

IAM RoadSmart submission of 12 January 2024

PE1992/L: Dual the A9 and improve road safety

Introduction

IAM RoadSmart is the UK's largest independent road safety charity. It has a vision of a society where all road users can safely and sustainably use the public highways together. It does this through a range of means including through the advanced driving and riding tests. IAM RoadSmart was formed in March 1956 and has over 75,000 members that supports its campaigns on road safety. IAM RoadSmart's policy and standards division publishes original research on road safety issues.

IAM RoadSmart have been members of the A9 Safety Group since its inception. We also represent our members interests on the Transport Scotland Road Safety Operational Board and work closely with Road Safety Scotland influencing education campaigns and materials. Our local Groups in Scotland work with Police Scotland and a range of other bodies to deliver initiatives such as Rider Refinement North. We also serve on ad hoc expert committees such as the Transport Scotland Motorcycle Safety Group and the Older Driver Working Group.

We have no objection to our response being reproduced or attributed.

Petition Overview

This petition has three sections and the IAM RoadSmart response to each is laid out below.

Section 1 – Publish a revised timetable and detailed plan for dualling each section.

IAM RoadSmart strongly support this suggestion. It has made no sense to us over the many years of monitoring and commenting on the upgrade of the A9 that a detailed plan has not been published giving a timetable for each section. The Scottish Parliament has supported the dualling of the A9 for decades and yet the planning process has not been expedited to deliver the final project.

Local people do of course need to be consulted on the detail of the new road, but the vast majority of the improvements are along the existing line of the A9. It should therefore be possible to amalgamate planning permissions and enquiries to quickly deal with any objections. The need for dualling is widely supported and accepted and the Scottish Government just needs to get a confirmed funding package in place to allow contractors to bid with confidence. IAM RoadSmart are not experts on contract design and implementation, but it does seem that the Scottish Government's variable approach to funding has exacerbated the problem – culminating in the recent issues on the Tomatin section where not enough bids came forward and further delays have occurred.

Section 2 - Complete the dualling work by 2025

It has been clear for years that this target cannot be met and yet the Scottish Government left it until the last minute to confirm the obvious. This simply delayed the possibility of further discussion on alternative funding approaches and contractual changes.

IAM RoadSmart welcome the recent statements from the Scottish Government on the revised timetable, but we do want to see more detail on how this will be achieved including the detailed plan as mentioned above.

Section 3 - Create a memorial to those who have lost their lives in road traffic incidents on the A9.

This is not a top priority for IAM RoadSmart, but we would not stand in its way. It is vital that any memorial is located in a safe place that does not encourage illegal or unsafe stopping on the carriageway. It should also be well maintained and carefully looked after.

IAM RoadSmart are aware of some local authorities having guidelines in place for such memorials which should be part of any consultation process. Overall, in our view the most lasting memorial to those who have tragically lost their lives on the A9 would be the construction of a safer road that removed many of the reasons for fatal crashes completely. This is why dualling is so important as it reduces the risk

from head on crashes and side impacts at junctions – the least survivable types of collision.

IAM RoadSmart have frequently raised the issue of fatigue and the lack of roadside services and high quality rest areas along the A9 which bypasses all the communities between Perth and Inverness. If there was a modern network of safe rest areas and stopping points they would make ideal locations for memorial to those who had lost their lives locally as well as acting as a reminder to future road users.