

A96 Dualling Inverness to Aberdeen Engaging with Communities

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I. Introduction

Meaningful engagement with directly affected communities and businesses will be a key part of our work as we develop our plans to dual the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen.

As well as bringing benefits, road construction often impacts on those who are living and working along the route.

The local perspective on the main risks and opportunities, in addition to baseline information on the existing area, is not only welcome, but vital.

Dualling this important road between Scotland's two most northern cities is a significant undertaking which requires careful in-depth planning and design to ensure we deliver the right scheme. The Scottish Government and its transport agency Transport Scotland are committed to encouraging interest and public involvement in the development of proposals for dualling the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen.

This document, A96 Dualling Inverness to Aberdeen: Engaging with Communities, outlines:

- how Transport Scotland and our appointed consultants and contractors will engage with the public during the design and development phases;
- how you will be able to take part; and
- how you can contact us for information or advice.

In addition to meeting all statutory requirements, Transport Scotland will ensure that:

- arrangements for participation are inclusive, open and transparent;
- a wide range of participants are encouraged to get involved at the appropriate time;
- information is provided at key stages to allow for full consideration;
- communication is facilitated through a range of methods in a range of appropriate locations; and
- all representations will be fully considered and feedback provided.



A96 near Pitcaple (looking westbound).

2. Background to A96 Dualling Programme

The Scottish Government's Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR), published in 2008, set out a number of transport priorities for the Inverness to Aberdeen corridor to be met by 2032. These transport priorities included rail enhancements, new stations at Kintore and Dalcross, strategic park and ride at Dyce, upgrading the A96 to dual carriageway between Inverness and Nairn, a bypass at Nairn, a new bridge at Inveramsay, and a targeted programme of measures to reduce accident severity along the corridor:

In December 2011, the Scottish Government published its Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP), which provided an overview of plans for infrastructure investment over the coming decades. It included a commitment to complete the dual carriageway network between all Scotland's cities by 2030, including the upgrade of the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen to dual carriageway.



2. Background to A96 Dualling Programme continued

The A96 Trunk Road

The A96 trunk road is of national importance linking the strategically important cities of Inverness and Aberdeen. This corridor is vital in supporting the future growth of the two cities and the various communities within, and connected to, the corridor. The existing A96 trunk road runs between Raigmore Interchange at Inverness and Haudagain Roundabout at Aberdeen, is approximately 160km long and passes through, or close to, various towns and villages along the route including Nairn, Forres, Elgin, Fochabers, Keith, Huntly and Inverurie.

The majority of the route is rural single carriageway however, the western and eastern limits of the trunk road have previously been upgraded to dual carriageway standard to improve the efficiency of the trunk road network. At Inverness, the dualling extends for some 0.75km from Raigmore Interchange to Seafield Roundabout at Inverness Retail and Business Park. At Aberdeen, the dualling extends for some 20km from Haudagain Roundabout to Port Elphinstone Roundabout at Inverurie.



A96 Dual Carriageway at Kintore (looking westbound).

Dualling the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen will provide a number of benefits by:

- supporting sustainable economic growth by providing opportunities to grow the regional economies on the corridor through improved access to the wider strategic transport network and enhanced access to jobs and services;
- improving road safety for motorised and Non-Motorised Users;
- reducing journey times and improving journey time reliability;
- reducing conflicts between local and strategic journeys;
- reducing the environmental effect on the communities along the corridor through reducing severance and improving environmental conditions in towns to be bypassed;
- supporting access to tourist and recreation sites; and
- facilitating links to pedestrian, cycling and public transport facilities.



A96 Alexandra Road, Elgin (looking eastbound).

3. The Planning Process

The Scottish Government, through Transport Scotland, has an excellent record of delivering major, complex transport infrastructure projects on time and budget.

Transport Scotland carries out a rigorous assessment process to establish the preferred line for a trunk road improvement. The three-stage assessment process, based on standards set by the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB), covers environmental, engineering, traffic and economics. Throughout this process, Transport Scotland consults with a large number of people and interested bodies. Following the Strategic Assessment (Stage 1) of dualling the A96, the dualling programme will be divided into sections (i.e. individual projects within the overall dualling programme) for further assessment at Stages 2 and 3.

Stage 1: Strategic Assessment

- Undertaking strategic planning and development of improved transport links between Inverness and Aberdeen;
- Identify the environmental, engineering, traffic and economic advantages and disadvantages and constraints associated with broadly defined improvement strategies; and
- A Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) report and Preliminary Engineering Report will be published for comment.

Stage 2: Route Options Assessment

- Development and assessment of route options for dualling the A96. This includes an environmental, engineering, traffic and economic assessment of the potential impacts of each option to inform the route choice;
- During this stage the options will be made available for public consultation; and
- Following this assessment and public consultation, the preferred option is then selected and taken forward to the detailed stage.

Stage 3: Design Development and Assessment of Preferred Option

- Detailed assessment and definition of the preferred dualling option (this will also include detailed discussions with landowners affected by the preferred option); and
- An Environmental Statement is prepared and the land required for the dualling is identified.

Statutory Process: Publication of Environmental Statement and Orders

- The draft Compulsory Purchase Order (defining the extent of the proposed land required to deliver the scheme), the draft road Orders (defining the line of the proposed infrastructure) and the Environmental Statement are published for comment;
- Any statutory objections which are lodged during the defined period but remain unresolved are then considered at a Public Local Inquiry (PLI);
- If a PLI is not required, or if one has been held and the project is subsequently approved by Scottish Ministers, then the draft Orders are finalised and made (subject to any modifications required as a result of consultations or PLI where one is held); and
- After this point the legal permissions have been obtained and the project can proceed with the necessary acquisition of land.

3. The Planning Process continued

Following the completion of the planning stages, the process to procure a works contractor for the construction phase begins. Suppliers are invited to express an interest in the procurement, and then a prequalification process is used to shortlist suppliers that will be invited to tender. Through the tender process, a supplier is selected and the contract is awarded. The preferred dualling option can then move to the construction phase.

Since April 2013, Transport Scotland has also been engaging with many partners, key agencies, communities and interested parties to identify the risks and benefits which need to be considered as part of the project delivery.



A96 near Cairnie (looking westbound).

4. Engagement Principles

Transport Scotland is committed to placing public engagement and meaningful dialogue with directly affected communities and other stakeholders at the heart of the development and delivery of its projects.

We want to ensure that communities have the opportunity to comment on the proposals for the A96 Dualling Programme at every stage in the process and Transport Scotland is keen to hear people's views.

Transport Scotland is committed to undertaking a rolling programme of regular engagement to ensure those affected by the work over the next decade and beyond are kept fully informed and their vital feedback taken into account.

This programme of engagement commenced in November 2013 with a series of public exhibitions held at various venues along the A96 corridor and will continue throughout the dualling programme to ensure that businesses, communities and individuals affected by the work are kept fully informed.

Local perspectives on the main risks and opportunities for the A96 Dualling are not only welcome, but absolutely vital, and Transport Scotland welcomes your feedback.

As the project is designed, procured and constructed, Transport Scotland will consider points raised during engagement and act upon them where reasonable and appropriate.

The A96 Dualling Programme will comply with the National Standards for Community Engagement. These National Standards are aimed at ensuring communities and affected individuals have their voices heard in the planning and delivery of services. The standards were launched in May 2005 and have been widely adopted in Community Planning Partnerships and in other areas of government since their original endorsement by the Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA),

Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO), Association of Chief Police Officers, Scottish Health Council and the Poverty Alliance. They have been recommended by Audit Scotland as good practice and their impact was the subject of a positive evaluation in 2008.

The standards set out best practice principles for the way that government agencies, councils, health boards, police and other public bodies engage with communities. They are not compulsory, but they are good practice.

These standards are:

- **Involvement:** we will identify and involve the people and organisations who have an interest in the focus of the engagement;
- **Support:** we will identify and overcome any barriers to involvement;
- **Planning:** we will gather evidence of the needs and available resources and use this evidence to agree the purpose, scope and timescale of the engagement and the actions to be taken;
- **Methods:** we will agree and use methods of engagement that are fit for purpose;
- **Working together:** we will agree and use clear procedures that enable the participants to work with one another effectively and efficiently;
- **Sharing information:** we will ensure that necessary information is communicated between the participants;
- **Working with others:** we will work effectively with others with an interest in the engagement;
- **Improvement:** we will develop actively the skills, knowledge and confidence of all the participants;
- **Feedback:** we will feed back the results of the engagement to the wider community and agencies affected; and
- **Monitoring and evaluation:** we will monitor and evaluate whether the engagement achieves its purposes and meets the national standards for community engagement.

More information on the National Standards for Community Engagement can be found at:
www.gov.scot/Topics/People/engage/NationalStandards

5. Communication Methods

We recognise that engaging with the communities affected by the A96 Dualling and maintaining that engagement is key to the success of this programme.

We will use a range of methods for engagement on an ongoing basis throughout the dualling programme as appropriate, including the following:

Participation method	Benefits	Commitments
Letters	Direct contact with statutory organisations and other groups/ individuals/landowners/community/ interest groups.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To introduce them to the programme/individual project. • To invite stakeholders to meetings. • To request information. • To have direct communication with landowners.
Email correspondence	A dedicated email address has been established to allow the public to contact the programme/project team: a96dualling@transportscotland.gsi.gov.uk Faster and more cost-effective than post in targeting consultee groups/individuals.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To respond to email queries received.
Programme/project website	An important central resource for the public, media and all stakeholders to access up-to-date information. The website will feature a document archive, frequently asked questions (FAQs), feedback mechanisms, information about events, news articles etc. Information can be downloaded at: www.transportscotland.gov.uk/a96dualling	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To keep the website up-to-date throughout the programme. • To include all published programme and individual project documents. • To provide an email enquiry and response service.
Leaflets	Provide regular information on specific route sections and topics and highlight feedback mechanisms.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • For use during public exhibitions and to keep key groups (e.g. Community Councils and landowners) informed with details of specific sections.

Participation method	Benefits	Commitments
Newsletter	To provide regular information and opportunities for individuals to feed back comments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To keep all affected parties and the general public informed about project development. • To make this information accessible to a wide audience by distributing through libraries and other community facilities.
Media/news releases	To provide information to as wide an audience as possible using the national and local media.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To keep the media updated on developments throughout the life of the programme and individual projects through news releases and interviews or briefings.
Briefing sessions	Briefing members of representative stakeholder groups, including responding to questions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To hold briefing sessions to introduce stakeholder representatives to the programme team and set up a communication link with community groups. • To also give consideration to the location and timing of these briefing sessions and ensure that invitations are issued in good time.

5. Communication Methods continued

Participation method	Benefits	Commitments
Public exhibitions	Opportunity for the public to feed back views through contact with the programme/project team.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To hold public exhibitions/ roadshows to present information and gain public feedback on proposals. • To provide an opportunity for feedback. • To ensure that constituency and list MSPs, MPs, MEPs and elected local councillors are made aware of public exhibitions and are invited to attend.
Community council, residents associations and landowner meetings	Involving local people, key stakeholders and community groups to establish key issues and solutions. The format can be modified to suit the audience, including formalised presentation, small group discussions and feedback.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To engage effectively with community representatives and affected parties. • To follow up on briefing sessions and to provide opportunity for discussion on programme/project developments.
Reference/focus groups	Structured group process where people's views on specific issues can be sought. Can be directed to a particular group with an interest in the programme and individual projects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To benefit from the knowledge and expertise of particular groups to benefit the programme.
One-to-one stakeholder meetings	One-to-one meetings with stakeholders most affected by the proposals. Opportunity to resolve potential issues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To meet specific stakeholders to discuss issues related to the programme/projects, develop specific mitigation, etc. (as required or requested).



Feedback from all consultation events will be recorded, including how the information provided has been taken into account in the development of the project.

The table sets out key methods that will be used for public participation. Transport Scotland will require appointed contractors to continue effective engagement with the local community and interested parties during construction to minimise disruption and deliver community benefits wherever possible.

NB This document will be updated before construction begins to detail how ongoing engagement will be maintained during this phase.

6. Further Information

If you would like further information on the A96 Dualling Programme or would like to express your views, please use one of the following:

Visit the project website:

www.transportscotland.gov.uk/a96dualling

Email the project team:

a96dualling@transportscotland.gsi.gov.uk

Write to:

A96 Dualling Team,
Transport Scotland,
Buchanan House,
58 Port Dundas Road,
Glasgow,
G4 0HF



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