

A9 Safety Group

Thursday 19th April 2018 at 11:00

Tulloch Caledonian Stadium, Inverness.

Marco Bardelli	Transport Scotland
Amy Phillips	Transport Scotland
Donna Turnbull	Transport Scotland
Stuart Wilson	Transport Scotland
David McKenzie	Transport Scotland
Lisa MacKellaich	The Highland Council
Chic Haggart	Perth & Kinross Council
Sergeant Donald MacKinnon	Police Scotland
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.

2. Apologies

Apologies were made for Michael McDonnell (Road Safety Scotland), Morag MacKay (TS), Arron Duncan (Safety Cameras Scotland), Martin Reid (Road Haulage Association), Chris MacRae (Freight Transport Association), Peter Houston, Matthew Millar, Fraser Grieve (SCDI), David Pollock (TS), Inspector Neil Lumsden, Neil Greig (Institute of Advanced Motorists), Richard Gerring (The Highland Council)

3. Previous Minutes and Actions

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

4. Average Speed Camera System Update.

David McKenzie presented an update on the system's 3-year post scheme evaluation. This period extended Nov 2014-Oct 2017 and the information (comparative to the established 3 year Baseline period) was to be released to the general press and media on the date of the meeting. Highlights of the evaluation report indicated that there had been a 27% reduction in overall average annual casualties. Figures also indicated that there had been 10 fewer fatalities, 16 fewer serious and 96 fewer slight casualties. These figures were welcomed by the group.

It was noted that during the same period, traffic flows had increased by 13% and that journey time reliability was within a 3 to 3.5 minute average variation for the entire route.

In terms of enforcement there was an average of 10 speeding detections per day in the post opening period compared with 12,000 speeding detections per year in the pre-scheme implementation period. In the 3-year post period there were a total of 11,814 detections giving a 68% reduction in speeding offences.

In terms of incidents on the route there had been a 19% reduction in non-weather related incidents and a 25% reduction in consequential total restriction times.

The A9 Safety Group are committed to the safety of all road user groups including road workers. This would be a focus for the future of the group and the route especially as the dual carriageway upgrade schemes begin construction. The number of incidents at roadworks had halved but there had still been some high profile incidents. The success of the "Roadquake" system had been praised but still greater focus was required to reduce incidents in roadworks and on roadworker safety in general.

MB had concerns that by having several upgrade schemes underway at the same time this could lead to driver frustration on single carriageway sections not subject to temporary traffic management. This could result in a potential increase in speeds and hazardous driving manoeuvres. MB also had concerns that the difference in standard between old and new sections of dual may cause some driver adjustment issues.

AP/MB both expressed a need for the group to focus on the A9 north of Inverness which is still a problem area for road safety. Communities to the north of Inverness were making frequent requests for reduced speed limits. These were largely being refused due to a lack of any change in the road environment since the speed limit review. MB praised the recent road studs and hazard marker posts had made to the A9 from Nigg northwards.

A discussion surrounding driver fatigue took place. CH was concerned that driver fatigue may play a part in accidents with few rest areas in existence on the A9 between Perth and Inverness in particular. MB added that driver attention/fatigue diminishes due to length of journeys north of Inverness. Many road users were travelling extensive distance from the south before arriving onto the A9. AP indicated that technology may play a part in addressing this issue including rumble strips or raised profile road markings to alert drivers to erroneous lane changing. The need to innovate was also endorsed by SW and the potential for journey time signing was also discussed.

KM indicated that BEAR Scotland would be undertaking a review of measures that could be implemented to reduce crossover accidents. This review would be undertaken in the current financial year.

LM identified that the NC500 increased demand on the A9 to the north of the Inverness. This increase in traffic included a mix of foreign drivers as well as different road users from the UK including motorcyclists, caravanners, cyclists and car drivers. This mix of road users could increase accident risk along the route of the NC500 and the A9.

It was noted that the quarterly A9 ASCS updates to Ministers continued but would aim to reduce to annually.

5. A9 Interim Safety Plan – Key Performance Indicators Update

Discussed under Average Speed Camera item.

6. A9 Safety Campaign 2017

The group identified that a previous overtaking campaign had been a success and could potentially be rolled out again. Other ideas raised by the group included raising the awareness of the speed limit in force, targeting driver fatigue and raising the issue of driver distraction due to mobile phones & in-car entertainment systems.

The group also discussed the merits of Variable Message Signs to target particular issues such as mobile phone use. This was agreed to be a useful tool and should be used where appropriate.

Foreign drivers on the network was also identified as a potential safety concern with regular accidents during the summer months involving a foreign driver. Foreign driver safe driving leaflets were available at key locations such as car hire facilities and at ports. KM raised concerns that the 50mph HGV speed limit trial signs were causing confusion for this driver group in particular. This resulted in many foreign drivers incorrectly assuming the speed limit was 50mph, resulting in driver frustration amongst other road users and increasing overtaking manoeuvres.

MB identified that there was a general lack of stopping places on the A9 which could lead to longer journeys and more fatigued drivers. How could road users be encouraged to take more breaks to reduce fatigue?

LM raised the general issue of the health of drivers playing a part in reduced reaction times and possibly contributing to a reduction in safety. DM also added that the medical condition of drivers could also be a risk in certain circumstances and that some fatal accidents involved medical contributory factors. A discussion ensued regarding older drivers in particular being at an increased risk of involvement in incidents. CH identified that this was a problem which was a societal one with an ageing population and difficult to target without risking being construed as ageist. DT added that the Drivewise campaign would be looking at older drivers as a group. More information would be provided to the group in due course. SW suggested a trial could be undertaken with a community to engage with the older population in an effort to address issues with older drivers. The group were to think of potential locations which may be appropriate but Inverness or Aviemore were suggested as potentials.

MB mentioned that health facilities in the highlands were largely centred in Inverness and therefore were remote for many communities and in particular the elderly who struggled with the limited public transport. This was especially an issue for the communities to the north of Inverness.

MB informed the group that signing of the NC500 route was being developed by Transport Scotland and The Highland Council. This was an ongoing project and subject to funding being obtained.

AP advised that a "Roadquake" trial had been a success and asked if there was potential to roll this out nationally. Tommy Deans of BEAR Scotland had been leading on this issue and was to provide further information going forward.

SW highlighted that a review of serious accidents may be undertaken as well as the investigation of all fatal road traffic accidents.

Alan Campbell spoke about the Safe Systems Approach to road safety and how it should cover all aspects of road safety. The group agreed that it offered a good basis for road safety interventions and should be followed where possible.

7. Group Priorities 2019

Covered within Item 6.

8. A9 Dualling Update

Stuart Wilson provided an update on the current status of the A9 dualling scheme.

- The Kincaig to Dalmally link was open to the public and operating well. Two fatal accidents had occurred within the locality of the link, however, there were no common contributory factors with these accidents and there appeared to be no link to the dual carriageway section;
- The Luncarty to Birnam dual carriageway section was due to have contracts awarded in the first half of this year. A range of archaeological surveys were underway in advance of the project commencing;
- The advanced works framework was ongoing with I & H Brown undertaking the preparatory works;
- There were a further 9 dualling sections remaining to progress. Transport Scotland had promoted 4 traffic orders for the works with the remaining orders to progress later in the year;
- The Dunkeld co-creative process was underway allowing the public to have a say in the design process. This would delay delivery of this dualling section;
- The A9 is to become Scotland's first electric highway with charging points provided along its length. No details were available specifying exact locations for charging points but MB identified that local communities would also want charging points to ensure visitors had a reason to visit.

9. Updates from Partners

BEAR Scotland

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

- There have been 11 structural maintenance schemes with a value of £3,500,000.
- In the previous 6 months there has been £387,180 worth of routine maintenance schemes including, A9 Doll resurfacing, A9 Clynemilton resurfacing, A9 Collieburn resurfacing, A9 Portgower resurfacing, A9 Dunkeld RT lanes resurfacing, A9 Inverness to Dornoch signing improvements, A9 Badbea to Berriedale drainage improvements, A9 Tore to Latheron road stud renewal, A9 Raigmore Interchange lining renewal, A9 Lynwilg road stud renewal and A9 Faskally to Trinafour lining renewal.
- A number of Strategic Road Safety improvement schemes have been implemented including the following:
 - A9 Munloch Junction – introduction of VRS to prevent crossover accidents (£55k);
 - A9 Tacher - introduction of VRS to protect a culvert and watercourse (£25k);

- A9 Borgue resurfacing near Dunbeath – series of bends resurfaced due to a substantial increase in vehicles losing control and leaving the road (£200k); and,
- A9 Granish junction – Signing scheme to rationalise signs and provide on passive posts due for implementation in May 2018.
- A number of Strategic Road Safety investigations and designs underway and planned include the following:
 - A9 Tain North & South Junctions Conflict Study – ongoing;
 - A9 Skiach ARSR – draft ready for review;
 - A9 Rosskeen/Achnagarron junction ARSR – draft ready for review;
 - A9 Tain North & South Junctions Conflict Study – ongoing;
 - A9 Dunkeld Junction ARSR – 18/19 investigation;
 - A9 House of Bruar junction – 18/19 design and build subject to consultation;
 - A9 North of Inveralmond gap closure - 18/19 design and build subject to consultation;

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 two road safety studies ongoing at the moment within the NE section of the A9 (Dunblane to Perth). The A9 Keir safety study is investigating potential improvements on the southbound approach and circulatory carriageway of this roundabout. The Broxden Roundabout Improvements Study is considering the feasibility of various options to increase safety and capacity through this area. In addition to the above studies, alterations to the A9 Inveralmond Roundabout are being designed at present and are programmed to be installed during this financial year. These works are 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.

In terms of maintenance work, £1.4m worth was undertaken during financial year 2017/19 on this section of the A9. A further £0.7m of maintenance work is programmed to be carried out on this section during 2018/19. This will involve, carriageway patching, resurfacing, road marking replacement and drainage maintenance.

Perth & Kinross Council

Chic Haggart stated that PKC were still hopeful of a future scheme at Blackford to provide a northbound exit-slip to reduce the volume of HGVs travelling through the village. Further discussions were to take place in due course with Transport Scotland.

The Highland Council

Lisa MacKellaich provided an update of The Highland Council schemes including a number of 20mph zones to be introduced in AIness and Dingwall.

Transport Scotland

Stuart Wilson informed the group that the results of the 50mph speed limit trial would be available later in the year.

There were no further updates from partners.

10. AOCB

Covered above, no additional items.

11. Date of Next Meeting

It was hoped that the next meeting of the group would be scheduled for October.
Venue to be confirmed in due course.