



Public Petitions Committee
T3.40, Scottish Parliament,
Edinburgh EH99 1SP

Federation of Small Businesses
74, Berkeley Square
Glasgow G3 7DS

26th February 2014

Dear Mr Howlett,

Scottish Parliament Public Petition [PE1503](#) On A Review Of A9 Speed Camera Proposals

I refer to your letter of 6th February concerning the Scottish Parliament Public Petition PE1503 and inviting members of the A9 Safety Group to respond to the case made by Mike Burns.

The FSB is the UK and Scotland's leading business organisation with around 200,000 members and around 19,000 in Scotland. It exists to protect and promote the interests of the UK's small and medium-sized businesses. More information is available at www.fsb.org.uk/scotland

We lobbied hard for the dualling of the A9 between Perth and Inverness for many years and were delighted when the Scottish Government took the decision to dual the whole route by 2025.

Moreover, aware of the accidents that continue to blight this vital artery, we fully support measures to make it safer. However, last summer's announcement that the whole road would be covered by average speed cameras from Dunblane to Inverness aroused concern amongst members in the North.

We expressed our concerns in a press release on the 6th August last year which was picked up by a number of Highland newspapers. In it, while emphasising that safety must always come first, we suggested that the installation of cameras for such a long stretch of road, with the existing 40 mph HGV speed limit in place, might increase driver frustration, resulting in more dangerous overtaking and a less safe road. We also raised our fear that the cameras could cause economic damage by increasing the A9's reputation for slow journey times and danger, thereby discouraging leisure and business travellers from coming north. We concluded by suggesting that increasing the HGV speed limit from 40 to 50mph might help.

As a result we, together with SCDI, were invited to join the A9 Safety Group to represent the North's business community, and we did so in time for its meeting of 26th November 2013. One meeting has taken place since then on the 18th February this year.

We were delighted when, following the meeting of 26th November, the Minister announced that the speed limit for HGVs would increase to 50mph for a 3-year trial period once the

average speed cameras were in place. However, having studied the material supplied both by Safety Group members and by Mike Burns, and having listened to and participated in the discussions in the two Safety Group meetings that we have attended, we remain concerned.

Before outlining these concerns, I should emphasise our backing for many of the measures being recommended by the A9 Safety Group. Improvements to sight-lines, road markings and warning signage together with effective road maintenance, more and better laybys and an enhanced police presence should all help enormously. We will do whatever we can to promote and support the driver awareness and safety campaigns.

Our concerns centre on the proposal to install the average speed cameras on every non-duelled section of the road between Perth and Inverness.

While the FSB is a business organisation and not road safety experts, from all that we have heard and read we are not convinced that average speed cameras provide the most appropriate solution to the problem. Nor have we seen any evidence to show that the economic consequences of their introduction have been fully assessed.

Of course, for a larger number of motorists Inverness is not the end of the journey north but merely a place to bypass en route to Caithness and Orkney, the North & West Highlands, Skye and the Western Isles, or Moray. Many drivers heading north from the Central Belt, particularly during the tourist season, have a 5 hour plus journey ahead of them and we wonder if their mindsets are the same as drivers on the A77, the road to which the A9 is often compared.

Further, Mr Burns asserts that the average speed on the A9 is less than the speed limit and that 2% of accidents are accounted for by cars speeding, whereas nearly 50% are caused by overtaking.


When it comes to the economic case, and aside from the concerns over journey times already mentioned, there is also a concern over reputational damage.

We would be concerned if the A9's reputation for danger and slowness reinforces the image of the Highlands as an inconvenient and isolated place in which to holiday, relax or do business.

Our conclusion from all of this is simple:

- We hope that the various improvements recommended by the A9 Safety Group will collectively reduce frustration and hence the number of dangerous overtaking manoeuvres on the road, making it significantly safer to drive. The sooner they are introduced the better.
- However, the decision to install average speed cameras on all non-duelled sections of the A9 from Perth to Inverness raises some serious questions for which evidence-based answers appear to be limited.

Therefore, we urge the Scottish Government to put the camera project on hold, firstly to enable the impact of the other safety measures to be evaluated, and secondly, to enable Mr Burns' points and the questions that we and others have raised to be thoroughly investigated.

Yours sincerely,


David Richardson
Development Manager – Highlands & Islands