

A9 Safety Group

Wednesday 3rd December 2014 at 10:30
Birnam Arts and Conference Centre, Birnam

Attendees:

John Smith	BEAR Scotland Ltd
Alan Campbell	BEAR Scotland Ltd
Alan Farnington	BEAR Scotland Ltd
Neil MacSparran	Central Scotland Safety Camera Partnership
Jeremy Tinsley	CPT-UK
David Richardson	Federation of Small Businesses
Margaret Simpson	Freight Transport Association
Hugh Logan	Highland Council
Neil Greig	Institute of Advanced Motorists
Fraser Grieve	Scottish Council for Development & Industry
Dougie Bennion	Northern Safety Camera Partnership
Chic Haggart	Perth & Kinross Council
Neil Lumsden	Police Scotland
Bryan McGeogh	Police Scotland
Ian Martin	Police Scotland
Chris Campbell	Road Haulage Association
Arron Duncan	Tayside Safety Camera Partnership
Stuart Wilson	Transport Scotland
Sarah O'Loughlin	Transport Scotland
David McConnell	Transport Scotland
David Pollock	Transport Scotland
Graham Thomson	Transport Scotland
Jamie Carson	Transport Scotland

Notes of Meeting

1. Welcome & Introductions

Stuart Wilson welcomed all to the meeting and introductions were made around the table.

2. Apologies

Apologies were made for Malcolm Bingham (Freight Transport Association), Stewart Leggett (Transport Scotland), George Mair (CPT-UK), Michael McDonnell (Road Safety Scotland), Iain Murray (Police Scotland) and Martin Reid (Road Haulage Association).

3. Previous Minutes & Actions

Stuart Wilson asked for comments on the minutes of previous meeting held on the 26th August 2014. There were no issues raised with the minutes produced for the previous meeting.

4. Website Development & Updates

Jamie Carson provided an update on the A9 Road Info Website and figures relating to its use between 6th October and 7th November with the A9 ASC system going live on 28th October. Some 91,000 page views were reported, with over 37,000 different sessions recorded. The average viewing time was just under two minutes. The most visited pages were the Homepage and the Speed Limit Information page.

9th October saw the launch of the speed limit awareness campaign including radio adverts. Portable Variable Message Signs were also located along the route to advertise the forthcoming camera switch on.

The total opportunity for people to see the print and digital PR was over 9 million. 73% of the coverage was positive in tone.

A view will be taken on when the speed limit awareness campaign will be re-run.

A number of members raised the issue of clarity of speed limits for light goods vehicles, some further focus of these within the website and any future campaigns should be considered.

5. Average Speed Camera System (ASC)

David McConnell updated the group on the ASC installation and overall scheme. The groundworks programme was completed on time for 28th October, a minor snagging programme has been agreed and Road Safety Audits are now in progress. All sites have been calibrated and the back office installation is complete.

The operational management of the system was handed over to the Camera Partnerships with no significant issues being reported. System performance monitoring is in place.

In terms of impacts there has been an overall reduction in speeds. In 2012 40% of vehicles monitored near Moy were recorded travelling above the posted speed limit. In July 2014, after the erection of the camera infrastructure, but prior to its activation, this fell to 8% and in November, following the camera activation, this fell further to 4%.

Similarly at Blackford the figure of speeding drivers recorded in 2012 was over 30%. In September 2014 this fell to 25% and fell again in November to 4%.

Journey times have been in line with those predicted during the modelling exercise.

Parallel Route running, although not identified as an issue, will be monitored at three routes that have been highlighted through the press.

Chic Haggart requested that if a report is compiled it be made available to the public. David McConnell replied that information gathered from the monitoring exercise will be made available to the general public via the A9 website.

6. A9 HGV Pilot

Margaret Simpson reported on a very positive reaction to the HGV pilot which sees speed limits for HGVs on the A9 increased from 40mph to 50mph on single

carriageway sections. Members have reported improved fuel economy, improvements to journey times and reduced stress levels.

As with the previous meeting concerns were raised over the changes proposed by the UK Government to increase speed limits for HGVs in England and Wales on single and dual carriageway roads in April 2015 and the impacts that different speed limits on both sides of the border will have on drivers travelling from England into Scotland.

Graham Thomson mentioned that Scottish Ministers do not believe that there is a sufficient evidence base that would justify an increase in the national HGV speed limits in Scotland. Analysis of the Impact Assessments that have been published by DfT has indicated that although there are potential economic benefits that are derived from an increase in national HGV speed limits this is also likely to be accompanied by an increase in accidents and casualties. In contrast, the trial on the A9 is being conducted to deal with issues that are particular to that route and in conjunction with a controlled Average Speed Camera System, which is being introduced as a safety measure.

Chris Campbell also noted that the 50pmh HGV pilot has been welcomed, making the journeys safer with better fuel economy.

An article due to be published in the journal Transport News in January 2015 was distributed to the group. The article covers an experiment that was carried out with an HGV driving the identical route on the last day of the 40mph limit and the first day of the 50mph trial and the results and experiences of it. The results show that the same amount of fuel was used however journey times dropped by around 30 minutes with perceived driver stress levels dropping considerably.

7. Maintenance of the Route

Alan Campbell reported on maintenance and improvement work on the route between Dunblane and Perth. To date, £2.4m had been spent on maintenance this year, with £1m spent since the last Safety Group Meeting, with resurfacing works completed at Gleneagles, Upper Cairnie and Windyedge. In addition, permanent closure of the central reserve gaps at the old Gleneagles Railway Station and Millhill Farm accesses has been completed. Proposals to install queue warning signs on the southbound approach to Keir Roundabout are currently programmed for installation in February 2015.

During the Ryder Cup, residents in the Auchterarder area had raised a petition to retain the pedestrian footbridge across the A9 that had been installed for the event. It was not possible to do this as the temporary structure had been hired in specifically for the period of the event and consequently was removed thereafter. However, Transport Scotland has agreed to commission a pedestrian study covering this area. This is expected to be completed in March next year.

John Smith reported on maintenance and improvement work on the route between Perth and Thurso. A Vehicle Activated Sign is now installed at Helmsdale to encourage speed compliance through the community.

Surfacing works are complete at Ballinluig (NB) and Dalraddy. No works planned on the A9 in Jan/Feb. Trinafour and Drumochter are planned for March 2015.

Golspie to Latheron scheme nearing completion. Design to commence for Tain north junction.

8. Update from Partners

Bryan McGeogh noted that driver behaviour on the A9 appeared to be improving since the introduction of the ASC system. There have been minimal complaints on parallel route running but Police Scotland will continue to monitor.

Recent initiatives included the 'Get Ready for Winter Week' which was carried out all over Scotland with over 400 road checks taking place.

Police Scotland are currently in discussions with BEAR Scotland over winter arrangements on the A9.

The next national campaign to run will be the Festive Drink Driving Campaign. The drink driving limit in Scotland is being reduced on 5th December 2014.

John Smith commented that on the times he has travelled the A9 he has noticed a positive change in driver behaviour.

Dougie Bennion agreed with John particularly in regards HGV drivers. The back office system for the handover and management of the ASC system has been smooth. Figures will be released 26th January from the first quarter of results. Also the recently installed Crubenmore hardstanding area is now operational.

Ian Martin commented that enquires continue on the fatal collision that occurred recently on the dual carriageway section of road at Ballinluig.

9. A9 Dualling Update

David Pollock provided an update to the group on the A9 dualling process.

In September roadside interviews were carried out with regards to layby and rest area design. Chris Campbell enquired if the RHA or FTA had been consulted on this aspect. David Pollock will investigate and advise.

On 23rd October the Minister for Transport announced a shortlist of four construction firms invited to bid for the contract to deliver the first A9 dualling scheme between Kincaig and Dalraddy, with the contract due to be awarded in summer 2015.

Construction work to dual the A9 between Luncarty and Birnam is still due to commence in 2017 although objections have been received and a Public Local Inquiry will be required.

The third and final major design contract to dual the A9 between Dalraddy and Inverness is expected to be awarded very shortly.

10. Future Initiatives

Stuart Wilson asked the group to think about how to move the group going forward, particularly in terms of future education campaigns. Members should consider ways in which to do so prior to the next meeting.

Neil Greig commented that a campaign to highlight issues with fatigue would be beneficial.

In addition, Neil mentioned that a programme detailing the publication of updates would be useful. Sarah O'Loughlin suggested a programme of media events / activities be prepared and circulated.

11. AOCB

Stuart Wilson noted that correspondence received had predominantly been enquiries regarding the speed limit for specific vehicles on the A9 with some positive responses received about overall route performance.

Stuart also noted that we are looking at all forms of unacceptable driver behaviour such as tailgating.

Chris Campbell commented that speed limit stickers on the back of vehicles appear to be causing confusion amongst the travelling public. Arron Duncan added that the difference in limits for vans and car-derived vans causes particular confusion.

12. Date of next meeting

To be held in March 2015; date to be confirmed.