



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Ed Humpherson
Director General for Regulation
UK Statistics Authority
1 Drummond Gate
London
SW1 2QQ

20 February 2020

Dear Ed

I am writing regarding a press release from Transport Scotland of 19 February 2020, which claims to show a reduction in HGV traffic through the city of Aberdeen since the opening of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route one year ago. I have enclosed the text of the press release which can be found on the Transport Scotland website <https://www.transport.gov.scot/news/> and I also enclose the response of Transport Scotland to my call for full transparency as reported by the Aberdeen Evening Express on 20 February 2020.

My concern is that Transport Scotland and the Scottish Government have failed to provide a full set of figures for traffic using the old A90 through the city of Aberdeen, instead using only selective data showing very positive outcomes for HGV traffic alone. As you will see, Transport Scotland's response to these concerns was to say that the data came from "an initial evaluation which looks at limited data sources only."

It may be another two years before the Scottish Government chooses to publish a "comprehensive" set of figures, relating to the impact the opening of the AWPR has had on traffic in and through Aberdeen, yet they quote figures from an unpublished survey in order to make a political point.

I have tabled parliamentary questions to ask for all the data collected to be published, not just on HGVs but also on any changes in the volume of journeys by private car and public transport. I would be interested in your thoughts on this approach to the use of data by Transport Scotland, and whether you think it is appropriate to use selective figures from unpublished surveys carried out at taxpayers' expense.

Yours sincerely,

Lewis Macdonald MSP
North East Scotland

Lewis Macdonald MSP (North East Scotland), 70 Rosemount Place, Aberdeen AB25 2XJ
Tel: 01224 646333 Email: lewis.macdonald.msp@parliament.scot

AWPR first anniversary

19 February 2020

Transport Scotland has released a data snapshot on the first anniversary of the AWPR fully opening to traffic (19 February) indicating that HGV traffic has significantly reduced on the A92 (*previously the A90) since the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route/Balmedie to Tipperty (AWPR/B-T) project fully opened to traffic.

Depending on the location, HGV traffic along the A92 corridor through Aberdeen has reduced between 49 per cent and 61 per cent when comparing January to June 2019 data with comparable 2014 data. This reduction is greater than the 20 to 36 per cent reduction originally predicted and suggests that the AWPR/B-T may be more successful than anticipated in attracting HGV traffic from the local road network.

Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity Michael Matheson said:

“The AWPR/B-T’s first anniversary is a significant milestone and it is important to recognise the transformational effect this project has had on people’s daily lives in the north east. The benefits of the project are plain for everyone to see, enhancing the quality of life for tens of thousands of people.

“In addition to the widely reported improvements to journey times for drivers using the AWPR/B-T, it is clear from the reduction in the proportion of HGVs on the A92 that businesses are benefitting from the option of a faster and more reliable route to and from the North East. Equally, other road users and communities alike benefit greatly from HGVs transferring to the new trunk road.

“This is supported by initial reporting which shows a reduction in congestion through the city, including areas which are susceptible to congestion such as the Bridge of Dee, where there has been noticeable reductions in queue lengths and durations.

“The AWPR is also providing the local authorities with an opportunity to improve and expand public transport and active travel, as traffic has been moved to a more appropriate route.”

Aberdeen City Council Co-Leader Jenny Laing said:

“It is fantastic that the opening of the AWPR has led to a significant reduction in the level of HGV vehicles within the city and the new route clearly complements the other improvements implemented as part of our wider transport strategy.

“The AWPR, supported by the Council’s £75m investment, is a vital component of Aberdeen City Council’s £1 billion capital programme and it will allow us to deliver on both the economic and transport aims set out in our Regional Economic Strategy.”

Aberdeen City Council Co-Leader Douglas Lumsden said:

“The improved connectivity from the AWPR is helping our communities and is something we’re taking advantage of with the new opportunities it presents for helping with reducing traffic numbers in the city centre.

“The premise of the city centre as a destination rather than a thoroughfare will become far more appealing and the City Council is supporting that with developments that are bringing positive change to Aberdeen’s traditional heart.”

Leader of Aberdeenshire Council Cllr Jim Gifford said:

“These initial statistics echo the positive indications we’ve had from residents and businesses about reduced and more predictable journey times.

“The reduction in HGV traffic from rural routes is really being noticed, along with an overall reduction of traffic on the B-class network. We’re also hearing of increased visitor numbers to the likes of Stonehaven and Westhill as a result of the improved infrastructure.”

Martin Reid, Director, Road Haulage Association Ltd, added:

“The Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route has seen benefits to freight movements in the North East. The take up from hauliers has been even higher than expected, and that shows the road to be catering for their needs and allowing them to find the greater efficiencies and savings they all seek in what is a low margin industry.

“The AWPR allows road freight to keep moving avoiding the bottlenecks that were all too familiar on the old A90. There is also little doubt that the reduction in traffic congestion will have a positive effect on air quality and quality of life in general for the residents who live along the old route. The AWPR is delivering what we all hoped it would; improving journey times and reducing congestion, meaning businesses can be more certain in terms of delivery times and costs.”

*The data covers the A92 (previously the A90) from Stonehaven to Blackdog via Anderson Drive and The Parkway and vice versa.

MSP calls for clarity over Aberdeen bypass traffic figures

by Jamie Hall

Aberdeen Evening Express 20/02/2020

A north-east MSP has called on the Scottish Government to publish full statistics on traffic flow in Aberdeen.

Transport Scotland, the Scottish Government's transport arm, published figures showing the number of heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) in the city had fallen significantly.

The body claimed HGV traffic had reduced by as much as 61% since the opening of the AWPR.

But Labour's Lewis Macdonald called on ministers to reveal the full impact of the new road.

He said: "Transport Scotland has quoted selectively from data they have collected, to show that the number of HGVs on Anderson Drive and the Parkway has fallen significantly.

"Transparency is essential if we are to understand the impact the AWPR has had on traffic in and around Aberdeen, but even more so in assessing plans for future road and rail projects."

A Transport Scotland spokesman said: "The data released showing a substantial reduction in HGV traffic as a result of the new road is from an initial evaluation which looks at limited data sources only.

"The one year after evaluation commences a full calendar year after completion and for a project of this scale will take a significant period of time to complete."