

PE1657/C

Glenapp Castle Hotel written submission of 14 September 2017

I am the Director and General Manager of the Five Red Star Glenapp Castle Hotel. We are located two miles south of the village of Ballantrae in South Ayrshire. The castle was put up for sale in 2014 and was bought in 2015 by a Yorkshire businessman Paul Szkiler. In the last two years Paul has invested an additional £1.5m in upgrading the property and employing an additional 15 people. Our total staff role stands at 55 employees.

Paul has invested heavily in the product and subsequent marketing. We have a first-class product but historically no one knew! We have had many successes over the last two years, doubling turnover and increasing profits and we have more we want to do.

The South West is a beautiful part of Scotland. International visitors are unaware of the region and associate Scotland with the Highlands. Our sales team have to explain our location and the hidden beauty that it offers. Guests love the castle and area and many return looking upon Glenapp as a home from home. We welcome FTSE 100 companies and many wonderful guests from all over the world. We have a major disadvantage over our competition. Infrastructure, (Road, Rail and Internet).

The A77 connects us with the central belt, International Airports and the Highlands. The road infrastructure from Stranraer to Ayr is poor, so poor that we feel it strangles economic activity in the South West. This caps the number of jobs and leads to a migration out of the area of young people who feel they need to move away to get on. This shapes communities and restricts services.

The slow A77 journey times, slows the flow of business coming to the hotel. I have many guests who say they generally have no reason to travel south from Ayr it's just difficult. Just this week I had a potential bride cancel her second viewing mainly due to the condition of the road and journey times.

You would expect this to happen once in a while but we regularly receive negative feedback about the A77. We host journalists, agents and conference planners from all over the world. All have the potential to direct substantial business towards the South West. The road quality and journey times is the biggest hurdle we have to climb. Competition is fierce and many event planners are concerned that the journey from major airports on a sub-standard road will result in negative comments from their corporate clients and therefore on occasion we have lost the business for this very reason. We have those that can arrive by helicopter, this is a small percentage but it allows minimum travel times and to them their time is more valuable than the cost of avoiding the A77.

As the road is so narrow for safe working, remedial work on it causes the road to be closed. This causes us and other neighbouring businesses great inconvenience. We try to contact guests and explain the diversion. In many places in bad weather the high verges slip causing traffic lights disruption, one area near Stena has had lights stopping traffic for well over 18 months. The few passing places causes ferry traffic to bunch together. This makes overtaking difficult and dangerous.

In conclusion, I believe the road is not fit for purpose and strangles the communities of the South West.

Glenapp is happy to support the A77 Action Group.