



A96 Dualling Programme

Strategic Environmental Assessment

Tier 2 Environmental Report

Appendix D - Preliminary Assessment Outcome Summary

May 2015



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Option A	✘
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key risks include the lack of environmental relief and increased disruption to communities along the existing A96 • Includes increased risk to properties either side of existing A96 through settlements • Benefits include a reduced requirement for additional land take when compared with off-line options • <i>On balance, SEA review considers that option A should not be taken forward for further consideration due to the potential for adverse effects on population and human health, exacerbating existing conditions</i> 	
Option B North	✔
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key risks include more land at risk of flooding (fluvial and coastal) when compared with option B South, and the presence of more historic environment designations spanning a large proportion of the breadth of this option • Key benefits include bypasses around major settlements, providing environmental relief for communities • B North and B South only vary in terms of the bypass options around Forres, Elgin and Inverurie and, on balance, SEA review considers that option B North is more significantly constrained than option B South • <i>However, bypass options to the North of these settlements should be taken forward for further consideration, in order to provide flexibility at this early stage should the PES engineering studies determine that options to the South of these settlements are particularly constrained in engineering terms</i> 	
Option B South	✔
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • B North and B South only vary in terms of the bypass options around Forres, Elgin and Inverurie and, on balance, SEA review considers that option B South is less significantly constrained than option B North • Key benefits include bypasses around major settlements providing environmental relief for communities and avoidance of historic environment features potentially affected by B North • Key risks include significant areas of land at risk of flooding within the bypass options to the south of communities (less; however, than B North) and potential risk of adverse impacts on Ancient Woodland designations • SEA considers that, at this early stage, option B South could be viewed as the reference case for SEA comparison of other broad alternative options • <i>On balance, SEA review considers that option B South is less significantly constrained than online option A and option B North and therefore should be taken forward for further consideration</i> 	
Option C	✔
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When compared with the corresponding stretches of options A, B North and B South, this option is less significantly constrained • Risk of adverse impacts in terms of losses of productive (mixed agricultural) land, and impacts on areas designated as Ancient Woodland • Key risk is the introduction of potentially adverse impacts on those smaller settlements presently unaffected by A96 issues • Key benefits include the avoidance of the larger settlements of Inverurie and Huntly, potentially providing environmental relief • Also avoids a number of historic environment designations potentially affected by options A, B North and B South • <i>On balance, SEA review considers that option C should be taken forward for further consideration as it could potentially provide a less constrained alternative to the corresponding sections of options A, B North and B South</i> 	

Option D ✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When compared with the corresponding stretches of options A, B North and B South, this option is less significantly constrained • Key risk is the introduction of potentially adverse impacts on those smaller settlements presently unaffected by A96 issues • Also risk of adverse impacts in terms of losses of productive (arable and mixed) agricultural land, and impacts on areas designated as Ancient Woodland • No larger A96 settlements bypassed by this option; however, does enable the avoidance of a number of GDLs • Option D would be most beneficial when considered in conjunction with a north bypass option around Inverurie • Option D may be removed from further consideration should PES engineering assessments determine that either option B South or option C is preferred in this area • <i>On balance, SEA review considers that option D should be taken forward for further consideration as it could potentially provide a less constrained alternative to the corresponding sections of options A, B North and B South</i>
Option E ✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compared with the corresponding sections of options A, B North and B South, this option is less significantly constrained • No significant environmental designations on/ around the hill(s) for the tunnel option • Key issues relate to environmental impacts of tunnelling operations (e.g. excavations, spoil, construction and maintenance accesses for ventilation shafts, etc.) • However, tunnelling spoil could provide substrate aggregate material for other sections of A96 dualling • Key benefits include avoidance of a GDL • SEA recommendation would be to avoid a tunnelling option in favour of an 'open' solution • <i>On balance, SEA review considers that a tunnelling option should only be taken forward for further consideration where the PES engineering studies determine that the alternative options in this area are particularly constrained; however, option E should be taken forward as it may provide flexibility to consider a less constrained alternative</i>
Option F ✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In terms of environmental constraint designations, when compared with the corresponding sections of options A/B North/B South, this option is less significantly constrained • However, in terms of watercourses and water quality, this option contains a number of distilleries which would support consideration of this option only where others do not prove viable • Key issues include valuable habitats (including Ancient Woodland and peaty soils which traverse the breadth of the option) and the River Spey SAC/SSSI • Relies on selection of a southern bypass option around both Elgin and Keith • Environmental relief benefits for existing A96 communities likely to be limited due to recent completion of bypass works at Fochabers/ Mosstodloch (not dual carriageway bypass) • Key benefits include the avoidance of historic environment designation (GDL) present in options A/B North/B South and which was previously affected by the Fochabers/ Mosstodloch scheme • <i>On balance, SEA review considers that option F should only be taken forward for further consideration where the PES engineering studies determine that the alternative options in this area are particularly constrained in engineering terms</i>

Option G ✖
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key issues include the mountainous terrain and cutting through the Cairngorms National Park which spans the breadth of this option • Does not address the community relief issues on the A96 corridor as would only really help end-to-end traffic • Cuts through three Natura sites that would be avoided entirely by focusing on solutions along the existing A96 corridor • Key benefits include the avoidance of a number of designated historic environment sites when compared with options A/B North/B South • <i>On balance, SEA review considers that option G should not be carried forward for further consideration</i>
Option H ✖
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key issues include the mountainous terrain and dualling through the Cairngorms National Park which covers almost half of this option • Does not address the community relief issues on the A96 corridor as would only really help end-to-end traffic • Introduces dual carriageway through Cairngorms communities not currently affected by A96 issues • Cuts through Natura sites that would be completely avoided by focusing on solutions around the existing A96 corridor • Key benefits include potentially reduced land take if dualling existing A class roads, and use of less land at risk of flooding • <i>On balance, SEA review considers that option H should not be carried forward for further consideration</i>
Option I ✖
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relies on the approval of parts of option H • Key issues include the mountainous terrain and dualling through the Cairngorms National Park which covers over 80% of this option • Does not address the community relief issues on the A96 corridor as would only really help end-to-end traffic • Introduces dual carriageway through Cairngorms communities not currently affected by A96 issues • Cuts through Natura sites that would be completely avoided by focusing on solutions around the existing A96 corridor • <i>On balance, SEA review considers that option I should not be carried forward for further consideration</i>
Option J ✖
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key issues include the potential to impact communities within the option, including Rothes, Craigellachie and Dufftown • Unlikely to address community relief issues within the A96 corridor – would require commitment to dual a completely different route • Impacts on Natura, SSSI and GCR sites that would be avoided by focusing on solutions along the A96 corridor • <i>SEA review considers that option J should not be carried forward for further consideration</i>
Option K ✖
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compared with the corresponding section of option J, this option is more constrained as it dissects the Hill of Towanreef SAC and SSSI site • Depends on the approval of the majority of options H and J • Unlikely to address the community relief issues along the A96 corridor • Key benefits include the avoidance of the settlement of Rhynie, present in the corresponding section of option J • <i>On balance, SEA review considers that option K should not be carried forward for further consideration</i>

Option L ✖	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key benefits include less land at risk of flooding than corresponding sections of options A/B North/B South • Key issues include Culloden Battlefield which is intersected by this option • Affects a range of SAC/ SPA/ SSSI/ GCR sites that would be avoided completely by focusing on solutions along the A96 corridor • Would require approval and construction of a completely new route from Inverness to Dufftown • On balance, SEA review considers that option L should not be carried forward for further consideration 	
Option M ✖	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compared with the corresponding sections of options A/B North/B South, option M appears to be more significantly constrained • Key issues include the Darnaway and Lethen Forest SPA, Lower Findhorn Woods and River Spey SAC/ SSSI sites and large areas of Ancient Woodland cover • Numerous watercourses and flood plain issues • Would require the approval and construction of a completely new route between Nairn and Huntly • Key benefit might include the bypassing of large A96 settlements including Forres, Elgin and Keith – however, option is unlikely to address traffic between these centres • On balance, SEA review considers that option M should not be carried forward for further consideration 	
Option N – original ✖	Option N – revised ✔
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compared with the corresponding sections of options A/B North/B South, option N contains more significant Natura constraints at its western extent • Key issues also include Darnaway Castle GDL at the western extent • Uncertain whether this option would provide relief for settlements between Aldearn and Fochabers that may be more likely provided by options along the existing corridor • Key benefits include avoidance of a number of historic environment designations at Fochabers (present in options A/B North/B South) • On balance, SEA review considers that option N should not be carried forward for further consideration – some refinement to avoid Natura sites at the western extent could make this option more favourable • <i>Following this SEA finding a review of the option was undertaken with the PES team and Transport Scotland resulting in amendment of the alignment</i> • <i>The Option has therefore been revised to link into the existing A96 further east, between Aldearn and Forres, to avoid the SPA and SAC sites and ensure that they are not affected</i> • SEA review therefore considers that the revised option N should be carried forward for further consideration 	

Option P	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compared with the corresponding section of option A, this option appears less significantly constrained • Compared with the corresponding section of options B North/B South, this option is more significantly constrained • Key issues include peaty soils and Ancient Woodland which cross the breadth of the option and therefore cannot be avoided (bisects the Bin Forest) • Major river and flood plain crossings to north of Keith and Huntly • Likely to be most beneficial when combined with a northern bypass around Inverurie and linking through option D • However, southern bypass options around Keith and Huntly appear less significantly constrained • Other key issues relate to environmental impacts of tunnelling operations (e.g. excavations, spoil, construction and maintenance accesses for ventilation shafts, etc.) • However, tunnelling spoil could provide substrate aggregate material for other sections of A96 dualling • SEA recommendation would be to avoid a tunnelling option in favour of an ‘open’ solution • On balance, SEA review considers that a tunnelling option should only be taken forward for further consideration where the PES engineering studies determine that the alternative options in this area are particularly constrained; however, option P should be carried forward for further consideration as it may provide flexibility to consider a continuous northern bypass option from Craigiebank (south of Fochabers) past Keith, Huntly and Inverurie 	
Option Q	✓
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compared with the corresponding sections of options A/ B North/ B South, this option appears more significantly constrained • Key constraint issues include Barra Battlefield and Straloch GDL which both span the breadth of the option • Would introduce dualling issues to a range of communities not directly affected by A96 issues • Key benefits include less land at risk of flooding than the corresponding sections of options A/ B North/ B South • Also could provide alternative dual carriageway connection to AWPR north of Dyce that may relieve some traffic from existing A96 dual carriageway section south of Inverurie • On balance, SEA review considers that option Q should be carried forward for further consideration as it could provide an alternative connection to the northern side of Dyce on the AWPR 	



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