
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

FOR DECISION

Title: Approval of proposed CNPA response to Transport Scotland informal consultation on the A9 Dualling, Project 6 Pitagowan to Glen Garry

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Purpose

This paper provides an overview of Transport Scotland's proposals for dualling the section of A9 between Pitagowan and Glen Garry and asks the Committee to endorse the proposed CNPA response to this informal consultation.

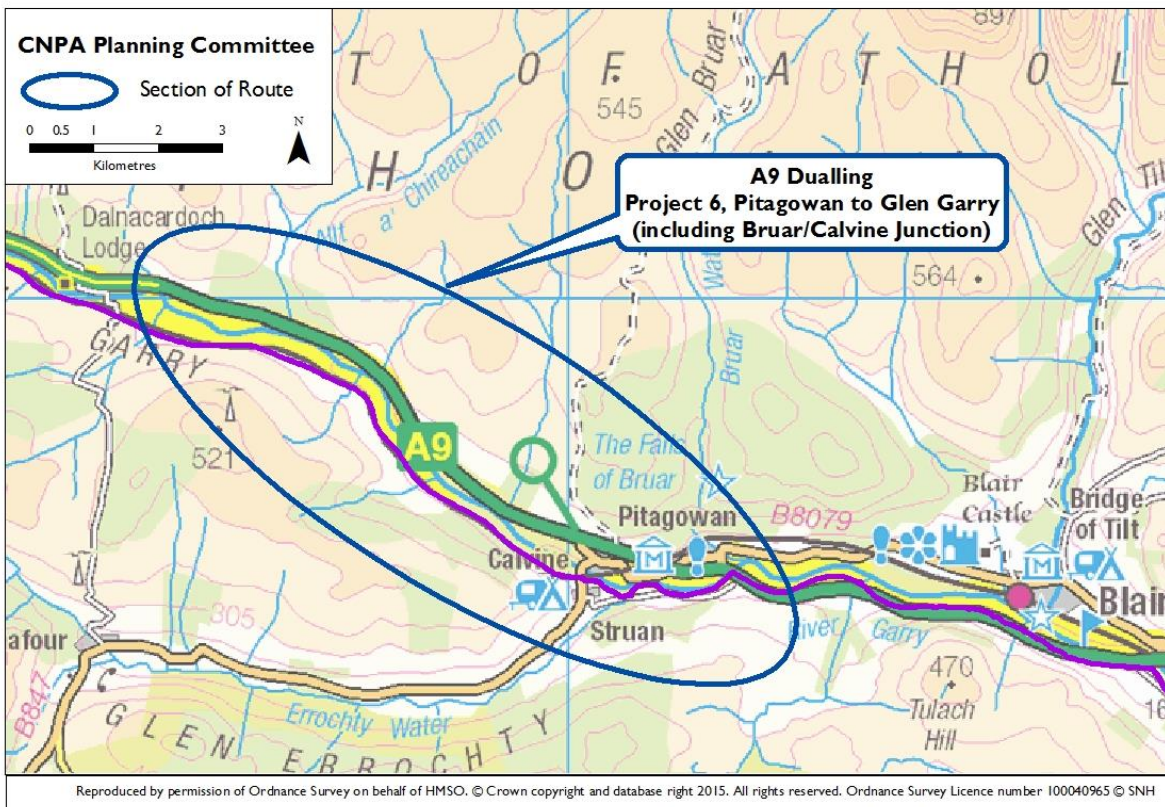
Recommendations

That the Committee:

- a) note the proposed options for dualling of the A9 between Pitagowan and Glen Garry; and,
- b) approve the proposed CNPA response to the informal consultation.

Background

1. A briefing paper was presented to Committee in July outlining the process and projected timescales for the dualling of the A9. The process for the project is dictated by the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB). The flowchart at Appendix 1 provides an overview of key steps in the process. The majority of projects are currently at Stage 2.
2. The CNPA and public agency partners are being informally consulted by Transport Scotland on outline proposals and options for dualling sections of the A9. The first consultation to be received is for Project 6, the section between Pitagowan and Glen Garry which includes the junction north of Blair Atholl at the House of Bruar. A location map of the Project 6, Pitagowan to Glen Garry is shown below.



Explanation of the DMRB Stage 2

3. The Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) Stage 2 assessment is a stage of the design process that allows a number of route options to be considered. The process provides information to help the Scottish Ministers to identify a preferred route option. Environmental impacts are considered alongside engineering, traffic and economic requirements. Once a preferred route option is confirmed, the design detail will be further developed and refined at DMRB Stage 3.
4. This Stage 2 consultation is non-statutory and is not a public consultation. Only the partners who sit on the Environmental Steering Group (ESG) for the project (SNH, SEPA, Historic Environment Scotland, Scottish Water, Local Authorities, and CNPA) are being asked to comment on options. The public are being asked to feed into the process separately through public exhibitions. Detailed proposals will be developed and subject to a formal statutory consultation at DMRB Stage 3 (see Appendix 1).

Consultation Focus

5. Transport Scotland has provided a large amount of very detailed information in the Consultation Report. Key elements of this are summarised in this paper. CNPA are asked to comment on the following:
 - a) significant omissions or errors;
 - b) key concerns with regard to residual impacts; and,
 - c) suggestions for consideration in more details at DMRB Stage 3.

CNPA's role in the Consultation

6. The partners in the ESG are all being consulted on this project. To avoid duplication of effort, the CNPA comments focus on issues relating closely to our remit and expertise and specifically those issues not covered by other partners. These include:
 - a) Outdoor Access (CNPA is the Access Authority)
 - b) Landscape
 - c) Ecology (non-designated sites - SNH deals with designated sites only)
 - d) Community & Private Assets

Route Wide Issues

7. Many of the issues relating to the economy, tourism, communities, and disruption are similar for all projects along the route, including issues both during and post construction. Transport Scotland has established a number of Forums to consider how potential issues and opportunities might be addressed. Any issues that are locally specific to a particular section of the route will be picked up in consultation.

Policy Context

The Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB)

8. The Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 (the Act) confers powers and duties to the Secretary of State as roads authority. The Act declares that the Secretary of State shall manage and maintain trunk roads and for the purposes of such management and maintenance he shall have power to reconstruct, alter, widen, improve or renew any such road or to determine the means by which the public right of passage over it, or over any part of it, may be exercised. The infrastructure requirement of the dualling proposal has been developed following the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB), which is considered to be sufficient to ensure a robust and fit for purpose design. Statutory (planning) permissions must also be gained through the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984. The DMRB process is shown in Appendix I.

The DMRB Stage 1 Design Guide

9. The Design Guide produced at Stage 1 of the DMRB is the key document against which proposals are assessed, incorporating principles for landscape, ecology, water etc. It does not include outdoor access but an 'Access Strategy' is currently being developed by Transport Scotland. The CNPA contributed to the development of this Design Guide which has been influenced by policies in the National Park Partnership Plan, Local Development Plan and other relevant strategies. Proposals put forward in the consultation are assessed against the Design Guide for compliance and impact.

National Park Partnership Plan and Local Development Plan

10. A preliminary assessment of the compliance of the project and each of the proposed route options against national, regional, and local development planning policies is provided in the Consultation Report. A limitation of the current assessment is that each route option is assessed against the available 'Stage 2' information. At DMRB Stage 2, the proposed route options have not been subject to detailed design or mitigation which might influence

whether the option is fully compliant with policy. A detailed assessment will be undertaken by Transport Scotland at DMRB Stage 3 when the final design and mitigation is developed.

Summary of Project 6 Pitagowan to Glen Garry

11. Four proposed route options have been identified for this section. Appendix 2 has more detail on the proposed route and junction options. Each of these options comprises two lanes in each direction, separated by a 2.5m central reserve and 2.5m verges (both with widened visibility where required).
12. For the majority of the options, the widened road will follow the existing route. This is referred to as 'online' widening with some 'off-line' sections in Options 3 and 4 where the road is aligned slightly further south and closer to the River Garry.
13. Each of the four route options includes a grade separated junction (i.e. a bridge over the road 'overbridge', or a bridge under the road 'underbridge') at the site of the existing B8079 Bruar Junction, referred to as the Bruar/Calvine junction. Main Options 1, 2, 3, and 4 include slip roads and use the existing B847 road underpass. Variants to Options 3 and 4 are also proposed. Variant B provides a new overbridge and loop road arrangement to access if for northbound traffic and Variant C provides a similar loop arrangement but with a new underbridge instead of an overbridge.

Appraisal of options

14. Appendix 2 has more detail on the proposed route and junction options with a full appraisal of access, landscape, ecology and community & private asset matters. The appraisal is summarised below:

Outdoor Access: Non Motorised Users (NMU)

15. The consultation report identifies NMU routes in the area, including Core Paths, Rights of Way, and National Cycle Route (NCR) 7. The report identifies the potential impact on these both in terms of the route itself as well as potential severance. Options 1, 2, and 3 are identified as having the highest potential impact on NMUs. However, these impacts could be mitigated through appropriate design at Stage 3. Route/junction options that do not incorporate roundabouts on NCR7 are safer for cyclists.

Landscape and Ecology

16. In terms of landscape, Option 1 is the preferred option. It has the smallest footprint and the lowest landscape and ecological impact of all options. Options 3B and 4B are the least preferred due to the proposed overbridge which will have the highest potential landscape and visual impact of all options. The residual impact of this would be difficult to mitigate against. Other options have potential intermediate effects on landscape which could be mitigated, as could ecological impacts.

Community & Private Assets

17. There is no requirement for demolition of property for this project and there are no direct

impacts on community facilities and land or on development sites. The impact on the main land owner, Atholl Estate, is identified as moderate for all options. There will be some loss of land for both residential and commercial properties for all options including; loss of some parking and amenity grassland areas at House of Bruar; loss of part of a parking area for one residential property; and, loss of direct access to the A9 for two properties. Options 1, 3B, and 4B impact the least on agricultural, forestry and sporting land but not necessarily the lowest land take overall. Land take for the project is not expected to impact on the future viability of the business.

Proposed Response to Consultation

18. A detailed response is being prepared for submission to Transport Scotland identifying issues, mitigation requirements, and areas for further consideration based on the points above and the detail in Appendix 2.

Significant omissions or errors

19. The identification and analysis of the key relevant issues within the Consultation Report are accurate and no omissions or errors were identified.

Key concerns with regard to residual impacts

20. Option 1 is preferred by CNPA as it has the lowest impact in terms of landscape and ecology. Appropriate mitigation for NMUs would also be required.
21. Junction Variants 3B/4B are the least preferred as they have a high landscape impact which cannot be mitigated against.
22. Junction Options 1, 2, 3A and 4A incorporate roundabouts at the Bruar junction which is shared with National Cycle Route 7 (NCR7). Options with roundabouts are less safe for cyclists so additional mitigation would be required to ensure cyclist safety.

Suggestions for consideration in more detail at DMRB Stage 3

23. The CNPA suggests the following points:
- a) The detailed proposals will need to be carefully considered against the policies of the CNP Local Development Plan, the Cairngorms National Park Core Paths Plan and the Design Guide.
 - b) The proposed options create issues that require mitigation proposals to be explored.
 - c) Where possible, it would be helpful to identify initial proposals for 'accommodation works' to accommodate those communities and owners of private assets who will be adversely impacted by the project.
 - d) There should be detailed proposals to avoid detrimental impacts upon National Cycle Route 7 (NCR7) and its users. For example, where it becomes necessary to realign NCR7 or incorporate it within new junctions, the approach should be one of seeking overall improvement to the existing standard. This can be managed through a combination of design and mitigation. The CNPA supports the principle of maintaining and where possible increasing, the distance of NCR7 from the carriageway.

- e) Where existing Core Paths have been identified crossing the A9 carriageway, all viable options should be considered to allow them to continue once the upgraded A9 is operational. This should be done through a combination of diversion to nearby, adjacent, or new underbridges or overbridges. Permanent severance of existing Core Paths should be avoided.
- f) Where non-designated local paths are affected and permanent severance is likely, all viable options should be considered to allow them to continue once the upgraded A9 is operational. It is recognised that, in certain circumstances, maintaining Core Paths may be prioritised over non-designated paths.
- g) If permanent severance of a path becomes necessary, it should be supported by a clear rationale and assessment to demonstrate that the severance will not unreasonably affect access opportunities in that area. The assessment should take account of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003.

Recommendation

That Members approve the proposed CNPA response to Transport Scotland Consultation on the A9 Dualling, Project 6 Pitagowan to Glen Garry

Next Steps

- 24. Once a preferred route option is confirmed, the design detail will be further developed and refined at DMRB Stage 3. For Project 6 Pitagowan to Glen Garry, DMRB Stage 3 is anticipated to start in early 2016, and will include completion of an Environmental Impact Assessment and preparation of an Environmental Statement. Officers will report back to the Committee at an appropriate stage in that process.
- 25. The next DMRB Stage 2 consultation response will be brought to Committee on Friday 13th November for Project 5, Killiecrankie to Pitagowan.

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