

Item:
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Report to Partnership Board 20.09.24

RESEARCH AND STRATEGY DELIVERY

Bottlenecks!

Purpose of Report

To inform the Board on the progress of the whisky logistics study.

Bottlenecks! Study

WSP were appointed by the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership and the Scotch Whisky Association to identify existing issues on the transport network which could have an impact on the ability of the Scotch Whisky industry to continue to grow in Scotland.

The industry provides a significant contribution to Scotland's economy and is a crucial part of the Highlands and Islands economy. The rural nature of the Highlands and Islands results in the majority of goods and materials associated with operational activities being transported by road, with ferries supporting access to the area's islands. The resilience of the road and ferry networks are therefore vital to the industry's efficient operation.

The whisky industry in the Highlands and Islands has experienced significant growth in recent years, with its annual whisky production capacity having increased by 26% since 2009. This study has reviewed the area's transport network to identify existing constraints to the Scotch Whisky industry's continued growth, in addition to forecasting the increased impact generated by the continued growth of the industry.

Analysis of H&I Transport Network Usage

A spreadsheet analysis tool was developed as part of a previous 2011 study undertaken on behalf of the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership and this has been used to highlight the sections of the transport network which accommodate the greatest level of trips generated by the Scotch Whisky industry. The tool has also been used to review the impact of the continued growth of the industry on the transport network's operation.

Whisky Key Stats

- £7.1bn to the UK economy
- £5.3bn generated in Scotland
- 25% in the Highlands and Islands
- 99 distilleries in the Highlands and Islands
- 67% of Scotch Whisky distilleries
- 45% of total distilling capacity

A theoretical 10% growth across Highlands and Islands would generate: 159 additional daily HGV movements, 58,115 additional annual HGV movements

Stakeholder Consultation

Stakeholders were consulted to inform this study, including:

- Scotch Whisky Association
- Distillers
- Maltsters
- Hauliers
- Ferry Operators
- Transport Scotland

The consultation exercise was undertaken to identify current constraints on the Highlands and Islands transport network, along with issues affecting the Scotch Whisky industry and opportunities to support the industry's continued growth and intention to decarbonise the industry.

Study Findings

The analysis was used to highlight the locations on the Highlands and Islands transport network which accommodated the greatest number of daily whisky industry generated trips. This information was combined with the results of the transport network review and stakeholder consultation exercise, to identify the following five key constraints (bottlenecks) on the transport network.

Constraint 1 – Islay crossing

Constraint 2 - A95 between Grantown-on-Spey and Dulnain Bridge

Constraint 3 - A83 at the Rest and Be Thankful

Constraint 4 - A9 between Dalwhinnie and Druimuachadar

Constraint 5 - A9 between Invergordon and Tore

Key Concerns:

Reliability and Capacity of Islay Ferry
Restricted width of the A95
Rockfalls and Landslips on the A82 and A83

Additionally, the A96 remains a critically important route to the industry to be maintained and upgraded so as to not risk becoming a future constraint.

Required schemes and recommendations

A strategic asset worth around £23 billion to Scotland, the trunk road network in the Highlands & Islands is critical to support the Scotch Whisky industry's continued growth (and that of other businesses and communities in the region). Strategic investment to maintain and upgrade the trunk road network remains crucial to enable the industry and the region's continued success. A number of schemes and measures have been identified to provide a resilient transport network which is able to support the Scotch Whisky industry's continued growth.

These schemes and recommendations are summarised below, along with the responsibility for delivery:

Improved Resilience

Fully optimise the utilisation of vessels across the network, including the operation of a freight-only service and drop-trailers for the Islay service, with a delivery plan to provide increased capacity for the long-term. (Transport Scotland/Scottish Government)

Road Safety

Development of a strategy and delivery plan to maintain and upgrade the trunk road network to ensure it is resilient and fit for purpose in the Highlands and Islands and meets the current and future needs of the industry, with a particular focus on the constraints identified: A83, A9, A95 and A96. (Transport Scotland/Scottish Government)

Improved Resilience

Commitment to a date by which the current scheme to minimise the impact of landslides on the operation of the A83 at the Rest and Be Thankful is completed. (Transport Scotland/Scottish Government)

Road Safety /Improved Resilience

Completion of dualling of the A9 between Perth and Inverness at the earliest opportunity. (Transport Scotland/Scottish Government)

Improved Resilience

Support the continued development of the A82 Tarmat to Inverarnan improvement project (Transport Scotland)

Improved Resilience Provide commitment to carriageway widening schemes at

constrained sections in association with planned maintenance activities so that roads meet expected design specification. (Transport Scotland)

Improved Resilience

Introduction of additional Variable Message Signage (VMS) and undertake a review of the availability / suitability of diversion routes for HGVs. (Transport Scotland)

Improved Resilience

Installation of wind deflectors on all major bridges in the Highlands and Islands which are susceptible to high winds. (Transport Scotland)

Improved Resilience

Update the design standards to improve the current drainage infrastructure to provide a road network which is more resilient to a changing climate and to ensure those standards are delivered across the road network. (Transport Scotland)

Road Safety

Location of existing Road Policing Units has an impact on accident response times and consideration should be given to the deployment of additional units in the Highlands and Islands. (Police Scotland)

Improved Resilience

Requirement to revisit the 2008 Scottish Road Network Landslides Study to identify a strategy to mitigate the impact of landslides on this section of the A82. (Transport Scotland)

Efficiency Improvements

Creation of a freight forum to facilitate better communication between customers and operators could lead to consolidation of loads to reduce the number of freight movements and demand on ferry crossings. (Transport Scotland)

RISK REGISTER

RTS Delivery

Impact – Freight efficiency, network resilience, road safety

Policy

Impact – Economy, ferry strategy, decarbonisation, STPR2

Financial

Impact – The study was fully funded by SWA and HITRANS

Equality

Impact – Nil

Recommendation

1. Members are asked to note the report.

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