

From: [REDACTED]

Transport Scotland  
21 March 2018

Minister for Transport and the Islands

## **THE A77 TRUNK ROAD (BOGEND TOLL TO SYMINGTON) (50 MPH SPEED LIMIT)**

### **Purpose**

1. To update you on the progress of considering proposals to return the current 50 mph limit to a national limit in this location and seek your approval, on consideration of the evidence, the retain the current limit on this section of the A77.

### **Background**

2. Proposals to deliver grade separated junctions on this section of the A77 were developed in the mid 2000's. These proposals attracted a number of statutory objections and, in 2009 a public inquiry was held into the proposed improvement of junctions and associated central reserve closures.

3. Separately, the speed limit on this section of the A77 was lowered in March 2008, following a fatal accident in 2006. At the time of the Public Inquiry, it was noted that the scheme of improvement could support the return of the speed limit to its pre 2008 level. Part of the evidence submitted by Transport Scotland to the Inquiry highlighted that the economic benefits of the grade separation would be higher (Benefit to Cost Ratio (BCR) =11.89) with the higher limit in place than without (BCR = 0.09).

4. The Public inquiry noted that while the grade separation could support a return to the previous national speed limit, the Reporter included the caveat that this should happen only if the roads authority were satisfied that doing so would not undermine safety on the route.

5. The Bogend – Dutch House Roundabout (Symington) Grade separation scheme was complete and the independent Stage 4 Road Safety Audit was reported thereafter. The conclusions based on initial safety performance were that the scheme had fulfilled its role with only one slight injury accident recorded in the 12 months following the scheme opening.

6. The section of A77 concerned retains a number of at grade accesses, mainly from residential and business properties adjacent to the route. The number of accesses is higher than that recorded over similar lengths both north and south of this section of the route. At the 2009 Inquiry, objections to the proposed scheme had, in the main, reflected concerns that these junctions would be retained and sought

alternative designs that reduced or eliminated these junctions and their direct access to the A77.

### **Speed Limit Order Process**

7. The process of preparing a Speed Limit Order to return the limit to national began in 2015. This included the required statutory consultation with residents and stakeholders, many of whom had objected at the original inquiry. A number of statutory objections were received to the proposed speed limit order, and have been sustained in spite of extensive engagement and evidence gathering. These objections have, in the main, related to concerns about access and egress from side road junctions onto the A77 itself.

8. The evidence gathering has included, amongst other processes, video surveys of junction movements. These were undertaken, in part, to provide direct evidence to support responses to the statutory objections.

9. The presence of these unresolved objections requires us to recommend a course of action and seek Ministerial approval. It is likely that, if we were to seek to raise the speed limit, an inquiry would be required to resolve remaining objections at which all evidence pertaining to the proposed speed limit change would be challenged and interrogated.

10. Our work to establish an evidence base has also included consideration by our Trunk Road operating company of the physical measures that may be required to support any return to a national speed limit.

11. Most recently, this work identified a package of lining and signing measures which it is suggested would be needed to bring the A77 to a standard relevant for the higher limit. These measures are estimated at £400-500k and cannot be justified on safety grounds (there being no significant safety risk that would be addressed by their delivery) nor on wider operational grounds as the A77 in this location has signing and lining comparable to other sections of the route.

12. From our appreciation of the matters raised in the objections to the speed limit order, the lining and signing measures indicated would also fail to address the fundamental concerns of access and egress from the adjacent properties.

### **Safety considerations**

13. To assist in our wider determination of the merits of a higher speed limit, we have undertaken a comparison of the physical characteristics and safety record of the Bogend - Symington section covered by the 50 mph limit and two adjacent sections of the A77, immediately to the north and south. These are of equivalent length and lie immediately to the north of the Bogend - Symington section and south of the Monkton roundabout, just south of the 50 mph section. The roundabout itself is excluded from consideration.

14. Both of the other sections are subject to the national speed limit, not 50 mph, and the southern section sits within the average speed camera coverage on the A77.

Both have fewer accesses and junctions and both have broadly comparable traffic characteristics, in terms of flows and HGV volumes to the Bogend - Symington section.

15. The following points may be noted from this work and background evaluation by Transerv;

- Each section has a similar accident number over the assessment period, 1 January 2012 and 30 November 2017, with 11,10 and 10 injury accidents being recorded on the sections from north to south respectively.
- The severity ratio (number of more severe accidents in the overall accident population) is lowest for that section within the 50 mph limit, both before and after the grade separation, with only slight injury accidents being recorded throughout. Both other sections have around 60% of their overall accident numbers recorded as slight, with the balance made of serious accidents in the southern section, and split between serious and fatal accidents to the north.
- Work undertaken by Transerv suggests that the accident history within the Bogend – Symington section improved markedly when the lower speed limit was introduced in 2008. It has remained low since then, with 6 of the 10 slight injury accidents recorded in this section taking place before the grade separation was complete.
- Of the three sections, the only fatalities are recorded on the derestricted section north of the 50 mph limit, where there are the fewest junctions of any section, and no average speed cameras. Were the Bogend to Symington speed limit to be raised, and cameras removed, this would be the most analogous section for comparative operational purposes.

### **Considerations moving forward**

16. The proposal to return the speed limit to a national limit is widely known and there are calls both for and against it. Most notably, we have unresolved statutory objections which would have to be addressed for any speed limit change to proceed. An inquiry is quite possible.

17. Our own evidence illustrates an economic return from a higher limit that would not be achieved with the current limit in place. There may be public or industry comment should the limit should be increased for economic benefits. It can be noted, however, that new developments have been consented locally which would not have been possible without the grade separation in place.

18. Equally, we can evidence a better safety record for the section of the A77 under 50 mph than either of the sections immediately north or south. This is in spite of the section to the south being covered by average speed cameras and the section to the north having the fewest side road accesses.

19. We can also highlight that the most obvious reduction in accidents took place when the 50 mph limit came into force. Wider published evidence supports a general premise that lower speeds support reductions in fatal, serious and slight casualties.

20. Transport Scotland has statutory obligations in terms of maintaining the safety of its network and the Reporter's decision regarding the safety consequences of raising the current 50 mph limit reflects this role. There are no externally driven obligations that absolutely require a speed limit increase.

21. Considerations would have to be given to enforcing the current limit as it is currently covered by average speed systems that we would have to consider retaining at part of the wider A77 system upgrade or removing as site no longer meets the handbook criteria for camera enforcement.

### Recommendation

22. On the balance of the evidence, we would recommend that the existing limit be retained. Whilst the schemes of grade separation have supported safety and development in this locale, we note that the introduction of the lower speed limit was accompanied by a reduction in recorded accidents and those adjacent sections of the A77 with higher speed limits have higher accident severities, in spite of their having fewer accesses or the presence of average speed cameras.

23. Comms will be prepared to support this recommendation, [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

- | [REDACTED]
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24. You are asked to note this recommendation, [REDACTED] and indicate if you are content that the current 50 mph limit be retained.

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
Safety & Development: TRBO

[REDACTED]  
21 March 2018

Copy List:	For Action	For Comments	For Information		
			Portfolio Interest	Constituent Interest	General Awareness
Minister for Transport and the Islands		X			
Cabinet Secretary for the Rural Economy and Connectivity			X		

