

---

# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

---

## FOR DECISION

**Title: DUALLING THE A9 IN THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK**

**Prepared by: Bob Grant, Recreation and Access Programme Manager**

### **Purpose**

This paper updates the Board on how the dualling of the A9 will be taken forward in the National Park and seeks advice on key aspects of principle that we would wish to have incorporated in the design. It highlights the likely staff resource require to achieve these aims.

### **Recommendations**

The Board is asked to:

- a) Note the scale and timeline for completion of the works;
- b) Approve the key principles that CNPA would wish to be incorporated in the project;
- c) Consider the merits of roadside, commercial development; and
- d) Approve the staff resource to engage fully at each stage of the project.

### **Executive Summary**

The Scottish Government have confirmed a timeline for dualling the A9 between Perth and Inverness. The initial stage of consultation and engagement provides the opportunity to positively influence the design of the road and all linking infrastructure. A set of key principles are put forward that will help ensure the new route contributes positively to the National Park Partnership Plan. The staff resource required to assist in this work is estimated at 118 days over the next 3 years.

## DUALLING THE A9 IN THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK FOR DECISION

### Background

1. There has been a long held desire to have the A9 improved to full dual carriageway between Perth and Inverness. The journey time between the two cities can vary considerably as a result of slow moving traffic and lack of overtaking opportunities. This in turn has led to driver frustration and has been a factor attributed to a higher than average rate of serious and fatal accidents. With very limited alternative routes, such accidents can cause severe delays through lengthy periods of road closure as these accidents are investigated. In addition, traffic flows are much higher during the summer months which reflect the importance of the route for tourism.
2. The decision to dual the A9 between Perth and Inverness was included in the Scottish Government's Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR) in 2008 and the proposed timeline was confirmed by Ministers through the published Infrastructure and Investment Plan in 2011. A dualled route will offer much greater reliability in journey times and be safer as a consequence of improvements in design that have taken place over the last 30 years. The Government expects to see the whole route completed by 2025. Whilst there has been no firm decision taken on the timing for construction of the majority sections of the route, there are two exceptions. There is a Ministerial commitment to have the section between Luncarty and Birnam started by 2017 and between Kincaig and Dalraddy taken forward in the 2015/16 financial year.
3. A parallel project that is of relevance is improvements to the Highland Main Rail Line. The timeframe for the rail improvements to be completed is also 2025 and will result in hourly rail services and an improvement in the journey time by 35 minutes. Estimate for this work is between £250 million and £600 million.
4. The Cairngorms National Park Authority notes the proposal to upgrade the A9 and this is acknowledged in the National Park Partnership Plan where it also recognises that the responsibility for delivery rests with other agencies. It has also been included as one of the National Strategic priorities in the National Planning Framework 3 which is in draft form.
5. Transport Scotland is currently engaging with a wide range of interests to ensure they fully understand the needs and desires of all before they progress the work. The engagement process therefore offers the opportunity to positively influence how Transport Scotland take the project forward and therefore to see real benefits

built in from first principles for natural and cultural heritage, landscape, the economy and recreation and access.

## **Contract Methodology**

6. The proposed method of construction is “design and build.” The more traditional method for letting construction projects is to fully specify every aspect of the work, seek tenders and let accordingly. This method has been found wanting where elements have been incorrectly specified or where obstacles are encountered on-site that prohibit any flexibility in finding a solution. The client can therefore be exposed on both counts and cost overruns are not uncommon. The “design and build” methodology identifies all the constraints for the work and the contract is tendered on that basis. This passes the main risk to the contractor and allows the contractor to be innovative in terms of solutions provided the solution remains within the constraints set.
7. It is therefore vitally important that all constraints are correctly identified as early as possible in the process and Transport Scotland have already started to engage with partners to help identify these constraints.

## **Key Principles**

8. To assist Transport Scotland and to ensure that all the benefits that CNPA would wish to see derive from this development are delivered, a set of key principles are being proposed and these are shown below. These all relate to the finished route and it is recognised that additional detailed work will be required to influence Transport Scotland during the construction phase.
  - a) All mitigation work should enhance landscape, natural heritage and access;
  - b) The completed route should ensure the view from the road for key landscape, natural and cultural features are retained and developed;
  - c) The completed route should ensure that views from villages, viewpoints and the surrounding area are retained and developed;
  - d) All existing non-motorised crossing points should be incorporated in the design of the road;
  - e) Appropriate provision must be included for wildlife to cross the route safely through green bridges or similar structures;
  - f) There should be safe, motorised links on and off the route for all villages and towns and appropriate linkages for businesses and land managers that are located alongside the A9 in the National Park;
  - g) There should be a commitment to construct, manage and maintain the National Cycling Network Route 7 between Perth and Inverness.

9. Our overarching aim is to see a route developed that contributes to the aims of the National Park rather than one that bisects it. The principles listed above have been developed to fulfil that aim.

### **Service Provision**

10. The Highland Council used to have a policy against the provision of commercial services at roadside. The policy was designed to encourage motorists to leave the trunk road for food, fuel and rest, thus deriving an economic benefit from the road for the by-passed villages. That policy has now lapsed as has the supporting Scottish Government Planning Advice Note.
11. There is currently no 24 hour service provision other than in Perth and Inverness but it is not clear whether there is a strong demand for such facilities and whether communities prefer to retain the status quo.

### **Implications**

#### ***Resource Implications***

12. The design and build methodology places a strong onus on all concerned to ensure that all the relevant mitigation factors are identified at an early stage so that that they can be incorporated in the design. There is therefore a need to “front load” the CNPA input into the process. A small internal group within CNPA has been set up to manage and co-ordinate our input into this project.
13. To date, CNPA staff have contributed to early work on the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) that is required for the whole route and have already met separately with Transport Scotland to provide initial views on access, conservation, landscape, planning and economic development. Further meetings are planned to discuss the specific elements of the Kincaig to Dalraddy section.
14. Transport Scotland have envisaged a three layered process for consultation and engagement. The top layer will involve the key statutory agencies and will include CNPA along with Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Environment Protection Agency and Historic Scotland. This group will have an approving role and is likely to meet every two months during the initial phase of the programme.
15. The two other groupings that will be created are a consultation group which will be consulted on specific elements of the emerging plans and an information group to which information will be disseminated on a twice yearly basis. Membership of both these groupings is yet to be finalised.

16. CNPA advice will require to be given from officers covering conservation, landscape, planning, economic development and access and recreation. This input will be co-ordinated through the Recreation and Access Programme Manager.
17. At this stage it is not possible to give a detailed breakdown of the total staff resource required but an estimate for the remainder of the current financial year and the subsequent two years is given below in staff days. As more detail emerges this table will be reviewed and updated.

**Table 1:**

<b>Tasks</b>	<b>2012/13</b>	<b>2013/14</b>	<b>2014/15</b>
Consultation group meetings	4	12	12
Contribute to SEA scoping and screening	5	10	0
Detailed advice on Kinraig / Dalraddy section	5	20	10
Detailed advice on all mitigation measures	10	20	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>32</b>

**Presentational implications**

18. This is a Transport Scotland led project and we welcome the significant gains that dualling of the A9 will bring to the economy of the National Park. At this stage both Board and staff should be encouraging all to contribute to the current engagement process as this will help ensure that the final design fully meets the needs of all who live in, work and visit the National Park. CNPA can also offer experience in community engagement to Transport Scotland which will help ensure an inclusive approach is taken.

**Next Steps**

19. The outcome from this Board discussion will be relayed to Transport Scotland and work will continue to ensure all the key mitigation issues are fully identified. Further updates on progress will be provided to the Board annually.

**Bob Grant****21 December 2012**

bobgrant@cairngorms.co.uk