1 Introduction

1.1 Overview

1.1.1 This Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIAR) presents the findings of an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the proposed upgrade of the existing A9 trunk road to the north of Perth, between Pass of Birnam and the Tay Crossing. The proposed upgrade is a project within the A9 Dualling programme of works between Perth and Inverness.

1.1.2 The following figures and appendices support this chapter and are cross referenced where relevant:

- Appendix A1.1 (Record of Determination (RoD)).
- Appendix A1.2 (Statement of Competency).
- Figure 1.1 (Site Location Overview).
- Figure 1.2 (Pass of Birnam to Tay Crossing Overview).

1.1.3 The A9 trunk road forms a strategic link on Scotland's transport network, between central Scotland and the north of Scotland. The A9 trunk road commences at Keir Roundabout, near Dunblane and stretches 399km to the north coast of Scotland at Thurso.

1.1.4 To the south of Perth, the existing A9 is currently dual carriageway to where it meets the M9 at Dunblane. To the north of Perth, the A9 is currently dual carriageway until the Pass of Birnam following the completion of the Luncarty to Pass of Birnam section of the A9 Dualling programme in 2021. Thereafter, the road changes to predominantly single carriageway, interspersed with sections of dual carriageway and wide single 2+1 carriageway (WS2+1), which comprises sections of two lanes of travel in one direction and a single lane of traffic in the opposite direction.

1.1.5 The existing A9 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 when traffic volumes 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 including some fatalities which are discussed in Chapter 2 (Need for the Scheme). There is also a lack of alternative diversion routes, which causes severe delays when accidents do occur.

1.1.6 The A9 Dualling programme was founded in the Scottish Government's Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP) in December 2011 (Scottish Government, 2011) which set out the Scottish Government's plans for infrastructure investment up to 2030, and which included the commitment to upgrade the A9 trunk road to dual carriageway between Perth and Inverness by 2025. This commitment was built on the A9 Route Action Plan Perth to Inverness and the A9 Route Improvement Strategy Study (Scott Wilson, 2006) and was further developed in the Strategic Road Safety Plan (Transport Scotland, 2016b) and the Road Asset Management Plan

(Transport Scotland, 2016c), which were undertaken as part of the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR) in 2008 (Transport Scotland, 2008). The STPR (Transport Scotland, 2008) identified specific trunk road interventions, including upgrading the A9 between Dunblane and Inverness (Intervention 16) as a targeted infrastructure improvement, and, in particular, a requirement to dual the 129km stretch of the A9 between Perth and Inverness.

1.1.7 The Scottish Government's investment plans have continued to evolve further since the IIP in December 2011, alongside which has been the on-going commitment to deliver the A9 dualling programme, with a revised delivery plan laid out by the Scottish Government in December 2023 (Transport Scotland, 2023).

1.1.8 Further details on the background to the proposed scheme are provided in Chapter 2 (Need for the Scheme).

1.2 A9 Dualling Programme

1.2.1 Whilst the STPR (Transport Scotland, 2008) had undertaken a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) at a network level, Transport Scotland published the SEA Environmental Report (Transport Scotland, 2013, 2014a and 2014b) at the start of the A9 Dualling programme to ensure environmental matters were embedded into the decision making at a route level, and before any decisions on the division or delivery of the A9 Dualling programme were made. Several studies were undertaken to support the SEA, including:

- strategic flood risk assessment;
- strategic landscape review;
- programme wide habitats regulation appraisal;
- route wide constraints mapping; and
- route wide species permeability study.

1.2.2 To support the SEA, Transport Scotland commissioned a Preliminary Engineering Services (PES) study (Transport Scotland, 2014c) to examine constraints and opportunities and corridor options from an engineering, traffic and economics perspective. During the period 2012 to 2014, the two studies (SEA and PES) worked together to gather data and use that to shape the corridor for dualling and strategies for delivery. This work was the equivalent of a Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) Stage 1 level of assessment for the whole A9 Dualling programme. DMRB Stage 1 work across the SEA and PES was used to establish some founding principles for the delivery of the next stages of the Programme and to build in consistency of approach across project development. A number of strategies and principles were developed to guide future design work, which are set out in the SEA and PES documentation. The most notable included the following:

- A set of environmental principles agreed between Transport Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), Cairngorm National Park Authority (CNPA), Historic Environment Scotland (HES), Perth & Kinross Council (PKC) and The Highland Council (THC) (the consultation authorities), which defined the various stakeholder aspirations for the programme.

- An environmental design guide (Transport Scotland, 2015), again agreed between Transport Scotland and the consultation authorities, outlining the key issues emerging from the SEA and providing guidance on how to treat those during design development. The purpose of the design guide was not to rewrite the DMRB or other standards but to share an A9 specific, cross-agency, view on how impacts on certain important species, receptors or sites should be approached.
- A junction and access strategy (Transport Scotland, 2014c), establishing the policy for a high-quality dual carriageway.
- A non-motorised user strategy (Transport Scotland, 2016a), setting out Transport Scotland's approach to the provision of non-motorised user facilities. This was later further augmented, following consultation.
- A lay-by strategy (Transport Scotland, 2014c) also setting out an aspiration for the provision of enhanced lay-bys where possible to link to non-motorised user facilities and viewpoints.

1.2.3 The SEA aimed to incorporate effective protection for the environment into the earliest stages of the A9 Dualling programme. It collated a vast range of information of environmental constraints relating to the A9 between Perth and Inverness, including data from the STPR, to assess the significance of these constraints and their effect on route options. The SEA found that dualling along the corridor of the existing A9 single carriageway was the most optimal solution, taking into consideration the topographical, environmental and physical constraints along the route, including designated sites. As well as considerations such as topographical constraints and opportunities to use existing infrastructure, initial development of mainline alignment route options was progressed based on the SEA findings.

1.2.4 A brief background to the higher-level considerations of the full A9 Dualling programme is provided in Chapter 2 (Need for the Scheme).

1.2.5 Following the DMRB Stage 1 PES and SEA, DMRB Stage 2 level assessments were undertaken for specific sections of the A9 dualling programme which included developing route options for each section and undertaking a comparative environmental assessment of these, the outcomes of which were identification of a preferred route and this was reported in the DMRB Stage 2 Scheme Assessment Report (Transport Scotland, 2024). The DMRB Stage 2 assessment for the proposed Pass of Birnam to Tay Crossing scheme is discussed further in Chapter 4 (Alternatives Considered).

1.2.6 The A9 Dualling programme comprises upgrade to 11 sections of the A9 between Perth and Inverness, as listed in Table 1.1 below (from south to north) and shown on Figure 1.1.

Table 1.1: A9 Dualling programme

A9 Dualling Projects	Delivery Status
Luncarty to Pass of Birnam	Construction commenced in February 2019 and the road opened to traffic in August 2021.

A9 Dualling Projects	Delivery Status
Pass of Birnam to Tay Crossing	DMRB Stage 3/EIA.
Tay Crossing to Ballinluig	The Made Road Order and Compulsory Purchase Order were made on 27 October 2021 and came into force on 26 November 2021. Procurement of the construction contract is in progress.
Pitlochry to Killiecrankie	The Made Road Orders and Compulsory Purchase Order were made on 27 October 2021 and came into force on 26 November 2021. Procurement of the construction contract is planned to commence in Summer 2025.
Killiecrankie to Glen Garry	The Made Road Orders and Compulsory Purchase Order were made on 25 September 2024 and came into force on 18 October 2024. Procurement of the construction contract is planned to commence in Winter 2028/2029.
Glen Garry to Dalwhinnie	The Made Road Orders and Compulsory Purchase Order were made on 1 July 2021 and came into force on 30 July 2021. Procurement of the construction contract is planned to commence in Winter 2028/2029.
Dalwhinnie to Crubenmore	The Made Road Orders and Compulsory Purchase Order were made on 1 July 2021 and came into force on 30 July 2021. Procurement of the construction contract is planned to commence in Winter 2028/2029.
Crubenmore to Kincraig	The Made Road Orders and Compulsory Purchase Order were made on 18 December 2024 and came into force on 17 January 2025. Procurement of the construction contract is planned to commence in Winter 2026/2027.
Kincraig to Dalraddy	Construction commenced in June 2015 and the road opened to traffic in September 2017.
Dalraddy to Slochd	The Made Orders and Compulsory Purchase Order were made on 13 November 2024 and came into force on 6 December 2024. Procurement of the construction contract is planned to commence in Winter 2026/2027.
Tomatin to Moy	The Made Road Orders and Compulsory Purchase Order were made on 27 January 2021 and came into force on 26 February 2021. The construction contract was awarded in July 2024.

A9 Dualling Delivery Plan

1.2.7 The delivery plan for completion of the A9 Dualling programme was announced by the then Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Net Zero and Just Transition on 20 December 2023 (Transport Scotland, 2023) and involves a rolling programme of construction leading to the progressive opening of dualled sections. It is expected that nearly 50% of the A9 between Perth and

Inverness will be open as dual carriageway by the end of 2030, rising to 85% by the end of 2033 and 100% by the end of 2035.

1.2.8 Completion of the remaining sections of the A9 Dualling programme will be delivered via a hybrid approach, with capital funded design and build contracts to be procured for the Tay Crossing to Ballinluig, Pitlochry to Killiecrankie and, subject to completion of the statutory processes, Pass of Birnam to Tay Crossing sections of the Programme. Subject to confirmation in late 2025, regarding the contract form, two further contracts comprising the residual A9 North and A9 Central sections will be procured.

1.2.9 Jacobs UK Ltd was commissioned in 2014 to progress four of the A9 Dualling projects, namely the Pass of Birnam to Tay Crossing, Tay Crossing to Ballinluig, Pitlochry to Killliecrankie, and Killiecrankie to Glen Garry sections, including design, environmental assessment, statutory procedures, procurement and construction supervision for each.

1.2.10 This EIAR has been prepared in relation to the proposed dualling of the A9 between the Pass of Birnam and Tay Crossing, hereafter referred to as 'the proposed scheme'.

1.3 The Proposed Scheme

1.3.1 The proposed scheme as reported in this EIAR has been developed to a DMRB 'Stage 3' level of design and the project extents and relationship with adjacent A9 Dualling schemes is as shown on Figure 1.2. The proposed scheme is described in full in Chapter 6 (The Proposed Scheme).

1.3.2 The Pass of Birnam to Tay Crossing section was subject to DMRB Stage 2 route options assessments (Transport Scotland, 2024). Further detail on the DMRB Stage 2 process is provided in Chapter 4 (Alternatives Considered).

1.3.3 The proposed scheme comprises dualling of approximately 8.4 km of the A9, tying into the existing dual carriageway to the south (the previously completed Luncarty to Pass of Birnam section of the A9 Dualling programme) and the Tay Crossing to Ballinluig section to the north. The dualling of this section of the A9 will be achieved through a combination of widening and upgrades to the existing A9 carriageway and incorporates the following features which are described in Chapter 6 (The Proposed Scheme) and identified on Figure 6.1:

- one grade separated junction with restricted movements at Birnam;
- one at-grade roundabout at Dunkeld;
- one grade separated junction with full movements at Dalguise;
- three left-in left-out junctions providing maintenance access for Dunkeld & Birnam Station and Network Rail assets, access to The Hermitage, and access to Sustainable Drainage (SuDS) features and farmland at Dalguise;
- one pedestrian underpass connecting Dunkeld & Birnam Station to the replacement car park in Birnam;
- revisions to local access; and
- upgrade to existing road drainage and treatment.

1.4 Statutory Context for EIA

1.4.1 The requirement for EIA stems from the European Commission Directive 2011/92/EU of the European Parliament and of the Council of 13 December 2011 on the assessment of the effects of certain public and private projects on the environment (hereafter referred to as the EIA Directive; European Parliament, 2011) and Directive 2003/35/EC regarding public participation (European Parliament, 2003). Directive 2011/92/EU (European Parliament, 2011) codifies four earlier directives (85/337/EEC, 97/11/EC, 2003/35/EC and 2009/31/EC; European Parliament 1985, 1997, 2003, 2009) the first of which became law in European Union countries on 3 July 1988. The EIA Directive has been updated and a new EU Directive (2014/52/EU; European Parliament, 2014) was adopted on 15 May 2014, which was transposed into UK legislation on 16 May 2017: In Scotland there are a number of EIA regulations that implement the requirements of the EIA Directive, and those relevant in relation to the construction of trunk roads are The Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 (Scottish Government, 1984) as amended by the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 (Scottish Government, 2017; hereafter referred to as the Roads EIA Regulations).

1.4.2 The Roads EIA Regulations categorise developments according to their requirement for an EIA. Schedule 1 lists large-scale developments with the potential for significant environmental effects where an EIA is mandatory. Schedule 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.

1.4.3 The proposed scheme is considered to constitute a relevant project falling within Annex II of the EIA Directive, as it is a road infrastructure project where the completed works exceed 1ha in area.

1.4.4 Furthermore, the project has been subject to screening using the EIA Directive Annex III criteria to determine whether a formal EIA is required. Screening using these criteria identified a need for an EIA, as the works are likely to have a significant effect on the environment by virtue of factors such as:

- the proposed scheme footprint exceeds the screening threshold of 1ha in area; and
- the proposed scheme is located in a 'sensitive area' given its proximity to and potential for significant effects on the River Tay Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

1.4.5 Based on the above screening outcome, it was necessary to carry out an EIA and to publish an EIAR for the proposed scheme. The formal determination by Transport Scotland, as the competent authority for the screening process, was formally recorded by a Record of Determination, which is provided in Appendix A1.1 (Record of Determination (RoD)) and a Notice of Determination was published in accordance with the Roads EIA Regulations. This supersedes the RoD prepared in 2017 for the proposed scheme in accordance with The Environmental Impact Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 1999 as Amended.

1.4.6 The purpose of an EIA is to investigate the likely significant effects of the proposed scheme on environmental factors, including on members of the public and on current or planned future use of the environment. As such, the EIA of the proposed scheme has formed an integral part

of the engineering design and appraisal process and has provided a valuable opportunity to reduce potential environmental effects through design refinement.

1.5 Environmental Impact Assessment Report

1.5.1 This EIAR reports the findings of the EIA process undertaken for the proposed scheme.

1.5.2 The assessments reported in the EIAR have followed the guidelines set out in DMRB (National Highways et al., 2025). In addition to the DMRB, other applicable guidance has also been considered, where relevant, such as the Guidelines for Ecological Impact Assessment in the UK and Ireland Terrestrial, Freshwater, Coastal and Marine (CIEEM, 2024). Further details on the guidance applicable to the individual assessment chapters are referenced in the relevant EIAR chapters.

1.5.3 Schedule 1A of the Roads EIA Regulations outlines the information to be included in an EIAR. Accordingly, this EIAR provides the following:

- a description of the proposed scheme, including a description of the location of the proposed scheme, a description of the physical characteristics of the works, a description of the main characteristics of the operational phase of the project and an estimate of expected residues, emissions and waste produced during the construction and operation phases;
- a description of the reasonable alternatives that have been considered, and the main reasons for the selection of the proposed scheme, taking into account the environmental effects;
- a description of the relevant aspects of the current state of the environment (the 'baseline scenario') and an outline of the evolution of that baseline without implementation of the proposed scheme "*as far as natural changes from the baseline scenario can be assessed with reasonable effort on the basis of the availability of environmental information and scientific knowledge*";
- a description of the factors likely to be significantly affected by the proposed scheme and a description of the likely significant effects of the proposed scheme on those factors;
- a description of the forecasting measures or evidence used to identify and assess the significant effects on the environment;
- a description of the measures envisaged to avoid, prevent, reduce and where possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment;
- a non-technical summary of the above information; and
- a reference list detailing the sources used for the descriptions and assessments included in the EIA report.

1.5.4 The structure of the EIAR is presented as shown in Table 1.2.

Table 1.2: Structure of the EIA Report

EIAR Component	Description
Non-Technical Summary (NTS)	
Preface	Summary of the EIAR in non-technical language. This is also available as a separate document.
Volume 1: Main Report	
Chapter 1: Introduction Chapter 2: Need for the Scheme Chapter 3: Overview of Assessment Process Chapter 4: Alternatives Considered	These chapters introduce the proposed scheme, detailing the reasons why it is required, an overview of the EIA process adopted including the environmental parameters considered, details on its design and the options appraisal process including the reasons for its selection.
Chapter 5: Iterative Design Development	This chapter explains how environmental considerations have influenced the design and how it has been iteratively updated at key stages in the design process.
Chapter 6: The Proposed Scheme	This chapter provides a description of the DMRB Stage 3 design of the proposed scheme as assessed and reported in the EIAR, including a summary of the likely methods and programme of its construction.
Chapter 7: Consultation and Scoping	This chapter summarises the EIA consultation and scoping process and provides a summary of the key issues raised and how these have been taken into account.
Chapter 8: Air Quality Chapter 9: Cultural Heritage Chapter 10: Landscape Chapter 11: Visual Chapter 12: Biodiversity Chapter 13: Geology, Soils, Groundwater and Land Contamination Chapter 14: Material Assets and Waste Chapter 15: Noise and Vibration	Chapters 8 to 20 report the specialist environmental parameters/factors assessed. These chapters are structured to include an introduction to the subject area, approach and methods, baseline (i.e. existing) conditions, assessment of impacts and effects, mitigation measures and residual effects. They include consideration of relevant plans and policies, as well as compliance with national, regional and local planning policy and an indication of any assumptions and/or limitations applicable to the assessment.

EIAR Component	Description
Chapter 16: Population - Land Use Chapter 17: Population - Accessibility Chapter 18: Human Health Chapter 19: Road Drainage and the Water Environment Chapter 20: Climate	
Chapter 21: Assessment of Cumulative Effects	This chapter considers the effects of the proposed scheme on receptors affected by impacts from multiple environmental parameters (combined effects) and potential in-combination effects associated with other developments in the area.
Chapter 22: Schedule of Environmental Commitments	This chapter lists the measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and where possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment, as identified in each of the environmental topic chapters (Chapters 8-20).
Chapter 23: Summary of Significant Residual Effects	This chapter lists the likely significant effects of the proposed scheme on the environment, including direct impacts and any indirect, secondary, cumulative, short, medium and long-term, permanent and temporary, beneficial and adverse effects, as identified in each of the environmental topic chapters (Chapters 8-20).
Volume 2: Appendices – Specialist Technical Reports	
Appendices	Technical reference information supporting the EIAR chapters, such as calculations and detailed background data. Appendix number corresponds to the relevant EIAR chapter (e.g. Appendix A8.1 relates to Chapter 8).
Volume 3: Figures	
Figures	Graphics to support the EIAR chapters, illustrating the proposed scheme and environmental information. Figure reference corresponds to the relevant EIAR chapter (e.g. Figure 8.1 relates to Chapter 8).

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

1.5.6 This EIAR presents the assessment of the proposed scheme as described in Chapter 6 (The Proposed Scheme). It is acknowledged that while the scheme design may continue to be refined beyond publication of this EIAR and the draft Orders, it would still be deemed to comply with this EIAR provided that such refinements are subject to environmental review and Transport Scotland's acceptance of the findings of any such review. Should design refinements introduce new significant effects not reported in this EIAR or change a significance of effect reported in this EIAR from non-significant to significant, an addendum or new EIAR would require to be published for public consultation and comment.

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 6 (The Proposed Scheme) and in individual chapters of the EIAR where relevant.

1.5.8 An independent audit of the EIAR has been undertaken to ensure a robust EIA that complies with the requirements of the Roads EIA Regulations. Furthermore, consultation has taken place with regard to the scope, approach and results of the assessment, as described in further detail in Chapter 7 (Consultation and Scoping).

1.6 The Assessment Team

1.6.1 The EIAR was undertaken, managed and compiled by Jacobs UK, an Institute of Environmental Management and Assessment (IEMA) Registered EIA Quality Mark Company. Relevant expertise and qualifications of the assessment team are provided in Appendix A1.2 (Statement of Competency).

1.7 Review and Comments

1.7.1 A copy of this EIAR may be inspected, free of charge, during normal opening hours from 30 May 2025 to 25 July 2025 at the following locations:

- Birnam Arts, Station Road, Birnam, Dunkeld, PH8 0DS
- Transport Scotland, 177 Bothwell Street, Glasgow, G2 7ER

1.7.2 Please note that normal opening hours might vary during this period.

1.7.3 Copies of the EIAR can also be obtained from Transport Scotland, 177 Bothwell Street, Glasgow, G2 7ER at a charge of £150 for a hard copy. Requests for further information about the project may be sent to the same address.

1.7.4 A copy of the EIAR is also available for inspection on Transport Scotland's website at https://www.transport.gov.scot/projects/a9-dualling-perth-to-inverness/a9-pass-of-birnam-to-tay-crossing/.

1.7.5 Any person wishing to make any representations about the project and the EIAR should write to the Director of Major Projects, Transport Scotland, 177 Bothwell Street, Glasgow, G2 7ER. Representations must be received on or before 25 July 2025.

1.7.6 The Scottish Ministers will take into consideration any representations so made before deciding whether or not to proceed with the project with or without modifications.

1.8 References

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