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Dumfries and Galloway Transport Summit Report September 2016

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1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Following a commitment made in May by the Deputy First Minister John Swinney to hold a 'Transport Summit' in the South West within the first 100 days of a new Scottish Government, a summit took place on 22 August in Dumfries.

The summit was held in Easterbrook Hall, Crichton Campus in Dumfries and attendees included local politicians and members of Dumfries & Galloway Council, along with transport and port operators, business groups, the Scottish Rural Parliament, the Third Sector and other local stakeholders. This ensured a focussed discussion took place about the role of transport and associated infrastructure to support the economy and communities in Dumfries & Galloway.

Dumfries & Galloway is well served by a number of strategic transport corridors, including the A75 (which is also part of Euro-route 18¹) linking Stranraer and the Irish ferry terminals in the west to Gretna and the A74(M) in the east. Other key trunk roads in the area include the A7, A76, A77, A701, A751 and A74(M). In addition to these strategic routes, local routes such as the A702, A708, A709, A713 and A714 provide key links for communities, leisure and industry.

On the rail network Dumfries & Galloway is served by three lines, the West Coast Mainline which operates between Glasgow and London with a station at Lockerbie, the Glasgow South West Line which has two lines in the region – one from Ayr running south west towards Barrhill and Stranraer, and one from Kilmarnock running south east towards Carlisle, stopping at Kirkconnel, Sanquhar, Dumfries, Annan and Gretna Green.

¹ Euro-route 18 runs for 1,890 km (1,170 miles) from Craigavon, Northern Ireland via – Belfast – Stranraer – Gretna – Carlisle – Newcastle – Oslo – Stockholm/Kapellskär – Helsinki - to Saint Petersburg, Russia

For context, the strategic transport network in Dumfries & Galloway is shown in Figure 1.

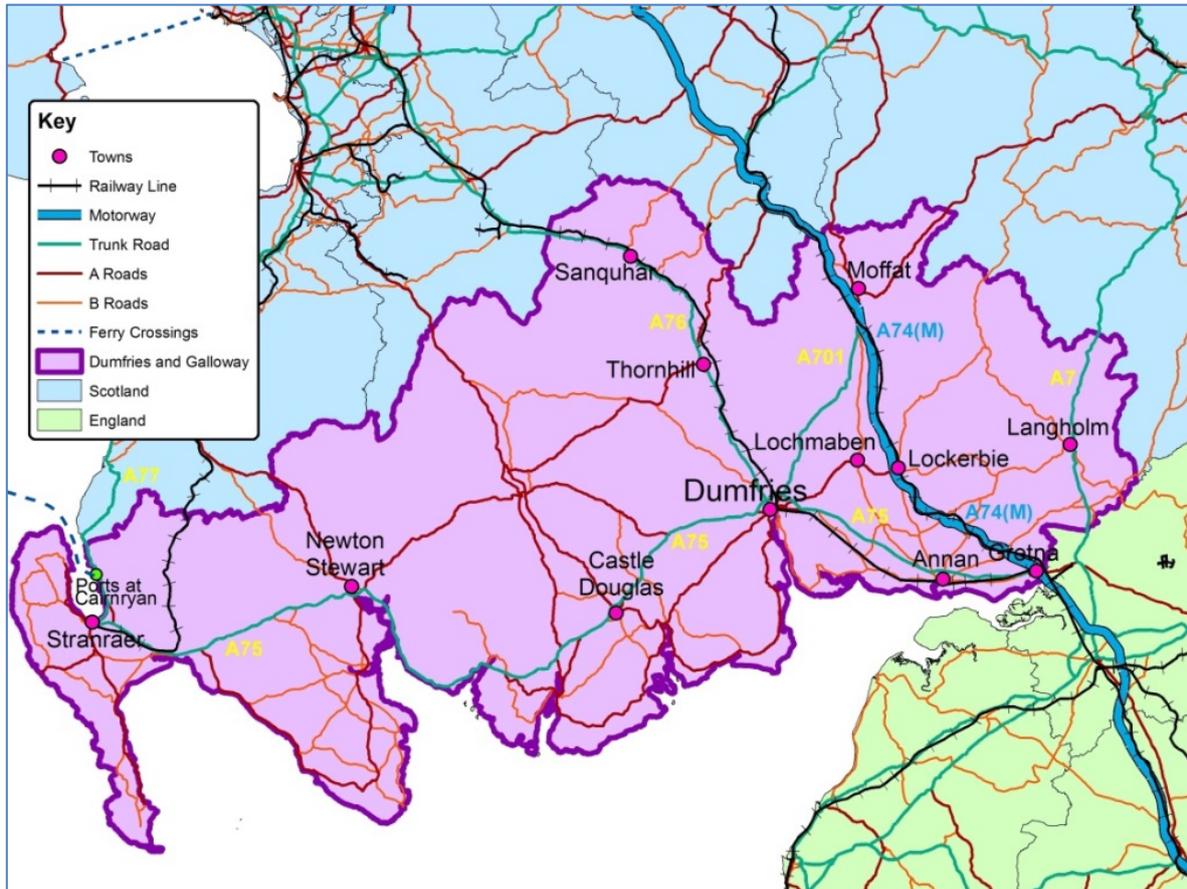


Figure 1 – Dumfries & Galloway Strategic Transport Network

Representatives from the following organisations were invited to the summit:

- Bus Users Scotland
- Confederation of Passenger Transport
- D&G Chamber of Commerce
- Dual the A75 Campaign
- Dumfries & Galloway Council
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Freight Transport Association
- Network Rail
- P&O Ferries
- Road Haulage Association
- Scotrail
- Scottish Council for Development & Industry
- Scottish Enterprise
- Scottish Parliament (Local & Regional MSPs)
- Scottish Rural Parliament
- Stagecoach West Scotland
- Stena Line
- SWestrans
- Third Sector Interface
- Transport Focus
- Transport Scotland
- Visit Scotland
- UK Parliament (Local MPs)

1.2 Opening Remarks

The summit was opened by Deputy First Minister John Swinney; Humza Yousaf, the Minister for Transport and the Islands; and Councillor Colin Smyth, Chair of the Economy, Environment and Infrastructure Committee at Dumfries & Galloway Council.

They highlighted that there are a number of key barriers to a more effective transport network in Dumfries & Galloway. For instance, the higher cost of transport, distance to education/employment, the difficulty accessing rail and reliance on bus services which are not as frequent as often needed. This leaves those without access to a car disadvantaged when considering where to live and work.

Ferry operations from Loch Ryan are of great economic importance to both Dumfries & Galloway and Scotland as well as Europe, however, platoons of HGVs heading to/from ports are common and a lack of overtaking opportunities on key routes can lead to driver frustration.

The Scottish Government recognises that transport links to more rural areas, such as Dumfries and Galloway, are as important as the major transport projects currently being delivered like the Forth Replacement Crossing or the Edinburgh-Glasgow (Rail) Improvement Programme. The challenge however is to deliver a transport network fit for 21st century Scotland and to continue to invest in our vital transport infrastructure.

As part of Scottish Government plans for this parliament, the Transport Minister announced at the summit that the National Transport Strategy (NTS) will undergo a full review and this will also be accompanied by a review of the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR). Both of these documents will be aligned with National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4).

There is a recognition that the lack of travel choices may also restrict the potential for the south west of the country to grow and develop economically. The Scottish Government's aim is to create greater prosperity and fairness, and includes taking steps to reduce inequality. The investments made to date on improving the A7, A75, A76 and A77 and on the rail network with the Scotrail franchise demonstrate the Government's on-going commitment to the area.

Since 2007, the Scottish Government has invested significantly in Scotland's motorways and trunk road network and are currently committed to the largest road investment programme ever seen in Scotland. In Dumfries & Galloway, £50 million has been spent on six new local road improvements to the A75, including £17 million on Dunragit Bypass.

In 2015/2016, £275 million was allocated for the maintenance of Scotland's motorways and trunk roads. The Scottish Government is committed to working with local government to help improve the condition and safety of all roads.

The need for improved rail connectivity in the region is recognised and a number of rail service improvements have been implemented already, with proposals due for

introduction in December 2017 including more frequent weekday services between Dumfries and Carlisle and improved early connectivity from East Ayrshire to Glasgow.

Integrated and efficient public services are vital, however these must be delivered against a backdrop of reducing public sector budgets. The Scottish Government is committed to continuing to provide financial support for bus services and incentives for the take up of greener vehicles, as well working in partnership to improve bus services.

Dumfries & Galloway is facing a number of major economic challenges, with the lowest wage economy in Scotland, low economic productivity and growing evidence of underemployment and youth unemployment. However, the area benefits from a range of economic opportunities as well as an outstanding natural environment and large potential for business growth. Transport infrastructure is critical for the region to tackle these challenges and pursue opportunities as they arise.

The issue of how to deliver rural cohesion is important, along with how the area can get an equitable share of infrastructure investment. The current appraisal and business case process is focussed on economic benefits which will not always be achievable in a rural context and therefore a more flexible approach may be required to secure investment for rail, road or active travel projects.

2 Regional Economic Strategy

2.1 Overview

Dumfries & Galloway's Regional Economic Strategy set the context for discussions at the summit and a summary of the key themes can be found below:

- The overall vision for the Region is that:
 - *“By 2020, Dumfries & Galloway will have a more diverse and resilient economy. One which is capable of taking advantage of opportunities by combining an appropriately skilled workforce and connected infrastructure to support more prosperous and inclusive communities where every member of every community has equality of access to that prosperity.”*
- Importance of enhancing regional connectivity, removing barriers to business competitiveness and improving access to economic opportunities for individuals and businesses:
 - *Roads: M74, A75, A76, A77, A7, A709, A701*
 - *Rail: West Coast mainline and Nith Valley & Stranraer lines*
 - *Sea: Cairnryan Ports*
 - *Digital*
- Investment projects that will have a significant impact on the regional economy:
 - *Stranraer Waterfront*
 - *Crichton Campus, Dumfries*
 - *Chapelcross Business & Industry Park*
 - *M74 Corridor*
- Regional Transport Strategy (RTS) has a role to play in supporting the region to grow and sustain indigenous companies, help businesses and people gain better access to markets and employment, grow key sectors such as forestry, tourism and food & drink, and attract inward investment.
- RTS needs to play a role in supporting the region to:
 - *Maximise impact of Assisted Area Status: M74 / A75 and Dumfries*
 - *Sustain and grow the resilience of micro economies across the region*
 - *Encourage inward migration*
 - *Maximise our region's contribution to Scotland and the UK economy*
 - *Facilitate benefits of our geography: City Regions and Borderlands*
- SWestrans Board agreed to refresh the RTS in July 2016 and this will reflect:
 - *National and Regional transport & economic priorities*
 - *Relationship of strategic transportation assets, economic growth areas and investment potential, including sites and allocations within the Local Development Plan*
 - *Importance of road, rail, sea and air routes and priorities for investment*

3 Topic Discussions

3.1 Introduction

Following the introductory part of the Summit, the main discussion session was split into three sections: Ports/Freight/Roads, Rail and Bus. Each section opened with some scene setting from key stakeholders in order to frame the following audience discussion.

3.2 Ports / Freight / Roads

The first topic discussion was opened with an introduction from the following representatives:

- *Andrew Kane – Port Services Manager (Cairnryan), Stena Line*
- *John McColm – Customer Operations Manager (Cairnryan), P&O Ferries*
- *Hugh Gillies – Director of Trunk Roads & Bus Operations, Transport Scotland*
- *Alistair Speedie – Director of Economy, Environment and Infrastructure, Dumfries & Galloway Council*

The four individuals above opened this session with some “scene setting” remarks. These remarks were focussed on the importance of unlocking the funding for investment that is needed to deliver regional equity for the sustainable economic growth of the South West. It is clear that the strategic road network is critical to economic growth and wellbeing of communities. There are key requirements to improve connectivity to the ports, communities and to Dumfries, the regional capital. The timber industry was highlighted as being a key economic sector for the region and that connectivity along the A709 corridor is fundamental for that industry.

The regeneration of Dumfries is another economic priority for the Council and, again, connectivity to sites such as the Crichton Quarter is crucial. Finally, it was noted that the beauty and attraction of the South West’s environment and landscape is a key foundation to building tourism and improving the economy and that the strategic road network should not be a barrier to the growth of this industry.

Discussion on Ports, Freight and Roads raised the following issues and suggestions from attendees:

These strategic routes, together with the local road network, must also cater for cycling and walking and Dumfries & Galloway Council has an active travel strategy to take this forward.

- The Ports at Cairnryan together, are the fourth busiest in terms of passengers carried yet have seen little investment in the strategic routes to the ports, which detracts from the value of transport in terms of freight. The volume of traffic travelling to/from the ports has created an issue regarding the safety of the local community, this is centred on a view that the majority of drivers are not adhering to the speed limit.

- The Loch Ryan Ports have to compete with other major UK ports such as those in Liverpool and Wales, all of which have a higher standard of roads compared to the largely single carriageway standard on the A75 and A77.
- Concerns expressed that drivers on the A75 are not adhering to the speed limit through the village of Springholm and both Springholm and Crockettford should be bypassed, with consideration given to the installation of average speed cameras in the short term.
- The speed limit for HGVs should be increased from 40mph to 50mph on the A75 and A77, in line with the current trial underway on the A9.
- Consideration should be given to dualling the A75 to improve safety, reduce driver frustration, improve journey times and improve the quality of life in the villages. Design considerations for new Euro-Route roads suggest they should avoid built-up areas and communities.
- The plans for the A75 need to be more ambitious – the 2010 action plan for the route should be revisited.
- It's important not to lose sight of the A77 – equally important to the ferry companies and the South West Dumfries & Galloway. It was considered that Stranraer has become isolated due to the condition of the A77. Safety on the A77 is also perceived as a concern, capital investment is required, such as that proposed for the A82. If the A77 is closed the detour from Stranraer / Cairnryan is around 50-60 miles long via the A75 and the A713 or A714.
- Five passing places on A77 were promised a long time ago, only three delivered [Haggstone; Glenapp & Park End to Bennane].
- Transport infrastructure in the region has been ignored. The A75 and A77 are the most important issue for local residents.
- Good, reliable transport links are important with regard to access to acute health care – it is a 75-mile ambulance journey from Stranraer to Dumfries along the A75.
- Connectivity from Stranraer to Carlisle and onwards to European markets for goods to/from Northern Ireland is important and should be considered as part of any appraisal of road or rail schemes in the region.
- Need special dispensation for business contributions and local business transport improvement projects. A one size fits all solution is not reasonable for small businesses.
- The NTS and STPR reviews need to be more ambitious and cannot simply focus on Cost-Benefit Ratios.

- Economic development can be constrained because of the rural character of much of the roads infrastructure in Dumfries & Galloway, particularly in some of the more fragile communities, for example those located on A7 and A76 corridors.
- A fast link from Dumfries to the A74(M) is crucial to connect the whole region's economy and east-west movements are critical to both agricultural and forestry related traffic.
- Traffic flows on the A709, which is part of the local road network, are higher than the average traffic flow on the region's trunk roads.
- A76 between Thornhill and Sanquhar – temporary traffic lights have been in place for 2 years which puts pressure on the network and regularly ties up police resources when they are called out to direct traffic when they fail.
- STPR review should consider the need for a fast, dualled link to the A74(M) from Dumfries.

3.3 Rail

The rail session was opened with an introduction from the following:

- Aidan Grisewood – Director of Rail, Transport Scotland
- Rob Shorthouse - Client and Communications Director, Scotrail
- Scott Prentice - Head of Business Development, Scotrail
- Steven Herriott – Head of Transport and Infrastructure, Dumfries and Galloway Council

The current Scotrail franchise continues to deliver benefits and improvements to the rail network across Scotland. Following consultation with the Regional Transport Partnerships [RTPs] (SWestrans and Strathclyde Partnership for Transport) and the local Community Rail Partnership, the number of trains to Stranraer increased from 6 to 8 per day in December 2015. A review of how this has affected passenger numbers will be undertaken in early in 2017.

December 2017, will see the introduction of more services between Dumfries and Carlisle each day – with the aim of getting as close to an hourly service, which it is anticipated will make it more attractive to potential passengers. These changes, will introduce an additional early morning service between Dumfries and Glasgow and evening return. The detail of the timetable is being consulted with the RTPs, while on train catering will also be introduced on Glasgow – Dumfries services at this time.

Recognising the importance of tourism to the Scottish economy, the Dumfries, Stranraer and Borders lines will form part of ScotRail's Great Scenic Railways of Scotland, marketing Scotland's scenery, its heritage and its tourist attractions to a wider audience. Community rail groups, local businesses and the wider railway

industry are strongly encouraged to engage with Scotrail to maximise the opportunities arising from these initiatives.

The discussion on rail raised the following points from attendees:

- A faster, more integrated transport system is required allowing rail services to connect to the ferry timetables. There are 2 million foot passengers per year who could take advantage of this.
- Affordability is key and fares should be comparable to the Central Belt.
- There are currently no rail projects for Dumfries & Galloway in STPR.
- Lockerbie provides a key rail hub with links both north and south, however, lack of parking at the station is an issue and improvements should be considered.
- The number of stopping services at Lockerbie should be secured and protected, with consideration of increasing services to Carlisle. Rail infrastructure investment is required across the region – especially on the West Coast Mainline.
- Rail services to/from Stranraer are perceived as below average by travellers – very poor station facilities and timetables are not integrated.
- Quality of the regions rolling stock is considered to be very poor compared the rest of the Scotrail network, no refreshments offered on Stranraer and Nith Valley services is seen as unacceptable due to the journey times from Glasgow.
- Local representatives are seeking more equity with the rest of Scotland to protect the Stranraer line, and seek the reinstatement of direct services between Stranraer and Glasgow, and Stranraer and Prestwick Airport.
- 85% of Dumfries & Galloway residents have not travelled by train in the past month
- Better rail links with the Central Belt would encourage people to live in Dumfries & Galloway. Connectivity to Edinburgh from the region is a particular issue.
- Electrification of the Nith Valley Line should be a priority.
- Re-establishing the rail link between Dumfries and Lockerbie should be considered.
- SWestrans and Dumfries & Galloway Council have aspirations to re-open stations at Beattock, Dunragit, Thornhill and Eastriggs – studies are on-going.

- The same Benefit-Cost Ratios “rules” cannot be applied across the whole of Scotland. We must continue to invest, as in the case of the Borders Railway, even when there is not a strong economic case because as demonstrated these types of projects generate new and additional travellers to their services.
- Langholm should be considered as part of any extension to the Borders Railway towards Carlisle.
- Carlisle should be the High Speed Rail hub for North England / Southern Scotland so that its benefits can also be realised in Southern Scotland.
- Capacity freed up for High Speed Rail should be used for stopping services from Dumfries & Galloway.
- Overcrowding on rail services can be issue – particularly on the route once past Kilmarnock, heading north.

3.4 Bus

The bus session was opened with an introduction from Douglas Kirkpatrick from SWestrans before the discussion was opened up to the wider group.

To set the context, it was noted that there are approximately 5 million bus passenger journeys made in the region each year. 44% of services are provided commercially by private operators who determine the route, timetable, fares and vehicles within the regulations. These commercial routes cover most of Dumfries and the main corridors into Dumfries from Carlisle, Lockerbie, Moffat, Thornhill, Castle Douglas and Dalbeattie; as well as the Langholm to Carlisle corridor; and Annan town. SWestrans have limited funding to support services where reductions in commercial services are made.

As the Transport Authority, SWestrans has a statutory duty to provide socially necessary local bus services where they are not provided commercially, i.e. the remaining 56% of services in Dumfries & Galloway.

SWestrans receives funding to provide these services from Dumfries & Galloway Council and currently spend £3.2 million per year carrying approximately 2 million passengers. SWestrans also uses its capital funding to purchase buses which are then provided to operators at no cost to undertake these contracts. With the addition of these non-commercial services, some 83% of the population has access to a bus service. It was noted that patronage is a challenge in Dumfries & Galloway with an average of seven passengers per service across the region.

There are currently a number issues for the supported (non-commercial) services. £2.5 million worth of local bus contracts are due to expire in April 2017 – this is all non-commercial routes in Dumfries and to the west. The number of bus operators able to undertake these contracts has significantly reduced and it is therefore important to ensure that those remaining are retained. New developments such as the opening of the new NHS acute hospital and the development of the Dumfries

Learning Town model are anticipated to have major impacts on transport use and provision.

Options are being investigated on how to deliver more flexible, demand led services using smaller vehicles where appropriate and sustainable. Coordination with partners is key to securing opportunities, and this includes the NHS, the Council and the Third Sector.

During the course of the discussion the following points, issues and suggestions were raised:

- Could the Scottish Government review the current restrictions on Dumfries & Galloway being able to act as a PSV Bus Operator?
- Neither the RTP nor Local Authority has a say on commercial routes, timetables or fares. The council and communities should be allowed to plan and run their own services to suit their needs.
- The Transport Act 1985 stops charitable organisations from making a profit out of providing transport services. Consideration should be given to changing legislation in order to help community operators play their part in the region's transport network.
- Stranraer long distance bus services have recently been substantially reduced with little advance notice.
- Congestion in Dumfries town centre affects bus service journey times.
- It was noted by the bus operators that SWestrans are doing a lot to ensure that buses run to serve the community in a challenging economic environment.

3.5 Other Comments

A range of comments were raised on accessibility and healthcare issues as summarised below:

- Users of the transport network are consumers with important views that should be heard.
- Frequency of all public transport services (both bus and rail) is a significant issue.
- Investment into communities is important. Communities create economic growth and it is important that we can get people to and from work/education so they can grow the economy from the bottom up.
- Equity of access to services is important, it's not just about economic development.

- Accessing healthcare can be difficult, especially if required to travel to Glasgow or the Central Belt for treatment.
- Communities and community needs should also be an important part of the conversation. There are high levels of SIMD/inequalities in rural areas and isolation is a real issue for individuals and communities. Communities can also help to identify local solutions
- A public-social partnership is being developed and could be considered to find community-based solutions for some transport issues – (e.g. transport for people discharged from hospital). The partnership is looking for Scottish Government support.
- The Integrated Joint Board and Health & Social Care Partnership need to be party to the NTS review.

4 Summary and Actions

4.1 Summary

The transport summit was aimed at providing a forum for a focussed discussion on the transport issues in Dumfries & Galloway. The event has provided a good opportunity to air the importance of transport to Dumfries & Galloway, as well as other transport and connectivity issues in the region and it was a very useful exercise to hear the strength of feeling about these matters first hand.

This will now feed into both the new National Transport Strategy and Strategic Transport Projects Review. There was a consensus of feeling among attendees regarding the issues around the A75, however, planning for new road infrastructure can be a lengthy process and therefore it is important to consider what can be done in the short-term to mitigate perceived safety concerns. Our intention is now to provide the opportunity for community groups and members of the public to contribute to the conversation.

Connectivity is key and it is important to consider how Dumfries and Stranraer can be better connected to Central Scotland and further afield. The feeling of remoteness in rural areas also needs to be better understood. It has been made clear just how important buses are to communities and the life-line services which they provide. These cannot be looked at simply in terms of economics, but also in terms of access to health and social care for those especially those without access to a car. The upcoming transport bill and the review of the NTS were seen as important vehicles to tackle some of these issues. Finally it was apparent that there is a desire for a more flexible approach to investment in peripheral and rural areas such as Dumfries & Galloway.

4.2 Actions & Next Steps

- A summit report will be issued in draft in four weeks for public comment.
- Final summit report to be published by the end of 2016.
- The summit recognised that organised pressure groups exist to further the cause of particular transport upgrades and engagement by the relevant organisations will continue to address their concerns.
- Transport Scotland will prepare a Springholm and Crocketford village traffic management study.
- Key partners will need to focus on what improvement can be made to improve the situation at Stranraer, looking closely at connectivity and access to road, rail and the ports at Cairnryan.
- Transport Scotland will work with stakeholders to discuss capacity and the condition of rail rolling stock on the Nith Valley line.

- Transport Scotland will continue to monitor progress on the rail station appraisal work which is underway, offering advice where appropriate.
- Transport Scotland will work with local authorities to consider ways in which congestion can be reduced to ease travel for bus services.
- A wider discussion is needed on transport legislation and in particular what is needed to support the bus sector.
- Transport and travel aspects related to health and social care to be considered in the National Transport Strategy review
- All partners should consider current legislation that limits council's to operate commercial bus services. First step is to identify whether this is a devolved matter.
- SWestrans will refresh their Regional Transport Strategy.
- Progress on key road improvements, including improvements to the A77 south of Girvan, linking to Cairnryan Ferry hub and the A75 and improvements to connect Dumfries and the A74(M), will be considered in the forthcoming reviews of the National Transport Strategy and the Strategic Transport Projects Review.

5 Stakeholder Engagement

5.1 We would like to hear from you - How to Get Involved

This summit report has been published on 19 September 2016 and further comments are now being invited from other stakeholders across Dumfries & Galloway and the rest of Scotland, into the transport issues affecting the region.

In particular, we would like to hear about whether you agree or disagree with the issues raised during the summit, while we also would like to hear from you on the following questions:

Q. What are the key transport challenges currently facing Dumfries & Galloway?

and

Q. What transport solutions or interventions do you think could help bring greater prosperity to Dumfries & Galloway, while providing a fairer opportunity to all those living and working in the region?

5.2 How to contact us

Please send your comments to Transport Scotland at:

D&G Transport Summit
Transport Scotland,
Buchanan House,
58 Port Dundas Road,
Glasgow, G4 0HF

Or alternatively, you can email them to:

dandgsummit@transport.gov.scot

Please note the closing date for comments is **31 October 2016**.

Appendix A

A Transport Summit for Dumfries & Galloway

Agenda

Start Time – 2:30 pm

(Refreshments will be available from 2pm)

- 2:30 pm Introductions / Opening Remarks from

 John Swinney MSP, Deputy First Minister

 Humza Yousaf MSP, Minister for Transport and the Islands

 Colin Smyth MSP (in his capacity as Chair of Dumfries & Galloway
 Council's - Economy, Environment and Infrastructure Committee)
- 2:50 pm Presentation on the Dumfries & Galloway – Regional Economic
 Strategy by Ewan Green, Head of Economic Development at
 Dumfries & Galloway Council

 There follows three facilitated transport topic based sessions.
- 3 pm Session 1: Ports / Freight / Roads

 Session 2: Rail

 Session 3: Bus
- 4:20 pm Comfort Break
- 4:30 pm Closing Remarks by Humza Yousaf MSP, Minister for Transport
 and the Islands

(Refreshments will be available following the close of proceedings)

Further comments or feedback on the summit can be sent to:

dandgsummit@transport.gov.scot

Facilitator for the summit is Glyn Harrison of Capital Value and Risk Ltd



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