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Proposed new A9 dual carriage way through Killiecrankie Battlefield

The Soldiers of Killiecrankie is a local Killiecrankie and Fincastle group whose focus is the history and events that surround the Battle of Killiecrankie. This is the first opportunity we have to comment on your plans for the Killiecrankie Battlefield, not having been part of the process that reached the decision on the final route through the battlefield. This six week consultation period is the only time we have a formal voice in the process.

We are not road engineers, archaeologists or battlefield experts. We are local people who are very keen to ensure the right decisions are being taken to protect our battlefield, not just for ourselves and our children, but for future generations of Scots keen on their nation’s history. The Battle of Killiecrankie has a significant place in Scottish history and helped to shape our nation.

Let us just stop and ask what we know that makes the Battle of Killiecrankie significant?

Battle of Killiecrankie.
Killiecrankie was the bloodiest battle in the entire Jacobite saga, not excluding Culloden; at least 2100 (lowest contemporary estimates of 600 Jacobite and 1500 Williamite soldiers) dead out of about 5400, or about 40%; Culloden with c.1550 dead out of c.13,000 men or about 12%.

Killiecrankie marks a significant number of first and lasts. It was the first battle of the Jacobite wars; which started here and ended at Culloden in 1746. The battle saw probably the last use of pikes with muskets; it was the last major battle in which the large two handed sword, of William Wallace’s fame, was used in a major battle; it was one of the first for the mass deployment of flint lock muskets equipped with plug bayonets; it might also have been one of the last battles in Europe in which archery played any part. It is the battle where the hand grenade was first used on British Soil. It is the first battle where evidence of friendly fire was discovered, where soldiers killed their own fellow soldiers of the same side. It is the battle where the devastating tactic, the Highland Charge was perfected and used so successfully by the Jacobite armies for the next 60 years. The modern bayonet was developed by the defeated commander General Hugh McKay after the battle, as he realised that asking his troops to stick a knife down the end of the barrel of their guns, when charging highlanders were upon you was nigh on impossible.

Despite the A9 passing through the battlefield in the late 1970s, Killiecrankie Battlefield remains one of the best preserved Scottish Battlefields, it still contains a lot of information yet to be discovered about the battle.

Our task as members of the public is to scrutinize your plans, it is not our job to have held your hand through the process of working out the best route for this major project, through Killiecrankie Battlefield. We have carried out our
due diligence and find the following:-

1. **Consultation process**
   a) Your decision to open the public consultation period over the four weeks leading up to Christmas and New Year, is disappointing, it would appear to be an attempt to minimize the ability of the Scottish public to focus on and understand your proposals. You are proposing destruction of large areas of the most important parts of one of Scotland’s most important and intact battlefields.

   b) We have to record our disappointment with regards to the lack of care and open discussion as to how best to route the new A9 carriageway through Killiecrankie Battlefield.

   Killiecrankie Battlefield is the first significant test of the Scottish Inventory of Battlefield Legislation. HES web site says under the heading “Caring for and conserving battlefields” - “We can all play a role in making sure that our historic battlefields survive for future generations. In the right hands, battlefields enhance our sense of place, culture and economy.”

   We are disappointed to see how little impact the Scottish Inventory of Battlefields has had on your route choice. We know you have consulted Historic Environment Scotland (HES), but this does not mean you have implemented their suggestions.

   We would have expected there to been a group of battlefield experts assembled openly and honestly work out with you and the public, how best to route of the A9 carriageway through Killiecrankie Battlefield. There is no evidence of this, we further illustrate this point in item 2 below.

   b) We are also concerned to see the undue haste that work has started during this public consultation period, with the issue of compulsory purchase orders, contractors on the battlefield digging and drilling holes to implement your proposals. It does make one wonder if this Public Consultation period is another tick box for the project, purely so you can say you have carried it out, without waiting for the objections.

2. **Archaeological Metal Detecting Survey of Killiecrankie Battlefield**
   i) We do not understand how you reached the decision on which areas of the battlefield to have the metal detector survey. The area designated in the Inventory of battlefields covers a much wider area, than that you chose to investigate – we do not understand the logic, nor can we see the rationale behind reaching this decision.

   Scotland has a centre of excellence with regards to battlefields in Dr Tony Pollard Centre for Battlefield Archaeology University of Glasgow. The only piece of evidence we can find regarding your consultation was a document, written by the contractors purporting to be a summary of a telephone conversation between a David Bull of Jacobs and Dr Tony Pollard, which took place on the 10th of February 2015, there is no indication as to how long this conversation was. The report indicates that Dr Pollard confirmed that there was significant potential for increasing the finds relating to the battle in the topsoil and also indicated that there was a possibility that there might be burials associated with battle. There is also an interesting comment that Dr Pollard appeared unconcerned about further damage to the battle field, this is interesting in that Dr Pollard in other writing about the battle comments on the significant archeological potential of the site.

   We are not convinced the area chosen truly represents an attempt to record all the potential archaeology that will be lost.
ii) We have grave doubts over the thoroughness of the Archaeological Metal Detecting Survey of Killiecrankie Battlefield. Let us expand on this:-

In the area you decided to survey, there are significant areas within the survey area that were omitted, for following reasons:-

F3 - due to the presence of horses
F4 –due to it being within Urrard Walled Garden
F7 - due to the vegetation being very thick and at head height, intended for bird shelter in winter (a crop kale).
F10 –due to the presence of livestock comprising cows and calves.
F11 –not surveyed due waterlogging and marshy conditions.
F16 –due to the presence of young bullocks
F2 - (Can find no explanation).
+ Area around the battlefield memorial Cairn (not given a designation number in the report)
+ Area in front of Urrard Estate steadings and Urrard House, (presumably due to the trees).

It surprises us that there no attempt to speak to the farmer so his live stock were removed? Why was no attempt made in the case of F7 to survey the field once the crop had been removed (this area we believe was a very significant area for the battle of Killiecrankie and detailed in the HES Inventory of Killiecrankie Battlefield). The areas that were water logged, why was the survey not carried out when the area had dried out?

WE are disappointed by the lack of thoroughness in investigation and collection of the information in the ground that the new carriageway will destroy. Metal detector survey is not the only tool available to collect information, we can see no discussion on what would be needed to collect and preserve this information before it is lost.

3. **The decision on which side of the existing A9 to place the new carriageway**

We would have thought a significant factor in reaching the decision on where the new carriageway would pass through the battlefield, is the foot print it leaves. By this we refer to how much of the Killiecrankie Battlefield will be destroyed by the route chosen.

We believe there is a significant difference in the destruction of the battlefield based on whether the new carriageway is placed on the downhill side or the uphill side of the existing road.

We further illustrate this by looking at your own images (below, on the next page). There is very significant damage to the battlefield on the down slope, the limit of which is designated by the path (Note - the right hand carriageway is the existing A9).
4. **Minimize impact of the new route on Killiecrankie Battlefield**

What other considerations would we have thought you would take on board with regards to your route choice?

There is a large field marked F12 on the upslope side that was destroyed when the A9 was built in the 1970s. The distance the A9 passes along this field is 270 metres (in image 1, page 5 – marked as F12). This in our opinion is a very significant area, as none of the battlefield on the down slope side of the proposed new carriageway has previously been damaged.
5. **What other factors would we have expected to have been taken in to consideration, when deciding on the best route choice?**

a) When the current A9 route was chosen in the late 1970s through Killiecrankie Battlefield not a lot was known as to where exactly the battle took place. Since then Two Men in a Trench in 2003 was able to establish significant facts previously unknown.

The Two Men in a Trench clearly concluded that the hand to hand close quarter fighting was in the area immediately below the existing A9. (see the two images on the left –from ‘Two Men in a Trench’ publication page 192).

In our opinion this is a significant factor in weighing up how best to build the new A9 carriageway through Killiecrankie Battlefield causing as little damage as possible.

b) Other factors, was the type of warfare back in the 1689. Large blocks of soldiers, walking from location to location. The bulk of these soldiers carry muskets, with an effective range of about 100 metres, these soldiers would have been firing up hill which is significant, as any shots fired result in the musket balls lodging themselves in the hill side, as opposed to travelling considerable distances if they were firing downhill.

The downhill side from the current A9, is the most sensitive area of the battlefield, where in all probability the majority of the soldiers of both armies fell that day.

We are concerned by the loss of topography in this very impart of the battle, some say the battle was won at the terraces. Future generations will want to stand where these government soldiers stood and visualise the terrain in front of them.

‘Two Men in a Trench’ page 234, discussed the terracing area “Probably most of these balls hit their targets, passing through bodies before dropping to the ground. Balls that missed their targets continued their flight and probably came to rest higher up the hill. If we are right, each of the musket-balls on the terrace lay just behind where a Jacobite soldier had fallen. It was one of the eeriest encounters we’d ever had with our subject matter.”

This terracing (F7 in Guard Archeology’s Report, an area not surveyed) in your image below, can be seen to the left of the proposed carriageway. (Note:- the right hand carriageway is the existing A9, everything to the left is new, destroying very significant part of the battlefield).
The proposed route for the new A9 carriageway destroys a significant amount of this terracing, an area where we know many men are likely to have fallen. This compounds the lack of archaeological investigation (in the report marked as F7 - due to the vegetation being very thick and at head height, intended for bird shelter in winter (a crop of kale)) mentioned earlier.

6. **We know historical accounts from 1689 does not tell us everything about the battle.**

Two Men in a Trench discovered a fragment of a grenade, it was not known that handgrenades were used at Killiecrankie. It had previously been thought that the first time grenades were used in battle was at the Battle of Glen Shiel some thirty years after the Battle of Killiecrankie in 1719.

What else is there yet to discover?

Our Irish colleague Tomás Ó Brógáin, who attended the Soldiers of Killiecrankie in 2015, 2016 and 2017 representing the Irish contingent that fought at the Battle of Killiecrankie in 1689 says, people “need to understand the fluid nature of the battle and not to think of it in modern terms, this was a slow ponderous affair with the Jacobite charge being the only fast thing and the ground they covered is where evidence of artefacts will be found. In Aughrim they found slug shot which is a lead cylindrical slug I bet these were used in Killiecrankie by the horse element also.”

We do not know exactly where the Scottish Government Army regiments stood, Two Men in a Trench have given us an indication of where they think they stood – will archaeologically in the future be able to tell us?

The science of archaeologically is a continuous evolving process, by destroying the battlefield we are losing historical information that will prevent future generations from finding and understanding what took place in 1689.
7. Massive drainage across important parts of the battlefield and positioning of SUDS.

Image 1 shows the proposed destruction of the battlefield directly in front of the left wing of the Scottish government army. This is further illustrated by your fly over image (below) of the proposed route below.

The new slipway (seen in both images) will expose the Killiecrankie memorial cairn (marked in Image 1), to visual and sound impact from traffic from the new slipway (takeoff to the Blair Atholl junction).

We do not believe your plans have adequately sort to protect this important place of commemoration.
The aerial image of the snow covered field (below), shows the field as it is today. Interestingly it highlights the crop cultivation marks, some are horizontal across the field and others are perpendicular up the slope similar to marks shown in Roy’s Maps, see image below. Does this imply the age of these markings and how intact this field is from 1689? Is this destruction really necessary for the SuDS?

The questions that remain unanswered:

- Why is ‘Skirmish Field’ known by that name?
- Why was this field designated as part of the Killiecrankie Battlefield under the inventory of Scottish Battlefields?
- Looking at Roy’s Map drawn 1747 -1757 (below) we can see there were no trees at the Alt Girnaig crossing, unlike today. Was this the route where some of the government forces retreated?
  It is interesting to note that Roy marked the site of the battle, above the crops up the slope, this was some 60 years later.

- Why is the burn (image 2) called Troopers Burn? We know the army marched up through the pass. We would not have expected to see Troopers here except in retreat.

- The A9 passing through the top of Skirmish Field is an area that was not part of the archeological survey. Why was there no archeological survey carried out here?
8. **The siting of two laybys on Killiecrankie Battlefield.**

We believe these are totally inappropriate especially as there is a safe exit less than one mile way at Blair Atholl, with 24 hour toilet facility. Pitlochry’s road junction at the other side of the pass is just two miles away. Laybys are associated with the public nuisance - litter and unnecessary noise, vehicle and people, urinating (which is highly disrespectful of a place were over 2,000 men lost their lives).

We are disappointed to see these retained in the plans despite requests by our local MSP John Swinney, the Deputy First Minister of Scotland, asking for their removal at our Killiecrankie Village Hall meeting last year.

**Conclusion.**

Soldiers of Killiecrankie conclude we do not believe there has been proper consideration taken of the impact of the new A9 carriageway through the battlefield.

We are bitterly disappointed to note this, there is no evidence that Killiecrankie Battlefield was properly considered in the planning process by gathering together battlefield experts to consider the least impact route and explore the options, to minimize the loss for future generations of Scots.

It would appear that Transport Scotland’s sole criteria for the choice of the route, was lowest cost route option.

We are convinced that the Killiecrankie Battlefield survey was no more than a tick box exercise for Transport Scotland in its dualling project. It has been clearly shown to be a floored process.

We do not believe your plans have adequately sort to protect this important place of commemoration.

We are very disappointed to see that the Cairngorms National Park authority whose responsibility Killiecrankie Battlefield falls as it is within its park boundaries, has singularly not spoken to locals to obtain their views on Killiecrankie
Battlefield, especially as they know we run a large annual event.

We add our voice to those expressed by Killiecrankie and Fincastle Community Council that we object to the route chosen through Killiecrankie and the siting of two large laybys over the battlefield.

This is a 100% Scottish Government issue being fully devolved, we urge Scottish Ministers to address these issues and stop any further construction work until there is a proper open and honest investigation in to the best route option for Killiecrankie Battlefield.

We are concerned that if this does not happen, Killiecrankie Battlefield, will be significantly degraded for future generations, and join the long list of destroyed Scottish Battlefields.

On Behalf of Soldiers of Killiecrankie
James Rattray Chairman.
22nd January 2018

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