

KilliecrAnkie1689

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A row is brewing between Transport Scotland and campaigners opposed to the planned route and design of the A9 across the Killiecrankie battle site.

KilliecrAnkie1689, a local residents campaign group, says that results of an important archaeological survey were kept from the public for over year. The findings of the survey may be “highly significant”, according to Historic Environment Scotland (HES) who is responsible for the protection of the Killiecrankie battlefield.

The row centres on a survey that Jacobs, the design engineers for the Killiecrankie to Glen Garry section of the A9 dualling project, commissioned in 2016. AOC Archaeology Group investigated the potential for buried remains on the proposed road during a 4-day geophysical survey conducted in November 2016. On one parcel of ground, in the direct path of the proposed new road, they identified some pits.

AOC said at the time that “burial pits should not be considered unexpected in areas surrounding battlefield sites and these features could be related to the battle or its aftermath.”

KilliecrAnkie1689 is concerned that these pits may turn out to be burial pits containing the remains of those who fell at the Battle of Killiecrankie. “The Battle of Killiecrankie was the bloodiest of all battles during the Jacobite uprisings,” says Henrietta Fergusson of KilliecrAnkie1689. “More than 2,000 men died in a brief but ferocious bout of fighting. We do not know where they were buried but historians agree that most would have been buried on or near where they were killed.”

Information about the survey and the findings was not disclosed until Transport Scotland published the Environmental Statement, the document that accompanies the final plans, in November 2017. "The detail was buried in an Appendix and not easy to find," says Henrietta Fergusson.

HES wrote in its objection to the A9 plan that they recommend that Transport Scotland takes "a precautionary approach" to potential archaeological remains. Should the pits be verified as burial pits, they would become a "special quality" of the designated battlefield and any design would have to try to preserve them *in situ*.

That would pose an enormous problem for the A9 route and design. Transport Scotland intends compulsorily purchasing the field where the pits have been detected in order to build extra carriageways, a new slip road to a large junction at Aldclune, a large drainage basin and a new access road.

Transport Scotland maintains that the A9 already bisects the battlefield and that whichever side is expanded will cause some impact. "That is very misleading," says Henrietta Fergusson. "The original A9 was constructed in the 1970s and did a lot of damage to the battle site, we now know. Attitudes and regulations have changed totally since then. It is no longer permissible to damage historic assets in this way and it certainly is not permissible to compound damage already done."

Those are the reasons why Killiecrankie1689 objected to the plan. The proposed route and design is the worst possible of all options as it will damage known historic assets along the northbound side of the road where the fighting, the killing and possibly the burying took place, they say. Like other objectors to the plan including HES, Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust and Cairngorms National Park Authority, the group wants Transport Scotland to do much more investigation and research so that they can devise a route and design that fully respects a national historic asset.

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1 Information on the A9 project Killiecrankie to Glen Garry, including the Environmental Statement and draft Road Orders, is available on Transport Scotland's website: <https://www.transport.gov.scot/projects/a9-dualling-perth-to-inverness/a9-killiecrankie-to-glen-garry/>

2 Objections to Transport Scotland's A9 plan at Killiecrankie have been submitted by Historic Environment Scotland, Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust, Cairngorms National Park Authority, Perth and Kinross Council, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Killiecrankie and Fincastle Community Council, heritage groups, historians and Killiecrankie1689.

3 The Battle of Killiecrankie was fought on 27 July, 1689. The Jacobites battle line was drawn on the hill that overlooks the A9 at Killiecrankie. They were led by John Graham of Claverhouse, Bonnie Dundee, who was killed in action. He was buried at St Brides Kirk near Blair Castle. The Government battle line was formed just south of the existing A9. The Government troops were led by General Hugh Mackay. The 2 sides clashed in the very area that is proposed for road-widening. It is estimated that fatalities were about 600 Jacobites and 1,500 Williamites. That is the highest toll of all Jacobite battles, including Culloden. At that time, senior figures may have been taken to be buried on consecrated ground. Otherwise the convention was to bury the fallen on or near the field of battle.

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