

A9 Safety Group

18th April 2019 at 11:00

Tulloch Caledonian Stadium, Inverness.

Marco Bardelli	Transport Scotland
Donna Turnbull	Transport Scotland
Stuart Wilson	Transport Scotland
Richard Perry	Transport Scotland
David McKenzie	Transport Scotland
Sam McNaughton	Transport Scotland
Chris Smith	A9 Luncarty to Birnam, Transport Scotland
Michael McDonnell	Road Safety Scotland
Kenny Sutherland	Northern Safety Camera Unit
Martin Reid	Road Haulage Association
Fraser Grieve	Scottish Council for Development & Industry
David Richardson	Federation of Small Businesses
Alan Campbell	BEAR Scotland Ltd
Kevin McKechnie	BEAR Scotland Ltd

Notes of Meeting

1. Welcome & Introductions.

Stuart Wilson welcomed all to the meeting followed by a round table introduction from everybody present.

Stuart Wilson provided high level accident and casualty trends on the A9 and identified that sustaining the momentum in accident reduction activity was still a key priority but that driving down accident numbers was very challenging. He elaborated that fatigue on the A9 was a serious issue and any measures which could reduce accident risk associated with fatigue should be considered.

2. Apologies

Apologies were made for Morag MacKay (TS), Aaron Duncan (SCP), Chic Haggart (PKC)

3. Previous Minutes and Actions

The minutes were accepted as a true reflection of the previous meeting.

SW and DT are continuing to investigate the research that would be required to allow the consideration of a change to the national speed limit for vans and will provide an update on this at future meetings

Action: Transport Scotland will consider the research required to determine the impact of a change to the national speed limits for vans.

4. Average Speed Camera System Update.

Kenny Sutherland provided an update from the Safety Camera Partnership. The A9 Kincaig to Dalraddy dual carriageway section did not have adequate speed camera signing in place to enable speed enforcement. Very high vehicle speeds had been observed along this section of the A9. KM updated that a signing scheme had been developed and was due for implementation in the next few weeks.

Kenny Sutherland provided details of the new Scottish Safety Camera Programme guidance handbook which established the latest guidance for safety camera site selection. The highlights included considering accidents over a 5-year period and utilising an evidence-based approach. A new points-based scoring system was in place to appraise sites. This new system has resulted in a greater number of sites being considered for enforcement activities.

The need for future dualling upgrade schemes on the A9 to consider the need for enforcement activities such as signing, hard standings, etc was identified.

The safety camera system deployed on the A9 Luncarty to Pass of Birnam section was not yet operational, however, David McKenzie observed that its presence was already having a positive effect on driver behaviour at that location. Sam McNaughton added that whilst compliance was generally good already, some speeding outside of peak traffic times was occurring.

5. A9 Interim Safety Plan – Key Performance Indicators Update

David McKenzie advised that the average speed camera system has now been in place for over four years and the benefits previously identified, in terms of collision reduction and journey time reliability, are still being recognised. Monitoring of the route will no longer take place quarterly. Stuart Wilson added that monitoring will still take place as accidents are still occurring, particularly serious ones. Fatigue could be an issue and potentially up to 1 in 3 accidents on A9 between Perth and Inverness may have fatigue as a contributory factor. This could include accidents during roadworks. Stuart Wilson identified areas where these may be taking place including the area north of Drumochter into the Spey Valley and commented that the safe systems approach may help reduce these accidents.

It was noted that there were darkness hours accidents in temporary traffic management. A discussion followed and it was agreed that making sites appear prominent, busy and active would help to raise driver awareness. Marco Bardelli identified an issue with the rumble strips on approach to roadworks with some drivers choosing to swerve into the opposite lane to avoid driving over them. Michael McDonnell said that the use of social media to highlight the issue of fatigue could work. Kevin McKechnie suggested the use of mobile VMS with appropriate messaging could help to remind drivers to take rests and indicate how far to next stopping area. The summer holiday time when traffic flows increase with often unfamiliar drivers using the A9 would be a good time to use mobile VMS.

The use of textured road markings such as Weatherline was discussed to potentially help alert fatigued drivers they were drifting out of a lane. Kevin McKechnie updated on the use of Weatherline raised road markings on the A87 and A9. These markings performed well on the A87 in double white line systems but were not as effective on intermittent lines on the A9. Alan Campbell was aware of negative texture surface treatments that may help with drifting accidents. The group raised concerns regarding the impact on the road surface from a maintenance perspective and a possible loss of control issue for motorcyclists.

A lack of suitable rest areas was highlighted as potentially encouraging longer journeys and fewer breaks. Marco Bardelli highlighted there were few roadside catering vans north of Drumochter. Consent for a catering van was available but no operator had come forward. Improved signing to existing rest areas and off-network facilities could maybe help encourage regular stops. It was noted that fewer lay-bys would exist when the route became dualled.

Action: Undertake a targeted media campaign with mobile road sign messaging. Explore the potential for rumble strip type road markings such as Weatherline to help alert fatigued drivers.

6. Group Priorities

David Richardson mentioned the lack of information on rest stops along the A9 between Perth and Inverness in particular with only the House of Bruar being an obvious roadside rest area. David McKenzie mentioned the 'Motorway Buddy' smart app for phones that was aimed at truck drivers looking for rest stops. This was of benefit to truckers and maybe other similar apps could be useful for other groups of road users.

The group discussed the wider issue of driver fatigue and ideas to offer mitigation such as improved signing of off network facilities could help, perhaps along the lines of 'bypassed communities' signing. Kevin McKechnie suggested the use of mobile variable message signs indicating distances to next communities or rest facilities could help. The variable message signs could also indicate 'don't drive tired' type messages. HGV drivers were well aware of fatigue issues and driving beyond hours. Private drivers less aware of the risks associated with fatigue. An investigation was underway to appraise the provision of lay-bys and rest areas on the A9 north of Inverness.

Accidents during the hours of darkness on the A9 was discussed due to the quiet, rural nature of extensive sections of the A9 causing drivers to 'switch off'. The use of solar powered road studs was offered as having the potential to clearly define the road layout during the hours of darkness. Further analysis of darkness hours accidents was to be undertaken by road safety managers to identify any higher risk locations and those where the use of solar powered road studs may be of benefit. Consideration would be required to the impact of solar powered road studs in National Park areas.

Action: Road Safety Managers to review darkness hours accidents on the A9 and see which locations may be suitable for the use of solar powered road studs.

The A9 to the north of Inverness was identified by the group as being a priority target area for accident reduction. Stuart Wilson highlighted the accident problems in the area and posed the question to the group "what could be done to address them?". Marco Bardelli made the point that the traffic composition to the north of Cromarty bridge was of a similar mix to that south of Inverness.

Safety issues centred around major/minor junctions such as at Alness. Right-turn manoeuvres at these junctions created conflicts and operational difficulties. The increase in traffic along the route may be contributing to an increase in accident risk, particularly during the tourist season when unfamiliar road users were numerous. Marco made the point that cruise ships were now visiting the area leading to an added increase in coach traffic.

Martin Reid noted that cyclists were now a very evident user group on the A9 which presented safety issues for them and could lead to queues developing behind them as vehicles attempt to overtake. Marco Bardelli informed the group that the section between Tain and Golspie is a popular route with no direct National Cycle Network (NCN) provision. An existing alternative

route exists but may take cyclists away from where they want to travel and so they choose to cycle on the A9. NCN Route 1 is situated on the A9 between Tain and Dornoch Bridge with no specific cycle infrastructure.

Action: Transport Scotland to discuss routing of cyclists in this area with Sustrans.

7. A9 Dualling Update

Chris Smith provided an update on the A9 Luncarty to Birnam dualling upgrade section, including the following:

- Traffic management was now installed and operational. Some diversion route issues were encountered when the TM was implemented. A single accident involving an overtaking vehicle through the works caused substantial delays;
- A temporary 40mph speed limit will be in place for the duration of the project. So far, compliance with the temporary speed limit appears to be good;
- A temporary mini-roundabout is to be installed on the A9 at South Bankfoot Junction in mid-May by Breedon following extensive traffic modelling work. The mini-roundabout will be in place until Spring 2020. Stuart Wilson asked how the news and information will be disseminated to the travelling public. Chris Smith informed that the information would be provided via press releases, Facebook, Twitter and other social media;
- Marco Bardelli informed that the mobile VMS along this section of the A9 were 'real-time', based on Bluetooth tracking to accurately identify journey times. The anticipated journey time delays were estimated to be approximately three minutes. Real-time journey information would be fed back into Traffic Scotland's main VMS;
- Slow moving vehicles such as tractors and excavators on the A9 through the works were causing delays.

Sam McNaughton provided an update on the other A9 dual upgrade schemes.

- The Pass of Birnam to Tay Bridge section was a constrained location subject to community challenges and a co-creative process. An options exercise had been undertaken via a public exhibition. Jacobs as consultants are to undertake an options appraisal during 2019;
- Seismic rigs were undertaking boreholes in Spring with some relatively minimal noise impacts. One will take place at Slochd.
- The other nine sections of the upgrade route are designed. Some objections received to the draft Orders including at Killiecrankie and Kingussie. All will require a Public Inquiry to consider objections, potentially with some set-aside to allow the schemes to progress. Transport Scotland are still working towards a target of 2025 for implementation of all works.
- Geotechnical investigations works are still underway and liaison with BEAR Scotland regarding network access and Traffic Management is working well. Up to eight sites of traffic management are present on the route at any one time. Feedback from public has been good. No personal injury accidents have occurred at the roadworks, but several damage only incidents. The standard of traffic management is in excess of Chapter 8 requirements with rumble strips, beacons and temporary vehicle-activated signs in place. Some speeding vehicles have been observed through the roadworks and Police Scotland have assisted with enforcement.

- Some problems have been experienced when removing traffic management during periods of poor weather that was not forecast, particularly in windy or snow conditions. Some temporary signs have been blown down with extra sand bags being used. Marco Bardelli suggested the use of elevated traffic management signing. A standard traffic management layout had been developed with BEAR and this gives consistency for the public. A report reviewing the success of the traffic management is currently being prepared to highlight best practice and be used going forward for other schemes.
- The Operations and Maintenance Group is currently discussing traffic management scenarios as there will likely be several contracts underway simultaneously. Traffic modelling is underway to determine the potential impacts upon travel times.
- Discussion with Scotrail are ongoing at present regarding the possibility of additional services during the road works.
- Marco Bardelli mentioned the forthcoming works at Berriedale Braes which are expected to last for one year. Some disruption is expected to the travelling public and some 'all red' phases will take place during seismic blasting.

8. Updates from Partners

BEAR Scotland

Alan Campbell gave an update since the last meeting on various schemes along the route in the North East Unit. Alan advised that there are four road safety schemes ongoing within the NE section of the A9 (Dunblane to Perth).

- The A9 Keir Roundabout project involves the installation of dynamic queue warning on the southbound A9 approach and the alteration of road marking on the circulatory carriageway. The signing and road marking as programmed to be installed in May/June 2019.
- The Broxden Roundabout Improvements Study is considering the feasibility of various options to increase safety and capacity through this area. Preliminary design of the potential layouts is currently ongoing, with various survey work having been undertaken previously.
- A9 Inveralmond Roundabout scheme is aimed at improving capacity on the circulatory carriageway, which will then have knock-on safety benefits to the A9 southbound approach, where excessive queuing is currently an issue. This project is programmed to be completed in June 2019.
- The A9 Windyedge Road Safety Study will investigate injury collisions that have occurred at this junction in recent years with the aim of identifying engineering measures that could reduce the chances of these recurring. The study will be undertaken during summer 2019.

In terms of maintenance work, carriageway resurfacing will take place between Gleneagles and Blackford and at Cairnie Braes within the next six months. Drainage renewal works will also be carried out on Dunblane Bypass during this same period. The combined cost of these works will be approximately £650k

Kevin McKechnie gave an update since the last meeting on various schemes along the route in the North West Unit including:

- Further structural and routine maintenance schemes to the value of £5.3m were due to be completed in the current financial year. This includes £125k of drainage improvements and £95k of footway works;
- A number of Strategic Road Safety investigations and designs underway and planned include the following:
 - A9 Tain North & South Junctions. The two major/minor junctions have been resurfaced and new road markings applied to the junction, including a double white line system. Works planned in the summer include a renewal of the traffic signs along the bypass to better highlight the junctions and improve road safety. Initial consultation on reducing the speed limit along the bypass to 50mph has taken place. A further road safety options investigation is to be undertaken to examine the feasibility of installation of a roundabout or traffic signals at Tain North and South junctions;
 - A9 Granish junction, signing scheme completed. Some kerbing works to central island to progress;
 - A9 Rosskeen junction. Signing works proposed;
 - A9 southbound at Inshes. Vehicle Activated Signs to improve warning of queueing vehicles ahead. Scheme requested initially by Police Scotland;
 - A9 Skiach ARSR – Signing scheme at junction and some VRS improvements proposed.
 - A9 Dunkeld Junction ARSR improvement scheme to improve signing and operation of junction;
 - A9 House of Bruar junction – possible signing measures to encourage greater use of the minor road from the House of Bruar car parks;
 - An investigation was underway to look at the accidents on the single carriageway sections of the A9 involving vehicles crossing a lane into opposing traffic; and,
 - An investigation was underway looking at accidents involving older driver around the network.

Road Haulage Association

Martin Reid mentioned the forthcoming conference in June which he hoped to attend. Any relevant items of note would be brought back to future meetings.

Road Safety Scotland

Michael McDonnell provided an update on the work of Road Safety Scotland.

- This included the ‘Breathtaking Roads’ campaign aimed at addressing motorcyclist accidents. These videos had been well received and further videos were planned to be released in advance of the summer; and
- Young Drivers in the 20 -29 age group would be the primary target of resources in the next two years. This included the ‘Drive like your Gran’s in the car’ campaign, drug driving, speed and a country roads driving campaign. These campaigns were to promote positive messages and make use of digital media that the age group would receive.

Scottish Council for Development & Industry

- Fraser Grieve highlighted the potential challenges of rail disruption and suggested that Transport Scotland and Scotrail should discuss this.

Action: Transport Scotland to consider the potential impacts of rail disruption.

Federation of Small Businesses

- David Richardson suggested that slow tourism should be encouraged rather than quick stops to improve safety on the route..

Transport Scotland Casualty Reduction Manager

Richard Perry provided an update on some A9 route issues including:

- A9 Raigmore Interchange upgrade that will see improved non-motorised user facilities. The Highland Council were progressing a scheme to enhance facilities between the A96 and Milburn Road in Inverness. Transport Scotland would assist The Highland Council where possible with the development of this scheme;
- 'Keep-left' campaign aimed at foreign drivers in particular. Transport Scotland has agreed to liaise with The Highland Council on this campaign in order to provide a consistent campaign across the network; and,
- A9 Tomich junction was a location of recent interest from press and politicians concerned about its safe operation. Few personal injury accidents have occurred here recently but there is known operational difficulties at this location.

Police Scotland

David Hynd provided an update to the group including the following:

- A review of serious and fatal injury collisions on the route since the previous meeting. This found that 50% of fatal accidents (two out of four) involved drivers that were elderly. This may in part be due to the local demographic of the population in northern areas in particular;
- Tourism was boosting driving routes such as the North Coast 500 which was increasing the volume of traffic. Good weather increased motorcycling activity and Stuart Wilson noted that better weather often resulted in increases in motorcyclist accidents.
- David Hynd raised the issue of community complaints when serious and fatal accidents occurred, and diversions were in place. The group agreed that this was necessary to undertake the full investigation required;

Transport Scotland Route Manager

Marco Bardelli delivered an update on issues and concerns, including:

- A9 Raigmore Interchange upgrade scheme as previously highlighted by Richard Perry. Full signalisation would be required to facilitate safe pedestrian and cycling infrastructure. The scheme is ongoing with completion anticipated in 2020.

- The villages of Golspie, Brora and Helmsdale had ongoing traffic and road safety issues. Marco Bardelli was looking for a meeting in May with these communities, BEAR Scotland and Richard Perry to evaluate if improvement measures could be implemented.

Donna Turnbull advised that the process of preparing the new Scottish Road Safety Framework is underway. The framework workshops are focusing on speed as a factor in accidents, vulnerable road users in all user groups and occupational road risk. The workshops are reviewing what can be done to reduce accident risk and evaluate what works well in road safety. The speed and vulnerable road users workshops have been undertaken with the age workshop due to take on the 8th May.

Each of the priority groups will have associated performance measures including monitoring Killed and Seriously injured collisions. The new framework will look at how different partnerships feed into each other and work collectively. There is to be an emphasis on locally focussed and targeted interventions

There were no further updates from partners.

9. AOCB

Covered above, no additional items.

10. Date of Next Meeting

It was hoped that the next meeting of the group would be scheduled in six months, for October 2019. Other sub-groups/discussions to be held as and when required. Venue for next meeting would be Inverness.