

PE1657/E

Minister for Transport and the Islands submission of 19 October 2017

Thank you for your letter of 20 September to the Cabinet Secretary for the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work, Keith Brown MSP regarding the A77. As the clarifications sought fall within my portfolio your letter has been passed to me to respond.

The Scottish Government recognises the important part that the A75 and A77 play in connecting the South West and Ports at Cairnryan with the rest of Scotland. This is why the Programme for Government makes a commitment to examining the case for transport improvements in the Dumfries and Galloway area, including improvements to the A77 south of Girvan, linking to the Cairnryan Ferry Hub and the A75 and improvements to connect Dumfries and the A74(M).

The ports are not only important to the region but are of major importance to Scotland as a whole, operating as a direct link to Ireland with all the economic and social benefits that brings on both sides of the Irish Sea. The significant investment of upwards of £215m that both Stena and P&O have made in their respective ports infrastructure and vessels in recent years is much welcomed by the Scottish Government. Their investment in Scotland firmly demonstrates an on-going commitment to services from the ports.

With regards to clarifications sought on the A77, the Scottish Government remains committed to delivering the 5.2km A77 Maybole Bypass. The procurement process for the main works contract commenced in August, with contract award anticipated in Autumn 2018. Once complete the scheme will help separate local traffic from traffic travelling further afield, including to our key ports which will lead to improved road safety for local communities and road users, and provide better journey time reliability for motorists and businesses along the full length of the A77.

In terms of your query regarding action being taken to address the traffic lights at Marchburn, Scotland TranServ, on behalf of Transport Scotland, is planning essential repair works to the A77 Cairnryan Landslip which will involve a full weekend closure commencing on 3rd November 2017. This weekend closure will allow the installation of temporary works following which repairs to the downslope embankment will take place. Temporary traffic lights will remain in place until completion of these works, which is programmed for early 2018. A consultation document will be issued to all key stakeholders well in advance of the proposed road closure, including the A77 Action Group, providing further details on this proposal. The monitoring of areas at risk of landslip is documented in the South West Landscape Action Plan.

You may be aware that in August 2016, I announced that the National Transport Strategy (NTS) and Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR) will be subject to a comprehensive review. The new strategy will establish the strategic direction for transport in Scotland for the next 20 years and will be based on collaborative working, establishing the evidence base and ensuring Transport Scotland engages widely with stakeholders and communities across Scotland.

Upwards of sixty stakeholder organisations are now represented on the various National Transport Strategy working groups and National fora. Transport Scotland has set up dedicated national working groups to look specifically at tackling inequality in Transport and promoting greater accessibility; at Transport as an enabler of sustainable and inclusive economic growth; at how Transport can be 'greener and healthier'; and at how we can build an even safer and more resilient transport network. A National Partnership Group, comprised of a wide range of key external stakeholders in a position to offer specialist insight and knowledge as the review progresses, is up and running and will ultimately sign off on the conclusions of the working groups.

The 2017-18 Programme for Government re-affirmed the commitment to commence work this year for the second Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR2) in the Dumfries and Galloway area. This work will consider the rationale for improvements to road, rail, public transport and active travel on the key strategic corridors including the A75, A77 and the railway corridors to Stranraer and Carlisle via Kilmarnock / Dumfries. The study will have a particular focus on access to the ports at Cairnryan. Transport Scotland will commission consultants this year and in the meantime, is undertaking a programme of data collection on the major road routes in Dumfries and Galloway and South Ayrshire as well as at the ports themselves to enhance understanding of trip making patterns on the major road routes across the SW region.