

7. Consultation and Scoping

7.1. Introduction

- 7.1.1. This chapter describes the consultation and scoping process that was undertaken as part of the Environmental Impact assessment (EIA). Consultation is a process that continues throughout the planning, design and construction stages of a project, helping to inform the environmental assessments in terms of scope, methods, type of impacts and identifying mitigation/enhancements.
- 7.1.2. Scoping determines the relevant information and parameters to be assessed and methodologies adopted. This DMRB Stage 3 assessment has utilised the findings of the DMRB Stage 2 environmental assessments to inform the scoping process.
- 7.1.3. Transport Scotland's Engaging with Communities documentⁱ sets out the ways in which the public and stakeholders have the opportunity to input during the design, development and construction phases of the A9 Dualling.

Consultation

- 7.1.4. The purpose of the consultation is to:
- ensure that statutory consultees (i.e. those with responsibilities for protecting the environment and regulating any activities which may adversely affect existing environmental conditions), other non-statutory bodies with a particular interest in the environment, and the public, are informed of the Proposed Scheme and are provided with an opportunity to comment
 - obtain baseline information regarding existing environmental site conditions
 - help to establish key environmental issues and identify potential impacts to be considered during the environmental assessment
 - inform the scope of the assessments and reporting
 - seek input to the design and development of appropriate mitigation
- 7.1.5. This chapter outlines the consultation undertaken. Appendix A7.1 provides a summary of consultation responses, the key issues raised, and how these have been taken into account.

Scoping

- 7.1.6. A scoping reportⁱⁱ was prepared for the A9 Dualling, which included consideration of all projects included in the Dualling programme, including the Proposed Scheme.
- 7.1.7. The scoping report set out a summary of the scope of the Stage 3 environmental assessment, based on DMRB and informed by discussions with statutory consultees who facilitated the agreement on a number of aspects such as the type and extent of the surveys to be undertaken.
- 7.1.8. A more detailed scope of works for each of the technical assessments is set out in the relevant chapters of this Environmental Statement (ES).

7.2. Approach and Methods

- 7.2.1. The consultation process involved identifying and engaging with a wide range of consultees, comprising statutory bodies (such as The Highland Council, Scottish Natural Heritage, Historic Environment Scotland and Scottish Environment Protection Agency), non-statutory organisations (such as Scotways and Sustrans Scotland), landowners and the public.
- 7.2.2. Consultees were identified through review of previous studies relating to the A9 Dualling (and other major roads projects), input from the technical specialists involved in the EIA and the consideration of communities and landowners within the influence of the Proposed Scheme.
- 7.2.3. Engagement with consultees was undertaken through regular forum and groups, public exhibitions and specific meetings, as described below.

A9 Dualling Programme-wide Consultation

- 7.2.4. Engagement with statutory and non-statutory stakeholders is facilitated through the following groups and forums that meet at regular intervals:
- Environmental Steering Group
 - Environmental Forum
 - Non-Motorised User Forum
- 7.2.5. The purpose of these groups / forums is to facilitate consultation between A9 consultants and stakeholders; to provide an opportunity to discuss requirements relating to statutory responsibilities and other issues; and to provide regular updates on and an opportunity for organisations to review emerging design work.
- 7.2.6. The groups and forums comprise representatives from various agencies (listed below), Transport Scotland, Transport Scotland's consultants and other stakeholders.

Environmental Steering Group

- 7.2.7. An Environmental Steering Group (ESG) comprises the following statutory stakeholders:
- Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA)
 - Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)
 - Historic Environment Scotland (HES)
 - Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA)
 - Perth and Kinross Council (PKC)
 - The Highland Council (THC)
- 7.2.8. The ESG meets each month to review progress and design details covering all projects in the A9 Dualling programme.

Environmental Forum

- 7.2.9. The Environmental Forum comprises statutory and non-statutory environmental stakeholders including the following:
- all members of the ESG

- Forestry Commission Scotland
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds Scotland
- Tay District Salmon Fisheries Board
- Spey Fishery Board
- Findhorn, Nairn and Lossie Fisheries Trust
- Badenoch and Strathspey Conservation Group
- Buglife – The Invertebrate Conservation Trust
- Scottish Badgers
- British Deer Society
- Scottish Wildlife Trust
- Scottish Badgers

7.2.10. The Environmental Forum meets on a regular basis as required (generally every 6 months) with project updates provided, including progress of environmental assessments, and there is opportunity for input from attendees.

Landscape Forum

7.2.11. The Landscape Forum comprises the landscape architects from Transport Scotland's consultants and Transport Scotland's landscape advisor. The Landscape Forum has undertaken consultation throughout the assessment process with SNH, CNPA and the relevant local authorities to reach agreement on the approach to the assessment, finalise viewpoint locations and appropriate mitigation strategies.

NMU Forum

7.2.12. The Non-Motorised User (NMU) Forum has also been developed to engage with and seek views on specific design aspects relating to NMU access and includes stakeholders with walking, cycling and equestrian interests.

7.2.13. The NMU Forum met on two occasions in May 2015 and May 2016, with Forum members also invited to attend the public exhibitions (refer to sections 7.2.22-7.2.25 below). At these events NMU stakeholders were updated on the A9 Dualling programme, including the A9 NMU Access Strategyⁱⁱⁱ, and provided details of the developing scheme designs for each project focussing on NMU facilities and access routes. A summary of NMU stakeholder feedback relevant to the Proposed Scheme is provided in Appendix A7.1.

Scheme Specific Consultation

7.2.14. Additional, focussed stakeholder consultations regarding the specifics of the Proposed Scheme have also been undertaken with statutory organisations, landowners and other non-statutory bodies between 2015 and 2017.

Statutory and Non-Statutory Consultation

7.2.15. In addition to consultations with organisations via the ESG and Environmental Forum, face-to-face consultations (relevant to the environmental assessments) were also undertaken with the following:

- THC

- SEPA
- SNH
- Sustrans Scotland
- Scotways
- Findhorn, Nairn and Lossie Fisheries Trust

7.2.16. As well as providing an update on the developing scheme design, these consultations focussed on specific aspects where the project team were seeking inputs to developing aspects of the designs from stakeholders.

Community Council Consultation

7.2.17. Specific engagement with Strathdearn Community Council has been ongoing throughout the DMRB Stage 2 and Stage 3 assessments and has aimed to inform of scheme progress and to seek feedback on any issues of concern with regard to potential effects on the local community. Issues of relevance to the environmental assessments are included in Appendix A7.1.

Landowner Consultation

7.2.18. Landowner identification commenced in 2015 and engagement with landowners has also been ongoing throughout the DMRB Stage 2 and Stage 3 assessments. This has involved door-to-door enquiries, written enquiries and meetings with both landowners and their agents. Landowners provided the following information in relation to their property interests:

- details of the owners and occupiers of land
- the extent of ownership information relating to any other land occupied either under lease, or through another informal agreement
- type of land use, activities and access arrangements
- details of any agricultural, sporting or forestry activities carried out

7.2.19. Landowners were also provided updates on scheme development, and provided with the opportunity to comment on particular aspects of design potentially interfacing with their interests.

7.2.20. Information was recorded in meeting notes, and the information gathered during the landowner identification and consultation process used to inform the Proposed Scheme development.

7.2.21. Specific meetings were held with landowners having agricultural, sporting or forestry interests as described in Chapter 8 People and Communities: Community and Private Assets.

Public Exhibitions and Drop-in Sessions

7.2.22. A series of public exhibitions and drop-in sessions have been held during the DMRB Stage 2 and Stage 3 assessment work. Events were held on the following dates in the village of Tomatin:

- 18 August 2015 – drop in session
- 26/27 October 2015 – public exhibition

- 14/15 November 2016 – public exhibition
- 18/19 May 2017 – public consultation event

7.2.23. The exhibitions provided the general public with information on the Proposed Scheme and were attended by key representatives from the project team including representatives from Transport Scotland and Transport Scotland’s consultants (including members of the environmental team). Exhibitions also provided the opportunity for public comment on the developing scheme design, verbally at the event and/or via a feedback form.

7.2.24. The exhibitions and drop-in sessions supplemented the exhibitions that were undertaken during the A9 Dualling Programme Preliminary Engineering Services work and the Strategic Environmental Assessment, as discussed in Chapter 3.

7.2.25. Invites to specific individual meetings to be held during the exhibitions and drop-in sessions were also sent out, primarily focusing on affected landowners.

7.3. Consultation Summary

7.3.1. The key issues raised during the consultation process are summarised in each chapter of the ES as relevant to that particular subject. Information and comments received have been taken into account during development of the Proposed Scheme and have helped to inform the design and assessment processes.

7.3.2. A summary of information and inputs relating to environmental aspects as provided by consultees is given in Appendix A7.1. This includes details of comments received and where these have been taken into account in the ES.

7.4. References

ⁱ Transport Scotland (2016); A9 Dualling Programme Engaging with Communities Summer 2016 Update.

ⁱⁱ Transport Scotland (2016); A9 Dualling Perth to Inverness EIA Scoping Report.

ⁱⁱⁱ Transport Scotland (2016); A9 Dualling Programme Non-Motorised User (NMU) Access Strategy.