Project update

The Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR), published by Transport Scotland in 2008, set out the Scottish Government’s transport investment priorities over the coming decades. Specific trunk road interventions emerging from the review included upgrading the A96 between Inverness and Nairn to dual carriageway and also a bypass at Nairn.

PUBLIC EXHIBITIONS WERE HELD IN FEBRUARY 2012 WHEN TRANSPORT SCOTLAND PRESENTED ROUTE OPTIONS FOR THE INSHES TO NAIRN SCHEME, INCLUDING A NAIRN BYPASS. SINCE THEN, FURTHER ROUTE OPTION DESIGN DEVELOPMENT AND SCHEME ASSESSMENT HAS TAKEN PLACE TO TAKE INTO ACCOUNT PUBLIC FEEDBACK, AS WELL AS THE DECISION TO DUAL THE A96. THIS LEAFLET PROVIDES A SUMMARY OF THE ROUTE OPTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION.

WORK HAS FOCUSED ON THE FOLLOWING AREAS:

- further development of possible dual carriageway route options including provision of grade separated junctions
- extension of the scheme proposals east of Nairn in order to support future dualling of the A96
- engineering, environmental and traffic and economic assessment of the route options

The purpose of this consultation is to explain the route options under consideration and seek public feedback on scheme proposals.
The scheme

The scheme consists of a new 30km dual carriageway between the roundabout for Inverness Retail Park and a point approximately 3km east of Aultearn.

The proposed scheme can be divided into two distinct sections:

Inverness to Gollanfield

The current route options have been developed from the alignments presented at public exhibitions in 2012.

There are two route options between Smithton and Newton and two between Kerrowaird and Brackley, giving four route options, IA to ID. These options are all on-line past Morayston and an alternative off-line Morayston Variant (MV) is being considered for each IA (MV) to ID (MV). This results in eight possible route combinations in this section.

Nairn Bypass

The decision to dual the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen has changed the route options under consideration from the options shown at the 2012 public exhibitions.

There are two route options being considered on the west side of Nairn, two proposed locations for crossing the River Nairn and four options past Aultearn. Not every combination of these is feasible, therefore only nine route combinations (2A to 2I) are being considered to bypass Nairn.
# Constraints

Constraints are summarised below and shown on scheme drawings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Engineering Constraints</th>
<th>Key Environmental Constraints</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Existing A96</td>
<td>European Protected Sites:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Local road network and numerous direct accesses onto the A96</td>
<td>• Moray Firth (SAC)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Inverness to Aberdeen railway line</td>
<td>• Inner Moray Firth (SPA)</td>
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<td>Inverness Airport</td>
<td>• Loch Flemington (SPA)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flat low-lying ground</td>
<td>• Moray and Nairn Coast (SPA)</td>
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<td>Minor watercourses</td>
<td>SSSIs – Longman and Castle Stuart Bays and Kildrummie Kames</td>
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<td>Flood plain of Alton Burn</td>
<td>Ancient and plantation woodlands</td>
</tr>
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<td>Tornagrain Development areas</td>
<td>Protected species – red squirrels, badgers, bats and otters</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scattered residential development</td>
<td>Flood risk – e.g. River Nairn, Alton Burn, Ardersier Burn, Cairnlaw Burn and Auldearn Burn</td>
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<tr>
<td>Utilities – 132kV transmission lines, oil pipeline, gas pipeline</td>
<td>Scheduled monuments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Active and redundant quarry workings</td>
<td>Category A, B and C listed buildings</td>
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<tr>
<td>Soft ground and areas of peat bog</td>
<td>Auldearn battlefield (1645)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>River Nairn</td>
<td>Development land allocation</td>
</tr>
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Landscape and visual impacts
Outdoor access – e.g. core paths and National Cycle Network
Route options
Inverness to Gollanfield
Options IA and IA(MV)
Options IB and IB(MV)
Options IC and IC(MV)
Options ID and ID(MV)
Route options Nairn Bypass
Options 2A, 2E and 2H
Options 2B and 2F
Options 2C and 2G
Options 2D and 2I
Environmental Assessment

The Design Manual for Roads and Bridges Stage 2 (DMRB) Environmental Assessment is assessing the impact of the route options on:

- **Air quality** – at sensitive receptors (e.g. residential areas, schools and hospitals).
- **Noise and vibration** – at sensitive receptors (e.g. residential areas, schools and hospitals).
- **Landscape and visual** – landscape character and visual amenity for built and outdoor receptors.
- **Habitats and biodiversity** – e.g. designated sites, habitats and protected species.
- **Cultural heritage** – archaeological remains, historic buildings and historic landscapes e.g. scheduled monuments, listed buildings and battlefields.
- **Geology and soils** – geology, groundwater and contaminated land sites.
- **Community and private assets (including agriculture)** – due to land-take and potential community severance.
- **Development land** – land allocation for development or land with planning permission.
- **All travellers** – users of core paths, rights of way and the National Cycle Network (NCN) Route 1 and impacts on vehicle travellers.
- **Materials** – material resources and waste management.
- **Water environment** – water quality, geomorphology and flood risk.
Environmental Assessment
Inverness to Gollanfield

There are a number of emerging challenges to the environment that have been identified as part of the on-going assessment. Some of these are described below.

**Habitats and biodiversity**—all options have the potential to impact on designated sites and protected species (e.g., badgers, red squirrels, otters). IA, IA(MV), IB, and IB(MV) may result in greater fragmentation and disturbance of supporting habitat for wintering birds. IC and IC(MV) are likely to result in the greatest loss of arable/grassland habitat, whilst IB, IB(MV), ID, and ID(MV) will result in the greatest loss of woodland at Tornagrain Woods.

**Cultural heritage**—all options have the potential to impact on the setting of scheduled monuments and listed buildings. IC, IC(MV), ID, and ID(MV) may result in the removal of part of the Lower Cullernie Ring Ditch (scheduled monument).

**Landscape and visual**—all options have the potential to impact on landscape character and visual amenity. IC(MV) is expected to have the greatest impact on landscape. IC, IC(MV), ID, and ID(MV) are expected to have the greatest impact on visual amenity.

**All travellers**—all options have the potential to impact on the core path network. IC, IC(MV), ID, and ID(MV) are expected to impact on the largest number of core paths through increased journey length and reduced visual amenity.
Environmental Assessment
Nairn Bypass

There are a number of emerging challenges to the environment that have been identified as part of the on-going assessment. Some of these are described below.

**Habitats and biodiversity** – all options have the potential to impact on designated sites and protected species (e.g. badgers, bats, red squirrels, otters) through habitat loss and fragmentation and potential pollution. **2D, 2E, 2F, 2G, 2H, and 2I** are likely to have greater impact on the Kildrummy Kames SSSI.

**Cultural heritage** – all options have the potential to impact on the setting of scheduled monuments and listed buildings. **2C, 2D, 2G, and 2I** are likely to result in the removal of part of the Meadowfield Enclosure (scheduled monument). **2A, 2B, 2C, 2E, 2F, 2G, and 2H** have the potential to remove unknown remains associated with the Auldearn battlefield, whilst **2A, 2B, 2E, 2F, and 2H** reinforce existing severance of the battlefield.

**Landscape and visual** – all options have the potential to impact on landscape character and visual amenity. **2E, 2G, 2H, and 2I** are expected to have the greatest impact on landscape character, with **2F and 2G** expected to have the greatest visual impact.

**All travellers** – all options have the potential to impact on core paths and NCN Route 1. **2A, 2B, 2C, and 2D** are likely to impact on the largest number of core paths through increased journey length and reduced visual amenity.
Environmental Assessment key next steps

We will continue to progress the environmental assessment and liaise with the statutory bodies to gather additional baseline data and review potential impacts.

One of the main next steps in our assessment is to undertake the **air quality and noise assessments**. In doing this, we will use traffic flow data to assess the likely impact on air quality and noise at key sensitive receptors such as residential properties, schools and hospitals.

We will also undertake a review of the suitable **mitigation** measures to reduce the impacts on the environment. For example:

- appropriate construction management plans, taking account of the timing of works
- mammal underpasses, ledges and fences
- sustainable drainage systems
- landscape planting to reduce the impacts on the landscape, visual amenity and setting of cultural heritage assets
- compensatory flood storage
- habitat creation such as squirrel boxes, badger setts or planting of woodland
- noise barriers, bunds and double glazing to reduce noise at source; and limiting duration of construction noise.
What happens next?

The route options presented in this exhibition are the subject of a full engineering, environmental and traffic and economic assessment (Design Manual for Roads and Bridges Stage 2 assessment – route option assessment).

Your feedback will be taken into account during the route option assessment process.

Transport Scotland is seeking to confirm a preferred route for the A96 Inverness to Nairn (incl. Nairn Bypass) in 2014.

We invite your comments on these route options using the relevant feedback form. Please leave them in the comments box provided or email:

a96dualling@transportscotland.gsi.gov.uk

Or post your feedback form to us at:
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Buchanan House
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Glasgow
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by 31 January 2014