

Ministerial Engagement Briefing, dated 20 August 2014

MINISTERIAL ENGAGEMENT BRIEFING: KEITH BROWN

Minister for Transport and Veterans

<i>Engagement Title</i>	Visit by the Minister for Transport & Veterans and the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth to: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Visit the A9 Kincaig to Dalraddy Ground Investigation (GI) works - part of A9 Dualling works, and2. To announce the formal decision to proceed with the construction of the project and bringing forward of funding, saving circa 6 months on the previous programme.3. To announce the publication of the OJEU notice and the start of the prequalification process for the main Contract.
<i>Timing</i>	
<i>Organisation/Venue and full address including postcode</i>	Kincaig, Highland The location for the photo opportunity is within a field a short walk from safe parking at the Community Hall.
<i>Date and Time of Engagement</i>	Date: Wednesday 20 August 2014 Time: 10am – 10:45am
<i>Background/Purpose</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> MCS Ref (If appropriate) <input type="checkbox"/> MCS Letter reference: (If appropriate) Purpose/Invitation History: To allow the Minister for Transport & Veterans and the Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth to announce the formal decision to proceed with the procurement of the A9 Kincaig to Dalraddy Contract.
<i>Relevance to Core Script</i>	On 6 December 2011, at the publication of the Scottish Government's Infrastructure Investment Plan, Alex Neil MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure & Capital Investment announced the overall intention to dual the A9 by 2025 and the road network between all Scotland's cities by 2030.

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<i>Greeting Party and specific meeting point on arrival (if event is at a non SE Building</i>	Ministers to be met at the Community Hall car park by Transport Scotland official [Redacted] (Head of Planning and Design), and [Redacted] (TS News Team).
<i>Specific entrance for Ministerial Car/parking arrangements</i>	Exit the A9 northbound at Kingussie and travel along the B9152 to Kincaig. Minister's cars will be able to park in the Community Hall car park.
<i>Venue contact Number</i>	N/A
<i>Special Dress Requirements</i>	Personal protective jacket, trousers & hard hat will be provided by Transport Scotland. Ministers to provide own safety boots.
<i>Event Programme</i>	10am – Ministers arrive at location of photo opp. They will be met by [Redacted] (Head of Planning and Design). They will meet the staff operating the GI rig and then be available for photos and media interviews. The photo will be of the Ministers with the drilling rig and the A9 in the background.
<i>Summary Page (key issues, lines to take if pressed and issues to avoid)</i>	See Annex A
<i>Speech/Speaking Points</i>	Lines to Take – see Annex B A9 Dualling Summary – see Annex C Q&A for media interviews – see Annex D
<i>Guest List or Meeting Attendees</i>	N/A
<i>Supplementary Info:</i>	
<i>Directions including map(s)</i>	Travelling north on the A9 take the Kingussie Junction (signposted Kingussie and Kincaig B9152) and continue north on the B9152 to Kincaig. The community centre is on the right hand side (look for the “recycling centre” sign. See Annex E and https://maps.google.co.uk/maps?q=Kincaig&hl=en&ll=57.128018,-3.933921&spn=0.006557,0.021136&sll=57.926517,-4.680176&sspn=6.573349,21.643066&oq=kincaig&hnear=Kincaig,+Highland,+United+Kingdom&t=m&z=16
<i>Media Handling</i>	Media will be invited to the location of the photo

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<i>Official Support</i>	<p>opp for 9:45am where they will be able to photograph Ministers with a GI drilling rig and the A9 in the background. Interviews will also take place at the location.</p> <p>TS News Team will separately send up a draft news release for clearance.</p> <p>Name: [Redacted] (M) [Redacted] [Redacted] TS News (M) [Redacted]</p>
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Copy List:	For Action	For Comments	For Information		
			Portfolio Interest	Constit Interest	General Awareness
Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure, Investment and Cities			X		
Cabinet Secretary for Finance, Employment and Sustainable Growth					X
David Middleton					X
PS/Transport Scotland					X
TS Directors					X
DG Enterprise, Environmental & Innovation					X
Press Transport Scotland					X
Communications Constitution and Economy					X
[Redacted]					X
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[Redacted], TS Comms					X

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[Redacted]	X
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Purpose of visit:

The A9 Kincaig to Dalraddy Project

The proposed improvement option involves the provision of a new section of dual carriageway widening to the existing A9 for a distance of 7.5km, lying broadly between Kincaig and Dalraddy. It is the first of the A9 Dualling projects to be taken forward.

We previously published a 2015/16 start date for the project.

The project will introduce a dual carriageway section in the nearly 50km of undualled A9 north of Crubenmore. This section was identified by our key stakeholders as being a top priority. This is good news, particularly for drivers and the local communities who told us that a dual carriageway was their preference over the original plans for an overtaking lane (WS2+1) at this location.

Bringing forward the construction of the project will bring early benefits to drivers of the A9 through the provision of guaranteed, safe overtaking and reductions in driver frustration.

The construction will bring opportunities for SMEs to bid for subcontractor roles through the Public Contracts Scotland portal

The estimated construction cost of the project is £50-55M.

Ministerial Decision to proceed with the Project

Draft Orders and an Environmental Statement were published for the project on 1 November 2013. 3 objections were received in connection with the scheme. These objectors were not persons where the holding of a public local inquiry is automatically triggered by their objection.

On 20th August, Ministers will announce that they have decided to make the statutory orders that were previously published in draft, to allow the scheme to proceed. The promoter and the 3 objectors will have been formally advised of this decision a day or two beforehand.

In the days following that announcement the orders will be “made” (i.e. signed), which will give the necessary powers to proceed with vesting the land in the CPO and constructing the project. A notice will be published confirming that the orders have been made.

The Minister should note that the making of the orders comes with a 6 week challenge period from the date of publication of the notice. Should a challenge be received during that period then the necessary powers will not be available to be exercised until the challenge has been successfully disposed of.

Savings expected from the Queensferry Crossing make it possible to bring forward procurement and construction.

The procurement process will also commence on 20th August with the publication of the Contract notice in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU). This will commence the process for shortlisting of potential Contractors for the main works. In

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the event of a challenge to the orders, active public procurement of the works would be suspended pending such a challenge being dealt with.

By bringing forward the funding and as a result of the a statutory process phase being completed sooner than originally projected, we estimate that construction may start circa 6 months earlier than we previously anticipated.

Ground Investigation Contract

The contract was won by Raeburn Drilling and Geotechnical Limited.

This is the third GI contract to be let for schemes within the A9 Perth to Inverness dualling programme.

The purpose of the GI is to provide geotechnical and environmental information on the ground conditions to provide sufficient information to enable the final construction details to be determined. The GI contract comprises fieldwork, in-situ testing and monitoring, laboratory testing and factual reporting. The GI builds on previous work carried out during 2005 and will assist prospective Contractors in tendering for the works.

LINES TO TAKE

ANNEX B

General

- We are committed to completing the dualling of the A9 between Perth and Inverness by 2025, the most expensive transport project in Scotland's history.
- We expect to have around a third of the dualling completed by 2021 and over half completed only a year later.
- We are determined that A9 motorists and non-motorised users should see improvements on the route as soon as possible and we will continue to look for opportunities to bring work forward. Today I can announce that we are moving ahead of our programme with the formal decision to proceed and the start of the procurement of the main works for the Kincaig to Dalraddy project, around 6 months ahead of schedule.
- This progress has been achieved by channeling savings anticipated from the Queensferry Crossing project directly into dualling of the A9.
- The A9 Dualling programme presents some of the most challenging work ever witnessed but given our track record on other major projects we are confident of delivery on time and on budget.

A9 DUALLING SUMMARY

ANNEX C

1. On 6 December 2011, the Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment launched the Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP). Contained within the document is a commitment to complete the dualling of the A9 between Perth and Inverness by 2025 and the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen by 2030.

2. By improving the A9 and A96 all Scotland's cities will be linked by dual carriageways and resulting benefits include reduced journey times, increased road safety and sustained economic growth.

3. The outline strategy for dualling the A9 between Perth and Inverness was announced by Alex Neil, MSP on 26 June 2012.

4. The Programme to dual the remaining 80 miles of single carriageway between Perth and Inverness will cost an estimated £3 billion and constitutes the biggest transport project, by cost, in Scotland's history.

5. The Programme to complete the dualling of the A9 between Perth and Inverness by 2025 is tight, taking into account the extent of design and development, statutory process, procurement and construction activity that it entails.

6. The A9 between Perth and Inverness requires dualling between the following seven sections:

- Luncarty to Pass of Birnam – 9.5 km
- Pass of Birnam to Ballinluig – 15.8 km
- Pitlochry to Killiecrankie – 5.7 km
- Killiecrankie to Glen Garry – 21.5 km
- Glen Garry to Crubenmore – 20.0 km
- Crubenmore to Slochd - 42.6 km (This section includes the approximately 7.54 km Kinraig-Dalraddy scheme)
- Tomatin to Moy – 8.5 km

7. On 19th March 2014, the Minister announced that these seven sections would be broken down further in twelve discrete schemes:

- Luncarty to Pass of Birnam – 9.5 km
- Pass of Birnam to Tay Crossing – 7.3 km
- Tay Crossing to Ballinluig - 8.4 km
- Pitlochry to Killiecrankie – 5.7 km
- Killiecrankie to Pitagowan – 10.7 km
- Pitagowan to Glen Garry -10.8 km
- Glen Garry to Dalwhinnie – 12.2 km
- Dalwhinnie to Crubenmore – 7.7 km
- Crubenmore to Kinraig – 18.4 km
- Dalraddy to Slochd – 24.1 km

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- Tomatin to May – 8.5 km

8. Design work as part of the Preliminary Engineering Services commission has focused on the definition of the road corridor and the policies for how the route options will be implemented. Public exhibitions detailing the results of this study and the Strategic Environmental Assessment, took place in June 2013 along the A9 Corridor. Further route options exhibitions took place during May and June 2014.

9. Development is also already underway for the three early implementation schemes below:

- A9 Luncarty to Pass of Birnam
- A9 Birnam to Tay Crossing
- A9 Kincaig to Dalraddy

10. We are determined that A9 motorists and non-motorised users should see improvements on the route as soon as possible and we will look for opportunities to bring work forward. Through that commitment we are already on target to complete almost 6% of the dualling on completion of the Kincaig to Dalraddy Scheme in 2017 and around 13% of the dualling on completion of the Luncarty to Birnam scheme in 2019. We expect to have around a third of the dualling completed by 2021 and over half completed by 2022.

11. Key benefits and opportunities:

- a) Sustainable economic growth
- b) Dual carriageway connectivity between all of Scotland's cities
- c) Improved road safety
- d) Improved journey times and reliability
- e) Improved access to tourist and recreation sites
- f) Improved links to pedestrian, cycling and public transport facilities

12. Dualling some sections of the route will be challenging. The main constraints include:

- a) Internationally environmentally designated sites
- b) Areas of outstanding scenery
- c) Rock cuttings
- d) New bridges and major bridge widening
- e) Public utilities
- f) Proximity of the Highland Mainline Railway

13. More specifically the scale of the programme means we will have to negotiate:

- The Cairngorms National Park
- 3 National Scenic areas
- 14 Scheduled Monuments
- 1 Historic Battlefield
- 3 Historic Gardens and Designed Landscapes

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- 1 Conservation Area
- 51 Listed Buildings
- 7 Special Areas of Conservation
- 2 Special Protection Areas
- 12 Sites of Special Scientific Interest
- 2 National Nature Reserves
- 142 sites registered on the Ancient Woodland Inventory
- 222 watercourse crossings including the Rivers Tay and Spey

Q & A

ANNEX D

A9 Dualling - General

Q. How committed is the Scottish Government to the A9 Dualling?

A. This Scottish Government is the only government to have committed to dualling the A9 between Perth and Inverness. The serious accidents in recent years highlight the importance of this commitment. We have already invested £50 million on improvements between the two cities since 2007.

The announcement by the Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment on 26th June 2012 set out details of this, one of the biggest infrastructure projects in Scotland's history, while also laying out the Government's intention to bring forward urgent actions to improve safety on the route, led by the A9 Route Safety Group. The approximately £3bn project involves 80 miles of upgrade to the seven single carriageway stretches by 2025.

Q. When will work start and when will the new road be open?

A. The IIP announcement of 6th December 2011 made a commitment to having the dualling completed by 2025.

Q. What has happened so far?

A. Contracts were awarded for the Strategic Environmental Assessment and Preliminary Engineering Support Services Commission in September 2012 to Halcrow and Jacobs respectively. These contracts allowed the road corridor to be defined and assessed from the strategic environmental aspect and defined the key principles on issues such as junctions, lay-bys, rest areas and active travel facilities including better paths for walkers, cyclists and equestrians and what environmental constraints affect potential sections of the dualling.

Work is on-going on the Birnam to Tay Crossing section to develop options for this 8 kilometre section of A9 dualling. The first section to be dualled, between Kincaig and Dalraddy, will be ready for construction to start in 2015. This will be followed by the Luncarty to Pass of Birnam section in 2017. Draft Orders and the Environmental Statement for the Luncarty scheme were published on the 19th March this year and we are currently considering the responses and comments received to these.

On 23rd April 2014 the Minister announced the award of the first of three multi-million pound design contracts for the A9 dualling, with each contract worth in the region of £40-60 million. This first contract was won by C2MHill/Fairhurst and covers the 26 miles of the A9 between Glen Garry and Dalraddy.

On 13 August 2014 the Minister announced the award of the second of the three multi-million pound design contracts for the A9 dualling,. This second contract was won by Jacobs and covers the 32 miles of the A9 between Pass of Birnam and Glen Garry.

The remaining contract is expected to be awarded before the end of 2014.

Q. What are the anticipated benefits of the programme?

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A. The Strategic Transport Project Review published in 2009 set out the Scottish Government's transport investment priorities for the next 20 years and identified the objectives of dualling the A9 as:

- Promoting journey time reductions between Inverness and the Central Belt,
- Improving the operational effectiveness of the A9 - benefits will come from provision of a consistent carriageway standard along the whole route
- Reducing the severity of accidents
- Addressing driver frustration.

The STPR goes on to state that dualling the A9 is expected to provide a significant contribution to the Government's Purpose of increasing sustainable economic growth.

Q. Why is the Scottish Government only now instructing improvement work on the A9?

A. Full dualling cannot happen overnight and we have continued to complete the improvements schemes previously identified as part of the Trunk Road Programme where they have merit. We have already invested over £50 million in safety and structural improvements on the A9 since 2007 including:

- Ballinluig
- Helmsdale to Ord of Caithness
- Moy
- Ralia
- Faskally
- Carrbridge
- Bankfoot
- Loaninghead, and
- Crubenmore

In addition to the major improvements already done, we continue to invest in the ongoing maintenance of the A9. This includes an annual programme of road and bridge maintenance schemes, road safety schemes and general repairs.

Q. Why will dualling take so long?

A. 2025 is in fact challenging given the extent of design and development, statutory process, procurement and construction activity we must complete. We must ensure that all options for dualling are considered and consulted upon so that we minimise the potential impacts on those living along and using the A9 corridor.

The A9 passes through areas which are breathtaking and hugely important in terms of wildlife and landscape - not to mention people's homes. The suggestion that we can somehow ignore these procedures and not consult people who stand to be affected by the upgrading work is of course not possible. We are legally bound to examine the possible impacts of the programme on the environment and have already published the Strategic Environmental Assessment for the route.

We are dealing with internationally environmentally designated sites; rock cuttings; building new bridges and widening existing major bridges; public utilities; dealing

Inquiry into A9 Dualling Programme – documents provided by Transport Scotland

with the close proximity of the Highland Mainline Railway; and there are currently over 100 junctions that must be incorporated to provide access to adjacent properties and communities. We must ensure that all options for dualling are considered and consulted upon so that we minimise the potential impacts on those living along and using the A9 corridor.

Each section represents a major project in its own right and these require in-depth planning and design to ensure that we deliver the right scheme at the right price as well as keep impacts on communities, businesses and the environment to the absolute minimum. Much of the work to deliver this programme lies in the planning and consultation process we need to undertake before construction can begin.

We are determined that A9 motorists should see improvements on the route as soon as possible and we will look for any opportunity to bring work forward.

Q. What will be the cost of dualling?

A. The cost of completing the dualling of the A9 to Inverness is presently estimated to be around £3 billion. Given the varying challenges to dualling along the A9 we will continue to review cost estimates for the entire strategy as we progress design development. This work will build on the route options and scheme cost estimating work already started on the schemes between Kincaig and Dalraddy and between Luncarty and the Tay Crossing.

Q. How will the scheme be funded?

A. We are currently considering the funding options available for the £3 billion A9 Dualling programme. Beyond the first section between Kincaig and Dalraddy construction is not due to continue until 2017 and a decision on funding this work and the wider dualling programme will be made nearer the time once our plans are further developed.

Q. Why not improve the Highland Mainline instead?

A. The Scottish Government is committed to improving rail services in Scotland, including the Highlands. The Highland Mainline Rail Improvements Project aims to deliver an hourly service and reduce journey times by up to 35 minutes. The project will be delivered in phases and will provide incremental journey time benefits.

The December 2011 timetable delivered part of Phase 1 of the Highland Mainline Improvements Project, which increased the number of services from 9 to 11 trains per day.

Network Rail recently completed a number of technical improvements between Perth and Inverness to deliver journey time benefits for a number of services from December 2012.

Transport Scotland is working closely with Network Rail to develop Phase 2 of the Improvements Project, which focuses on potential infrastructure enhancements, including the construction of new passing loops.

Q. What are the next steps for the project?

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A. Transport Scotland has undertaken a series of workshops and discussions with key agencies to discuss how the dualling work might be phased and to share experience of the route and the benefits dualling will bring. This work has culminated in a strategy for dualling. The strategy identifies packages of design and development work to be programmed over the next few years with the objective of being ready to start construction of the Kincaig to Dalraddy section in 2015 and completing the full dualling by 2025.

On the 19th March 2014 the Minister announced the reduction of the study area to a 200m wide online corridor and the division of the Dualling programme into 12 discrete projects. Exhibitions aimed at engaging with the local communities along these 12 discrete projects took place between 27th May and 1st July 2014.

There remains a lot of design and assessment work to be done before we can finalise the scheme alignment. However, by sharing these route options at this early stage we want to ensure that anything that should form part of that assessment work is captured at the start.

Q. What design challenges does the route pose?

A. The route poses a number of design challenges, including:

- a) Internationally environmentally designated sites
- b) Areas of outstanding scenery
- c) Rock cuttings
- d) New bridges and major bridge widening
- e) Public utilities
- f) Proximity of the Highland Mainline Railway
- g) There are currently over 100 junctions that must be incorporated to provide access to adjacent property and communities.

Some very complex and demanding challenges undoubtedly lie ahead but, given our track record on other major projects, we are confident of delivery on time and on budget.

Design & Development Assessment Process

Q What are the key stages of design and development assessment set out in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB)

A. The proposals will be developed following the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB). This is a three stage process:

Stage 1 – scoping of environmental and other constraints.

Stage 2 – consideration of broad corridor options and identification of a preferred corridor for the dualling.

Stage 3 – identification of the preferred alignment and assessment of the preferred scheme design including an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA).

At each stage of the process, a wide range of factors are considered including transport needs, engineering and the potential impacts on the environment.

Q. What are the key stages in the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 statutory process?

A. Draft Road Orders and Compulsory Purchase Orders are published along with an Environmental Statement.

The publication of these documents starts a 6 week objection period. Should objections, e.g. from Landowners or Local Authorities, be received and not resolved through negotiation, then a Public Local Inquiry (PLI) may be held, depending on the type of objections. At the conclusion of such processes, the Scottish Ministers will publish a decision on whether the scheme should proceed.

If a PLI is held then a independent Reporter will be appointed to hear evidence from both sides and make a recommendation to the Scottish Ministers on how to proceed. The Scottish Ministers will then be required to publish their decision letter. This process can take up to 18 months.

If a decision to proceed is forthcoming, either with or without a PLI, then the orders can be made. Made Orders are then published, with a 6 week challenge available period on certain limited grounds.

If no challenge is received to the Made Orders, the land required for the scheme may then be vested and a construction contract awarded following a public procurement process.

Environment

Q. Why did you undertake another Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)?

A. An SEA was undertaken as part of the STPR in 2008. It focussed on impacts relating to road and rail interventions in the transport corridor. This latest SEA builds upon that work to begin the assessment of impacts associated with various dualling options within the road corridor.

The eventual DMRB assessment work will undertake full Environmental Assessment of each dual carriageway section. The SEA is being undertaken in advance and will consider the corridor as a whole. It will help to inform the subsequent DMRB process and ensure that early decision making on route corridors takes full account of the potential environmental impacts.

The existing A9 corridor is an important environmental and landscape resource. We consider this work important in giving us an understanding of the environment and landscape quality in the corridor and ensuring we work to minimise the impacts on it.

Q. Will any properties be affected?

A. Yes, some property acquisition is inevitable given the scale of the project. The exact number of acquisitions will be determined through the forthcoming design of the scheme. However one property has been acquired between Birnam and the Tay Crossing and another between Luncarty and Pass of Birnam, following close discussions with the property owners.

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Q. Will affected property and land owners receive compensation for any losses incurred?

A. This is assessed by the District Valuer under compensation rules set out in law.

Q. How will Environmental Impacts be mitigated?

A. An assessment of the environmental impacts of the proposed scheme, during construction and operation will be undertaken. Where practicable, mitigation to avoid or reduce impacts will be identified and implemented as part of the scheme. Details of potential impacts, mitigation and residual impacts will be presented in the Environmental Statement. These cover land use, geology, contaminated land and groundwater, the water environment, ecology, landscape, visual, cultural heritage, air quality, noise and vibration, pedestrians and non-motorised users, vehicle travellers, disruption due to construction, policies and plans and cumulative impacts.

Q. What measures are being taken to address road traffic noise from the project?

- Road traffic noise impacts will be studied in detail and the approach to mitigation reported in the Environmental Statement.
- The scheme design will include mitigation where appropriate.
- This takes the form of, for example, earth bunds or fencing, in keeping with the local environment.

Q. When will people know if they are entitled to noise insulation?

- Properties which may qualify for noise insulation will be identified in the Environmental Statement.
- Further assessments will be carried out in accordance with the Noise Insulation (Scotland) Regulations 1975. This includes noise surveys pre and post construction and at years 5, 10 and 15 after opening of the road.
- Properties which meet the specified criteria will be eligible for noise insulation.

Public Consultation

Q. Who will be consulted/what opportunity will there be for public input?

A. Further public consultations will be undertaken as part of the design and development process. There will be ongoing strategic consultation with key sector organisations covering planning and transport, business and development, tourism and recreation, access and the environment. The objective will be to seek ways of working collaboratively across agencies to best capture the benefits of the scheme and use that information to support the emerging programme of work.

Q. How will my views be considered?

A. In general public consultation will take place at the following key stages during the design and development process:

Stage	Level of detail	Level of feedback
Strategic Environmental Assessment	Baseline conditions Environmental constraints Broad range of potential dualling options to be considered as part of more detailed design	A better understanding of the local conditions
DMRB Stage 2	Short list of dualling options Outline of design details and environmental assessment	Preferred option and any amendments to design details
DMRB Stage 3 draft Orders Publication	Preferred option and Environmental Statement. Extent Compulsory Purchase Order	Where scheme is unacceptable - Representation to Environmental Statement and objection to draft Orders

Transport Scotland will consider points raised during consultation and act upon them where reasonable and appropriate.

In addition to the formal consultation stages we hope to establish a regular consultation forum with the Community Councils along the A9. This will allow us to keep communities updated on the process and progress in local areas.

Q. How will Communities along the A9 be involved?

A. We have already been engaging with the communities affected by the schemes between Luncarty and the Tay Crossing and Kincaig to Dalraddy and this will continue.

We are carrying out a rolling programme of regular engagement from Perth to Inverness to ensure the businesses and individuals who will be affected by the work over the next decade or so are kept fully informed and their important feedback is taken very much into account as we design, procure and construct.

A9 Dualling public exhibitions were held in December 2012 and June 2013 at various locations along the length of the A9 between Perth and Inverness. A further round of exhibitions took place between 27th May and 1st July 2014 to engage with local communities along the route and to seek their views and input into the next stages of the design development.

We know that, as well as many benefits, roads construction comes with impacts for those living along the route - that is why communities must lie at the heart of our planning.

Feedback from local businesses and individuals who will be affected by the work over the next decade is absolutely essential. We must make them a central part of our plans as we design, procure and construct every mile of new dual carriageway.

Kincaig and WS2 +1 lines

Q. Why is Kincaig to Dalraddy being prepared for construction first?

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A. By announcing replacement of the proposed WS2+1 scheme between Kincaig and Dalraddy with a 7.5km length of dual carriageway, we will introduce a dual carriageway section in the nearly 50km of undualled A9 north of Crubenmore. This section was identified by our key stakeholders as being a top priority. This is good news, particularly for drivers and the local communities who told us this was their preference over the original plans for an overtaking lane.

While many of the schemes within this ambitious project have yet to undergo various statutory procedures such as land purchase, we were able to modify our existing plans for Kincaig-Dalraddy and upgrade this to a dualling scheme. As much of the preparatory work had already been done on this scheme, we will be able to start dualling this particular section of the A9 two years earlier in 2015/16.

Q. Will the previously planned WS2+1 schemes at Slochd and Kincaig still be constructed?

A. The work to date has considered the treatment of the remaining WS2+1 schemes in the programme. The Kincaig to Dalraddy scheme is to be converted into a dualled scheme and be shovel ready in 2015/16.

The WS2+1 scheme at Slochd does not have a readily dualled solution and will not provide an economic return in the lifetime it would have remaining to 2025. The strategy is therefore based on subsuming this scheme into the wider dualling preparation work.

Accidents

Q. How do you respond to accusations that the A9 is Scotland's most dangerous road?

A. The A9 between Perth and Inverness has a better than average trunk road safety performance (the accident rate for the single carriageway section between Perth & Inverness is 8.24 accidents per 100 million vehicle KMs, less than half that of the Scottish trunk road average which is 18.3 accidents per 100 million vehicle KMs). Scotland's Road Safety Framework provides a challenging vision to bring down fatalities towards 2020. This approach, based on engineering, education and enforcement - alongside targeted safety campaigns and the setting of demanding targets for Scotland's roads – is delivering results, although more can always be done.

We currently have record low road accident numbers and some of the safest roads in Europe, however, even one death is unacceptable.

The significant and consistently high level of investment in our road safety campaigns over the past few years reflects our determination to drive down the number of casualties on our roads. This Government's plans to lower the amount of alcohol which drivers can consume shows the depth of our determination. While we currently have the lowest road accident casualty records since records began and some of the safest roads in Europe, even one death is one too many and is unacceptable.

Q. What is being done to address accidents presently?

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A. The Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment has asked the A9 Safety Group to investigate and recommend a series of urgent actions to improve safety on the A9. This has led to the introduction of Variable Message Signs along the route that display anticipated journey times. Further to this average speed cameras are now being introduced between Dunblane and Inverness.

Q. How are accidents monitored and funding allocated?

A. Road safety is of paramount importance in the operation of the trunk road network. Safer road design, improved speed management, continued maintenance and a better provision for vulnerable road users are amongst the steps being taken to reduce numbers of injuries and fatalities on Scotland's roads. Transport Scotland assesses the safety performance of the trunk road network on an annual basis by screening all locations where 3 or more personal injury accidents have occurred in the preceding 3 year period. Further investigations are carried out and where appropriate, mitigation measures are prioritised and installed. This ensures that the funding available can be targeted at those locations that provide the greatest accident casualty savings.

Q How are accidents investigated and what is Transport Scotland's involvement?

A. It is Transport Scotland's policy to attend the location of all fatal accidents with the relevant Police force and Operating Company in order to collate information and establish whether there is a case for a more detailed engineering accident investigation. As Police investigations are still ongoing into accidents last year and earlier this year, it would be inappropriate to comment at this time on the exact circumstances of these accidents. Any intermediate road improvements required will be identified as part of the investigation in discussion with the Police.

Q. Who is represented on the A9 Safety Group?

A. Safety on the trunk road network is a priority for the Government. We take all accidents seriously and pay particular attention to fatal and serious accidents on our trunk roads. We work closely with the Police and other agencies to look at the circumstances of every fatal incident. With regard to the A9, safety is being considered through the A9 Safety Group set up by Transport Scotland. The working group has membership from the Police Forces, Local Authorities, Safety Camera Partnerships, Fires & Rescue Services and Trunk Road Operating Companies. The A9 Safety Group meets regularly.

Average Speed Cameras

1. Why introduce Average Speed Cameras on the A9?

The reductions in accidents delivered by Average Speed Camera Systems speak for themselves. Since the A77 system was installed in 2005, there has been a 46% reduction in the number of people being killed and a 35% reduction in the number of people being seriously injured, and we would expect a similar impact on the A9. The proposed cameras are just one part of a package of engineering, education and enforcement measures to improve safety on the A9.

Another significant statistic is that in permanent SPECS schemes across the UK that are more than 3 years old, the number of people Killed or Seriously Injured (KSI) dropped by 72% on average.

2. What was the evidence upon which the decision to introduce them on the A9 was based?

The A9 Safety Group collated and reviewed the facts and figures relating to the safety performance of the route to create a 'route evidence base'. This indicated that safety on the A9 would be improved by the introduction of an Average Speed Camera System. This is true both if current speed limits are retained and where the speed limit for HGVs are raised to 50 mph.

3. Will average speed cameras harm the economy of the Highlands?

No – the reductions in average speed and modelled increases in journey time associated with average speed cameras are primarily focused on reductions in excessive speed witnessed on the A9. For drivers travelling at the legal limit, the journey time disbenefits are expected to be relatively small, as little as 4 minutes on the trip between Perth and Inverness.

We have also announced proposals to increase the speed limit for HGVs in the single carriageway sections between Perth and Inverness to 50 mph. This will reduce the number of longer queues on this part of the A9 and the instances of slower moving vehicles generally.

The Road Haulage Association and Freight Transport Association are both members of the A9 Safety Group. They support the use of average speed cameras as part of the interim safety plan, and have agreed to work with their members to improve driver behaviour on the route. Average speed cameras typically improve journey time reliability, which is important in modern business planning.

4. Will raising the speed limit for HGVs change the amount of overtaking?

Each overtaking decision is affected by a variety of circumstances. Where drivers feel that their progress is being impeded by slower moving vehicles, this can affect their desire to overtake. However, this desire can also be affected by the length of the queue ahead of them, the number of HGVs in that queue, the presence and composition of oncoming traffic and the purpose of the individual driver's journey. The number of overtaking manoeuvres taking place is one of a range of factors we will be monitoring on the A9.

In all cases, overtaking safely should be governed by the principles outlined in the overtaking campaign literature and on the accompanying website.

5. Do you propose to ban HGVs from overtaking on the A9?

As part of the 50 mph speed limit pilot for vehicles over 7.5 tonnes, we will be working with the haulage industry to educate and improve driver behaviour around issues such as tail gaiting, elephant racing and overtaking to improve the operation of the route. Some drivers will still wish to overtake and if doing so we want them to think about the risks and make better informed decisions.

6. Will overtaking accidents be addressed by the average speed cameras?

The education campaigns, enforcement measures and engineering works will act together to improve safety on the route. Safety has consistently improved where average speed cameras have been installed in Scotland, the UK and across the world on a variety of road types. The development of the average speed camera system for the A9 reflects the realities of the route, in particular the excessive speeds recorded for many vehicles and the high accident severities recorded. The traffic models suggest there will be less desire to overtake with the Average Speed Cameras in place. The 50mph HGV pilot also being introduced will bring operational benefits and may further improve driver behaviour by reducing frustration.

DIRECTIONS TO THE GROUND INVESTIGATION WORKS

ANNEX E

Travelling north on the A9 take the Kingussie/Kincraig Junction and continue north on the B9152 to Kincaig Community Hall on the right hand side of the road.

