

PE1503/E

Police Scotland Letter of 27 February 2014

Andrew Howlett,
Assistant Clerk to the Public Petitions Committee,
Public Petition Committee,
Scottish Parliament,
Edinburgh,
EH99 1SP

Dear Andrew,

Scottish Parliament Public Petition PE1503 on a Review of A9 Speed Camera Proposals

Thank you for this opportunity to respond to the above petition.

Police Scotland is committed to 'Keeping People Safe' and strives to influence road user behaviour in order to make Scotland's road safer for all road users.

As such, the force is actively working towards the Scottish Government targets to reduce the numbers of people killed or seriously injured on the roads by 2020. In practical terms, this means that officers provide a high visibility presence in areas of concern and carry out a range of education and enforcement activities each day across the country

The A9 Safety Group was set up by Transport Scotland in July 2012. Police Scotland has been represented on the Group since the inception of the single force on 1 April 2013 and prior to this there was representation on the Group from the legacy forces of Northern Constabulary, Tayside Police and Central Scotland Police.

When 'causation' and 'contributory' factors in collisions are considered it is clear that a range of driver behaviours impact on safety on the A9, and a 'holistic' approach is therefore required if this is to be improved.

Road user behaviour, and how individual road users engage with each other on the road, presents the greatest risk and a number of safety measures have been considered by the Group since it was established.

Debate will rage long and hard over whether speed is the primary cause of collisions, but one thing we do know beyond all doubt is that speed impacts on the likelihood of injury and the severity of any injury should a crash occur.

Analysis of vehicle speeds has been carried out on the A9 and this has shown that one third of cars exceed the speed limit on the single carriageway sections of the route between Perth and Inverness. This demonstrates a high level of non-compliance of speed limits and this is supported by the Police and Safety Camera Partnerships data which showed that 3,869 speeding offences were detected during the period 1 July and 30 September 2013.

The proposal to make the entire stretch of the A9 from Perth to Inverness a dual-carriageway may help to improve certain safety aspects of the route but in the interim it is necessary to consider other measures to influence road user behaviour.

The police will continue to deploy high visibility patrols but it must be recognised that there are technological solutions that will also assist in this regard.

One of the options considered by the A9 Safety Group has been the installation of an Average Speed Camera system on the route. Such schemes have been deployed across the UK, and in a number of countries across the world, and have a proven record in influencing road user behaviour and delivering road safety benefits.

The best known example of this in Scotland is the system on the A77 which has contributed to a 46% reduction in the number of people being killed and a 35% reduction in the number of people being seriously injured since its installation.

It is clear that the situation in respect of the A9 is complex and there are a wide range of issues that need to be considered. However, from consideration of the independent research carried out by the Transport Research Laboratory, the view of the Safety Group is that Average Speed Cameras would contribute significantly to casualty reduction.

Police Scotland therefore supports the installation of the Average Speed Camera system, as one of a range of measures and initiatives, and believes that its introduction is in line with our primary aim of 'Keeping People Safe'.

In respect to the membership of the A9 Safety Group, I would suggest that a wide variety of organisations are represented and that each member brings their own professional experience and years of expertise to the table. The Institute of Advanced Motorists has been added in recent meetings and that addition will help to ensure that the views of motorists are considered.

It must be remembered that the aim of the A9 Safety Group is to improve safety and it is therefore important that any recommendations or decisions made are based on evidence and analysis and not on individual perception or belief, however well-intentioned that might be.

I trust the foregoing is of assistance and thank you again for the opportunity to respond to this petition.

Yours sincerely,

Iain Murray
Superintendent
Head of Road Policing