

A9 Safety Group

Wednesday 26th August 2015 at 10:30
Birnam Arts and Conference Centre, Birnam

Attendees:

Alan Campbell	BEAR Scotland Ltd
John Smith	BEAR Scotland Ltd
Alan Farnington	BEAR Scotland Ltd
Jeremy Tinsley	Confederation of Passenger Transport
Malcolm Bingham	Freight Transport Association
Margaret Simpson	Freight Transport Association
Neil Greig	Institute of Advanced Motorists
Brian McGeogh	Police Scotland
Martin Reid	Road Haulage Association
Aaron Duncan	North Safety Camera Unit
Hugh Logan	The Highland Council
Stuart Wilson	Transport Scotland
Stephen Davies	Transport Scotland
David McConnell	Transport Scotland
Graham Thomson	Transport Scotland
David Pollock	Transport Scotland

Notes of Meeting

1. Welcome & Introductions

Stuart Wilson welcomed all to the meeting.

Stuart informed the group of the sad passing of Dougie Bennion and extended his condolences and thoughts to his family at this time while acknowledging his professionalism, work and commitment to the A9 Safety Group. John Smith paid tribute to Dougie who had been instrumental with the group since its inception noting his tireless work in pursuit of reducing collisions and improving road safety.

2. Apologies

Apologies were made for the Chair of the Group, Stewart Leggett, (Transport Scotland), and for several other members who where possible had provided representation.

3. Previous Minutes & Actions

Stuart Wilson asked for comments on the minutes of previous meeting held on the 24th March 2015. There were no issues raised with the minutes produced for the previous meeting. Items for Action included in agenda items.

4. Road Safety Campaigns

David McConnell presented to the group an evaluation on the Summer Safety Campaign firstly giving thanks to Neil Greig and Michael McDonnell for their work within the campaign.

An evaluation of current and repeating issues identified two main themes for the campaign:

- Driver Fatigue
- Speed Limit Awareness

Research had indicated that Driver Fatigue was a very much under reported accident causation and that it was clear that a number of fatal and serious accidents on the A9 could be attributed to fatigue although it was acknowledged that it was often difficult to determine exactly this causation. The research had also identified that this is not an issue specific to the A9 (the M74 and A75 have higher reported incidents) and IAM research also supported the issue as being more national in nature.

In view of this it had been agreed that this should be the focus of a national campaign on Transport Scotland's 'Don't Risk It' platform and that this would be supported by the A9 Safety Group

The objective of the Driver Fatigue campaign was to raise public awareness and to make people consciously stop if they felt tired. The key advice in the campaign was recommending regular rest breaks for at least 15 minutes along with a caffeinated drink for every two hours of driving. The media strategy for the campaign was focused through the 'Don't Risk It' website and supported by radio adverts, poster campaign in public places and targeted digital media along with awareness through Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms.

The campaign ran for a period of 4 weeks and the evaluation provided a number of indices indicating performance against industry standards. The key finding was that the reach of the campaign exceeded projected levels with 35% of all adults in Scotland seeing or hearing the message.

Neil Greig provided a presentation in respect to recent Institute of Advance Motorists (IAM) research on driver fatigue which revealed broadly similar issues and findings.

Following a short discussion it was agreed that this was an area worthy of more research to identify mitigation measures. Neil Greig also advised that the IAM are also investigating the influence of roadside and in-car distractions and their effect on collision / incident frequency. It was agreed that this research would be considered for future campaigns when available.

The other key theme of the summer campaign was in relation to speed limit awareness. Again this is not an A9 specific problem as national research has identified this as a general issue. While responsibility for speed limit awareness firmly rests with the driver in national speed limit areas it was agreed to target the A9 directly with the installation of eight portable variable message signs on the route carrying related messages and directing drivers to the A9 website for further information. The signs were in place for four weeks from mid-July.

While no further campaigns are currently planned for 2015 Stuart Wilson asked the group to consider future potential campaigns and provide topics for consideration. Graham Thomson suggested that some form of campaign aimed at the safety of operatives and motorists around the dualling works may be of benefit.

5. Average Speed Camera System (ASC)

David McConnell provided an update of the latest KPI figures published in July which included the first reported casualty information. The KPI's and a detailed assessment have been published on the A9 Safety Group website.

The casualty figures were encouraging although given the short assessment period they have to be considered within this context. While the significant drop in KSI figures is welcomed there are concerns with the number of fatalities within the monitoring period. While all of the incidents are still under active investigation Police Scotland have confirmed that neither excessive speed or overtaking were contributory factors to the cause of the incidents.

This reiterated the Group's position that making the A9 safer required action on a number of fronts

David McConnell also confirmed that a speed management strategy for the forthcoming dualling works between Kincaig and Dalraddy would be implemented; designed around the principal of reducing risk to road workers and road users. This would involve temporary average speed cameras to monitor the reduced 40mph speed limit and would be managed by the North Area Camera Unit. A media and communications strategy was in the process of being developed to raise awareness of both the construction project and the speed management strategy.

Malcolm Bingham asked that the reasoning behind the reduction to 40 mph should be clearly stated and that the provision of this information to his members would provide the understanding needed. David McConnell undertook to provide this.

6. A9 Dualling

David Pollock updated the group on progress to date.

The £35 million contract for the construction of a 7.5km section of the A9 between Kincaig and Dalraddy has been awarded to the joint venture of Wills Bros Civil Engineering and John Paul Construction. Final ground investigations are taking place and pre-construction works are already underway.

The Official groundbreaking for the A9 dualling is planned for 10th September.

An update was provided on a variety of different work streams currently in progress in other areas and with the final design contract awarded to the joint venture of Atkins and Mouchel there are now over 800 design related jobs involved in the dualling project.

Wide ranging public consultation is also ongoing in relation to design options for other sections and there are a number of proposed public enquiries currently in process, brought about by local objections. The need for a public enquiry was also currently impacting on the improvements scheme for Berridale Braes north of Inverness.

Transport Scotland's commitment to education and training is also a major feature of the A9 dualling project with an initiative called Academy 9 due to be launched in late August. This is aimed at school children in the communities serviced by the A9 and will introduce engineering, environmental and other factors into the curriculum with an objective of stimulating interest in career choices within this industry.

7. Maintenance of the Route

Alan Campbell reported on the Perth to Dunblane section and aside from normal routine maintenance operations the following were worthy of note:

- A pedestrian survey was undertaken on A9 at Auchterarder and the recommendations from the survey which will be implemented will see footpath widening works and the installation of pedestrian activated signs similar to those installed in-between Broxden and Inveralmond Roundabout.
- Two similar studies south of Balhaldie and at Blackford are planned to commence within the next month.
- Resurfacing works at Blackford / Gleneagles and Kierwoodhead are complete, totalling over £500k of improvements

- Resurfacing works worth around £750k at Queen Victoria N/B and S/B, the A820 N/B slips and Kier Roundabout are programmed from September.

John Smith provided a similar update for north of Perth with the following worthy of note:

- Surfacing and improvement schemes completed recently include Drumochter, Moy North Junction, Thurso Central and South of Avielochan with a combined value of £1.3m
- A Further £1m worth of improvements is planned for the remainder of the financial year including works south of Slochd, south of Daviot duals and north of Drumochter.
- A number of safety schemes are planned including pedestrian activated signing at Tore, high friction surfacing at Tain along with design and investigation at the junction the B9161 Munloch, north of Inveralmond and the Dalmore junction.

8. Update from Partners

Stephen Davies confirmed that correspondence from Dunkeld Community Council which related to involvement with the Safety Group had been addressed. The issues raised were principally in respect to dualling and it was confirmed that the A9 Dualling Team had already been in touch with the Community Council.

Stephen Davies commented that Transport Scotland have had correspondence on the continued lack of understanding on the layout of the A9, particularly after existing dual carriageway sections and asked if the Group could consider what options may be available to address this. Discussion centred on additional two way arrow signs or the possibility of directional arrows in the carriageway. Some concerns were raised over historical evidence that additional markings lead to skidding incidents in wet weather conditions, particularly in relation to motorcycles. It was agreed that BEAR Scotland should look into what ant-skid materials may now be available with a view to re-considering this option.

Arron Duncan informed the group that the Safety Camera Partnership structure in Scotland had just undergone a significant review and was now aligned to Police Scotland's organisational structure. The net effect for the A9 was that it for its most part came within the newly formed North Area Camera Unit and that he was the Unit Manager for this area and would represent it's interests on the Group.

Graham Thomson reported that 2015 represented the mid-way point of the national Road Safety Framework to 2020 and that the Framework's Partnership Board are undertaking a review. As a result the Board are focussing on three priority areas, where they are reviewing the Framework commitments and looking to set outcomes through to 2020 and associated indicators :-

- Speed (also considering motorcyclists commitments)
- Age (considering Pre driver, Drivers 17-25 and older driver commitments)
- Pedestrians and Cyclists

Bryan McGeogh advised that in line with the earlier updates Police Scotland had also recorded a reduction in incidents on the A9. From a national perspective Police Scotland along with key stakeholders had a number of initiatives about to be launched or in planning. These include:

- Vulnerable users campaign
- Motorcycle campaign (running since April continues into September)
- Looking forward the winter campaign is due to commence 5th October.

Martin Reid informed the group that extended responsibilities may make his attendance at future meetings challenging but that he would endeavour to ensure that the RHA were represented.

Malcolm Bingham raised the issue that hauliers do not find it easy to access information for programmed road closures (not just the A9) and that having access to this information would be of significant benefit for his members. David McConnell advised that the Traffic Scotland website contained comprehensive information on current and planned roadworks and that the Scottish Roadworks Register contained a public portal which was searchable by route for current and future roadworks. A direct link to this portal is available on the Traffic Scotland website.

9. AOCB

No further points raised.

10. Date of next meeting

Date of next meeting proposed for early December 2015 with Transport Scotland to confirm.