

PE1503/A

Andrew Howlett
Assistant Clerk
Public Petitions Committee
T3.40
Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh EH99 1SP

20 February 2014

Dear Andrew

**SCOTTISH PARLIAMENT PUBLIC PETITION [PE1503](#) ON A REVIEW OF A9
SPEED CAMERA PROPOSALS**

Please find below the IAM's response to your letter of 27th January regarding the above.

- What are your views on what the petition seeks and the discussions that took place at the meeting on 28 January?

The IAM Policy and Research Department has been aware of many of the discussions around the implementation of average speed cameras (ASC) on the A9 for some time. As part of our invitation to join the A9 Safety Group we have received detailed briefings on the evidence for the project and we have attended one meeting of the group in Birnam on 18th February.

In our view the safety case for average speed cameras is compelling. Experience from around the world shows a high degree of compliance with such systems which leads to a reduction in speeding and fewer casualties. Research consistently shows a direct link between lower speed and lower casualty rates.

Initially the IAM did have some concerns around the installation of ASC over such a long length of mixed dual and single carriageway roads. We felt this may cause confusion in the minds of drivers as they drove along the full length of the A9 covered by the scheme.

However the technical specification of the project has now moved on and the creation of seven discrete enforcement sections only covering the single carriageway sections is a much better design solution. The accident data suggest that on the Perth to Inverness section the vast majority of the incidents take place on the single carriageway sections. The incidents are not clustered in

discrete locations however, but spread along the route. By covering all single carriageway sections the ASC system offers a good solution to the problem of lack of clustering.

On road safety grounds we cannot see why anyone can object to a system that merely enforces the existing legal speed limit. Whilst we can never condone breaking the limit some drivers may feel that they may have to in order to complete a safe overtaking manoeuvre. ASC would allow this to happen although it is clearly bad driving. There is no scientifically proven evidence that the IAM are aware of that ASC systems distract drivers by making them spend more time thinking about their speed or looking at the speedometer.

There is no doubt that many drivers do not see ASC as the solution to the overtaking problem on the A9 (or indeed any other road). However the IAM have been convinced by the information provided by Transport Scotland that platooning may be reduced and free flow traffic speeds will actually rise in an ASC system. This in turn should have a positive impact on overtaking opportunities and driver frustration.

The IAM have long supported a pilot project to examine the benefits of increasing the HGV speed limit on a unique route such as the A9. We therefore have no problem with the Scottish Government's proposals to increase the limit for HGV's over 7.5 tonnes to 50mph.

In relation to the petition we are concerned that some selective use has been made of statistics. In particular the suggestion that most drivers on the A9 come from outside Scotland is not backed up by the information on the A9 Safety Group website. Similarly, it is clear from traffic data that around one third of cars on the route are travelling above the posted limit.

The IAM support the full dualling of the A9 to Inverness and we will continue to press the Scottish Government to complete this major project as quickly as possible as it does offer the only permanent long term solution to the routes problems. The IAM also support the use of education campaigns to address driver behaviour issues and the continued deployment of police resources to detect serious offences. In addition the ongoing engineering works on safer roadside furniture and removal of vegetation must also continue to be part of the overall package.

No single solution can ever address the complex range of road safety issues on a road such as the A9. The IAM accept that ASC will reduce casualties which must be the ultimate goal. If they perform as expected they will do this without adding to journey times or driver frustration. However, ASC on this scale is unique and the project must be monitored closely on an ongoing basis to ensure it is meeting its targets. Transport Scotland must be flexible in reacting to the real world experience of ASC on the A9 to maximise the benefits.

- In addition to the Institute of Advanced Motorists recently joining, has the A9 Safety Group considered inviting other organisations such as the AA to be members of the Group?

The IAM were pleased to be invited to join the group on the basis of our record in road safety research and our long time involvement in bodies such as Road Safety Scotland. We do try to represent the views of all road users through our research, and also of our members through opinion polls and other avenues.

The IAM has not conducted any opinion or other research targeted at the specific users of the A9. Currently we have no plans to do so as such a detailed target audience can make research very costly. In any case Transport Scotland is already commissioning such research.

It should also be pointed out that individual IAM groups are charities in their own right, affiliated to the IAM and thus may express opinions which differ from those of the official IAM Policy and Research Department.

Neil Greig
Director of Policy and Research
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