartcard, already delivered on the Subway, and we are looking to roll this out across other modes over coming years. More information on SPT is available at www.spt.co.uk.

Key points

SPT has developed a Freight Action Plan as part of the Regional Transport Strategy¹ and chairs the Strathclyde Freight Quality Partnership, comprising representatives from the Freight Transport Association, Road Haulage Association, local authorities and other industry partners. The Ayrshire Roads Alliance attends the Freight Quality Partnership meetings.

SPT is also investing over £3m in 2014/15 in transport network initiatives which will improve connectivity for freight. These are attached at Appendix 1 to this response. Given this level of support, SPT is ideally placed to play a key role in assisting the Scottish Government, the freight transport industry and local authorities in addressing freight transport issues.

- An efficient, integrated and sustainable freight industry and network is essential to ensuring the competitiveness of the west of Scotland and wider Scottish economy and to help meet Scotland's ambitious carbon reduction targets;
- High traffic levels and limited road capacities cause congestion on the road network and this reduces the fast and reliable distribution of freight;
- Greater investment is required to improve freight infrastructure at ports, freight terminals and on both the road and rail networks, particularly adjacent to facilities;
- While the current grants available from the Scottish Government for current freight infrastructure are welcome (e.g. the Freight Facilities Grant), more targeted and specific regional / local resource and support is needed to promote and develop sustainable freight options in future. SPT is considering introducing a pilot scheme in the west of Scotland which it is hoped will go some way in seeking to address this issue;
- All partners need to make greater efforts to improve joint working to take forward initiatives to achieve regional and national freight objectives. SPT's Strathclyde Freight Quality Partnership (FQP) is an example of providing a forum for partnership working to seek to help to improve sustainable freight transport; and
- More information is needed on the movement of goods by mode and market sector for analysis and forecasting purposes. SPT and the

¹ http://www.spt.co.uk/wmslib/Documents_RTS/Action_Plans/freight.pdf

Ayrshire Councils are working to address this gap through the Ayrshire Freight Study which will provide a blueprint for a wider regional strategy.

1. Can you identify the main infrastructure and policy obstacles to the free flow of freight in Scotland, whether carried by rail, road, air or sea?

Infrastructure

Greater investment is required to improve freight infrastructure at ports, freight terminals and on both the road and rail networks, particularly adjacent to facilities and to tackle capacity constraints on both road and rail networks, including the potential to develop former rail freight sites.

High traffic levels, limited road capacities, road maintenance issues, bridge heights and restrictions can cause congestion on the road network and this reduces the fast and reliable distribution of freight. This situation can be exacerbated by the limited funds available to address such issues and meet road maintenance needs.

Other issues which should be addressed include:

- The need for more investment in rail infrastructure, i.e. rail gauges, junction and signalling capacities, freight train lengths and wagon maximum weights. In particular, there is a need to achieve gauge clearance improvements on the East Coast Main Line and the Glasgow and South Western line, and to standardise loop lengths on the West Coast Main line to allow freight operators to work more efficiently;
- The need for investment to improve capacity and journey times on key road routes;
- The lack of secure overnight parking facilities for lorries;
- The lack of capacity at sea ports, particularly for local timber traffic;
- The limited capacity for increased road and rail traffic to/from Hunterston;
- Further improvements are required on strategically important road freight routes, including “A” roads across the west of Scotland, which provide key freight routes within and to the region;
- A continuing difficulty for Scottish businesses is the imbalance of movement of goods to and from Scotland by container, resulting in insufficient supply of containers for export of goods and additional costs for exporters; and
- There is potential to move more goods to rail if facilities, resources and operating practices are improved to enable booking of end to end goods transportation through a complete logistics service that includes rail as the main mode and forms consolidated container loads and, in the long term, train loads from multiple customers’ shipments.

To address some of these issues, the Ayrshire Roads Alliance is working with North Ayrshire Council and SPT to take forward the Ayrshire Freight study. The

study will investigate and establish freight movements in the area, where freight is travelling from and to, what type of freight is moved, routes used, modes of transport for freight and opportunities for further freight development in Ayrshire. The study will help to provide a blueprint for freight strategy across the west of Scotland.

While the current grants available from the Scottish Government for current freight infrastructure are welcome, including Freight Facilities Grant, more resource and support is needed to promote and develop sustainable freight options in future.

Operational

There is a lack of train paths and available time slots for the transportation of freight by rail, particularly during engineering works. In terms of road freight, curfews on night-time deliveries prevent spreading HGV movements to periods when general traffic flows are low.

Financial

It is perceived that there is a higher cost associated with transport of goods by rail over road. A more transparent and competitive system of charges should be established to encourage modal shift to rail freight. Where there are capacity restrictions on the network, funding will be required to provide additional tracks and remove gauge width and height restrictions.

The impact of fuel prices, the requirements of the EU Working Time Directive and competition from non-UK registered hauliers are all also significant issues for the freight industry in Scotland.

Logistical

While the movement of freight by rail is to be encouraged, it is acknowledged that rail freight does not provide a door-to-door solution since freight requires to be transported to rail transfer facilities for onward transfer to its final destination. Currently, such facilities are limited in number e.g. there are none in Ayrshire. In addition, the movement of freight by rail is constrained by capacity, time and convenience.

The change in retailing towards greater online shopping for example has led to a growing trend to a higher proportion of vans being used for deliveries to meet “just-in-time” requirements and for home deliveries and this presents a significant challenge if road freight miles are to be reduced.

There are also issues to be addressed to improve urban delivery arrangements in our towns and cities including arrangements for loading and unloading of vehicles and restrictive curfew arrangements.

Partnership Working

Fostering partnership working between the public sector and operators and others is an important factor in achieving progress for the sustainable movement of freight. All partners need to make greater efforts to improve joint working to take forward initiatives to achieve regional and national freight objectives. The Strathclyde Freight Quality Partnership is a good example of providing a forum for partnership working to seek to help to improve sustainable freight transport:

Some examples of areas where there could be greater partnership working include:

- Ensuring better co-ordination of freight movements including the development of a more effective road freight route strategy;
- Learning lessons from extreme weather incidents; and
- Improving the “last leg” of the freight transport supply chain which is often the least efficient, and can cause significant congestion issues.

2. How can Scotland’s rail, road, air and sea freight routes to the rest of the UK, to Europe and worldwide be improved?

We have noted above the significant infrastructure investment and other challenges which require to be met to improve freight transport across modes and these are common across the rest of the UK, Europe and worldwide.

In addition, softer issues need to be tackled. This includes the need for better information and marketing on the available freight facilities and services across modes but particularly rail, to persuade consumers, retailers and producers of the commercial and environmental benefits of rail as a mode of transport for freight.

Other areas to be addressed include the need for improved information and analysis on the movement of goods by mode and market sector to ensure effective forward planning and forecasting to ensure freight is delivered efficiently.

There is an opportunity to explore how air freight can be better utilised given the existence of Glasgow Prestwick Airport, including the better utilisation of the existing rail and road links to the site. This fits well with aspirations to support local businesses to increase international exports.

The creation of web portals and services for freight, track and trace facilities, route planners and a system that encourages more sustainable road haulage could all be developed to improve freight transport integration. For example, Transport for London’s Freight Journey Planner allows users to generate and print a personalised route for a specified time, date and size of vehicle.

3. How can the Scottish Government structure its freight grant schemes to support the switch of freight to more sustainable modes of transport?

The Ayrshire Roads Alliance welcomes the existence of grants such as the Freight Facilities Grant to finance modal shift and enable more goods to be taken off the roads and onto rail or water. However, as noted above, more needs to be done to improve the transport network as a whole for freight.

The phasing of grants to provide more up front / start-up funding has the potential to encourage businesses to investigate and finance the switch to more sustainable modes.

In general terms, grant opportunities available to use more sustainable freight modes need to be better promoted to eligible businesses and organisations, and assistance could be provided to help secure any grant funding.

4. Are there any European Union initiatives which could provide further opportunities for Scottish freight transport?

Examples include:

Seeking European funding to adopt intelligent and telematics solutions within the freight transport network will help drive efficiencies and sustainability into the freight supply chains. The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) 2014-20 has a focus on smart, sustainable inclusive growth and there are funds for transport, ICT, climate change, resource efficiency and low carbon economy. Stakeholder efforts should be focussed on accessing these funds.

Weastflows is a project funded by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) - Interreg IVB North West Europe (NWE)) which examines freight movement and aims to encourage a shift towards greener freight transport in the NWE region. This is an example of how European funding can help to drive innovation in freight transport.

In Scotland, the Mode Shift Revenue Support (MSRS) 2014-15 mechanism provides funding for rail and inland waterway movements in Scotland and for rail movements between Scotland and England & Wales, where the majority of the Environmental Benefits are generated in Scotland. The Scottish Government MSRS budget for the period 2014-15 was set at £1.1m. It will be important to sustain and increase such funding in future years.

5. How can the freight industry make a contribution to greenhouse gas emissions reduction?

Freight Consolidation Centres - Freight consolidation centres have the scope to improve take up of rail freight but need to be financed and this is a major obstacle. Also, if there are relatively few restrictions on freight to and through cities and towns then this will not encourage support and investment from retail and other partners.

Improved coordination of information - Initially it would be helpful to fill any information gaps to allow various transport modes to be considered when assessing how to move freight. This could be done by providing a central resource centre.

Road Freight Maps - As mentioned previously, agreed Road Freight Maps would provide better routing information to the industry. For the duration of the Commonwealth Games a routeing strategy was in place and worked well with support from the road haulage industry. This should be rolled out on a more permanent basis reflecting everyday road conditions and capacities but with sufficient flexibility and adaptability to cope with a range of demand scenarios. Although this applies to road haulage, the same principle applies for rail freight where better information can breed confidence in the rail freight market.

Freight Gateways – Freight Gateways can provide a key economic contribution to the region and beyond. A Freight Gateway supports the development of local trade and global freight connections, contributing both to the economic and the social wellbeing of the region. To be a sustainable gateway, these logistics 'hubs' for the entry and exit movement of freight to a region have the potential to maximise multi-modal links by road, rail, air and sea to the surrounding area and the wider supply chain.

Adopting best practice – Through better management of resources and careful review of the overall logistics operations system, providers can reduce the environmental and economic impact of freight transport significantly. For example, SEStran has developed a checklist to encourage the logistics sector to consider measures that will make a move towards more sustainable logistics a more realistic option. The Centre for Sustainable Road Freight performs fundamental and applied research into low carbon road freight, including both vehicle engineering and logistical factors. Members of the Centre influence the aims and directions of research in sustainable road freight, and obtain the benefits, including exploitation of intellectual property, for relatively low cost.

Other options include:

- Encourage the sourcing of more goods locally to reduce the need for freight movement;
- Providing freight grants for the purchase of cleaner vehicles;
- Sourcing EU funding to encourage the use of cleaner vehicles;
- Review the opportunity for increased use of cleaner fuelled vehicles;
- Investigating ways of making use of empty freight containers (land, sea and air);
- Setting more stringent targets for carbon reduction;
- Imposing speed restrictions on lorries;
- Increase the Heavy Goods Vehicle Road User Levy;
- Through local Freight Quality Partnership Action Plans;

- More sustainable freight and logistics operations could be implemented through collaborative partnerships between the public and private sectors;
- More promotion of the FTA's toolkit and develop a best-practice guide for night-time delivery in sensitive areas; and
- Provide real-time information to help freight operators, in particular to deal with challenging traffic conditions.

6. Which policy changes, or infrastructure improvements, are required to increase the flow of goods through Scotland's major sea ports?

The provision of comprehensive intermodal facilities at ports will encourage sea ports to be used to transport freight and in turn encourage the further development of coastal shipping. Furthermore, supporting sea port developments and improving road and, where appropriate, rail access to these ports will be vital in improving freight transfer by sea. In addition, more funding for the achievement of both of the above will be essential in encouraging more sea freight.

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