

PUBLIC MEETING: CONDITION OF BANKEND AND CAERLAVEROCK ROADS  
1730 THURSDAY 25 SEPTEMBER 2025, HUTTON HALL

Present: Ms Karen Brownlie, Interim Assistant Director Transport and Infrastructure, D&G Council (DGC); Stuart Caven, DGC Roads Manager; David Gilbert (chair); Chris Woodness (Nith Ward Officer); 33 local residents.

**Introductions**

**Karen Brownlie** apologised for putting the wrong date in her diary and so missing the original meeting date. She has been with DGC for 29½ years and in her current position for 9 months. She thanked everyone who signed the petition: petitions such as this one draw DGC's attention to issues they may not have been aware of, and face-to-face meetings like tonight's are by far the best way of resolving issues. Her department now has 149 staff across D&G (has recently increased), 88 of them "operational" staff working solely on maintaining D&G's 4,200 km of roads, 1,300 km of footways and 25,000 street lights. DGC does not have the budget to carry out all the necessary road repairs, culvert clearing, street lighting etc so they have to prioritise. Note that Amey, not DGC, are responsible for trunk roads eg A74, A75 & A76.

**Stuart Caven** is in charge of roads maintenance and street lighting, also the road safety, road strategy, road network coordination and asset management teams, with roads planning possibly coming his way in future. His budget is £6.8m which covers salaries, buildings overheads, electrical costs and plant & machinery. Once all that is taken care of, £2.7m is left for roads maintenance in the whole of D&G. It's a small amount for the size of our roads network. He has additional money through his Capital budget of £30m over 5 years but this is for major projects and cannot be spent on maintenance. We are in year 2 of the 5. Last year's annual report estimated 49% of the 4,200 km road network needs some sort of maintenance. The work was estimated to cost £24.7m per year just to keep the roads at that level, never mind improvements. Hence the need for prioritisation.

See [DGC website](#) for how they assess and fix road defects.

**Road inspections**

As the budget is so small, work has to be prioritised. The "Well-managed Highways" document was produced in 2018 by the Institute of Highway Engineers, giving a framework whereby councils throughout the UK can prioritise their works. All 32 Scottish local authorities agreed on the current risk-based approach used by DGC.

All 4,200km of roads have been assessed. Roads such as the A709 and A711 are busy roads and are inspected monthly. The B725 from Dumfries through Caerlaverock to the junction with the B724 gets less traffic and is inspected every six months. The Bankend road is split in two: Dumfries to the Crichton is inspected every three months and the stretch from the Crichton to the junction with the B725 is 6-monthly. The Quay Hill gets a 12-monthly inspection, as does the road past the Canine Rescue Centre.

At inspection they look at the risk to a member of the public if they hit a pothole: size & depth of pothole; type and speed of traffic on the road; visibility (can you see the pothole coming or is it on a blind bend or over the crest of a hill?); location within the carriageway (edge or central?). From all this, a priority is produced for each pothole.

Priority 5: noted, but probably will not be fixed for 12 months to 2 years.

Priority 4: will continue to be monitored through inspection regimes.

Priority 3: will be done within 60 days.

Priority 2: within 5 days.

Priority 1: a “life and limb” defect and needs made safe straight away, with a permanent repair within 24-48 hrs.

### **Repair methods**

**Viafix** for a permanent repair.

**Traditional patching:** a JCB fills and rolls the holes. Stuart’s team are often asked why they don’t seal the edges. The current standard way across the industry is to seal the faces of the hole once it’s cleaned out, then fill and roll. A seal around the top of the patch is a skid risk to motorcycles and bicycles in wet weather.

**Surfacing:** as was recently done along the Lantonside stretch of the B725. Most of what DGC do nowadays is 45-50 mm resurfacing, on which they spend £1.5-£2m per year.

**Surface dressing** as was done this summer around Trohoughton. Surface Dressing is a preventative measure which can prolong the life of the carriageway by up to 10-15 years. £3m-£3.5m is spent on this per year. The final treatment was carried out yesterday when a very fine mist of bitumen was added to seal the surface during the crucial first winter period when the chips are bedding in.

**Carriageway construction** is a very expensive way of maintaining roads so very little is done these days (some around Dalbeattie this year).

The spray injection patching machine was working on the Bankend Road today, which Stuart, with a smile, assures us was purely coincidental (laughter from the attendees!); Stuart’s team had no idea he was attending this meeting tonight. The problem was identified last week following a report from a local resident. The spray injection patching season ends on 30 September.

### **Points raised by meeting attendees**

David Gilbert (DG) threw the meeting open for comments. The following points were raised.

- First speaker quoted an incident with his works van. To summarise, the pothole he hit was identified in 2021 but nothing was done. It has been reported several times since, including – by three different people – in February, March and April 2025. The hole has been allocated different priorities over the years, including Priority 1. Speaker wondered how a pothole can be designated Priority 4 or 5 when the inspector did not even get out of his van and measure the hole. It seems that the Council’s policy is not being followed.

Stuart and Karen asked the speaker to share this information with their team. The speaker said he has already done so, and has shown them pictures. Karen confirmed that a Priority 1 hole should be fixed immediately. Stuart was worried about how often this is happening. The public need to have trust in DGC.

DG summarised that there are two issues here: 1) are DGC employees following procedures? 2) the Council is losing credibility.

- Speaker from Croft Road described how she reported a pothole at the end of their drive in September 2021. It’s coming up for four years and it is still there, now three times the original size, right across their drive. She has sent emails and pictures but is constantly told the job is on their list. She has mobility issues and is unsteady on her feet. Stuart apologised that he unfortunately did not know the details of her case so could not give her an answer. She will send Stuart the details so that Stuart can try to track down the information, look at the priority and give her an indication of when it’ll be fixed.
- Another speaker commented on the newly asphalted stretch of the B725 past Lantonside. There had barely been a pothole there. Surely the money could have been better spent?

Stuart said that problems were picked up during a separate programme of works involving the road-scanning machine (big yellow machine which regularly scans all the roads in the D&G network). The road is scanned (total of 12m scanning points throughout D&G) and the data put into DGC's computer program, which analyses it and produces a priority. The road surface may look good but that doesn't mean there aren't problems underneath. Stuart went on to explain the two budgets: Revenue money is for pothole repairs. Capital money is for infrastructure replacement such as this major resurfacing. He cannot use Capital money for items that should be funded out of Revenue money. Another point is that because the amounts of money are so small, DGC find it cheaper and more effective to repair roads just before the situation becomes serious - so they are not always fixing the worst potholes first. Over time we should see a difference in the road network.

- Another speaker reported an issue by email in May this year and received an automated reply that DGC would email him with their findings and any planned repairs. He has still not had a response. Can DGC understand people's anger when they get no response from a Council to whom they pay their Council Tax? Why set up a system which serves no purpose? The speaker has lived in Bankend for 26 years and works at the castle, one of the most prestigious sites in this region. They get on average 200 visitors a day, mostly from abroad, and he is surprised our atrocious road surface does not warrant a higher priority since Historic Environment Scotland are trying to highlight this area of Scotland. Bankend Road is considered a low-traffic road compared with others. Speaker wants to know the vehicle count for the last 26 years. Road edges are a concern. Our farmers, with their expensive and ever heavier agricultural machinery, have no option but to move towards the road edge to allow cars to pass. Cars approaching each other also have to use the edge. He therefore disagrees with DGC's policy of giving potholes in the middle of the road priority over those at the edge. He wished to express his anger that we don't see to be getting any support or action from DGC. Applause from others in the room.
- DG added that in addition to the castle we have WWT. These are two of the most prestigious tourist attractions in D&G and visitors' vehicles are being trashed. These tourist attractions should be supported. The area is heavily reliant on tourism. It is unacceptable to generalise by awarding each pothole a priority while disregarding these specific points.
- Next speaker commented that the roads are no better than they were 5 years ago. Between Dumfries and Caerlaverock it's pothole after pothole.

DG says it might help everyone if DGC could explain the complaints process, starting with someone putting in a complaint.

#### **Karen and Stuart's responses to these points**

Karen apologised to the man who has had no response to his email, and to anyone else in that position. She explained that they have a new system in place. Karen understands that people need an immediate response, with a follow-up response within 14 or 21 days and admitted that the system has not worked as well as they'd hoped. They are now looking at a new, interactive system which should be in place early in 2026. A user should be able to see when a defect they've reported is going to be sorted, has been sorted etc. She also agreed about the importance of the castle and agreed DGC need to pick up on this. She totally understands what we are saying; they would do more if they could. Not an excuse; the roads budget is simply not enough and she'll continue to put pressure on MSPs.

In response to a comment about footpaths, Stuart said he has increased the budget for footways significantly by an additional £250,000 (up from £150,000). He is trying his best to address the issues that have been aired tonight.

- The speaker from the castle thanked Stuart and Karen for their responses. He suggested the Council should be proactive and seek ways of strengthening the edges of roads. On the subject of drainage, he said the many tonnes of grit that have been deposited along the Bankend Road in winter over the years all gets pushed up onto the road edges, creating a channel where rainwater gathers and cannot escape. This then freezes in winter, further degrading the road surface.

In response, Stuart said they are taking drainage very seriously because that is at the root of many road problems. DGC are investing in new small mini-diggers to help with ditching in rural locations and are also in final throes of procuring new machinery for cleaning gullies and the associated pipework.

- A speaker commented that the road from Bankend to WWT has dangerous edges in two locations. A trailer went onto the verge when it met another trailer and toppled over the edge, then the same thing happened about a year later on the other side. Stuart said his team are aware of the edge issue but he has no record of vehicles coming off the edge of the road. Stuart's team are looking at a solution for that location at the moment.
- A speaker commented on the B725 from Conheath to Castle Corner. All the culverts are on the landward side and water drains through a pipe onto the shore. It is 2-3 yrs since the culverts were emptied. Speaker has in the past rodded from the seaward side to try to get the water away. A JCB used to clear the seaward side but this no longer happens. There's no point clearing the landward culverts if the pipes are blocked on the seaward side. The landward side verge from Townfoot road end to Kenneth Bank is very soft and would damage the suspension of any car driving onto it. Drainage would help.

Stuart said they have spent money on new plant and equipment and a programme of works in that location will be starting soon, in 5-6 weeks. The B725 is one of their priority areas.

- Speaker said that to really appreciate the full horror of the Caerlaverock parish roads and the Glencaple-Dumfries road you need to be on a push-bike. Some of the potholes could damage a car but kill a cyclist. This is a National Cycle Network Route 7. Creetown to Newton Stewart is part of the same cycle route but the roads there are nothing like as bad as ours. There are now potholes on the S-bends between Glencaple and Dumfries. Drivers have to swerve to avoid them – when approaching a blind bend. He added his voice to the general plea to raise the priority of this area: potholes, drainage, surface water eroding the edges of the road. The road from Shore Road up past the Canine Rescue Centre to the church crossroads is a disgrace. Potholes repaired last year have opened up again so that was money down the drain. More applause from other attendees.
- DG reiterated that DGC assess roads based on traffic volumes but do not take account of other factors like tourism or the fact that we're on a National Cycle Route – when you add all those in the priority of our roads should increase.

#### **Karen and Stuart's responses**

Stuart understands our point about how hierarchies should be determined. He pointed out that other areas of D&G also have high tourism volumes. Regarding the state of roads around Creetown, Stuart recognises that there are fewer road issues in the west of the region compared to here in the east. As a result, he has adjusted budgets so that more money comes to the east of the region (now 60% to the east, 40% to the west). If things don't improve, further adjustments can be made. Traffic in the east is a lot lighter. Timber transport is a big issue in the west. A review of road hierarchies is scheduled for two years' time so we can look at more parameters such as tourism, timber transport routes, bus routes etc. At the moment, hierarchies are set by the roads management team and are set purely on average annual traffic.

DG commented that this is a very blunt instrument.

Karen thanked us for the comments on cycling the roads giving a different perspective. She will take away comments on prioritisation and see what other local authorities do. Cycle routes: may be opportunities for external funding. On the subject of drainage, Karen recognises the need to get culverts and pipes cleared. Will set up an annual programme like there used to be.

- Speaker often sees a series of holes on a stretch of road. A few get filled in and the rest are left. Why?

Stuart said they just don't have the money to fill them.

- Speaker said that in Dumfries town centre, holes a quarter as bad as ours are getting filled. He mentioned Bankend Road that serves the college, university, Mountainhall Treatment Centre and Nithbank Hospital. Anyone coming from Annan to Dumfries also uses this road. The road has never been busier. Yet it is a lower classification than the B725.
- Another speaker commented that the Community Council for 25-30 years or more have tried to make Bankend Road the same classification as the B725. The Kelsick is given the same priority as the Quay Hill, but the latter is a bus route. He sees a lack of joined-up thinking regarding classification of roads. If DGC reverted to receiving pothole information via Community Councils, then CCA – and all other Community Councils/Associations – could email DGC once a month saying where the potholes are and which ones are most important and DGC could act accordingly. Would this not make Stuart's job easier?
- DG asked when the road classifications were set up. He asked if we can get a traffic-counter on Bankend Road as we'd feel more comfortable if DGC knew how many people use it. The information DGC use now to prioritise potholes is a blunt instrument.

Stuart replied that the classifications were established in 2018, and yes, we can get a traffic-counter on Bankend Road, though probably not till next year. DGC are trying to update the classifications every 10 years.

- DG assured Stuart and Karen that we understand that DGC's budgets are limited, so is there anything this community can do to lobby or help in any way to get you more money? Tell us what you need from CCA and we will do everything we can to enable you to take things forward. For example, we can provide DGC with Historic Environment Scotland and WWT's visitor figures.

Karen confirmed that Stuart will organise the traffic counter, so DG to please let them know the best place. Karen understands they need to take away our concerns re individual potholes. She also

advises speaking to elected members (councillors, MSPs, MPs) and they'll come to the council. The one potential problem is DGC getting information from so many different sources – the public, MSPs, Councillors ... it is better to have communication with just one single point of contact and that's what they've been trying to achieve with the one-way-in, one-way-out system.

- A member of the group asked if a road has ever changed its classification, eg from a "C" to a "B" or from a "B" to an "A". Stuart does not recall it ever happening in his 15 years with the Council – though part of the A709 has been declassified. It used to run Dumfries-Langholm but the Lockerbie-Langholm stretch was downgraded to a "B"-class road.

Summing up, Nith Ward Officer Chris Woodness commented that we've heard how things worked previously and what changes are coming. A Director and a Head of Service, in the form of Stuart and Karen, have recognised that certain things were not working, eg fixing gullies, drainage and road-edges. They are now listening and implementing changes. Despite the tight budgets, things can now start to improve. Stuart and Karen have paid real attention to our rightful concerns, and new processes will be implemented, in particular – next year – an end to the frustration of not getting a response to our enquiries. There will be another round of community budget engagement in November, so that's your chance to DGC what your community's priorities are.

DG closed the meeting, thanking Karen, Stuart and all attendees. As CCA chair, he is happy to pass on information and will do anything he can to help matters. Next CCA meeting: Weds 26 November, 1930, planned for Barbour Hall.