
Letter from Craigie's Farm to MSPs re impact of Bridge Closure, and suggested actions...



From: John Sinclair

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Subject: forth road bridge

Hi Colin

Hope you are well. Just wondering if we can arrange a visit from you to discuss the effects the bridge closure is having on our business?

I was horrified to read in press this morning that The Scottish Government was aware that there was an issue with the bridge in 2010 but choose not to sign off the repairs. The rumours are that it was in fact the current First Minister who made the decision not to spend the money back in 2010, I do hope this is not the case.....

I feel that I have worked really hard to build up a successful business, provide employment, contribute to the local community and pay my taxes.

Whilst I would like to think that Edinburgh Council and The Scottish Government are generally supportive of what we are doing I do find it hard to find many examples of genuine support that has really helped us.

Having just completed a major extension (building warrant signed off this week) the timing of the closure is not good for our business, we were relying on a modest 15% upturn on sales but due to the bridge fiasco we have seen a 20% reduction on last year so basically 35% adrift from where we need to be.

Sales is not my biggest concern, staff is really important to our business and we invest heavily in staff development. We currently have 40 members of staff on the payroll, 8 of whom come from Fife. The alternative transport arrangements that have been put in place are far from ideal and **we are really concerned that our staff will get fed up of the arrangements and the extra costs and leave their job with us.** The conditions on the trains are scandalous and being a farmer we would not be allowed to transport livestock in the same way. **Three of our staff normally cycle to work, why are cyclists being stopped from using the bridge?** Perhaps the damage is a lot worse that we are being told?!

The whole situation is in a bit of a mess and I would imagine everyone will be quick to blame someone else and I suspect heads will roll (I imagine the heads that roll will be to protect the heads that should roll.....) So, I appreciate the bridge problem will not go away quickly and we will have to live with this.

What I am looking for is a productive discussion to discuss what The Scottish Government and Edinburgh Council are going to do for me to help my business get back on track and continue its growth and contribution to the local and Scottish community?

My wish list –

1. To hold on to my staff. What is the government going to do to compensate commuters who are experiencing the burden of extra travel costs. **Will a consideration be given to allowing cyclists to use the road bridge?**
2. To drive footfall. We need to drive footfall to in turn drive sales. We are a destination and an attraction so customers do not just turn up. 20% of our customer base is north of the Forth so we need to attract more customers from the West of Edinburgh. I have been fighting for Brown Signage for over 6 years now but someone in Edinburgh Council is blocking this and says that we are ‘no different to Tesco so will not get Brown Signs’. This would be an ideal time for someone to make a stand and help Craigie’s grow and develop through these challenging times. Mr Ewing and many others have tried but failed, are you the person who will make a difference?!
3. Honesty, can the Government just tell us how it is. The rumours are that the Bridge will be closed for up to 6 months and may never reopen to HGV’s. We are being told that it will just be closed until the New Year..... Please just tell us how it is

If you feel you can help can we get a date in the diary?

Regards

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