

About the programme

Why is the A96 Dualling programme being taken forward?

On 6th December 2011, the Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment launched the Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP) which provides an overview of the Scottish Government's plans for infrastructure investment over the coming decades. Contained within the document is a commitment to complete the dualling of the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen by 2030.

When will work start and when will the new road be open?

The IIP makes a commitment to having the dualling completed by 2030. The construction programme has not yet been developed and is likely to take shape during the design and development work currently underway.

What is the timetable for individual elements of the dualling, e.g. Nairn Bypass?

The overall timetable for the project is set by the Scottish Government's commitment to complete dualling of the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen by 2030.

The construction programme for individual elements has not yet been developed and is likely to take shape during the design and development work.

What are the anticipated benefits of the programme?

The dualling of the A96 provides a number of opportunities for businesses, motorists and local communities:

- Improve journey times and journey time reliability between Aberdeen and Inverness and, in combination with the dualling of the A9, improve connectivity to the Central Belt.
- Reduce the rate and severity of accidents.
- Improve the environmental conditions and reduce severance in bypassed communities.
- Offer the opportunity to improve pedestrian, cyclist and equestrian facilities.
- Complete the dual carriageway network between all of Scotland's cities.

Why will dualling take so long?

To complete the dualling of the A96 by 2030 is in fact challenging given the design and statutory procedures we must complete. We must ensure that all options for dualling are considered and consulted upon so that we minimise the potential impacts on those living in and using the A96 corridor.

What will be the cost of dualling?

At this early stage of development it is difficult to give an accurate estimate of the cost of dualling between Inverness and Aberdeen. As the design and preparation is progressed an estimated cost will be developed.

How will the scheme be funded?

It would not be sensible to make a commitment now for works being undertaken so far ahead. We will be considering the funding options that will be available and most appropriate.

What design challenges does the route pose?

- a) Environmentally sensitive areas
- b) Soft Ground
- c) New bridges and major bridge widening
- d) Public utilities
- e) Aberdeen to Inverness Railway

- f) Proximity to communities along the existing route
- g) Topography

Where will the proposed bypasses go?

At this early stage of development, the locations of the proposed bypasses have not been determined. Following the completion of the preliminary design work, detailed route options will be progressed and preferred routes for these bypasses identified at the earliest opportunity.

One of the Improvement Strategies appears to pass near my property – what do I do?

The Improvement Strategies shown in the DMRB Stage 1 Report, SEA Environmental Report and Exhibition material are different high level approaches to providing a dual carriageway between Inverness and Aberdeen, for example a bypass north or south of towns along the existing A96. It is important to note that the improvement strategy options do not represent specific corridors or route alignments, and therefore do not represent the exact locations where the upgraded A96 is likely to be located. During the next stage of design development route options will be developed and assessed. This will include an engineering, environmental, traffic and economic assessment of the potential impacts of each option to inform a preferred route option choice.

What are the next steps for the project?

It is proposed to progress the next stage of design (i.e. DMRB Stage 2 route option assessment) as three sections in addition to the Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) which is being taken forward separately. Details of the three sections are provided in the About the Project section of the A96 Dualling webpages.

Environment

Are you undertaking Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)?

Yes, Transport Scotland has undertaken a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to assess the route-wide constraints, issues and opportunities for A96 dualling. This built on the SEA undertaken as part of the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR) and considered more fully the route corridor options available for A96 dualling.

SEA outputs will inform the development of route options within corridor, as well as detailed design and project level Environmental Impact Assessment which will be undertaken as part of the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) assessment process.

Activities undertaken as part of the SEA include:

- Habitats regulations appraisal to consider effects on SAC, SPA and Ramsar sites
- Route-wide (strategic) flood risk assessment
- Engagement with statutory bodies and other interested stakeholders
- Collation of constraints around the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen and consideration of significant environmental issues and risks
- Development of strategic environmental principles and mitigation guidance for later design stages

How will environmental impacts be mitigated?

An assessment of the environmental impacts of the proposed scheme, during construction and operation will be undertaken. Where practicable, mitigation to avoid or reduce impacts will be identified and implemented as part of the scheme. Details of potential impacts, mitigation and residual impacts will be presented in the Environmental Statement. These cover land use, geology, contaminated land and groundwater, the water

environment, ecology, landscape, visual, cultural heritage, air quality, noise and vibration, pedestrians and non-motorised users, vehicle travellers, disruption due to construction, policies and plans and cumulative impacts.

Consultation

Who will be consulted/what opportunity will there be for public input?

We held a series of public exhibitions in venues along the route in November 2013 and May 2015. Further public consultations will be undertaken as part of the design and development process. There will be ongoing strategic consultation with key sector organisations covering planning and transport, business and development, tourism and recreation, access and the environment. The objective will be to seek ways of working collaboratively across agencies to best capture the benefits of the scheme and use that information to support the emerging programme of work.

How will my views be considered?

An on-going programme of regular engagement from Inverness to Aberdeen will be undertaken to ensure that communities, businesses and individuals affected by the work are kept fully informed and to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to provide important feedback. This feedback shall be taken into account as the project is designed, procured and constructed.