

PE1503/P

22nd May 2014

Dear Mr Leggett

Thank you for your recent correspondence regarding Public Petition PE1503

I am writing to advise that on behalf of the 9100 Supporters of A9 Average Speed Are Not the Answer Campaign, we are formally rejecting the invitation of a 1 on 1 meeting between yourself and myself as we do not believe it will be constructive given the past issues there has been regarding your own bullishness towards the campaign

As a member of both the current and also previous incarnation of the A9 Safety Group, you will be well aware of the vast number of A9 issues and potential solutions which have been discussed but have never been implemented in your tenures. It is a matter of grave public concern that someone now holding the Chair of the group has failed to discuss let alone implement a swath of A9 Safety Improvements which thousands of A9 Drivers have been crying out for to instead focus on a business policy which was dreamt up by someone in Transport Scotland.

I am fully aware through that Transport Scotland had a working group set up to analyse and respond to the Interim 20 point Safety Plan which the campaign published last year. We will be calling for the outcomes from this working group to be published in full to ensure that all alternatives were fully modelled as would be expected to inform the public debate. We will also be calling on the Petition Committee to ensure that the Economic Impact study is published on the effect of A9 ASCS on the Highland Economy which was commissioned by a member of the A9 Safety group but has never been realised. Also, we will continue our call for the A9 Safety Group to be opened up to a public forum and the chairmanship of the group to now be moved to the control of a Non Transport Scotland and Non Police Scotland member to ensure the group is not being driven by Transport Scotland business policies as opposed to a genuine approach to safety. I also note you wish to discuss the Interim 20 point Plan but was written on the plan, this was and still is an alternative to A9 ASCS so any discussion of the plan and modelling used on the proposals should be used to stop with immediate effect, any further work on the A9 ASCS whilst discussions take place in the open between the entire Group and the public in the North of Scotland.

The campaign would be very happy to meet with the entire A9 Safety Group in order to discuss their decisions, in a publically open meeting, in Inverness and I fail to see why the A9 Safety Group as an entire group is too scared to meet directly with campaigners and have made it policy to not engage with campaigners. The group has lost all integrity with this stance and it might be prudent for the group to start

engaging with the thousands of Highlanders directly who are against this scheme, especially as we are now aware that Transport Scotland's recent drivers surveys have had a vast number of responses telling you directly this proposal is a waste of time, money and does not address the real problems. We will urge the Public Petitions Committee to ensure all of these Driver Surveys are published to ensure there is a clear understand of what Drivers are actually telling Transport Scotland.

Whilst we are all agreed that the A9 needs to have urgent Safety Improvements after years of neglect and lack of spending by Transport Scotland, we are fundamentally opposed to the A9 Average Speed Camera proposal which was created before the reformation of the current A9 Safety Group and appears to have been a done deal with the A9 Safety Group being used to provide a rubber stamp to legitimise a scheme which was under development for years as evidenced by Transport Scotland contact and supplier events which took place on this exact issue.

We can find no evidence that the A9 Safety Group requested this proposal be investigated after its formation and the evidence clearly shows the 'Business Case' was in development for some time before. This leads to the very serious question of the integrity of the group and the ability for it to open a debate which is receiving a fair hearing and engaging closely with the public.

Whilst the Petitions Committee may decide to close the petition due to this response, we would urge that the committee uses its influence and power to ensure further publications of evidence from Transport Scotland. We will also be working closely with Danny Alexander MP to ensure that there is an indefinite delay on the A9 ASCS system and our new personal call to open up the A9 Safety group into a public group under a new chairman. There is a very clear opposition from tens of thousands of residents and it is nothing short of sheer disbelief that Transport Scotland and the A9 Safety Group continue on this path against such a ground swell of public opinion from real A9 users.

Sincerely

Mike Burns

Cc – Public Petitions Committee
Danny Alexander MP