

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 21 January 2026
2nd Meeting, 2026 (Session 6)

PE1992: Dual the A9 and improve road safety

Introduction

Petitioner Laura Hansler

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to deliver on the commitment it made in 2011, and address safety concerns on the A9 by:

- publishing a revised timetable and detailed plan for dualling each section;
- completing the dualling work by 2025; and
- creating a memorial to those who have lost their lives in road traffic incidents on the A9.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE1992>

1. The Committee has undertaken extensive work on this petition. In 2023, the Committee agreed to elevate its scrutiny to the level of an inquiry. [The Committee's report 'Inquiry into the A9 Dualling Programme', was published on 1 November 2024.](#)
2. [The Scottish Government response was received on 9 January 2025.](#)
3. [The Parliament then debated the report on 16 January 2025.](#)
4. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A**.
5. The Committee has received a new written submission from Rhoda Grant MSP, which is set out in **Annexe B**.
6. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's inquiry can be found on the petition's webpage.](#)
7. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
8. [The Scottish Government gave its initial response to the petition on 23 December 2022.](#)
9. On Wednesday 14 January 2026, the Cabinet Secretary for Transport delivered a ministerial statement to the Parliament on “A9 Dualling - Programme for 2035 Completion”. The relevant section of the Official Report is included at **Annexe C**.

10. [Transport Scotland also published the 2026 A9 Delivery Plan on 14 January 2026](#). A copy of this has been included at **Annexe D**.
11. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 4,323 signatures have been received on this petition.

Action

12. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

Clerks to the Committee
January 2026

Annexe A: Summary of petition

PE1992: Dual the A9 and improve road safety

Petitioner

Laura Hansler

Date Lodged

28 December 2022

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to deliver on the commitment it made in 2011, and address safety concerns on the A9 by:

- publishing a revised timetable and detailed plan for dualling each section;
- completing the dualling work by 2025; and
- creating a memorial to those who have lost their lives in road traffic incidents on the A9.

Previous action

Have been in contact with Fergus Ewing MSP and Kate Forbes MSP.

Background information

A social media awareness campaign called “A9 Dual Action Group”, was formed to highlight the following issues:

- The exponential rate of fatalities. The A9 has now become a road barely fit for purpose with an unsustainable influx of traffic on the infrastructure.
- In 2011, the Scottish Government pledged as "priority" an ambitious dualling scheme to be completed by 2025, between Perth to Inverness in its entirety. Since then, 59 people have lost their lives on the Perth to Inverness section of the A9 (based on figures provided by Transport Scotland).
- Whether there should be an investigation into the procurement procedure associated with this project.
- The need for mandatory safety features to be deployed on the A9 before any further loss of life.

The Action Group are also concerned that, more than 10 years after being labelled a priority, it is looking increasingly likely the Scottish Government will fail to deliver on their commitment to complete the A9 dualling project by 2025.

Annexe B: Written submission

Rhoda Grant MSP written submission, 17 December 2025

PE1992/M: Dual the A9 and improve road safety

I would like to thank the Committee for allowing my submission to be heard today. I am very sorry I cannot attend in person as I sit on another committee that meets at the same time.

I would however like to reiterate what I have said previously on this subject – the A9 is the gateway to the Highlands and beyond and it affects my constituents all over the region. Many of them have contacted me to share their concerns about the slow progress on the duelling project and the impact it has had on their communities.

As we approach the end of 2025, the deadline by which the SNP promised full dualling to Inverness, still only two of the eleven sections have been completed with another two in progress.

This delay is costing lives. Since 1 January 2021, there have been 170 collisions in the Highland Council area alone, 23 of which have been fatal. This equates to one death every eleven weeks. 2024 was the worst year for accidents with 49 injury collisions in the Highland Council area, two thirds (67.3%) of which were serious or fatal.

Some would argue that it is not dangerous roads which cause accidents but dangerous drivers. While it is true that driver behaviour plays a key role in the safety of our roads, their quality can be improved upon, and a dual carriageway would mitigate much driver error. The A9 carries the biggest share of harm for all accidents in Highland Council area, currently accounting for 29.6% of all injury collisions across Highland trunk roads from 2021.

The First Minister has said that the government remains committed to completing the dualling programme by the end of 2035 and that the necessary funding will be in place to do so. This is not sufficient however to reassure the public of what progress is being made.

As this petition requests, in order for the public to have confidence in the completion of the project, the Scottish government must publish a revised timetable and a detailed plan for the dualling of each section.

Therefore, I recently asked the First Minister if he would commit to introducing a duty of candour for the A9 project as recommended by the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee to ensure that the parliament and the public are fully informed about progress, delays, and financial challenges in real time.

We need an inquiry to assess what has gone wrong with this project and to examine the progress that has been made, with a new realistic timeframe for the delivery of this promise. I unequivocally support petition PE1992.

Annexe C: Official Report of Ministerial Statement: A9 Dualling - Programme for 2035 Completion, Meeting of the Parliament, 14 January 2026

The Deputy Presiding Officer (Liam McArthur): The next item of business is a statement by Fiona Hyslop on the A9 dualling programme for 2035 completion. The cabinet secretary will take questions at the end of her statement; therefore, there should be no interventions or interruptions.

15:00

The Cabinet Secretary for Transport (Fiona Hyslop): The A9 is a vital element of our national infrastructure that connects the communities of the Highlands and Islands with central Scotland and supports their economic and social wellbeing. Dualling the A9 between Perth and Inverness will improve the safety, reliability and resilience of the route, and this Government has been consistent in its commitment to completing that vital work.

In support of that commitment, in December 2023, the Government announced its delivery plan for the completion of the A9 dualling programme by the end of 2035. That plan involved the procurement of four design and build contracts and, subject to further decision making in late 2025, the procurement of two mutual investment model contracts.

As the Government indicated yesterday in the budget and spending review statement, the programme will be delivered using capital-funded contracts instead of mutual investment model contracts, and it will still achieve dualling of the A9 between Perth and Inverness by 2035.

I am pleased to provide an update for the Parliament on the A9 dualling programme and further detail on the decision making and on how that decision affects our delivery plan for the completion of this vital programme of work.

The 2023 delivery plan set target dates for progress of the dualling programme. So far, the Government has met all those targets dates, and construction is under way on the third and fourth sections of the programme—Tomatin to Moy and Tay crossing to Ballinluig—which, together, will provide approximately 11 miles of dualling. Procurement of the fifth section, Pitlochry to Killiecrankie, commenced in July this year, and we are on track to award that contract in autumn 2026. That will bring another four miles of the programme into construction. The Government has also made significant progress with statutory processes. Since December 2023, we have published draft orders for one project, made orders for a further three projects and completed land acquisition for six projects.

The 2023 delivery plan anticipated the use of two mutual investment model contracts to achieve completion of the dualling programme. The Government indicated at the time that that would be subject to further decision making in late 2025, to take account of updated assessments of expected market conditions. Extensive work to inform that decision making was undertaken throughout 2025. Our updated business case confirmed that the rationale for completing the dualling programme remains strong and that it is considered to provide value for money. Our market consultation

indicated a strong appetite among European contractors for involvement in the delivery of MIM contracts and an appetite among domestic contractors for involvement in the delivery of capital-funded contracts.

Our updated financial modelling indicates that the cost of MIM contracts is now around 28 per cent higher than the cost of equivalent capital-funded contracts—an increase from the 16 per cent difference estimated in 2023. The increased difference is primarily linked to the fact that the expected costs of borrowing for each MIM contract are now around 2 per cent higher per annum, which reflects macroeconomic factors impacting on borrowing costs.

It was concluded that using MIM contracts for the A9 dualling programme would provide poorer commercial value for money than would be provided by capital-funded contracts. Therefore, the Government will progress the A9 dualling programme to completion using capital-funded contracts. That important decision demonstrates the strength of the Government's commitment to meeting its target of completing the A9 dualling programme by the end of 2035.

The decision not to use MIM contracts has implications for how completion of the A9 dualling programme by 2035 will be achieved. The 2026 delivery plan continues to balance factors including industry's capacity to deliver and the need to minimise disruption to road users. It also takes into account the likely need for a public local inquiry for the Pass of Birnam to Tay crossing project. It brings forward the start of works for the Dalraddy to Slochd section in the north, providing earlier completion of the new grade-separated junctions that serve Aviemore and Carrbridge. It facilitates the earlier completion of a section of dualling that includes the new grade-separated junction at Dalnaspidal as part of a combined Glen Garry to Crubenmore contract, rather than as a stand-alone advance works contract.

The 2026 delivery plan is based on establishing a framework agreement that will streamline the procurement process and provide a pipeline of work, as the market has requested. We will continue to engage with the construction industry on the A9 dualling programme, including with the Civil Engineering Contractors Association, which has welcomed the use of capital-funded contracts.

Next week, in support of that aim, Transport Scotland will launch a further market consultation with interested parties on the design of the framework agreement. That consultation will inform procurement of the framework agreement, which is planned to commence in spring this year, with appointments being confirmed by the end of the year.

Once it is in place, the framework will be used to procure five contracts for completion of the six projects that are yet to commence procurement. Full details of the target dates for each contract to be procured are set out in the 2026 delivery plan, which has been published today on both Transport Scotland's website and the dedicated A9 dualling website.

The 2026 delivery plan maintains the target of having dualling operational between Perth and Inverness by the end of 2035. With continuous construction activity taking place across the corridor, dualling will continue to be brought into operation on a phased basis, with 50 per cent of the route between Perth and Inverness operating as dual carriageway by the end of 2030; 67 per cent by the end of 2032; 91 per cent by the end of 2034; and 100 per cent by the end of 2035.

Today's confirmation of the procurement and funding route for the remaining sections of the A9 dualling programme provides further reassurance for communities and businesses throughout the corridor on the timelines for construction of those projects.

I can also confirm that the updated cost estimate for the programme is now £3.97 billion at April 2025 prices. When adjusted for inflation, that is equivalent to £2.5 billion at April 2008 prices, which remains well within the original cost estimate of £3 billion at 2008 prices. This Government remains committed to providing the necessary funding in support of the estimated costs in order to deliver the dualling programme on track in 2035.

I will briefly cover three related matters. First, the Government has been progressing work to secure planning consent for the proposed active travel route between Aviemore and Carrbridge. Subject to obtaining the planning consent and completing land acquisition, those works will be included within the now earlier Dalraddy to Slochd section.

Secondly, Transport Scotland will continue to investigate the potential introduction of temporary traffic signals at the A923 Dunkeld junction and an associated reduced speed limit. Assuming that those proposals are confirmed, our target is to deliver those improvements during the 2026-27 financial year.

Thirdly, we will continue to prioritise road safety along the corridor. In 2025, we completed a £5.2 million package of short-term measures. We continue to work in partnership with Police Scotland and our wider road safety partners to respond, where appropriate, to any safety concerns on the route through our established processes, including the A9 safety group.

The 2023 delivery plan provided certainty on the target dates for key early milestones, as well as allowing for a further decision-making process to be completed in late 2025. That decision-making process has led to the 2026 delivery plan that I am announcing today, which provides further detail and certainty on the target dates for key milestones for the remainder of the dualling programme.

The Government is fully aware that much work remains to be done to deliver this vital major infrastructure programme, and we are relying on the contracting industry to work collaboratively with us to achieve that outcome. The Government has made it clear that completion of the A9 dualling programme by the end of 2035 is an absolute priority, and we have now set out clearly how we intend to achieve that goal.

I hope that today's update further reassures the communities that are served by the A9 that there is a clear, robust plan for dualling the A9 between Perth and Inverness by the end of 2035. The visible work that we can all see on the route will continue to ramp up, and I want to take the opportunity to thank all road users for their patience while we undertake this vital work to upgrade Scotland's arterial route, which will support the Highlands and benefit all of Scotland.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: The cabinet secretary will now take questions on the issues raised in her statement. I intend to allow around 20 minutes, after which we will need to move on to the next item of business. As ever, I would be grateful if members who wish to ask a question could press their request-to-speak buttons.

Sue Webber (Lothian) (Con): I thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of her statement. The dualling of the A9 was meant to be completed last year, but thanks to Scottish National Party incompetence, the can has been kicked down the undualled road to 2035 and taxpayers will now have to fork out almost £4 billion as a result of this catastrophic project mismanagement.

As costs soar and progress stalls, more lives are still being lost on this lifeline road. Yesterday, Shona Robison boasted about the additional £200 million to complete the A9 but—to be frank—that is a drop in the ocean in comparison with what is actually needed.

Laura Hansler, from the A9 dual action group, said that yesterday's announcement amounted to

“keeping a project technically alive while ensuring it never meaningfully progresses.”

Echoing the Scottish Conservatives' proposals, the Scottish Chambers of Commerce said that

“dualling ... must be accelerated, with clear routes for private capital to support.”

Nothing in the statement today addresses either of those statements. How can anyone believe a word that the cabinet secretary says, when her party has, time and again, broken its promise on dualling this key road?

Fiona Hyslop: I think that Sue Webber has selective memory when it comes to the financial constraints on capital projects that her party put on the Parliament and the Government. If she had been listening to the statement, she would have heard that I stated that the project is within the original budget, so the costs are not increasing in the way that she describes.

She implies that somehow the project is stalling. When was the last time Sue Webber actually drove the A9?

Sue Webber: Oh my goodness!

Fiona Hyslop: If she did, she would see the groundwork that is happening from Tomatin to Moy. How can the project be stalling when those works are happening at the north and the south ends of the A9 as we speak?

As she will know—[Interruption.]

Undoubtedly she has driven the A9 recently, which makes me wonder why she asked the question.

With regard to the budget, the cabinet secretary, in her comments yesterday, referred to the one-year budget and the investment there. I refer the member to the budget items at levels 2 and 3—she can find them in the budget documents and in the spending review; that is where the funding is.

We have said clearly that when we get to the latter sections of the A9 in particular, the work will be funded by revenue transferred to capital. The full funding of the requirements for the 2035 completion has been set out; we have identified how we are going to fund that and we have set out the programme. That is very certain indeed, and I refer the member to the new plan so that she can have a look at the budget figures and identify that we have delivered and are delivering.

The project has construction work happening now, and I encourage all members, if they want to have confidence that it is happening, to go and see the work on the A9.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: I can confirm that there is a lot of interest in asking questions, and we will get through all those questions only if members ask their questions and then listen to the responses.

Daniel Johnson (Edinburgh Southern) (Lab): I thank the cabinet secretary for advance sight of her statement. The SNP first committed to dualling the A9 at least as early as 2007—20 years ago. Despite promises to complete the work by last year, however, we are barely a third of the way through. The announcements yesterday and today merely commit to the completion being a decade late.

While today's announcement refers to using capital budgets rather than MIM or other financial models, we know from the Fraser of Allander Institute that capital budgets were cut by £850 million in the budget in the medium-term financial statement. That is a 10 per cent cut, despite exhausting the Scottish reserve and despite receiving more through the block grant.

Can the cabinet secretary confirm, therefore, what impact yesterday's cut will have on the A9 dualling and other transport projects? Can she outline what contingency measures will be put in place so that we can have confidence that the dualling of the A9 will be complete by 2035?

Fiona Hyslop: I refer the member to table 9.01 on page 28 of the spending review. The figures for trunk road network safety adaptation, maintenance and improvement are contained in the spending review, as is the next one-year budget for 2026-27. The review covers a number of years, so the figures for the A9 will have both capital and resource funding. The member will see the increase in the budget, which is reflected as we move to the latter stages of the spending review.

I deliberately wrote to the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee to advise that I would be making a statement about whether we would be using MIM contracts or capital funded contracts. What I have just announced has been baked in to the budget provision for one year, as well as the comprehensive spending review for future years. That is how it has been organised, which is why I can come to the chamber to deliver the statement that I have just made. I am conscious of time, Presiding Officer.

Emma Roddick (Highlands and Islands) (SNP): I am pleased to hear that we are still on track and, in particular, that the Slochd section will be brought forward. The grade-separated junctions at Aviemore and Carrbridge and the associated active travel route will make a huge difference to practicality and safety. Could the cabinet secretary provide more detail on the next steps for that section?

Fiona Hyslop: There is an opportunity to bring forward the Dalraddy to Slochd route. We know that there have been safety concerns about a number of junctions on the A9. Work on the three junctions serving Aviemore and Carrbridge will help to improve road safety. That will mean that that section of the road will become the first of the remaining sections to go to procurement. After the framework agreements have been established, the next stage will be to move to develop that area. That will be very welcome, as will the active travel section, which a number of people have been interested in.

Murdo Fraser (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Con): As Sue Webber said, the dualling of the A9 was supposed to have been completed last year. We are already 10 years behind where we should be, and too many lives have been lost in the meantime. I hope that the latest announcement will not turn out to be yet another broken promise from the SNP Government to the people of Perthshire and the Highlands.

In her statement, the cabinet secretary said that there are projects in the north section which have been brought forward. Has that been done at the expense of any projects in the south section? If so, which ones?

Fiona Hyslop: I am sure that the member will have been in the chamber in 2023 when the then cabinet secretary set out the 2023 delivery plan. I reassure him that all the milestones in that delivery plan had been approved. The member is quite right to identify that there has been an adjustment. The Glen Garry to Crubenmore section will go to procurement in 2027, with dualling operational in 2034. That will be a longer period for construction and some of the central sections may take longer. We have to look at what will happen to the Pass of Birnam, depending on the timing and results of any public inquiry, should that happen. The Glen Garry to Crubenmore section will allow us to at least try to get the Dalnaspidal junction into fairly early development. I know that that had been raised previously from a safety point of view.

The remainder of the contracts will be resequenced, but there are benefits within that. I hope that the member can appreciate that we are trying to optimise the remainder of the programme, with completion by 2035.

Kenneth Gibson (Cunninghame North) (SNP): Can the cabinet secretary advise what impact high levels of post-Covid inflation, coupled with years and years of cuts to Scotland's capital allocation by the Tories at Westminster—the architects of the high speed 2 fiasco, who are soon to be outdone by Labour who will cut our capital allocation to 2023 levels over the next five years—has had on A9 dualling and a host of other capital projects, ranging from new housing to hospitals and harbours?

Fiona Hyslop: The previous Conservative UK Government did not inflation-proof its capital budget. At the time, we forecast that that would have resulted in a nearly 10 per cent real-terms cut in our capital funding over the medium term. We should also remember that the previous UK Government stripped £6 billion out of our budget.

Despite facing significant demands on our capital budget, from inflationary pressures, economic uncertainty, and the energy and cost crises, we are using all the levers that are at our disposal to top up our capital funding through ScotWind. We will continue to prioritise capital funding to eliminate child poverty, grasp the opportunities of net zero, boost economic growth through our infrastructure plans, and maintain services. We can do that only with the funding that is available to us, which has been severely hampered by Westminster Governments.

Rhoda Grant (Highlands and Islands) (Lab): The timeline suggests that about 40 to 50 miles of the A9 could be under construction at the same time, yet the statement makes no mention of contingency for knock-on construction delays or of any mitigation for lengthy delays for road users at that time. It is clear that there are many risks to the project. Will the cabinet secretary therefore support the creation of a parliamentary committee dedicated to the project, as happened with the Queensferry crossing, and will she commit the Scottish Government to a duty of candour, as called for by the Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee?

Fiona Hyslop: I am being as open as I can be. I have come to the chamber whenever there is anything to announce.

Having a dedicated committee is a matter not for me, but for the next session of Parliament. However, I have indicated to the current convener of the Net Zero, Energy and Transport Committee that I think that transport would get more attention if the committees were readjusted. The current committee is diligent in its work and has received regular six-monthly updates from Transport Scotland officials. I am also open to being examined by the committee on the provision.

I think that the way in which the programme has been set out has balanced what it means for contractors in terms of the market and how we manage that constant work, which Sue Webber does not seem to understand is happening now. We have to balance the work that is done with the needs of drivers and we have to try to prevent frustrations.

Ms Grant is right to identify the issue that she raises but, if we want the A9 dualled, there will need to be construction work, and our contractors are working very hard to minimise disruptions, as I think that people who travel on the Tomatin to Moy route appreciate already.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We have about eight minutes left and 10 members who wish to ask questions, so we will need slightly briefer questions and responses.

Rona Mackay (Strathkelvin and Bearsden) (SNP): The dualling of the A9 is a fundamental project to connect Scotland and to ensure that we have the physical infrastructure to meet the needs of the country. Will the cabinet secretary tell us more about how the Scottish Government is enhancing connectivity through infrastructure projects such as that?

Fiona Hyslop: I have limited information before me today, but I will be happy to point Rona Mackay to a number of projects. I am pleased that the comprehensive spending review has funding in it that will help to make improvements at the Rest and Be Thankful on the A83 main artery west, and that, with regard to the road from Inverness, the budget and the spending review contain funding for advance works on the A96 next year, and to progress the work on the Inshes to Smithton route and the Nairn bypass in particular.

Mark Ruskell (Mid Scotland and Fife) (Green): Anyone who has attempted to turn north on to the A9 at Dunkeld will recognise the absolute road safety nightmare that is faced by communities day in, day out. Although I welcome the mention of that junction in the statement, what is proposed falls way short of what the communities have campaigned for over many years. They want a roundabout and permanent speed reduction on the A9. What reassurance can the cabinet secretary give that the improvements that the communities want will be delivered and that we will end up with a safer road rather than just a faster road?

Fiona Hyslop: I recognise those issues, which is why, in my statement, I addressed some of the issues around the A923-A9 junction. There have been local representations about trying to manage them, and we discussed the matter at the most recent meeting of the A9 safety group, in relation to what can be done with our contractors. That is why we are exploring the possibility of implementing a speed reduction, along with, potentially, signalling.

On the idea of a temporary roundabout, I note that there have been a significant number of objections made and concerns raised about that from people in the Pass of Birnam and Dunkeld area. If the issue goes to a public inquiry, as it might do, it will not be possible for work to proceed on a temporary roundabout.

Willie Rennie (North East Fife) (LD): The minister does not like it, but she needs to be reminded that we are talking about a promise that was supposed to be delivered last year. We are years behind where we should be, and people are suffering as a result.

The minister highlighted the fact that we need to have candour and transparency. In the interests of that transparency, will she set out what is now high on the risk register for the project to dual the A9 up and down its length?

Fiona Hyslop: In terms of the risk factors, some disruptions are outwith the control of contractors. For example, severe weather over lengths of time can cause issues.

We are planning the project as tightly as we can. In my opening remarks, I said that we would have to work with contractors to ensure that we can deliver the project. That has already happened, and I am sure that it will continue to happen.

The framework agreement will provide more certainty, which will be helpful. However, the on-going risk aspects are something that I and future Governments, as well as future committees of this Parliament, will consider as we progress over the years ahead, towards the delivery date in 2035.

Clare Adamson (Motherwell and Wishaw) (SNP): I thank the cabinet secretary for her statement. I am really interested in the track record of delivering road infrastructure improvements, and I welcome the commitments on both the A9 and A96 that we have heard about this afternoon. Will the cabinet secretary tell us a bit more about the wider plans in Scotland and how those particular roads will help connectivity with the central belt?

Fiona Hyslop: I make the point that the Highlands and the central belt both benefit from the dualling of the A9.

We have already carried out many additional projects. Given Clare Adamson's earlier question about private finance, I point out that we use private finance when appropriate. The Aberdeen western peripheral route and the M8, M73 and M74 motorway improvements all include that element, and the payments for them are identified. We must ensure that we have value for money.

There are limits to our borrowing. If people want us to use additional funding, our borrowing limits would have to be increased. However, we will pursue the A83 works and the Inverness to Nairn section. Obviously, there are constant improvements on the A75 and the A77, but the work on the A75 bypasses is important, as well.

Edward Mountain (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I agree with the cabinet secretary that there should be a separate transport committee in the Parliament to overlook these projects.

The final section of the A9 to be dualled will be the northern section. Yet again, that means that the Highlands come last. According to the programme, 50 per cent of the dualling will be done in the final five years, but not one bit of the A9 dualling that has been carried out so far was carried out on time. Why should the highlanders believe

that you will stick to your timetable? Will you outline the contingency plans should you not reach the deadlines that you have set yourself?

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Speak through the chair.

Fiona Hyslop: Regarding the northern section, Tomatin to Moy is a northern section that is being worked on now. It will be done by the spring of 2028, and the Dalraddy to Slochd section by 2032. That will mean that, on completion by 2032, there will be 38 miles dualled from Inverness to Kincaig.

That information on those 38 miles should reassure Edward Mountain about what is happening in the north. That is one of the significant changes in this work, but, as I mentioned, there will be an area—Glen Garry to Crubenmore—that is due by the end of 2034. I said that we are delivering the first sections on target.

Marie McNair (Clydebank and Milngavie) (SNP): Given how essential the A9 is to Scotland, it is vital that we improve the safety and reliability of the route for road users across the Highlands and beyond. Will the cabinet secretary provide an update and expand on the recent discussions of the national road safety strategic partnership board and outline the steps that the Scottish Government is taking to drive forward safety improvements across Scotland's trunk road network?

Fiona Hyslop: The statement was specifically about the A9, and the A9 safety group continues to meet. Some of the consequences regarding safety improvements that I mentioned in my statement came from that group.

Any death on any of our roads is regrettable. There was one fatality on the A9 Perth to Inverness section in the operational records that we have—although sometimes those figures can alter—but we need to be constantly vigilant. That is why I put a great deal of emphasis on road safety investment, and £12 million is being spent on delivering casualty-reduction measures and speed reductions on our trunk road network.

Fergus Ewing (Inverness and Nairn) (Ind): The Tomatin to Moy section was announced in 2021, but it will not be completed until 2028 at the earliest. That is seven years, and there are eight remaining sections. Let us do the maths: if there are similar delays, we are talking about 2075 and not 2035.

When the Tomatin to Moy section was first tendered, it got one offer of £170 million, which was regarded as too expensive, but the outturn figure was £310 million or thereabouts. Does the cabinet secretary agree that there must be an examination of what went wrong and why Transport Scotland failed so abysmally? Will she recognise that there must be an inquiry by Audit Scotland into that scandal of gross abuse and the failure of Transport Scotland to develop terms and conditions that produced competitive bids for the industry, which is a sine qua non—

The Deputy Presiding Officer: Cabinet secretary.

Fiona Hyslop: Competitive bids are what is required. I think that Fergus Ewing is being selective. I know that he likes to dwell on the past—I understand that—*[Interruption.]* We must learn the lessons of that and then move forward. That is what the 2023 delivery plan set out.

I correct the member: the Tomatin to Moy procurement began in September 2023, the contract award was made in 2024 and the dualling operation is due to be complete by spring 2028.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: We will conclude at the 20-minute mark, so I will take the next three questions but they will need to be brief, as will the responses.

Jamie Halcro Johnston (Highlands and Islands) (Con): Communities living alongside the A9 have endured years of uncertainty about when work will start, which has often impacted on their ability to properly plan for the future. Many are concerned that, when work finally starts, little consideration will have been given to taking into account existing or planned work on major energy infrastructure projects in the area. Does the cabinet secretary recognise those concerns, and will she agree to come to the Highlands and meet my constituents to hear those concerns first hand?

Fiona Hyslop: In relation to the A9 and providing certainty, we are trying to set out for the constituents of Jamie Halcro Johnston—and, indeed, for the constituents of all members across the Highlands—what the work will mean for their area and what will happen locally. Community involvement is essential, and I have been asked by a number of members to look into issues for individual constituents.

The point about energy and planning is important. That is why I, as Cabinet Secretary for Transport, have been encouraging Transport Scotland to engage, and ensuring that it does so—particularly with our renewables sector in relation to different plans. Jamie Halcro Johnston is perhaps talking about actual delivery, whereas I am talking about transportation requirements, but it is an essential part of our infrastructure planning, and I am very cognisant of what he said.

Jamie Halcro Johnston can write to me to explain what, in particular, he is seeking me to do. I am in regular correspondence about the interests of individual constituents—not least with the First Minister and other members who have constituency interests along the A9.

Douglas Ross (Highlands and Islands) (Con): I realise that the statement is about the A9, but the cabinet secretary herself has mentioned the A96 in her answers. Given that those two roads are very much linked and that many people who travel up the A9 go on to the A96, if we are supposed to believe the earlier correction to the record that the SNP is still committed to dualling the A96 in full, will the cabinet secretary tell us when that will happen?

Fiona Hyslop: Inshes to Smithton is clearly an important part of the A9 and the connection to the A96. That is where the budget has provided for early advance works to take place, similarly to the Nairn bypass. We will need to look at the procurement method, which would determine which phases of the A9 can be developed and when. However, our commitment to the full dualling of the A96 is unwavering.

In terms of the work and the pressures on the fiscal position, I have set out that, in relation to the Inverness to Nairn aspects, we would expect advance construction early on. Construction work and procurement will certainly take place in the next spending review, and we would see construction of those two parts during the next spending review. At the same time, we will be working on progress improvements

eastwards, including on the Elgin bypass. Steps in taking forward an Elgin bypass will include further route development.

Davy Russell (Hamilton, Larkhall and Stonehouse) (Lab): After 18 years, we are now promised that, in nine more years, we will finally have the dualled A9, which will cost between £16 million and £30 million per kilometre. That is 50 per cent more than the going rate—I am telling you that from experience. Are we using golden nuggets or asphalt? Does the Government not see that something is not right? There have been 20 years of delays, and the north-east has been deprived of billions of pounds in economic growth. Countless lives have been lost on a road that is not fit for purpose. The Scottish people deserve better. Will the cabinet secretary explain why costs are far above the going rate?

Fiona Hyslop: Anybody will know—I am sure that Davy Russell will know from his experience—that construction costs and inflation have been particularly problematic over recent years.

I agree with Davy Russell that capital infrastructure is a major driver for economic growth. If he can speak to his Westminster counterparts and the Labour UK Government to ensure that this Parliament and this Government get more capital, we can drive ahead our infrastructure projects. In the meantime, we will use our resources appropriately and deliver, as I have set out in the statement today.

The Deputy Presiding Officer: That concludes this item of business. There will be a brief pause before we move to the next item of business to allow members on the front benches to change.

Annexe D: Copy of A9 dualling Perth to Inverness 2026 Delivery Plan

Delivery plan

In December 2023, the Cabinet Secretary the then Transport, Net Zero and Just Transition [announced the delivery plan for the remaining A9 Dualling projects in Parliament](#).

In January 2026, following the decision to procure the remaining contracts using capital funded contracts, the Cabinet Secretary for Transport [announced the 2026 Delivery Plan for the A9 Dualling Programme in Parliament](#).

Progress so far

Since the start of A9 Dualling two projects have been brought into operational use as dual carriageways:

- Kincaig to Dalraddy – dualling operational in September 2017
- Luncarty to Pass of Birnam – dualling operational in August 2021

Two projects are currently under construction:

- **Tomatin to Moy** – dualling expected to be operational by the end of Spring 2028
- **Tay Crossing to Ballinluig** – dualling expected to be operational by the end of 2028

One project is currently in procurement:

- **Pitlochry to Killiecrankie** – contract award expected Autumn 2026 and dualling expected to be operational by the end of 2030

Following publication of the 2023 Delivery Plan, all of the milestone set out in the plan were delivered as planned:

- Award of the contract for **Tomatin to Moy** – July 2024
- Commencement of procurement for **Tay Crossing to Ballinluig** – May 2024
- Award of the contract for **Tay Crossing to Ballinluig** – July 2025
- Commencement of procurement for **Pitlochry to Killiecrankie** – July 2025
- Completion of further decision making on the use of Mutual Investment Model contracts – Late 2025

Plan for future progress

Following the Government's announcement in January 2026, completion of A9 Dualling will now be delivered entirely through **capital-funded design and build or similar contracts**

The 2026 Delivery Plan is based on the establishment of a Framework Agreement, under which five contracts will be procured to deliver the remaining projects that have not yet reached procurement, whilst maintaining the target of completing

dualling by the end of 2035. The updated Delivery Plan includes the following updates:

- **Framework Agreement** – procurement expected to commence Spring 2026, parties appointed Winter 2026/2027
- **Dalraddy to Slochd** – procurement expected to commence Winter 2026/2027, contract award expected Autumn 2027, dualling expected to be operational by end of 2032
- **Glen Garry to Crubenmore** – Glen Garry to Dalwhinnie and Dalwhinnie to Crubenmore projects to be procured as a single contract, procurement expected to commence Autumn 2027, contract award expected Summer 2028, dualling expected to be operational by end of 2034
- **Pass of Birnam to Tay Crossing** – subject to completion of statutory processes, procurement expected to commence Summer 2028, contract award expected Spring 2029, dualling expected to be operational by end of 2033
- **Killiecrankie to Glen Garry** – procurement expected to commence Spring 2029, contract award expected Winter 2029/30, dualling expected to be operational by end of 2034
- **Crubenmore to Kincaig** – procurement expected to commence Winter 2029/30, contract award expected Autumn 2030, dualling expected to be operational by end of 2035

This approach will create a rolling programme of construction leading to the progressive opening of dualled sections. It is expected that:

- 50% of the A9 between Perth and Inverness will be dualled by the end of 2030
- 67% by the end of 2032
- 91% by the end of 2034
- 100% by the end of 2035

Estimated Programme Cost

The updated cost estimate for the programme is £3.97 billion (at April 2025 prices). When adjusted for inflation, this is equivalent to £2.5 billion at April 2008 prices, which remains within the original cost estimate of £3 billion at 2008 prices.