

31 May 2016

FAO: Mr S Paton
On behalf of Dunkeld & Birnam Community Council
Dunkelda9workinggroup@gmail.com

Transport Scotland: A9 Dualling Programme
Pass of Birnam to Tay Crossing and Tay Crossing to Ballinluig Projects

Dunkeld & Birnam Community Council, Consultation Response

Dear Mr Paton

Thank you for your considered and comprehensive response dated 21 April 2016 to recent consultation on the A9 Dualling Programme, Pass of Birnam to Tay Crossing and Tay Crossing to Ballinluig projects.

As you are aware, there are ongoing off-line option investigations on the Tay Crossing to Ballinluig project. Furthermore, the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) Stage 2 Scheme Assessment Report for this project is not yet complete. Given this, and that your response of 21 April 2016 concentrates, in the main, on the Pass of Birnam to Tay Crossing project, the following response is limited to Pass of Birnam to Tay Crossing. We will be in contact with you concerning Tay Crossing to Ballinluig when the outcomes of the off-line option investigations are known.

The DMRB Stage 2 assessment is currently ongoing for the Pass of Birnam to Tay Crossing project. The consultation held in late January 2016 form part of this process, the latest part of an ongoing consultation process which started in 2009 when investigations to upgrade the Pass of Birnam to Tay Crossing section of the A9 began. Engagement with directly affected communities is a key part of the project development process and is important to ensure the project team understands local concerns and ideas that may be considered in future design and assessment work. Indeed, following public and stakeholder consultation in February 2012, prior to Jacobs' involvement, Option 7 was developed for the Pass of Birnam to Tay Crossing project with direct involvement from the Dunkeld & Birnam Community Council. This option involved alterations at Dunkeld & Birnam Station, where the A9 dual carriageway is lowered and a structure proposed over the A9 at ground level to link Station Road with the railway station. This option has been further developed by Jacobs and is included in the DMRB Stage 2 assessment as Option B.

Since Jacobs' appointment in August 2014, regular public and stakeholder consultation has been maintained. Drop-in sessions have been held in Dunkeld and Birnam to provide the community an opportunity to discuss the project on a one-to-one basis with the design team. The previous consultants also held drop-in sessions from 2012 to August 2014. In addition, Jacobs has attended two Dunkeld & Birnam Community Council meetings and held a Public Exhibition.

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Following the Public Exhibition in late January 2016 in Birnam, sixty-six feedback forms have been received. Responses to the queries raised by the public are currently being prepared. As part of this process, the Dunkeld & Birnam Community Council has made its response and all the collective comments of the community will be considered as part of the DMRB Stage 2 process.

The DMRB Stage 2 process culminates in identification of the Preferred Route Option; a decision which is Transport Scotland's alone. Transport Scotland and Jacobs have therefore sought, through consultation, to seek feedback on the route options including from Dunkeld & Birnam Community Council. This feedback will be considered when Transport Scotland assess options and identify the Preferred Route.

That notwithstanding, in your response, you make it clear you wish further information in order to give a fuller response. Normally, the DMRB Stage 2 Scheme Assessment Report is published and made available to the public once a Preferred Route Option has been identified. However, by exception, and to address concerns raised, a copy of the Draft DMRB Stage 2 Scheme Assessment Report, Part 3: Environmental Assessment Chapters for the Pass of Birnam to Tay Crossing project will be provided to the A9 Dualling Working Group and is contained in the CD enclosed with this letter. To understand the overall impacts associated with the project, it is important that these Chapters are considered in their entirety. Furthermore, these Chapters are provided in confidence as it is, as yet, not complete. We ask that the status of these Chapters is respected and not issued outside of the elected members of the A9 Dualling Working Group and Dunkeld & Birnam Community Council.

As you are aware, as part of the DMRB Stage 2 assessment, the A9 Environmental Steering Group (ESG), which includes Perth & Kinross Council, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) are invited to review the developing Environmental Assessment Chapters. You are therefore receiving the same level of environmental detail as the statutory consultees.

It should be further noted that elements of the current Draft DMRB Stage 2 Scheme Assessment Report, Part 3: Environmental Assessment Chapters will differ from the Technical Note (B2140002/TN/011 Revision A, Summary of DMRB Stage 2 Assessment) that was issued to Dunkeld & Birnam Community Council on 23 March 2016 in response to issues raised at the Community Council meeting held on 8 February 2016. This is as a result of further, more detailed assessment work, not required by the DMRB process at Stage 2 that was undertaken for the Technical Note to address specific comments raised at the 8 February 2016 meeting. The results presented in the Technical Note are for information purposes only and may not be included in the DMRB Stage 2 Scheme Assessment Report, Part 3: Environmental Assessment Chapters. Further assessment work will be undertaken at DMRB Stage 3 and mitigation recommended as appropriate.

Considering the time spent developing options to date, including the extent of community engagement that has input to this stage and, in order to end uncertainty within the community, it is important a Preferred Route Option is identified to draw this phase of work to a close.

Once you have had an opportunity to review the Draft DMRB Stage 2 Scheme Assessment Report, Part 3: Environmental Assessment Chapters, we would welcome your further views on the options presented. While we do not wish to limit the scope of your comments, please note that it is not necessary for Dunkeld & Birnam Community Council to identify a Preferred Route Option. As you recognise in your submission, we are progressing to the programme previously advised at the exhibition in January 2016 to announce a preferred route in autumn 2016, anticipated to be September 2016.

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In addition to refining the options and selecting the Preferred Route Option, the next stage of the project will also include more detailed consideration of environmental impacts and mitigation, accesses, lay-bys and facilities for pedestrians, cyclists and other Non-motorised Users (NMUs). The current anticipated timescales for the next stages of the Pass of Birnam to Tay Crossing project are:

- Preferred Route Option selection - Summer/Autumn 2016
- Development of Preferred Route Option and Environmental Impact Assessment - Autumn 2016 to Autumn 2017
- Statutory (planning) Process - Autumn 2017 to Winter 2018

In the meantime, we hope provision of the Draft DMRB Stage 2 Scheme Assessment Report, Part 3: Environmental Assessment Chapters for the Pass of Birnam to Tay Crossing project addresses many of your queries. A detailed response to each of the issues and recommendations raised in your submission will be provided in the near future. We note that the alternative options that you refer to are centred on the derogation of standards and we will also address this in our detailed response.

We welcome the opportunity to meet with the A9 Dualling Working Group and follow-up on the points raised in your response. Such a meeting would be with the members of the A9 Dualling Working Group and not the general public. We believe that this will be a more constructive format for such a discussion. The platform for individual residents to provide their comments is via the feedback forms at consultation events and directly to our Stakeholder Team at any other time.

Jacobs' intention is to continue dialogue with the A9 Dualling Working Group throughout the future stages of design and assessment and for the Group to work with us.

Yours sincerely

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ENC: CD copy of Draft DMRB Stage 2 Scheme Assessment Report,