

PE1610/M and PE1657/L

Freight Transport Association submission of 04 May 2018

The Freight Transport Association (FTA) would like to thank the committee for writing to the Association and giving us the opportunity to formally comment on such an important debate.

The FTA has previously voiced concerns about the state of the road taking traffic from Gretna to the ferry port at Cairnryan the A75. We have similar concerns on the A77.

For such a key route as the A75, the lack of consistent road surface is a headache for both freight operators and local residents and deserves urgent attention. Bypasses need to be constructed as a priority for the villages that the road currently travels through and we would urge Transport Scotland to investigate the possibility of duplicating the current A9 pilot scheme, which uses average speed cameras and increased speed limits of 50mph, to keep this key economic corridor to and from Northern Ireland open and functioning efficiently.

The port at Cairnryan handles around 45 per cent of Northern Ireland's trade with the UK. There are around 9,000 sailings a year on the Loch Ryan to Belfast route, accounting for 410,000 units of freight. Growth on the route has grown by 1.3 per cent over the last year but that is outstripped by far greater growth in movements between the ports of Holyhead and Dublin. This will only continue if the inadequate quality of the A75 is not addressed soon.

Trading conditions are already under stress over business' Brexit concerns and the uncertainty on delivery times caused by an ageing road network is only compounding the problem. The A75 in Scotland is the quickest direct route connecting Great Britain to shipping serving Northern Ireland and is vitally important for 'just in time' deliveries which retailers and agri-food producers in Northern Ireland rely on. The A77 equally connects central Scotland with the Northern Irish sea crossing. There is also a need for development of secure and suitable lorry parking facilities on such routes.

FTA therefore believes that it is beholden on central government, as well as the devolved administrations, to ensure that vehicles, products and services can continue to make it to the ports on time so that businesses on both sides of the Irish Sea can continue to flourish – and that will require urgent and sustained investment in infrastructure improvements.

FTA is happy to assist with further discussion and evidence as required.