

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee

3rd Meeting, 2023 (Session 6), Wednesday
22 February 2023

PE1992: Dual the A9 and improve road safety

Petitioner	Laura Hansler
Petition summary	Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to deliver on the commitment it made in 2011, and address safety concerns on the A9 by: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• publishing a revised timetable and detailed plan for dualling each section;• completing the dualling work by 2025; and• creating a memorial to those who have lost their lives in road traffic incidents on the A9.
Webpage	https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1992

Introduction

1. This is a new petition that was lodged on 28 December 2022.
2. A full summary of this petition and its aims can be found at **Annexe A**.
3. A SPICe briefing has been prepared to inform the Committee's consideration of the petition and can be found at **Annexe B**.
4. While not a formal requirement, petitioners have the option to collect signatures on their petition. On this occasion, the petitioner elected to collect this information. 3,814 signatures have been received.
5. The Committee seeks views from the Scottish Government on all new petitions before they are formally considered. A response has been received from the Scottish Government and is included at **Annexe C** of this paper.
6. A submission has been provided by the petitioner. This is included at **Annexe D**.

7. Members may wish to note that the Minister for Transport provided a statement to Parliament on the A9 dualling programme on 8 February 2023, in which it was confirmed that the original completion date of 2025 “is simply no longer achievable”. The Official Report of the Minister’s Statement is available [here](#).

Action

The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take on this petition.

Clerk to the Committee

Annexe A

PE1992: Dual the A9 and improve road safety

Petitioner

Laura Hansler

Date lodged

28 December 2022

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to deliver on the commitment it made in 2011, and address safety concerns on the A9 by:

- publishing a revised timetable and detailed plan for dualling each section;
- completing the dualling work by 2025; and
- creating a memorial to those who have lost their lives in road traffic incidents on the A9.

Previous action

Have been in contact with Fergus Ewing MSP and Kate Forbes MSP.

Background information

A social media awareness campaign called “A9 Dual Action Group”, was formed to highlight the following issues:

The exponential rate of fatalities. The A9 has now become a road barely fit for purpose with an unsustainable influx of traffic on the infrastructure.

In 2011, the Scottish Government pledged as "priority" an ambitious dualling scheme to be completed by 2025, between Perth to Inverness in its entirety. Since then, 59 people have lost their lives on the Perth to Inverness section of the A9 (based on figures provided by Transport Scotland).

Whether there should be an investigation into the procurement procedure associated with this project.

The need for mandatory safety features to be deployed on the A9 before any further loss of life.

The Action Group are also concerned that, more than 10 years after being labelled a priority, it is looking increasingly likely the Scottish Government will fail to deliver on their commitment to complete the A9 dualling project by 2025.

Annexe B

The logo for SPICe, consisting of the letters 'SPICe' in a white, sans-serif font on a dark purple background.The logo for The Information Centre, consisting of the text 'The Information Centre' and 'An t-Ionad Fiosrachaidh' in a white, sans-serif font on a dark blue background.

Briefing for the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee on PE1992: Dual the A9 and improve road safety, submitted by Laura Hansler

Background

On 6 December 2011, [the Scottish Government committed](#) to dualling the 80 miles of single carriageway road on the A9 between Perth and Inverness. The project was to be delivered in 11 sections at an expected cost of £3 billion and with a completion date of 2025.

To date, two of these sections have been completed (Kincaig-Dalraddy and Luncarty-Pass of Birnam). Transport Scotland is currently progressing the procurement of the Tomatin to Moy section and undertaking design work on the rest of the programme. Ministers have committed to completing the statutory process for seven of the remaining eight sections, with a final decision on the routing of the Pass of Birnam to Tay Crossing section yet to be made.

The Minister for Transport [answered a parliamentary question](#) about the timetable for the delivery of the A9 dualling programme on 10 November 2022, stating:

“Work to determine the most suitable procurement options for the remaining sections of the A9 dualling is also ongoing. This is a complex exercise which looks at a number of factors including how the project can be delivered most efficiently by the industry, whilst minimising disruption to road users and helping to support economic recovery post-COVID.”

Scottish Government Action

Separate from the dualling programme, the Scottish Government has implemented two significant road safety interventions on the A9 between Perth and Inverness, both of which began on 28 October 2014. These are:

- **HGV speed limit increase:** The speed limit for goods vehicles weighing over 7.5 tonnes on single carriageway sections of the A9 was increased from 40mph to 50mph. The assessment of the first three years of the higher limit concluded that vehicle speeds were more consistent, the average difference in speeds between HGVs and other vehicles had reduced, there were fewer slow moving HGV-led vehicle platoons and drivers were less frustrated.
- **Average speed cameras:** The impact of average speed cameras on the single carriageway sections of the A9 between Perth and Inverness was assessed after three years. This found that, compared with the three years before cameras were installed, annual average fatalities were down by 40%, total casualties were down by 27% and the average number of collisions were down by over 23%. In addition, there had been a 25% fall in the time the road was closed/restricted due to collisions. There had been a 13% increase in annual average traffic volumes between the 2013 baseline and 2017.

In the three years following the installation of average speed cameras and the increase in the HGV speed limit, annual average fatalities on the A9 between Perth and Inverness fell from seven to four – when compared with the average of the preceding three years.

In response to a parliamentary question asked on 15 December 2022 about road safety along the A9, the Minister for Transport stated:

“I can advise today that this Government is taking forward a package of safety measures, valued at £5M, to help address the trends identified recently.”

Scottish Parliament Action

Ministers, Transport Scotland officials and transport stakeholders were regularly questioned about the progress of the A9 dualling programme

by members of the Session 4 Transport, Infrastructure and Climate Change Committee and Session 5 Rural Economy and Connectivity Committee. The issue continues to be raised by members of the current Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee.

Debates that focused on the progress of the A9 dualling programme were held on [2 November 2022](#) and [17 November 2021](#).

Alan Rehfisch
Senior Researcher
9 January 2023

SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at spice@parliament.scot

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in petition briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

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Annexe C

Scottish Government submission of 23 December 2022

PE1992/A: Dual the A9 and improve road safety

Thank you for your email dated 30 November 2022 regarding the above named petition which we have considered and responded to below.

Road safety is of paramount importance to the Scottish Government. One life lost on Scotland's roads is one too many.

We remain committed to improving the transport infrastructure throughout Scotland to bring improved road safety and economic benefits to road users and local communities of Scotland alike. With our partners, including local authorities and Police Scotland, we will continue to examine what more can be done to make our roads safer for everyone, and to ensure that more people drive their vehicles safely.

Transport Scotland has developed short-term road safety measures that can be implemented prior to dualling, which take account of the recent unfortunate trend of fatal accidents on the A9 this year. As well as the three safety schemes totalling £95,000 which are already scheduled for delivery, including one at the B9150 (Ralia) junction, an additional £622,000 of works and campaigns will also be delivered by 1 April 2023. Initial engineering works will be concentrated around the Birnam to Dalguise area, as that part of the route has both witnessed some of the recent accidents and allows investment to be concentrated on the first single carriageway section A9 users encounter as they head north. For 2023/24 and 2024/25, the scope of these works will be expanded to the route between Perth and Inverness.

These short term measures will include enhanced road markings with acoustic properties, illuminated road studs plus signage and marking improvements to highlight single carriageways and the transitions at dualled sections. Variable message signs will also be deployed along this part of the route. A fatigue awareness campaign will be run this

year, followed by a campaign at Easter and into next summer in support of the “Drive on the Left” work being undertaken across the route.

Transport Scotland also working with the car hire sector and key local and regional partners to examine how tourists and foreign drivers can be better supported in driving safely. This will aid wider campaign work on “Drive on the Left” and will also highlight the necessity for taking regular breaks, tackling driver fatigue.

The Scottish Government remains firmly committed to completing the dualling of the A9 between Perth and Inverness and we are working hard to bring the benefits of the A9 Dualling programme to Scotland.

In regards to the current status of the programme, I can confirm that road users are already benefiting from the dualled sections between Kincaig and Dalraddy and Luncarty and the Pass of Birnam, which opened in September 2017 and August 2021 respectively.

We are currently progressing the procurement for the Tomatin to Moy section and undertaking design work on the rest of the programme, with ministerial decisions to complete the statutory process confirmed for seven of the remaining eight schemes.

The only section not to have started the statutory process is the Pass of Birnam to Tay Crossing project following the innovative co-creative process with the local community. Work is progressing on announcing a preferred route for this section in the coming months.

As work to determine the most suitable procurement options for the remaining sections of the A9 dualling is ongoing we are currently unable to provide a revised timetable. This is a complex exercise which looks at a number of factors including how the project can be delivered most efficiently by the industry, whilst minimising disruption to road users and helping to support economic recovery post-COVID.

With regard to creating memorials, we understand why people would want to remember loved ones lost in such tragic circumstances. However, there is a risk to people’s safety particularly for anyone who might visit or tend such a memorial and for those reasons, establishing these at roadsides is not encouraged. Families and friends of those

bereaved by road deaths may wish to remember those that are important to them in different ways.

Transport Scotland will continue to work with organisations such as the road safety charity, BRAKE, to provide support to everyone who has been affected by the death of someone they knew on Scottish trunk roads.

We hope you find the above information helpful.

Annexe D

Petitioner submission of 13 February 2023

PE1992/B: Dual the A9 and improve road safety

Following the Transport Minister Jenny Gilruth's announcement on the failure to deliver complete dualling of the A9 by 2025, and the retraction of future development therewith, I would urge the Committee to consider that this matter should now be the focus of a Public Inquiry.