

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CABINET - 16 JUNE 2010

A76 PARTNERSHIP GROUP FIVE POINT ACTION STRATEGY

Report by the Depute Chief Executive/Executive Director of Neighbourhood Services

1. PURPOSE

1.1 The purpose of the report is to:-

- (a) Update the Cabinet on the work of the A76 Partnership Group;
- (b) Seek approval for the leaflet prepared by the Partnership Group, which sets out a Five Point Action Plan to improve safety and accessibility in the A76 corridor; and
- (c) Seek approval for the Partnership to arrange a press release to launch the Five Point Action Plan, to submit the Action Plan to the Minister and request that the Action Plan is included in the trunk roads programme.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The A76 trunk road is operated by the Scottish Government. The route extends from Kilmarnock in the north to Dumfries in the south and provides strategic links to the M77 at Kilmarnock and to the M74 at Gretna, via the A75. The A76 also provides essential access to the towns and communities which make up the former coalfield regeneration area, in the south of East Ayrshire, that are relatively remote from the motorway network.

2.2 In 1996, the Scottish Office published a programme of measures to improve safety along the A76, mitigate the environmental effects of traffic passing through communities and provide six localised improvement schemes. Only two of the improvement schemes have been implemented, at Crossroads in East Ayrshire and Glenairlie in Dumfries and Galloway.

2.3 The Strategic Transport Projects Review, published by the Scottish Government in 2009, identifies the need for localised improvements to a number of trunk roads, including the A76, to bring their condition and safety standards up to the level needed to support expected traffic volumes.

2.4 The A76 Partnership Group was formed in 2004 after the loss of the trunk road maintenance contract. The Partnership Group meetings are attended by Members and senior officers from East Ayrshire Council and Dumfries and Galloway Council, with the aim of

identifying schemes needed to enhance safety and support economic activity in the towns and villages along the A76 corridor.

- 2.5** Initially, the Partnership Group met on an infrequent basis. However, at its meeting on 30th October 2009, the Group agreed to meet more regularly and to prepare a leaflet which would focus on the improvements needed to bring safety and the reliability of journey times up to modern standards.
- 2.6** At its meeting on 2nd December 2009, the Cabinet approved Member representatives to attend the A76 Partnership Group meetings.

3. FIVE POINT ACTION PLAN

3.1 A leaflet has been prepared by the Partnership Group (a copy can be accessed on the Members portal) which sets out safety and other improvements that have been carried out following the preparation of the A76 Route Action Plan in 1996; current traffic and accident data; land use and economic development considerations; and the Partnership Group's objectives to make East Ayrshire and Dumfries and Galloway attractive for inward investment and job creation. It also sets out a range of current traffic related issues including:-

- a. Road Safety - The accident rate exceeds the national average on four rural sections in East Ayrshire;
- b. Congestion - Peak period delays at Bellfield Interchange and in Mauchline impair access to the former Coalfield Regeneration Area and major development opportunity sites in Cumnock and Mauchline;
- c. No Convenient Diversion Routes - Lengthy, time consuming diversions are necessary during road works and incidents;
- d. Unreliable Journey Times - Limited safe overtaking opportunities and slower moving traffic can result in unreliable journey times;
- e. Environmental Impacts - Traffic noise, visual intrusion, atmospheric pollution and severance in communities through which the A76 passes;
- f. Poor Connectivity - Improved access is needed to the Coalfield Regeneration Area for economic regeneration and jobs.

3.2 The leaflet also sets out a Five Point Action Plan to enhance safety and improve connectivity comprising:-

1. Completing four improvement schemes identified in the 1996 Route Action Plan, which have not been implemented (Howford Bridge and Polquhirter climbing lanes in East Ayrshire);
2. Upgrading schemes at Crosshands Junction and Skerrington in East Ayrshire along with improved overtaking opportunities on the trunk road exits to roundabouts;

3. Providing financial support for the construction of Mauchline By-Pass;
4. Improving Bellfield Interchange to address peak period safety and severe congestion issues;
5. Road safety improvement measures to reduce casualty rates to the national average, or lower, on the rural sections of the A76 in East Ayrshire.

3.3 The Five Point Action Plan will improve connectivity to major housing development areas in Cumnock and Mauchline which are identified in the East Ayrshire Local Plan, the Cumnock town centre regeneration area and to tourist opportunities at Dumfries House and the Barony A Frame in East Ayrshire. It will also aid access to Upper Nithsdale and Drumlanrig in Dumfries and Galloway and will enhance job opportunities and economic growth in both local authority areas. The Five Point Action Plan is supported by the respective regional transport partnerships, SPT and SWestrans, Strathclyde Police and Dumfries and Galloway Police.

4. PROPOSAL

4.1 It is proposed that East Ayrshire Council and Dumfries and Galloway Council will continue to work in partnership to promote the Five Point Action Plan and encourage the Scottish Government to make provision in future investment programmes for the implementation of the Action Plan.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5.1 None

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

6.1 None

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None

8. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The Five Point Action Plan would enhance road safety in the A76 corridor and support economic regeneration in the former Coalfield Regeneration Area and in the other towns and communities served by the route in accordance with National, Regional and Local Transport Policies.

8.2 Further, the extent to which developer contributions can be used as a means of financing projects like the Mauchline By-pass is still to be determined within the context of the examination of the Alteration to the

East Ayrshire Local Plan. Once the outcome of the examination becomes known, the Council will only then be in a position to assess not only the likely extent of developer contributions that it may use to fund projects like the Mauchline By-Pass but, also any shortfall in funding. Given this position, the Council will continue in its endeavours to secure any required funding for such projects from all relevant sources.

9. COMMUNITY PLANNING IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1** The Five Point Action Plan to upgrade the A76 will contribute towards the Improving Community Safety and Delivering Community Regeneration Community Plan themes.

10. RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1** Not implementing the Five Point Action Plan will delay improvements in road safety in the A76 corridor and stand in the way of fulfilling the Development Plan policies for economic regeneration and jobs in the Former Coalfield Area.

11. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 11.1** It is recommended that the Cabinet agrees to:-

- (i) Note the progress that has been made by the A76 Partnership Group in preparing a leaflet setting out the issues along the route and a strategy for addressing them;
- (ii) Approve the A76 leaflet and the Five Point Action Plan set out in the leaflet; and
- (iii) The A76 Partnership Group launching the leaflet, submitting it to the Minister and requesting that provision is made for the Five Point Action Plan in the trunk road programme.

Elizabeth Morton
Depute Chief Executive/Director of Neighbourhood Services

10th June, 2010

JB/YK

BACKGROUND PAPERS

**A76 Dumfries to Kilmarnock Trunk Road
Five Point Action Plan**

For further information on this report please contact Keith Orton,
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A76 DUMFRIES TO KILMARNOCK TRUNK ROAD

Five Point Action Plan

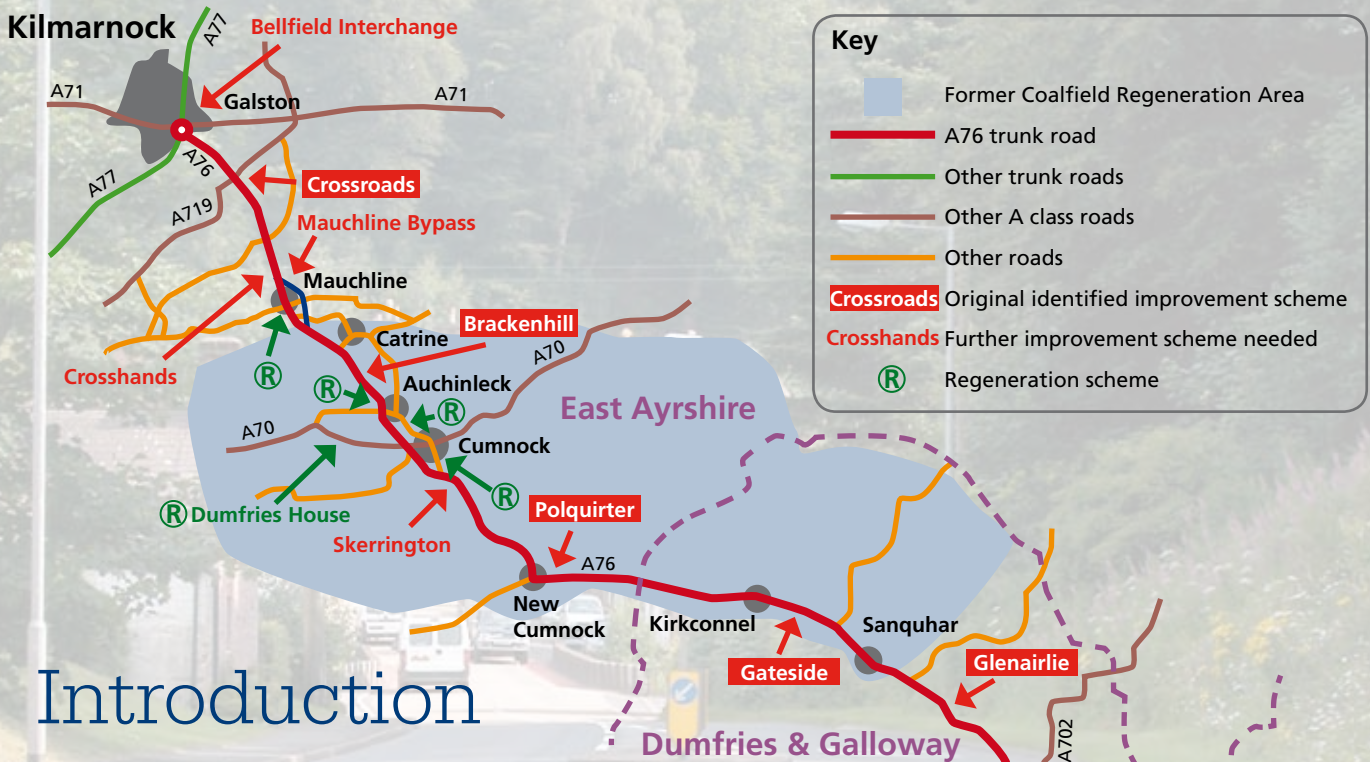
June 2010



THE **A76** PARTNERSHIP



Location Plan



Introduction

The A76 Corridor Partnership comprises Dumfries and Galloway and East Ayrshire Councils, together with their respective police forces and regional transport partnerships, SWestrans and SPT. The group has a common shared interest in securing a range of improvements to the A76 trunk road.

The A76 trunk road provides a strategic link to the motorway network, via the A75 trunk road to the M74 at Gretna and the M77 at Kilmarnock. The route is 60 miles (97km) long, of single carriageway construction, and is largely unimproved over the 38 mile (61km) stretch between Dumfries and New Cumnock.

The Trunk Roads Review carried out in Scotland in the early 1990s confirmed the important role of the A76 trunk road to serve the needs of the Nith Valley area in Dumfries and Galloway and the southern parts of East Ayrshire, both of which are relatively remote from the main motorway network.

The Strategic Transport Projects Review, published in 2009, identifies the need for localised improvements to a number of trunk roads, including the A76, to bring their physical condition and safety standards to a level to support expected traffic levels. This leaflet identifies what is needed.

A76 DUMFRIES TO KILMARNOCK TRUNK ROAD

Route Action Plan Update January 2010

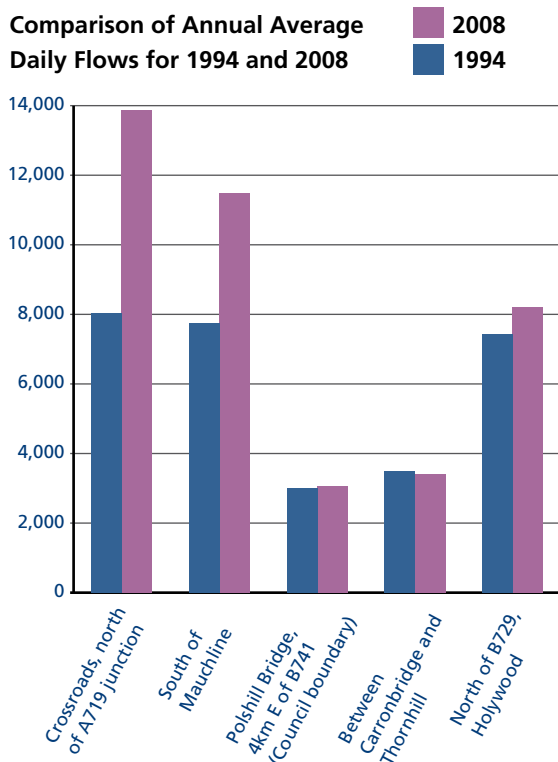
In 1993, the Scottish Office commissioned a Route Action Plan (RAP) study for the A76. A brochure was published in October 1996, setting out proposals to improve safety, to mitigate the environmental effect of traffic in communities and provide localised improvement schemes.

The brochure highlighted the limited overtaking opportunities along the route and proposed six priority improvement schemes to enhance the reliability of journey times and improve access for economic activity in the A76 corridor. By January 2010 only two of the original major overtaking schemes (Crossroads near Kilmarnock, and Glenairlie at Menzies) have been completed.

This new brochure sets out the current position and a future five point action plan for improved safety and enhanced connectivity overall and to support economic growth in the Former Coalfield Regeneration Area.

Traffic Patterns and Growth

In 2008, the traffic flows on the rural section of the A76 between Crossroads and Crosshands were in the order of 13,900 vehicles per day (vpd), compared with 7,900 vpd in 1994.



Approximately 13,000 vehicles pass through Mauchline on the A76 each day contributing to peak period traffic delays, safety and environmental issues.

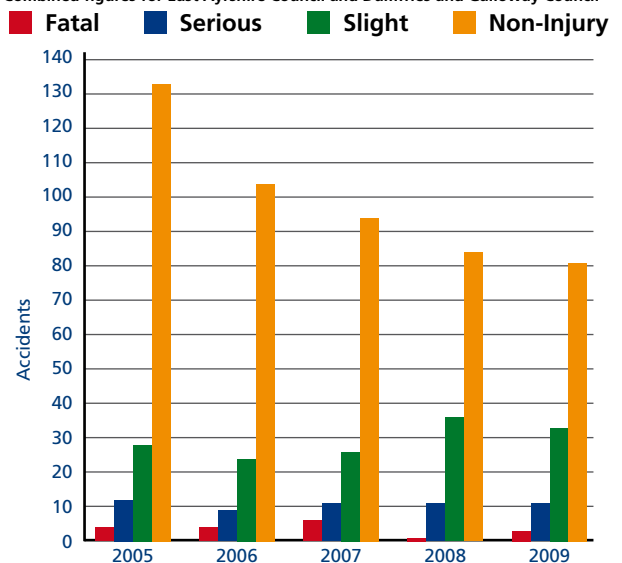
Sections of the A76 in East Ayrshire have been upgraded to current standards. However, the daily traffic flow exceeds the design flows on parts of the road. The traffic volumes and the absence of suitable alternative routes for long sections of the A76 result in extensive delays during routine maintenance works, when accidents and other incidents occur and if there is slow moving traffic on the road.

Road Safety

There were 10 fatalities, 28 serious injuries and 110 slight injuries on the A76 in East Ayrshire during the 5 years to December 2009. More than three quarters of casualties occur on the rural sections of the route. The accident rate exceeds the national average on four sections of the road (Crosshands to Mauchline; Mauchline to Auchinleck; Cumnock to New Cumnock; and New Cumnock to the boundary).

There were 11 fatalities, 41 serious injuries, and 118 slight injuries on the A76 in Dumfries and Galloway during the 5 years to December 2009. However, the accident situation in Dumfries and Galloway has improved in the most recent three years as a result of concerted enforcement, education and accident remedial measures.

A76 Trunk Road Reported Accidents for 2005 - 2009
Combined figures for East Ayrshire Council and Dumfries and Galloway Council



The injury accident rate on the A76 between New Cumnock and Kirkconnel is three times the national average, with that on the section between Cumnock and New Cumnock twice the national average.

Land Use and Economic Development

Improving accessibility to jobs, educational opportunities and economic regeneration areas is vital for regeneration in Dumfries and Galloway and East Ayrshire Councils. Good trunk road links are needed to attract investment, encourage tourism and to enable businesses in this area to distribute goods and services to key markets.

The Ayrshire Joint Structure Plan identifies the need to stabilise the population in 2025 at current levels, supports measures that encourage economic development and highlights the need to improve accessibility within Ayrshire and to market opportunities elsewhere in the UK. To achieve the stabilisation of the population the Structure Plan has allocated some 12,150 new homes in East Ayrshire by 2025 with larger scale Strategic Expansion Areas. Two such areas are situated in Mauchline and Cumnock/Auchinleck, within the Former Coalfield Regeneration Area.

The East Ayrshire Local Plan supports the proposals from the Prince's Foundation for the Built Environment (PFBE) for a major residential development comprising 770 new houses at Knockroon to the north of Cumnock. The PFBE development is linked to the restoration and improvement of Dumfries House and its potential to become a major tourism destination. A Cumnock Town Centre Regeneration Masterplan is also being

developed which aims to provide a modern Shopping Centre, new office development, and enhanced public realm measures.

Improved road connections would support the Structure Plan policies for economic regeneration, assist local and developing industries by reducing transport constraints, costs and times, improve the reliability of journey times, improve access to tourism opportunities such as Dumfries House, the Barony A Frame site and Drumlanrig Castle, and help to reduce the perception of peripherality which can be a barrier to new investment in East Ayrshire and Dumfries and Galloway.

Dumfries and Galloway Council has identified the Upper Nithsdale area, which is deeply rural and particularly fragile, as being a priority for emerging economic and transport development in the Dumfries and Galloway Structure Plan.

Unemployment levels are high in Upper Nithsdale. Where new industry has been attracted to the area, it is vital that efficient road haulage connections can be maintained to its customers and not be disrupted by road closures due to accidents and flooding and the overall poor level of service offered by the present condition of the A76. Many of the residents of the area now commute to work and reliable, safe and efficient journeys along the A76 are essential for these people.

The A76 Partnership's objectives, to maintain Dumfries and Galloway's and East Ayrshire's positions as attractive locations for companies to invest and create jobs are:

- To improve transport links within the area, to provide fast, safe and reliable journey opportunities to significant markets, including the national economic centres of Edinburgh and Glasgow, as well as England and Northern Ireland.
- Contribute to improved economic growth and social inclusion in the region, whilst minimising the environmental impacts of transport.
- Add value to the broader Scottish economy and underpin economic growth.
- Assist in getting visitors/tourists to the region from other parts of Scotland, England, Ireland and beyond.
- Making it possible for more people to do business in and from the area by providing sustainable connections to key business centres in the Central Belt and other locations such as Ayrshire and Cumbria.
- Reduce the constraint of peripherality both between the regions main settlements and its outlying areas and between the region and external markets.
- Pursue certain transport schemes in the context of local and national economic development while at the same time recognising the wider context of economic, social and environmental imperative.

A76 DUMFRIES TO KILMARNOCK TRUNK ROAD

Progress on the Route Action Plan

- **Traffic Calming in Communities:** Traffic calming measures have been implemented in the communities along the A76.
- **Schemes to Improve Overtaking Opportunities:** Two major overtaking schemes have been constructed, at Crossroads near Kilmarnock and at Glenairlie south of Sanquhar. Differential Acceleration Lanes, (DALs), have also been provided at the Bowhouse Roundabout, Crossroads Roundabout and Crowbandsgate Roundabout, near New Cumnock, to aid safe overtaking.
- **Road Safety Improvements:** Route Accident Reduction Plan measures to provide consistent signing along the whole route on the approaches to bends, communities, junctions and accesses have been provided.

Other Recent Actions

- A new mobile safety camera site has come into operation at Dettingen, south of Cumnock.
- The 30mph speed limit has been extended at the north end of Sanquhar, adjacent to the Academy.
- During 2009-10 signing, road marking, patching, drainage and barrier upgrades have been carried out at 12 locations.
- Maintenance and road safety improvement works at 16 locations are proposed for construction in 2010-11.
- 5 further locations are the subject of current investigations.

Issues

- **Accident problems:** The accident rate on rural sections of the route in East Ayrshire exceeds the national average. Accident clusters occur in the communities bisected by the trunk road.
- **Congestion and delays:** Extensive peak period queuing and delay occurs at Bellfield Interchange. Large traffic volumes cause extensive queues and delays in Mauchline on weekdays and at weekends. Queues and delays also occur at peak times at the A76/A75 roundabout junction in Dumfries.
- **No convenient alternative diversion routes:** Lengthy diversion routes are often needed when the A76 is closed for maintenance or accidents.
- **Unreliable journey times:** Limited safe overtaking opportunities result in unreliable journey times particularly for freight movements.
- **Environmental traffic impacts:** Traffic noise, visual intrusion, atmospheric pollution and severance adversely affect Mauchline, New Cumnock, Kirkconnel, Sanquhar, Mennock, Carronbridge, Thornhill and Closeburn.
- **Poor connectivity:** Improved access is needed to the Former Coalfield Regeneration Area for economic regeneration and jobs.



Future Action Strategy: Five Point Action Plan

Both East Ayrshire Council and Dumfries and Galloway Council advocate the following five point action plan to enhance safety and improve connectivity to support economic regeneration and jobs.



1. Complete the remaining four Improvement Schemes identified in the 1996 Route Action Plan

- **Brackenhill.** (Howford Bridge climbing lanes, between Mauchline and Auchinleck).
- **Polquiter.** (Climbing lane between New Cumnock and Council boundaries).
- **Gateside.** (South of Kirkconnel).
- **Cample.** (South of Thornhill).

2. Upgrade Substandard Carriageway

Improvements to the road alignment, road width and sight lines to enhance safe overtaking opportunities and improve safety at the following locations:

- **Crosshands.** Junction improvement. (North of Mauchline).
- **Skerrington.** DAL south of roundabout. (Between Cumnock and New Cumnock).
- **Drumlanrig Gorge.** (North of Carronbridge).
- **Ellisland.** (Between Dumfries and Closeburn).

Differential Acceleration Lanes are needed to improve overtaking opportunities on all trunk road exits from roundabouts.

3. Provide Mauchline Bypass

Construction of Mauchline bypass would help to improve business prospects and economic growth in the former Coalfield Area and the whole corridor.

East Ayrshire Council's Local Plan allows for 406 houses to be built in Mauchline up to 2017, with a further expansion of 450 by 2025. It was intended that the housing developers support the cost of providing the bypass. In the current economic climate further financial support is likely to be needed for the bypass to enable the housing developments to progress in the foreseeable future.

Investment in the bypass would benefit the local community and travellers on the A76, minimise traffic delays during future road works and improve access to the Former Coalfield Regeneration Area south of Mauchline for economic regeneration.

The provision of a Mauchline bypass corresponds with two of the key objectives in the Scottish Government's National Transport Strategy to:

- Improve journey times and connections, to tackle congestion and the lack of integration and connections in transport which impact on economic growth, social inclusion, integration and safety.
- Reduce emissions, to tackle the issue of climate change, air quality and health improvement.

4. Improve Bellfield Interchange

Capacity improvements are needed to address severe peak period congestion and safety issues at the Bellfield Interchange.

- Queuing on the A77 southbound off ramp regularly backs up onto the A77 dual carriageway resulting in delays, increased journey times, and is detrimental to road safety on the trunk road.
- $\frac{2}{3}$ mile (1km) long queues on the A735 Queens Drive Kilmarnock, back up from the interchange most weekday evenings and on Saturday afternoons.
- The peak time delays at Bellfield Interchange and Mauchline result in an increased journey time of approximately 20 minutes for drivers making the 12½ miles (20km) journey between Kilmarnock and the Former Coalfield Regeneration Area.

5. Improve Road Safety

Further road safety initiatives are needed to improve safety on the A76.

The accident rate on the rural sections of the A76 in East Ayrshire is up to four times greater than the national average.

In Dumfries and Galloway attention needs to be given to Guildhall Bridge, north of Kirkconnel, to prevent lorries tipping over.

Conclusions

Further upgrading of the A76 is needed to improve:

- Overtaking opportunities.
- Improve the reliability of journey times.
- Reduce the number and severity of crashes; reduce the environmental impact of traffic on communities.
- Promote tourism, social and economic growth.
- Improve strategic transport links to the Former Coalfield Regeneration Area.

This strategy is supported by both East Ayrshire and Dumfries and Galloway Councils and the respective SPT and SWestrans regional transport partnerships.

East Ayrshire Council and Dumfries and Galloway Council will continue working in partnership to encourage the Scottish Government to programme the five point action plan to tackle congestion at Bellfield Interchange, improve safety and overtaking opportunities along the A76 and provide bypasses for Mauchline and New Cumnock.

The action strategy would improve connectivity to the major housing development areas in Mauchline and Cumnock; to the Cumnock town centre regeneration area; to Upper Nithsdale and to tourism opportunities at Dumfries House, Barony A Frame and Drumlanrig Castle to enhance job opportunities and economic growth in the Former Coalfield Regeneration Area.

The Five Point Action Plan

1. Complete the remaining four Improvement Schemes identified in the 1996 Route Action Plan

Schemes at: Brackenhill, Polquarter, Gateside and Cample.

2. Upgrade Substandard Carriageway

Four identified improvements at: Crosshands, Skerrington, Drumlanrig Gorge and Ellisland.

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Construction of Mauchline bypass would help to improve business prospects and economic growth in the former Coalfield Area and the whole corridor.

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