



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

Official Report

INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

Wednesday 4 June 2014

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INFRASTRUCTURE AND CAPITAL INVESTMENT COMMITTEE
17th Meeting 2014, Session 4

CONVENER

*Maureen Watt (Aberdeen South and North Kincardine) (SNP)

DEPUTY CONVENER

*Adam Ingram (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP)

COMMITTEE MEMBERS

*Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP)

*Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab)

*Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab)

*Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con)

*Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP)

*attended

THE FOLLOWING ALSO PARTICIPATED:

Keith Brown (Minister for Transport and Veterans)

Scott Lees (Scottish Government)

Stuart Wilson (Scottish Government)

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

Steve Farrell

LOCATION

The Adam Smith Room (CR5)

Scottish Parliament

Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee

Wednesday 4 June 2014

[The Convener *opened the meeting at 10:00*]

Subordinate Legislation

HGVS Speed Limit (M9/A9 Trunk Road) Regulations 2014 [Draft]

The Convener (Maureen Watt): Good morning, everyone, and welcome to the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee's 17th meeting in 2014. I remind everyone to switch off their mobile phones, as they affect the broadcasting system.

Agenda item 1 is evidence on the draft HGVS Speed Limit (M9/A9 Trunk Road) Regulations 2014 from Keith Brown, Minister for Transport and Veterans; Scott Lees, head of network operations at the Scottish Government; and Stuart Wilson, development management and strategic road safety manager at the Scottish Government. The regulations are laid under the affirmative procedure, so the Parliament must approve them before they come into force. Following this session, the committee will be invited under agenda item 2 to consider a motion to recommend approval of the regulations.

I welcome the witnesses and invite the minister to make opening remarks.

The Minister for Transport and Veterans (Keith Brown): I am delighted to speak to the proposal for a 50mph speed limit for heavy goods vehicles in the regulations. We are doing this for a number of reasons. The expected benefits of the proposed HGVS pilot will be spread across four key areas, all of which are considered to be significant to road safety. It is also expected to benefit business in the Highlands and connectivity to and from the central belt. The main benefits are improved journey time reliability, a positive economic impact across a range of indicators, wider road safety improvements and environmental benefits.

As everyone knows, the A9 is one of Scotland's most important links. The pilot is just one of the many engineering, enforcement and education measures that are being introduced to improve the route's safety and operation ahead of dualling. An extensive view of the available evidence has been taken in considering the pilot. We have also taken into account the views of A9 users, the business community and hauliers.

Raising the speed limit for HGVS is an integral part of the wider A9 safety initiative. It is linked directly to the introduction of the average speed camera system. The strategy for deploying that system aims to provide 100 per cent cover of all single-carriageway sections of the A9 that will be impacted by raising the HGVS speed limit.

It is clear that the speed camera system will bring safety improvements to the route and that the pilot will bring operational benefits. The pilot might also further improve driver behaviour by reducing driver frustration.

The Road Haulage Association has assured me that it will work with its drivers to ensure that they adhere to the most professional standards for the trial's duration—and, I hope, in perpetuity. The association will customise its training for the A9 and it will implement an education campaign.

The pilot to raise the speed limit depends on the introduction of the average speed camera system. We will use several measures to judge the pilot's success, including before and after surveys, and we will monitor changes in overtaking behaviour.

I make it clear that the speed limit will not be changed for vehicles other than HGVS whose weight is above 7.5 tonnes, so there will be no confusion for other motorists or tourists. The revised speed limit will be signed and will be part of the wider interim safety plan proposals to improve safety for all A9 users.

Adam Ingram (Carrick, Cumnock and Doon Valley) (SNP): Everything else being equal, it is a wee bit counterintuitive to suggest that increasing the speed limit for HGVS will improve road safety on the A9. Will you develop your thoughts on why that will be a significant benefit? The Transport Research Laboratory concluded in a report for Transport Scotland back in 2009 that

"The reduction in the number of accidents is likely to be greater if the speed limit is retained at 40mph rather than increased to 50mph".

Keith Brown: I have seen that study. Our point is that accident statistics and the safety of the road will be improved by first reducing the queueing and the overtaking of slow-moving HGVS that we currently see. You will appreciate that there is quite a substantial differential between the 40mph limit for HGVS and the 60mph limit for other vehicles. We believe that that differential causes frustration and that we can reduce frustration by this measure.

As I have said, the measure is being introduced along with the average speed camera system. That is very important. One of the main representations that I received was from hauliers who regularly obeyed the speed limits and even had limiters in their vehicles to ensure that they could not exceed the 40mph limit. Given that the

average speed of HGVs on the road before was 56mph, they thought that there was not a level playing field. Obviously, hauliers operate in a competitive environment, and they want a level playing field. If we can increase the speed limit, reduce frustration and some of the overtaking manoeuvres that are undertaken, and make a level playing field that is enforced, that will be better for the industry generally.

As I have said, the current average speed for HGV vehicles on the single-carriageway parts of the road is 50mph or in excess of that. We believe that there can be substantial savings of 150,000 vehicle hours per year in journey times.

It is worth saying that the TRL highlighted the A9 as a suitable location for an HGV speed limit pilot, given the levels of monitoring that will be put in place and the presence of the average speed camera system.

Adam Ingram: I am familiar with the average speed camera system, given that it is a feature of the A77 south of Kilmarnock to the Ayr bypass. Is your suggestion predicated on the camera system being up and running before the pilot is introduced?

Keith Brown: It is predicated on both happening simultaneously. You mentioned the M77. That is an important point. Studies that have been done on the effect of the average speed camera system there record around two fewer fatal accidents per year. Apart from the personal tragedy that is involved in any fatal accident, there is a cost of around £2 million to the public agencies each time. The approach has proven to be extremely effective in reducing accidents, especially fatal accidents.

That is why we believe that the two things should happen at the same time and that we should not have one without the other. I think that Alex Johnstone publicly made the point that we should consider the two things together, which we have done.

There are a number of other measures. For example, members may have heard the quite graphic campaign on the radio about overtaking—there is the tick, tick, tick of the indicator and a voice saying that that could be the last sound you hear. We know that overtaking is a cause of accidents on this road. That is why we think that the two things should go together. We should properly enforce the speed limits and try to reduce the frustration, platooning and queueing that happen.

The Convener: You mentioned the potential economic impact of increasing the speed limit. Will you expand on that a bit? What economic impact were you thinking of?

Keith Brown: There are two main aspects, one of which is journey times, which can be reduced for HGVs that previously travelled at 40mph and will now be able to travel at 50mph. I mentioned a reduction of 150,000 hours. Obviously, that factors through to drivers' time and fuel. Having reliable journey times is also very important. People can estimate how long it would take to go the length of one of the most important economic routes in the country. There can be journey time savings, and savings can be produced for companies and, ultimately, customers by bearing down on transportation costs. There can also be more certainty about planning and how long it will take to use the road.

Mark Griffin (Central Scotland) (Lab): As part of the economic modelling, has there been any assessment of what the impact will be on rail freight by increasing the speed limit for HGVs?

Keith Brown: Since the strategic transport projects review in 2008, we have undertaken work to highlight the commitment to both road and rail freight. The STPR highlighted the dualling of the A9 and improvements to the Highland main line, both of which have been progressed.

We are working closely with Network Rail to develop phase 2 of the Highland main line improvements project, and rail enhancements include provision of bi-directional signalling to reduce the impact of engineering works on the route, increasing the length of freight loops and removing speed limits below 75mph for freight trains. It is not the case that we are looking only at the roads option; we are also improving the rail option, and those improvements that we have talked about should help to increase the attractiveness of rail.

There have also been one or two pilots. In particular, the committee might have heard about the whisky trains from Moray. The whisky industry has got together with the support of the Scottish Government to take freight from road and put it on to rail. We hope that those pilots, and the increasing benefits of using rail, will factor through. We are not just taking one side; we are trying to improve both routes, including the attractiveness of rail.

The Convener: Has a climate change impact assessment been done on changing the speed limit?

Keith Brown: We expect there to be environmental benefits. I will ask Scott Lees to say more about the detail of the assessments that have been done. You will have seen how queueing has been alleviated when you come across the Forth road bridge. I used that route this morning, so I know that it has not been completely alleviated, but those measures mean that the

traffic passes more freely, and cars do not have to stop and start in the same way, which is extremely damaging to the environment. We know that that will have a beneficial impact on the environment.

Scott Lees or Stuart Wilson may care to comment.

Scott Lees (Scottish Government): Stuart Wilson is more suited to answer that question.

Stuart Wilson (Scottish Government): There has not been a specific assessment of how much CO₂ might be saved by the journey time savings that the minister has mentioned, although we have done a lot of environmental work with average speed cameras and 50mph monitoring. The 50mph pilot sits in the context of other average speed camera systems, and the experience from those systems is that smoother traffic flows and more organised speed—for want of a better description—mean that engines are typically running more efficiently.

The Road Haulage Association and the Freight Transport Association have also made it clear that a modern HGV running at 40mph is not running its engine efficiently. Modern HGVs are much more comfortable running at 50 or 55mph, because that is what they are designed for. There will be savings, but I cannot quantify precisely what they will be. The dynamics of the A9 traffic flow are unique in many respects, so it is not really possible to give an annual savings figure.

Jim Eadie (Edinburgh Southern) (SNP): Mr Wilson, you said that no specific assessment of CO₂ emissions had been undertaken. Why is that the case, and will it be done in future?

Stuart Wilson: We will not be doing it specifically, but the A9 dualling team is doing a much wider assessment of how the A9 will perform into the future with differing speed limits. Given the relatively small number of HGVs on the A9 and the fact that 95 per cent of them are currently speeding—as the minister said, the average speed is already approximately 50mph—the number of HGVs whose speed characteristics will change is relatively low. We expect journey time savings of 150,000 vehicle hours, but the carbon savings will be too small a number to be accurate on.

Jim Eadie: Are you saying that it is not possible to undertake the assessment?

Stuart Wilson: You could do the number crunching, but the validity of the number would be questionable.

Keith Brown: We are going to have quarterly assessments, so we can at least do the calculation on the 150,000 hours that we expect to save. It will be a matter of judgment as to what the average environmental cost would be of 150,000 extra

HGV hours, but it is probably harder to quantify exactly what is saved, not just in hours but in terms of the profile of the traffic. If you think back to before the M74 extension, you will remember that we all experienced horrendous conditions on the Kingston bridge, with traffic backing up for many miles, and stopping and starting, which is extremely damaging. It is harder to quantify that, but for the benefit of the committee we could try to extrapolate from the 150,000 hours to arrive at a figure for what we expect to save in environmental emissions.

Jim Eadie: That is helpful.

You talked about the importance of introducing an increase in the HGV speed limit at the same time as the use of average speed cameras, and you said that it is necessary to do those two things in parallel in order to derive the benefits that you have outlined, principally around safety. However, the Transport Research Laboratory report to which Mr Ingram referred, which was commissioned by Transport Scotland, states:

“it appears that there would be a safety benefit associated with the installation of average speed cameras whether or not the speed limit applicable to heavy goods vehicles ... were increased”.

Given that there could be a benefit without the installation of average speed cameras, I am just keen to understand why you are convinced that their installation and the increase in the speed limit have to happen together and that there is no need to wait for an assessment of the impact of the average speed cameras before increasing the speed limit.

10:15

Keith Brown: We are going to introduce both things simultaneously. We linked them because we believe that doing so brings a benefit in economic and, to an extent, safety terms. The TRL report that you cited also said that it was possible that an increase in the speed limit could cause an increase in accidents. However, if an increase in the speed limit is mitigated by proper enforcement, bearing in mind what the average speed of HGVs on the A9 is at present, and if we can take away some things that are causal factors for accidents—for example, driver frustration, which causes exasperated people to undertake overtaking manoeuvres that they would not otherwise do—we believe that there will be a reduction in the number of accidents. I think that enforcement through having average speed cameras will sit well with an increase in the speed limit, but that is not the only reason for introducing average speed cameras.

It is worth bearing in mind that average speed cameras are required for the 12 phases of work to dual the A9, as that kind of work requires such

cameras. For example, there was an average speed camera system for the M80 for the duration of the works there. Average speed cameras are required for different sections of the A9 in any event.

I think that Mr Ingram mentioned the benefits to the M77 of doing both things. The installation of average speed cameras has a wider application than just in relation to increasing the speed limit for HGVs—it has other benefits as well. That is why we think that both things are best done together.

Jim Eadie: What is the evidence base for the conclusions that you have reached? What work has been undertaken to arrive at those conclusions?

Keith Brown: Substantial work has been undertaken by the A9 safety group, which includes the safety camera partnerships and Police Scotland, which has crucial expertise in this area. The group also takes into account the views of road users, so the RHA and the transport freight group are involved in that. We have taken evidence from experts and paid heed to users' views. I think that there has also been a petition about the A9. Certainly, there have been representations on the issue for a number of years from the road haulage industry, which has made the point that increasing the speed limit for HGVs would improve safety.

By increasing the speed limit we can also start to tackle things such as elephant racing. That refers to what happens at the start of a dual-carriageway section of the A9 when an HGV pulls out to overtake a slower-travelling HGV, and the traffic that is looking for the relief of the dual carriageway to get past the HGVs is unable to do so. Increasing the speed limit for HGVs to 50mph for all sections of the route would reduce the effects of elephant racing.

I should also say that there has been quite a change in how the A9 is policed since the advent of Police Scotland, which now has a dedicated trunk road police monitoring unit. There is now a greater presence of police on the A9. In the past, their presence had to be co-ordinated by different police forces, but it is now done by one unified police force.

We have taken advice from the police and other experts and have also looked at the TRL study that has been mentioned and other written evidence that is out there already.

Jim Eadie: Thank you very much.

The Convener: So HGVs will now be allowed to do 50mph along the entire route of the A9.

Keith Brown: Yes.

The Convener: But the average speed cameras will apply to all vehicles.

Keith Brown: Yes.

The Convener: So what average speed do you expect people to do on the A9?

Keith Brown: The legal speed limit or less. Of course, there will still be a differential between HGVs and all other traffic, which can still travel at 60mph. The HGVs are currently restricted to 40mph on the single carriageway and 50mph on the dual carriageway. With the application of the speed cameras, we expect people to obey the speed limits. At the moment, the average speed of HGVs is 10mph in excess of the legal limit. We want to reconcile those two figures.

The Convener: In the schedule to the regulations, the A9 from Luncarty to Moy is divided into eight parts. Does that mean that average speeds will be worked out for each of those eight parts?

Keith Brown: No. The average speed cameras and the survey work that we are undertaking will allow us to get average speeds across the length of the A9 from Perth to Inverness. That is the intention. In fact, the average speed cameras will cover Stirling to Perth, as well.

I should point out that the cameras are the latest digital cameras, which can differentiate between types of vehicles to ensure that they are travelling at the correct speed. That will give us much more information about what the average speed is along the length of the A9. I do not know whether Stuart Wilson wants to say any more about that.

The Convener: Before we hear from Mr Wilson, I would like to know how you will police the system. Will you fine people whose average speed is above the limit over a particular stretch? What I am getting at is whether people could receive three or four different fines if they exceed the limit on different stretches.

Keith Brown: Obviously, it is possible for someone to use only part of the A9, and their average speed on the part of the A9 that they have used will be taken into account. Someone could come off the A9 at Dunkeld and then go back on to it, so people could be fined more than once. Stuart Wilson can say more about the mechanics of the system.

Stuart Wilson: The eight sections that are set out in the schedule are the single-carriageway sections between Perth and Inverness. Between Perth and Inverness, the average speed cameras will apply only to the single-carriageway sections. The operating strategy for which sections are live will fall to the safety camera partnerships. Transport Scotland will not know which sections are under enforcement. The point is that drivers

should not know that either; they should drive at the speed limit. Not all the sections will be live.

The Home Office-type approval for the system requires enforcement to take place within a single geometry, in the sense that enforcement could take place over a single-carriageway section or a dual-carriageway section, but it could not take place over a combination of the two. The strategy for Perth to Inverness is based on the fact that the accidents happen on the single-carriageway sections, so the average speed cameras are devoted to enforcing the speed limits on those sections. The average speed cameras will not enforce the speed limits on the dual-carriageway sections; the police and the safety camera partnership can deal with that as part of a separate strategy.

You asked whether someone could pick up more than one penalty for driving at excess speed, and the answer is yes, they could. If they pass through two live sections and are twice recorded as having driven at excess speed, they will receive two penalties. Average speed cameras are fairer than the fixed Gatso cameras, because it is possible for people to adjust their speed over a long distance to maintain an average. With fixed cameras, if someone makes a mistake over a relatively short distance and passes a camera, they will receive points. Average speed cameras allow drivers to be more disciplined in how they use the route.

By driving at speeds of 60mph and 70mph—which cars can do on the dual-carriageway sections—it is possible to get from Perth to Inverness comfortably in two hours or less. There is a lot of evidence, some of which we have collected and some of which the A9 dualling team has collected, that some folk are doing that trip in 90 minutes. Average speeds of 80mph or 90mph and point speeds of 125mph have been recorded. We recently completed some driver surveys, in which three quarters of the people whom we interviewed admitted to speeding at least once on their most recent trip on the A9. Most of that was fairly low-level speeding—it involved travelling at 3 or 4mph above the speed limit. A third of those people admitted to going at 10mph above the speed limit and a fifth admitted to going at 15mph above it. The folk whom we spoke to were car drivers, not HGV drivers. I give them credit for their candour. A lot of people exceed the speed limit on the A9, but not the majority—only a third of car drivers speed; two thirds drive at the speed limit.

That reinforces the point that the minister has made. By raising the speed limit for HGVs and introducing an average speed camera system, we will reduce the speed range. The current legal speed range is from a limit of 40mph for HGVs,

although most of them do not adhere to it, to a limit of 60mph for cars, although a third of them travel faster than that. When we look at some of the modelling outputs, we see that the desired speed of those motorists is closer to 70mph. If we bring the legal speed range down to 50mph to 60mph, everyone will travel within a relatively small range. For anyone who travels within the range, the average speed cameras will be irrelevant. The cameras do not exist for those who obey the law; they simply require people to obey the law and to think about what they are doing. If someone does not do that, there is every possibility that they will pick up penalties for driving at excess speed. They would have to do that consistently over a long distance to pick up a penalty. Those are exactly the people whose behaviour we want to moderate.

The Convener: The north-east safety camera partnership publishes information in the local paper in my area on where speed cameras will be operating in the following week. Will that happen in relation to the A9?

Keith Brown: There will be substantial signage and a public education campaign to alert people to the existence of the average speed cameras. I think that you are talking about the mobile speed cameras that the police move around. The partnership lets people know about those locations, because the intention is to prevent speeding rather than collect fines. Just to kill off one myth, neither the Government nor the camera safety partnerships get the cash directly from the fines—it goes back to the Treasury.

The answer is no, because the cameras will be at fixed points and they will be well advertised, so the situation will not be the same as the one in the north-east that you mention.

Alex Johnstone (North East Scotland) (Con): I was allocated questions on enforcement issues, but we have covered the vast majority of those already. However, I would like to clarify a couple of points. First, are you confident that the electronic measures—the average speed cameras—will be the main enforcement measure for the change in limits?

Keith Brown: No, we have not said that the cameras should be the main enforcement measure. There is a genuine suite of measures, some of which have started already. We have talked about the education campaign on overtaking for drivers in general, but I also mentioned the education campaign and training that will be undertaken by the RHA in relation to its members. Those are important measures. Plus, there will be the additional policing that I have mentioned. In particular, there will be a much more co-ordinated way of policing the A9. There will still be police on the road, so enforcement will not just

be left to the speed cameras. The speed cameras are an integral and important part of enforcement, but they are not the only part.

Alex Johnstone: I move on to the issue of policing and the number of police officers that are likely to be involved. You said that there has already been a change in the structure as a result of the changes in police boundaries. Do you envisage that the measure will require an additional police presence on the road, or will the police presence remain as it has been since reorganisation?

Keith Brown: As you will know, the levels of policing and the deployment of police officers are not matters over which we have any control. Those are for the police to decide, and they will base their decisions on their perception of any problems. However, the police have told us that the move to Police Scotland makes the policing of the road much more manageable. There is now a head of road safety for the whole of Scotland—Chief Superintendent Iain Murray—who has control over the policing of the road. He thinks that the new structure is much more effective in that regard. In the past, officers from Tayside Police, Northern Constabulary and even Central Scotland Police were involved in policing the road, and whether they always allocated the resources to their part of it is open to question. The police can now police the entire route much more effectively. Of course they will have an idea of where they want to have a particular presence. Their role is not just to do with safety and speed—when there is bad weather or when other issues arise, the police will up their presence on the road.

Policing levels will remain a matter for the police, but they think that the road will have more intensive policing than it has had in the past, because of the structural changes.

Alex Johnstone: We have all carefully alluded to the fact that it is possible that some HGVs have been exceeding the current speed limit. It has been suggested that you do not envisage much change in the speed at which vehicles travel. However, it will be necessary to regulate the new speed limit. Will it be necessary to intensify police activity at the outset to ensure that drivers do not simply exceed the new limit by the same margin by which they exceed the current one?

Keith Brown: That would be the danger if we did not have the average speed cameras. If people have become used to the idea that they can exceed the existing speed limit by 10mph, intuitively we might think that if we suddenly increase that limit, the same drivers will make the same calculation that they can go 10mph above that—although I am not saying that they would do so. It is not just an intuition that people are currently exceeding the speed limit. It is pretty well

established that the majority of HGVs exceed the current speed limit—the evidence base is there for that.

For reasons that Stuart Wilson mentioned, the current situation can be quite frustrating. One aspect is that HGV drivers who obey the speed limit can see their competitors whizzing by. That frustration will be lessened. Also, if a vehicle is designed to go more comfortably at a higher speed than the 40mph to which it is limited, that can cause frustration. The measure will also help to reduce that frustration.

The intensity of the policing operation will depend on various factors. Obviously, when the new measures are introduced and people are getting used to the system, I imagine that that will be a high point and that there will be a greater police presence. As I said, bad weather will also mean more intensive policing. In general, the police have made a commitment on the issue.

To be honest, I travel on the A9 pretty regularly and I have seen that increased presence since the advent of Police Scotland. I have travelled the road in a police car, too, and the police will tell you that they are much better placed now to deliver co-ordinated policing of the road and to ensure that they can allocate additional resources when bad weather or accidents cause particular issues. I think that I am right in saying that, in the past, only one police force had laser equipment, which enables measurements to be taken more quickly after a crash. We have provided funds to help Police Scotland get more laser equipment, so the police will be able to use it up and down the A9. I think that we will see more improvements to the policing of the road. We are seeing improvements already, because of the pilot and the use of average speed cameras.

10:30

Alex Johnstone: I would like you to clarify something for me. Perhaps I should know the answer, but I will ask you the question so that I am better informed. Does the resource requirement for running and monitoring the average speed camera system come from the Police Scotland budget, or is it covered by an alternative budget stream?

Keith Brown: It is partially funded by fines. I said that fines go to the Treasury, but the Treasury gives money back for running the system. We will fund the laser equipment that I mentioned and we are providing £245,000—I think that that is the figure—for the increased signage and so on that is associated with the system.

Scott Lees might want to say more about that.

Scott Lees: The eight safety camera partnerships are funded through Transport Scotland. Any changes in resourcing as a result of the scheme will be covered by Transport Scotland.

Keith Brown: I think that I am right that the structure of the partnerships is being reviewed. Obviously, the existing eight partnerships must reflect the changes to policing that have happened.

Mary Fee (West Scotland) (Lab): Could you give me some detail around the procedures that will be put in place to review the increased speed limit? Could you also give me a bit more detail on the before and after surveys that you mentioned in your opening remarks?

Keith Brown: To judge the effect of a measure, before and after surveys are needed to provide the data on which any assessment is based. Over and above that, I have mentioned that we will do three-monthly surveys to evaluate how the situation is progressing.

Stuart Wilson can give more details.

Stuart Wilson: I mentioned the driver interviews that we have just completed, which were part of the before survey. We are doing a lot of operational work, too, given that quite an extensive dataset is available on the A9 with regard to the previous situation and the dualling works. We felt that it was appropriate, particularly given the structure of the average speed camera system, to get a bit of detail on that. We are looking at speed along sections of the A9, overtaking, accidents and so on, which we will monitor and report on quarterly. In April or May next year, six months after the average speed cameras have been put in place, we will repeat the before survey, which looked at people's experience of the route—how they use it, how they feel that other people use it and the ways in which they think various enforcement measures contribute to its safety. Some of the initial feedback showed that people want more enforcement, more police and more cameras.

The A9 will be one of the most intensively monitored routes with regard to what we are doing with the interim safety plan and to support dualling. As the A9 evolves, the dynamics of the route will change and evolve. We are conscious that the baseline strategy and the future strategy have to reflect that. We need to be able to give a definitive comment on whether the situation with regard to speed, overtaking and accidents has changed on sections of the road that have not been dualled, and relate that back to other considerations, such as the fact that the south section is now dualled but was not dualled five years ago.

A lot of work is going on with regard to getting the baseline right, asking the right questions now and mapping out what we will do in three, five or 10 years' time.

Mary Fee: Will the surveys be done on the different sections of the route or across the whole route?

Stuart Wilson: The driver interviews were done at various points on the route, such as Perth, Inverness, Pitlochry and Dunkeld—the main places where the users of the A9 could be interviewed in context. It was important to get the right number of people, and we also sought a mixture of leisure users, business users and commuters. Quotas were set up for the people who conducted the surveys, in order to ensure a degree of robustness. We will repeat the exercise next year. We will not get the same people, of course, but we will ask the same questions of the same spectrum of people and analyse the answers.

The operational surveys can be done on a section-by-section basis—in effect, they have to be done that way, because as the A9 is dualled some sections will be lost, so we will need to be able to distil down what happened on other sections and make an informed judgment in that regard.

Mary Fee: Will you monitor accident levels and compare how the average speed cameras operate on different sections of the route?

Stuart Wilson: Yes. That will be monitored extensively. The A9 will be one of the most extensively monitored routes that we have, given our ability to get information on it and the need to answer questions about it.

Mary Fee: Thank you.

Gordon MacDonald (Edinburgh Pentlands) (SNP): Minister, in your opening remarks, you said that the introduction of a 50mph speed limit is a pilot scheme. If the approach is successful in reducing accidents, injuries and fatalities, do you intend to extend it to other trunk roads, such as the A70 and A71, which run through my constituency?

Keith Brown: No. I have no plans to do that—I have no intentions in that regard. The reason for that is that the A9 is unique. We have had a substantial number of representations from people who are concerned about the approach being used on routes that do not have the same characteristics as the A9. The pilot is specifically for the A9 and is not for wider use.

Gordon MacDonald: How do you establish that the route is unique, given that driver frustration is common to all single-carriageway trunk roads, such as the A70 and A71? The injury stats for

roads in Scotland show that there are consistently more injuries per kilometre on both the A70 and the A71 than there are on the A9. Surely if we want to address driver frustration and overtaking at dangerous bends and junctions, such as the Dalmahoy junction, it would be sensible to roll out the approach on such roads, as well as on the A9, if the pilot proves to be successful.

Keith Brown: I do not use the road that you are talking about as much as I use the A9, but I do not think that it has the same characteristics. I do not think that the Dalmahoy junction is comparable with junctions on the A9.

The United Kingdom Government considered a general speed limit increase to 50mph for HGVs in England, but it has moved back from its position and said that it does not intend to introduce that. That is a decision for the UK Government.

Our decision is very much based on the uniqueness of the A9. However, you made a good point about the accident stats. The perception has grown that the A9 is worse than any other road, which is simply not borne out by the statistics. However, people feel worried on that route.

It is not just about the people who do not want average speed cameras and want to continue to drive and overtake as they do—we might say that that is their decision, and they are putting their lives at risk. I think that the majority of people want to travel on the A9 safely and are sometimes worried by the behaviour that they see on the road. We need to address those safety concerns.

The A9 is unique in that respect; it is also a hugely important arterial route between the north and south of Scotland. I do not think that other roads, including the ones that you mentioned, have the same characteristics. The guys might want to give you a more technical explanation.

Stuart Wilson: Part of the consideration in relation to the A9 is that its single carriageway is much better engineered than the single carriageway that we typically encounter elsewhere on the trunk road network. It is relatively wide and relatively straight, albeit that it weaves about, which is not the case in many other parts of the trunk road network, such as the A82, the A83 or the A85 in the Highlands, the A70 and the A71, or even the A75 down south, which do not have the same wide carriageways.

In the context of the pilot, we are also comforted by the fact that we are dualling the A9, so we are not setting a precedent that is not defensible. In addition, when average speed cameras are in place we will be able to enforce speed limits generally and target unacceptable behaviour. Many things have come together to make the A9 appropriate for a pilot, which perhaps do not apply to other routes.

Gordon MacDonald: Will you consider taking other steps to address the fact that other roads have more injuries and fatalities per kilometre, if you are not going to increase the speed limit for HGVs?

Keith Brown: Yes. We keep these things under review. The criteria that are normally used—again, the guys can keep me right—involve a look back over the past three years at the reported accident rates for those roads and other roads—non-trunk roads. We have just had a major review of all the roads in Scotland in which we looked at speed limits. There have been constant improvements to the trunk road network because we believe that the issue applies across the network. The position changes over time—we improve a road and then another road comes up as a priority.

It is not the case that we are forgetting about those other roads—they are constantly monitored. It is worth bearing in mind that trunk roads comprise 6 per cent—or even less than that—of all the roads in Scotland. Those are the ones that we are primarily responsible for, and the entire trunk road network is kept under constant review.

Alex Johnstone: Of all the roads in Scotland, the one that perhaps shares characteristics with the A9 is the A1 south of Edinburgh, heading towards the border. Might it be considered in future?

Keith Brown: As I think I have said, when we consider investment decisions, we have to look at the evidence, and the evidence is that the A1 is fit for purpose and is safe for use. I am not saying that the A1 is accident free—no road is accident free—but it is fit for purpose. That was the outcome of the STPR. There have been improvements and, as you will know, part of the road is dualled. Given the evidence that we have, we believe that it is fit for purpose now.

The Convener: When a pilot is done, there is normally an end date. Can you confirm that you are saying that the end date will be when the A9 is dualled completely?

Keith Brown: No. Obviously, the two things will start to come together as the dualling gets under way. We have started off by saying that it should be a three-year pilot, but we will not suddenly decide at the end of the pilot what should happen; we will base that on the evidence, which we will consider throughout the three-year period.

In any event, as I have said, had we not done this in terms of the average speed cameras, we would have ended up doing it on much of the route as we dualled those parts of it that are single carriageway. However, it is a three-year pilot.

The Convener: Okay, so you will report back to the committee in three years' time.

Keith Brown: Yes.

Members have made various points about the evaluations and the surveys that we do. I am happy to come back at any time to say where we are as we go through the process.

The Convener: Agenda item 2 is formal consideration of motion S4M-10171.

Motion moved,

That the Infrastructure and Capital Investment Committee recommends that the HGV Speed Limit (M9/A9 Trunk Road) Regulations 2014 [draft] be approved.—[*Keith Brown.*]

The Convener: Does anyone wish to make any further comments?

Alex Johnstone: The decision to go ahead with the pilot is excellent. It has been fully justified by the Government and has been handled in an excellent way. I hope that the committee will give its unanimous approval to the measure.

The Convener: The question is, that motion S4M-10171, in the name of Keith Brown, be approved. Are we agreed?

Motion agreed to.

The Convener: That concludes our consideration of the instrument. We will report the outcome to the Parliament.

Next week, the committee will hear evidence from the Scottish Housing Regulator on homelessness, as part of the committee's follow-up to its inquiry on the Scottish Government's 2012 homelessness commitment. We will also consider our work programme.

Meeting closed at 10:43.

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