

PE1610/L and PE1657/K

Road Haulage Association submission of 02 May 2018

I would like to firstly thank the committee on behalf of our members for writing to the Association and giving us the opportunity to formally comment on such an important debate. We have read with interest the committee's Official Report of the meeting on the 29th March 2018 and agree with many of the points put forward.

Our office is in the unique situation to cover both Scotland & Northern Ireland. This of course means we spend a lot of time across the Irish Sea and can see first-hand the improvements being made on that side of the Channel. By way of example, there has been £133 million invested on the A8 dualling scheme between Belfast and Larne. This scheme demonstrated benefits for the local community of Ballynure when their village was bypassed as a result of this upgrade. Access and egress to ports on the other side of the Channel will be enhanced further when the £165 million York Street interchange project starts.

The main concerns for our members travelling the A75 & A77 are fairly easy to explain. The road surface and width, in some places due to vegetation, make it difficult for HGV's to pass side by side without coming dangerously close to the edge of the road or indeed touching one another. A lack of overtaking opportunities along the A75 can lead to driver frustration and dangerous manoeuvres being attempted. This brings me to point to the recent A9 speed limit trial and comments made by the Transport Minister in a previous committee session. The RHA strongly believe that HGV's national speed limit on single carriageway roads should be increased to reflect those in England. The trial on the A9 provides significant statistics which demonstrate improved safety & journey time reliability. Together with a schedule of upgrades for the A75 & A77, an increase in speed limits must be part of the solution in providing a safer & more efficient road for all road users

In addition, the two routes also have very few diversionary routes available. When there is an incident on either road it can lead to HGV's travelling on arguably inappropriate roads or taking a 100+ mile diversion adding significant cost to the job and putting avoidable stress on the driving & working time regulations drivers must comply with. For the committee's reference, hauliers operate with margins between 2 & 3% which makes it very difficult to absorb any unplanned cost.

As an industry, hauliers are sympathetic to the concerns of the local communities who live along this route and feel that many of these concerns could be addressed by bypassing the areas concerned as has already been done on many routes across Scotland.

I also wish to take this opportunity to welcome the committee's comments on securing a debate on both petitions. These matters are extremely important to the

Dumfries & Galloway and South Ayrshire local economies, Scotland's national economy & the road haulage industry. It is encouraging to see they are being treated with the required level of importance.

Lastly, I wish to outline the Associations desire to assist with any formal evidence gathering or at any round table meeting. I trust you will find this information useful, and I hope that if we can be of any further assistance you will not hesitate in contacting us.