1 Introduction

1.1 Background

1.1.1 The A9 Trunk Road forms a strategic link on Scotland's Transport Network, linking Edinburgh to Thurso and passing close to Stirling, Perth and Inverness, as shown on Figure 1.1. This route is also a key link between the Scottish Highlands and Central Scotland, and is vital to supporting the growth and development of the economy in the north of Scotland.

1.1.2 To the south of Perth, the A9 is currently dual carriageway to where it meets the M9 at Dunblane. To the north of Perth the character of the road changes to predominantly single carriageway, interspersed with sections of dual carriageway and Wide Single 2+1 (WS2+1) (sections consisting of two lanes of travel in one direction and a single lane of traffic in the opposite direction).

1.1.3 This important link is used by a combination of different vehicle types, including coaches, Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs), and agricultural, tourist, local and long distance traffic. The mix of usage has led to an increase in driver stress, particularly during the summer months and holiday periods where traffic levels tend to be higher. The nature of the non-dualled sections is such that there is a lack of safe overtaking opportunities, which has led to a number of serious accidents. There is also a lack of alternative diversion routes, which can cause severe delays when accidents occur.

1.1.4 The Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment launched the Scottish Government's Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP; December 2011), which sets the Scottish Government's plans for infrastructure investment up to 2030. Included in the IIP is the commitment to upgrade the A9 Trunk Road to dual carriageway between Perth and Inverness by 2025. This commitment follows earlier work undertaken as part of the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR) in 2009, which identified dualling of the A9 as a priority intervention.

1.1.5 The A9 between Perth and Inverness requires dualling between the following sections, from south to north, as shown on Figure 1.1:

- Luncarty to Pass of Birnam;
- Pass of Birnam to Ballinluig;
- Pitlochry to Killiecrankie;
- Killiecrankie to Glen Garry;
- Glen Garry to Crubenmore;
- Crubenmore to Kincraig;
- Kincraig to Dalraddy;
- Dalraddy to Slochd; and
- Tomatin to Moy.

1.1.6 This Environmental Statement (ES) has been prepared in relation to the southern-most of these A9 sections; Luncarty to Pass of Birnam, which has been progressed to a 'Stage 3' level of design, in accordance with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB). As explained in Section 4.2 (Scheme Procurement) and Section 4.3 (Sustainable Development Policy) of Chapter 4 (The Proposed Scheme), this will form the basis for the detailed design to be constructed by the appointed Contractor(s), subject to agreement with Transport Scotland and adherence to the environmental mitigation and constraints identified in this ES.

1.1.7 One further section is currently at a similar stage of design development (Kincraig to Dalraddy), with the remaining sections forming part of the wider programme for A9 dualling. A brief background to the higher-level considerations of the overarching programme for the full A9 is provided in Chapter 2 (Need for the Scheme).

1.2 Luncarty to Pass of Birnam

1.2.1 A Route Improvement Strategy Study (RISS) (Scott Wilson, 2005) (Scotland), aimed to identify a route improvement scheme for the Perth to Blair Atholl section of the A9. Part of the emerging strategy was to undertake a programme of upgrading between Perth and Pitlochry. The findings of the RISS (Scott Wilson, 2005) were subject to appraisal as part of The Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR), first reported in 2009.

1.2.2 The Luncarty to Pass of Birnam Strategic Planning Study was completed in January 2009 (Atkins, 2009a), accompanied by a DMRB Stage 2 Environmental Assessment in February 2009 (Atkins, 2009b). The DMRB Stage 2 assessment considered the feasibility of four different route options, whereby the environmental, engineering, economic and traffic advantages, disadvantages and constraints of each route were identified. Although the Strategic Planning Study recommended Option 3B as the preferred option, no formal decision was announced by Transport Scotland as it was decided that additional public consultation should inform the decision.

1.2.3 In January 2012, Transport Scotland held a public exhibition, presenting two options from the Strategic Planning Study. The options presented were Option 1B: widening alternating between the west and east side of the existing A9, and Option 3B: parallel widening to the east of the existing A9. Both of these options shared the same junction strategy at Bankfoot and Tullybelton/Stanley. A number of comments regarding these options were received from members of the public attending the exhibitions in January 2012.

1.2.4 Jacobs was commissioned by Transport Scotland in August 2012 to progress the DMRB Stage 3 design of the preferred route, including completion of a DMRB Stage 3 Environmental Impact Assessment, (EIA) and to provide services to complete an ES and scheme orders.

1.2.5 Prior to commencing DMRB Stage 3 assessment, Jacobs undertook a review of the comments received from the public exhibitions to establish whether these could be addressed by amending the previously identified preferred option. Following discussions with Transport Scotland, revisions to the preferred Option 3B design were developed and assessed, and a Stage 2 Addendum Report was completed (Jacobs, 2013). A refined design referred to as 'Option 3B Addendum' was taken forward as the preferred option to form the basis of Stage 3 design development and assessment, and was presented to members of the public at exhibitions in June 2013 to obtain further comment and input.

1.3 The Proposed Scheme

1.3.1 The A9 Dualling: Luncarty to Pass of Birnam DMRB Stage 3 engineering design assessed in the EIA and reported in this ES is hereafter referred to as 'the proposed scheme' and is shown on Figure 1.2.

1.3.2 The proposed scheme comprises dualling of approximately 9.5km of the A9**,** to be achieved through a combination of widening and upgrades to the existing A9 carriageway. The proposed scheme also incorporates:

- upgrade to road drainage;
- revisions to local access; and
- provision of a grade separated junction to Tullybelton/Stanley.

1.4 Statutory Context for EIA

1.4.1 The legal requirement for an EIA is determined by the Environmental Impact Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 2011 (hereafter referred to as the 'EIA Regulations'). The EIA Regulations implement European Commission Directive 85/337/EEC, as amended by Directive 97/11/EC, regarding the assessment of the environmental effects of certain public and private projects and Directive 2003/35/EC regarding public participation.

1.4.2 An EIA of certain road construction or improvement projects is also required under the terms of the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984, as amended by both by the current (1999, as amended) and original (1988) EIA Regulations.

1.4.3 The EIA Regulations categorise developments according to their requirement for an EIA. Annex 1 lists large-scale or potentially high impact developments for which an EIA is always required. Annex 2 lists developments that may or may not require an EIA depending on the characteristics and location of the development, and the significance of potential effects.

1.4.4 On the basis that the proposed scheme requires 69.38 hectares (ha) to be acquired (through Compulsory Purchase; CPO) which is greater than 1 ha, and due to the location of part of the proposed scheme in a sensitive area (the A9 crosses watercourses designated as part of the River Tay Special Area of Conservation (SAC)), it is considered to constitute a 'relevant project'. Due to the extent and nature of the proposed works it is considered likely that the project may have significant environmental effects. Therefore, the conclusion of the screening exercise was that the proposed scheme required an EIA. This screening process was recorded in information to support a Record of Determination, submitted to Transport Scotland in March 2013 (see Appendix A6.4).

1.4.5 The EIA of the proposed scheme has formed an integral part of the engineering design and appraisal process. The purpose of EIA is to investigate the likely effect of the proposed scheme on the biological, physical and historical environment, as well as on members of the public and on current or planned future use of the environment.

1.4.6 The EIA process also provides a valuable opportunity to reduce potential environmental effects through design refinement. The EIA has informed decision making throughout the design process to address potentially significant effects where practicable, such as by refinement of route alignment or by the incorporation of measures to avoid or prevent, reduce, remedy or offset any potential adverse environmental effects.

1.5 Environmental Statement (ES)

1.5.1 As noted in Section 1.3 (The Proposed Scheme), the proposed scheme has been subject to EIA that establishes detailed information about the likely main environmental effects. This ES reports the findings of the EIA process undertaken for the proposed scheme.

1.5.2 The assessments reported in the ES have followed the guidelines set out in DMRB, Volume 11 (Highways Agency, 1999; as amended), including relevant DMRB Interim Advice Notes (IAN), such as IAN 125/09. In addition to DMRB, other relevant guidance has also been considered where relevant, such as the Guidelines for Environmental Impact Assessment (IEMA, 2004). Further details on the guidance applicable to the individual assessment chapters are referenced in the relevant ES chapters.

1.5.3 Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations outlines the information to be included in an ES. Accordingly, this ES provides the following:

- a description of the proposed scheme, including details of the site and the road design, land use requirements, and an estimate by type and quantity of any emissions arising;
- an outline of the main alternatives and the main reasons for the choice of the proposed scheme, taking into account the environmental effects;
- a description of the aspects of the environment likely to be significantly affected by the proposed scheme;
- a description of the likely significant impacts of the proposed scheme on the environment, including direct and any indirect, secondary, cumulative, short, medium and long term, permanent and temporary, beneficial and adverse effects, and a description of the forecasting methods used to assess the effects on the environment;

- a description of the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and where possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment;
- an indication of any difficulties encountered in compiling the required information; and
- a non-technical summary of the above information.

1.5.4 This ES is presented as shown in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Structure of the Environmental Statement

ES Component	Description
Non Technical Summary (NTS)	
At front of the ES	Summary of the ES in non-technical language. Also available as a separate document.
Volume 1: Main Report	
Chapters 1 - 4	These provide project background and proposed scheme information. Following Chapter 1, Chapter 2 sets out the need for the scheme, Chapter 3 explains the alternatives considered and Chapter 4 provides a description of the Stage 3 design.
Chapter 5	This provides an overview of the assessment process, setting out the environmental parameters considered, and explaining how the assessment of environmental effects was undertaken.
Chapter 6	This summarises the EIA consultation and scoping process, and provides a summary of the key issues raised and how these have been taken into account.
Chapters 7 - 18	Reporting of EIA for each specialist environmental parameter, including an introduction to the subject area, approach and methods, baseline (i.e. existing) conditions, assessment of effects, mitigation and residual effects.
Chapter 19	This considers the overall (cumulative) impact of the proposed scheme and potential cumulative effect with other developments in the area, where not covered within the preceding chapters.
Chapters 20-21	These provide tabulated summaries of the mitigation proposed and the key residual effects remaining after implementation of mitigation.
Volume 2: Appendices – Specialist Technical Reports	
Appendices A4.1 - A18.2	Technical reference information supporting the ES chapters, such as calculations and detailed background data. Appendix number corresponds to the relevant ES chapter (e.g. Appendix A7.1 relates to Chapter 7; Appendix A11.1 relates to Chapter 11).
Volume 3: Figures	
Figures 1.1 -16.3	Graphics supporting the ES chapters, illustrating the proposed scheme and environmental information. Figure reference corresponds to the relevant ES chapter (e.g. Chapter 7 refers to Figure 7.1 *et seq*.).

1.5.5 A glossary of terms and a list of abbreviations are also provided at the front of Volume 1.

1.5.6 This ES presents the assessment of the proposed scheme as described in Chapter 4 (The Proposed Scheme). The design of the proposed scheme may be refined, but will still be deemed to comply with this ES provided that such refinements to this design are subject to environmental review to ensure that the residual effects would be no worse than those reported in this ES.

1.5.7 Some detailed aspects of the proposed scheme design, such as construction methods and traffic management, will depend on the approved construction proposals of the appointed contractor(s), details of which will not be available until the detailed design and build stage. Assumptions have been made where necessary to inform the assessment, as described in Chapter 4 (The Proposed Scheme) and in individual chapters of the ES where relevant.

1.6 The Assessment Team

1.6.1 The EIA was undertaken, managed and compiled by Jacobs UK Ltd. Jacobs UK Ltd is an Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) Registered EIA Quality Mark Company. Additional specialist environmental input was also provided to some technical components where appropriate, as identified within the relevant ES chapters.

1.6.2 Independent reviews and audits of assessments have been undertaken at key stages to produce a robust EIA that complies with the requirements of the EIA Regulations. Furthermore, consultees have been consulted with regard to the scope, approach and results of the assessments, as described in further detail in Chapter 6 (Consultation and Scoping).

1.7 Review and Comments

1.7.1 Copies of this ES are available for inspection at:

Transport Scotland
Major Transport Infrastructure Projects (MTRIPS)
Buchanan House
58 Port Dundas Street
Glasgow
G4 0HF

Telephone: 0141 272 7100

08.30 to 17.00 Monday to Thursday
08.30 to 16.30 Friday

Stanley Post Office
2-4 Percy Street
Perth
Perthshire
PH1 4LU

Telephone: 01738 828 206

09:00 to 17:00 Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday
09:00 to 13:00 Wednesday
09:00 to 12:30 Saturday

AK Bell Library
York Place
Perth
PH2 8EP

Telephone: 01738 444 949

09:30 to 17:00 Monday, Wednesday, Friday
09:30 to 20:00 Tuesday, Thursday
09:30 to 16:00 Saturday

Bankfoot Church Centre
Tulliebelton Road
Bankfoot
Perth
PH1 4BS

Telephone: 01738 827 952

09:30 to 13:30 Monday to Friday

1.7.2 The ES can be viewed on the Transport Scotland website. (http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/road/projects/A9-Luncarty-to-Pass-of-Birnam)

1.7.3 A bound paper copy of the ES may be purchased at a cost of £150, and the ES is also available in DVD format at a cost of £10 by writing to Transport Scotland at the address shown above, or by email to: info@transportscotland.gsi.gov.uk.

1.7.4 Any person wishing to make representation on the ES should write to Transport Scotland at the above address. Representations must be received within six weeks of the advertised date of publication of the ES.

1.8 References

Atkins (2009a). A9 Dualling: Luncarty to Pass of Birnam - Strategic Planning Study. January 2009.

Atkins (2009b). A9 Dualling: Luncarty to Pass of Birnam – Stage 2 Environmental Assessment, Volume 1. Unpublished, February 2009.

Environmental Impact Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 2011.

Highways Agency et al. (1999). Design Manual for Roads and Bridges: Volume 11 as amended.

Highways Agency et al. (2009). Interim Advice Note 125/09. Supplementary guidance for users of DMRB Volume 11 'Environmental Assessment'.

IEMA (2004). Guidelines for Environmental Impact Assessment. Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment.

Jacobs (2013). A9 Dualling: Luncarty to Pass of Birnam. DMRB Stage 2 Addendum Report.

Scottish Government (2009). Strategic Transport Project Review (STPR).

Scottish Government (2011). Infrastructure Investment Plan, December 2011.

Scott Wilson (2005). A9 Perth to Blair Atholl - Route Improvement Strategy Study. Scott Wilson (Scotland) Ltd, December 2005.