



**The Granary
West Mill Street
Perth PH1 5QP
Tel: 01738 493 942**

By email to nick.groom@gov.scot

Nick Groom
A9 Dualling Team
Transport Scotland
Major Transport Infrastructure Projects
Buchanan House
58 Port Dundas Road
Glasgow, G4 0HF

Your ref: 2140003/SM/MP/KS

Dear Sir

**A9 Dualling Programme: Perth to Inverness
Tay Crossing to Ballinluig: Preferred Route Public Exhibitions**

1. Introduction

Thank you for your letter dated 27 January and the notice of the public exhibitions concerning the Tay Crossing to Ballinluig section of the Dualling Programme. As we are unable to attend the exhibitions, we provide initial observations below, based on our assessment of the options.

Please note that our contact details have changed and future correspondence should be addressed to David Gibson, CEO, at the above address, email david@mountaineering.scot

Mountaineering Scotland is the only recognised representative organisation for hill walkers, climbers, mountaineers and ski-tourers who live in Scotland or who enjoy Scotland's mountains, and acts to represent, support and promote Scottish mountaineering. Mountaineering Scotland also acts on behalf of the BMC (British Mountaineering Council) on matters related to landscape and access in Scotland, and provides training and information to mountain users to promote safety, self-reliance and the enjoyment of our mountain environment.

These notes have been prepared in relation to the advertisement of public exhibitions to be held on 15th and 16th February 2017, following the announcement of the Preferred Corridor and Route Decision on 5th December 2016. The purpose of these exhibitions is to give local communities and road users the opportunity to see and comment on the outcome of the route option assessment work and the preferred option for the Tay Crossing to Ballinluig dualling project - part of the A9 Dualling Programme.

2. Background

The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 enshrined a right of responsible access on users and the associated Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) details how land and water should be managed responsibly for access.

Access rights should be respected when managing land or water by “taking access rights into account when planning and implementing any major land use change or development” (SOAC, 2005).

3. The proposed routes - potential access issues

The A9 will be dualled in 11 sections (see <http://www.transport.gov.scot/project/a9-dualling-perth-inverness>). The advertised public exhibitions referred to above relate to the “A9 Tay Crossing to Ballinluig” section, which starts just north of the existing River Tay crossing (at approximately 300 450 E, 743 825 N) and extends northwards to the existing dualled A9 at Ballinluig (at approximately 298 000 E, 752 050 N).

The proposed routes broadly follow the line of the existing A9 road and railway, running approximately north up the Tay Valley. As all proposed routes lie to the east of the River Tay, potential access issues are considered to be most likely on this side of the valley between the existing River Tay crossing to the south and Ballinluig to the north. This area has a number of communities, for example at Dowally, Guay and Kindallachan, along with several farms and other small settlements. To the east of these are generally farmland, wooded areas and forests, low hills, moorlands, crags and lochs. The area is popular with recreational users, particularly for walking, rock climbing and mountain biking. The area is accessed frequently (daily) for these purposes, and efforts should be made to maintain or enhance access points. Of particular concern are the following (from south to north):

At the existing River Tay crossing

There are two access considerations here relating to the bridge carrying the existing A9 over the River Tay:

- (i) On the south bank of the River Tay, a footpath runs underneath the existing A9 (at approximately 300 425 E, 743 725 N), forming an important link in the local walks network between Little Dunkeld and the forests to the west of the A9 (including Craig Vinean and the Hermitage, a local beauty spot); and
- (ii) On the north bank of the River Tay, a footpath and cycleway (part of National Cycle Route 77) runs underneath the existing A9 (at approximately 300 475 E, 743 925 N), forming an important link between Dunkeld and the north.

Access to both these routes should be maintained during both the construction phase and following completion of the A9 dualling. Furthermore, in order to link the route mentioned in (ii) with the route mentioned in (i), it is currently necessary to walk along a short section of pavement immediately adjacent to the A9 across the bridge carrying the existing A9 over the River Tay. There is an opportunity to improve this situation when this bridge is widened to accommodate a separate walkway away from the road, forming an important community service to the local walks network in the Birnam and Dunkeld area.

Access to Craig a Barns

At the road junction to the west of Rotmell Farm (at approximately 300 225 E, 747 100 N), the old A9 meets the existing A9, linking the existing A9 to the village of Dunkeld (part of Regional Cycle Route 83). This junction should be maintained as an important link to the popular rock climbing crags of Craig a Barns near the village of Dunkeld. Access should be maintained during both the construction phase and following completion of the A9 dualling.

Access to Creag na h-Eighe

This rock climbing crag is reached from the minor road between Guay (where there is a junction with the existing A9) and Tulliemet at approximately 300 625 E, 749 525 N. Access should be maintained during both the construction phase and following completion of the A9 dualling.

Access nearby

As noted above, the area to the east of the A9 between the existing River Tay crossing and Ballinluig is popular for recreation including walking, rock climbing and mountain biking. Access should be maintained during both the construction phase and following completion of the A9 dualling.

Furthermore, it should be noted that a number of popular low- and mid-level walking and mountain biking routes are accessed from the villages of Birnam and Dunkeld, just to the south of the section under consideration. This area is enjoyed by locals and visitors alike and has high amenity value.

Mountaineering Scotland can therefore advise on other access issues which fall into the “A9 Birnam to Tay Crossing” section:

Birnam - local paths network

There are two access issues here relating to the local path network connecting Birnam with the forests to the west of the A9 (including Craig Vinean and the Hermitage):

- (i) Where the existing A9 crosses the River Braan to the east of Inver (at approximately 302 300 E, 742 175 N), footpaths pass under the existing A9 on both sides of the River Braan, and across the River Braan by footbridge; and
- (ii) A footpath runs alongside the existing A9 from Inver to the carpark at the Hermitage at approximately 301 500 E, 742 275 N.

Access to both these routes should be maintained during both the construction phase and following completion of the A9 dualling. Furthermore, there is an opportunity to improve the situation with respect to (ii) by accommodating a separate walkway away from the road, forming an important community service to the local walks network in the Birnam and Dunkeld area.

Finally, pedestrian access to Birnam Station (and leading to local residences / Birnam Hill / areas of farmland, wooded areas and forests, low hills and moorlands west of the existing A9 / south of the A822) should be maintained during and after construction *via* Birnam Glen, passing from Birnam village under the existing A9 (at approximately 303 025 E, 741 725 N).

4. Conclusion

We hope that these comments will be helpful and used to inform your proposals for the dualling programme, and would appreciate an acknowledgement of your receipt of this letter.

Kind regards,

David Gibson
CEO