

A9/A96

Inshes to Smithton scheme

Preferred Option – Design development update
Public drop-in sessions

May 2018



Overview leaflet

**[transport.gov.scot/projects/
a9a96-inshes-to-smithton](https://transport.gov.scot/projects/a9a96-inshes-to-smithton)**

Introduction

Transport Scotland has been taking forward design development for the A9/A96 road connection between Inshes and Smithton.

Towards the end of 2017, public exhibitions were held to provide an overview of the outcomes of the route options assessment work, and to present the preferred option for the scheme. This preferred option included two variants (A and B) to reflect alternative alignments close to Ashton Farm.

This leaflet provides an overview of the early design and assessment work of the preferred option, including which of the two alignment variants will be progressed.



Looking east from Inshes towards Smithton

i A feedback form is available at the drop-in session or on the project website: transport.gov.scot/projects/a9a96-inshes-to-smithton

Inverness & Highland City-Region Deal

As part of the Scottish Government's commitment within the £315 million Inverness & Highland City-Region Deal which was signed in January 2017, Transport Scotland is progressing plans for a single carriageway road connecting Inshes to Smithton in Inverness.

The City-Region Deal will improve connectivity because of investments in transport and includes the development of the A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton scheme.

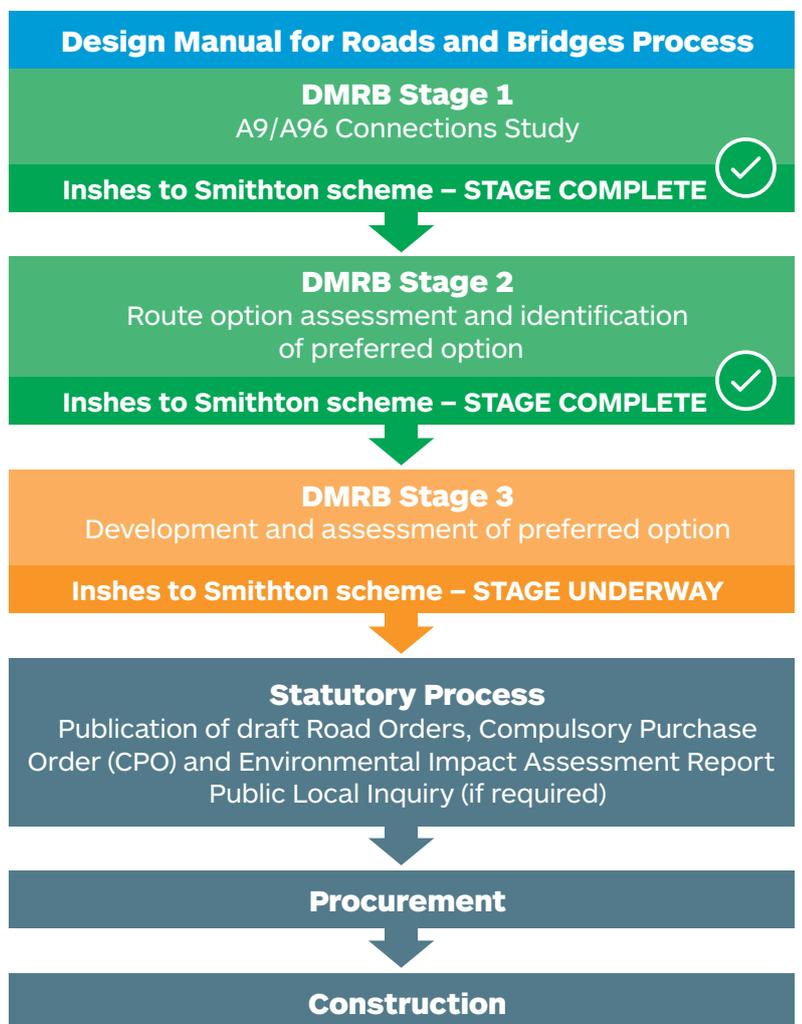
The scheme is interdependent with other projects and plans being progressed by The Highland Council, as well as being dependent on the proposed A96 Dualling Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) project.

Scheme assessment process

Transport Scotland carries out a rigorous assessment process to establish the preferred option for a road improvement scheme.

The preparation and development of road schemes follows the scheme assessment process set out in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB).

This three-stage assessment process covers engineering, environmental, traffic and economic consideration.



Consultation

Throughout this process, Transport Scotland consults a large number of stakeholders, local communities and interested parties, including heritage, environmental and Non-Motorised User (NMU) groups such as pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians.

The DMRB Stage 2 Assessment for the A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton scheme has been completed and the design and assessment of the preferred option (DMRB Stage 3) for the scheme is in progress.

Scheme update

The preferred option for the A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton scheme was announced on 31 October 2017 and was presented to members of the public at a series of exhibitions in October and November 2017.

Alignment variants A and B

The preferred option included two alignment variants (A and B), which were to be reviewed during the early design development at **DMRB Stage 3**. This was to allow further consultation and consideration of the integration of the proposed scheme with The Highland Council's draft **Inverness East Development Brief**.

Since the preferred option was announced, The Highland Council has made progress with the draft Inverness East Development Brief and its formal consultation period closed on Friday 9 March 2018.

DMRB Stage 3 process

Design development and assessment have been carried out as early activities in the DMRB Stage 3 process.

Consultation feedback from statutory consultees and landowners, as well as feedback received from members of the public following the exhibitions held in October and November 2017, has also formed part of the review of the A and B variants during the early part of the DMRB Stage 3 process.

Non-Motorised User (NMU) provision

Facilities for Non-Motorised Users (NMUs), such as pedestrians and cyclists, are an integral feature of the proposed scheme. As part of the DMRB Stage 3 Assessment process, we continue to identify and assess impacts on existing NMU links in developing the design for all users.

NMU provision for the scheme will be designed and developed during the DMRB Stage 3 Assessment and will be developed in conjunction with **The Highland Council's emerging masterplan for Inverness East**.

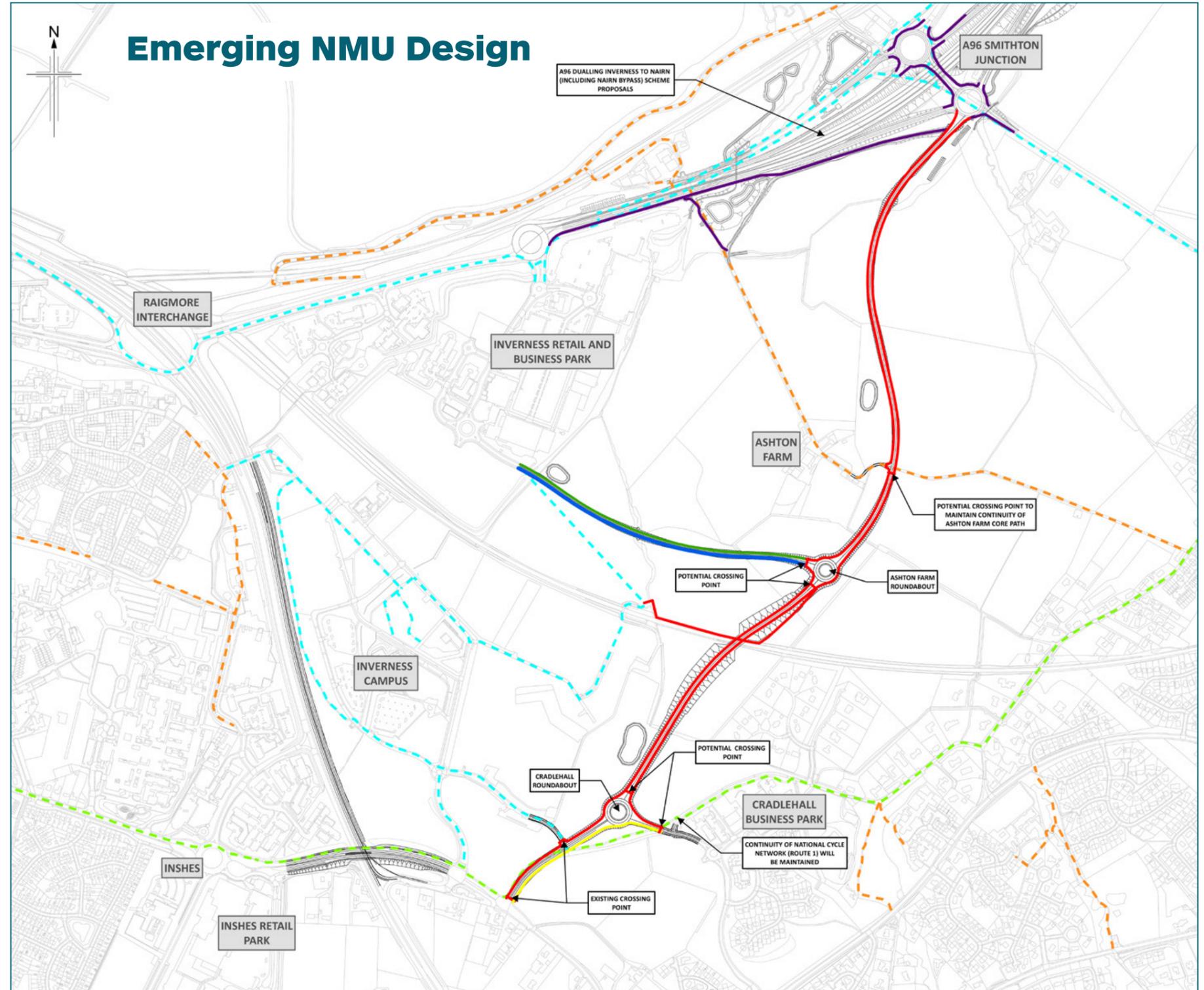
The following objectives have been set in terms of NMU provision for this scheme:

- To maintain continuity of the existing National Cycle Network (Route 1) as it passes through the scheme corridor
- To maintain continuity of the existing core path at Ashton Farm as it passes through the scheme corridor
- To maintain continuity of other existing NMU routes as they pass through the scheme corridor

- To take account of the proposed East Inverness Active Travel Corridor (EIATC) in the development of the scheme design
- To recognise and exploit opportunities to provide for existing and potential future NMU desire lines that pass through the scheme corridor and the surrounding area.

To assist in meeting these objectives, we are developing the NMU design to include:

- A 3 metre shared surface adjacent to both sides of the proposed carriageway, including a 0.6 metre segregation strip
- A 3.5 metre dedicated cycleway, along the link to Inverness Retail and Business Park, plus a 2 metre footway adjacent to both sides of the link
- Continuity of the National Cycle Network (Route 1)
- An NMU facility adjacent to the Highland Main Line Railway to tie into the existing facilities between the University of the Highlands and Islands (UHI) campus and Inverness Retail and Business Park.



Ashton farm core path



View looking west from Inshes overbridge



Inverness Campus NMU Facility

Transport Scotland's **Roads for All: Good Practice Guide for Roads** is being used for the design of footways to ensure that new provisions cater for disabled people, the elderly, people with prams and other vulnerable users.

Shared footways and cycleways are also being developed in accordance with Transport Scotland's **Cycling by Design** document. Both documents are available to view on Transport Scotland's website.

Legend

Proposed Scheme	Proposed A96 NMU Provision	Existing Core Path
Proposed A9/A96 NMU Route	Proposed Realignment of National Cycle Network (Route 1)	Existing Local Path
Proposed A9/A96 Footway	Existing National Cycle Network (Route 1)	
Proposed A9/A96 Dedicated Cycleway and adjacent Footway		

Please note:
The design will be subject to further development during the DMRB Stage 3 process.

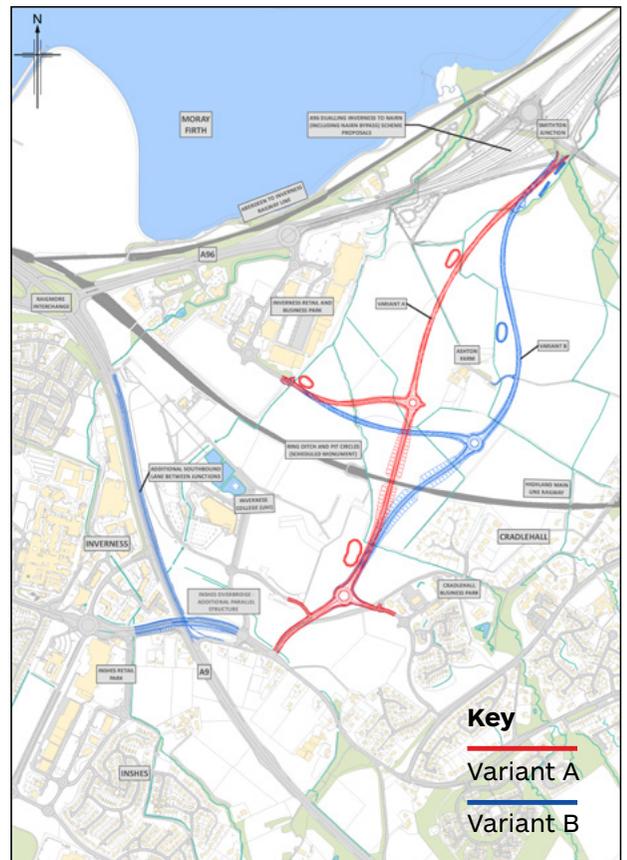
Alignment variant assessment

The road designs for alignment variants A and B have been reviewed and refined since completion of the DMRB Stage 2 Assessment in October 2017.

Areas of design development have included reducing the quantity of imported material required for the scheme and reducing the impact on watercourse crossings and flood risk areas.

The following is a summary of the review:

- **Variant B** is preferable to variant A in terms of its lower potential impact on nationally important cultural heritage features (a scheduled monument at Ashton Farm). Historic Environment Scotland has confirmed a preference for variant B.
- **Variant B** integrates better than variant A with land use for future development as described in The Highland Council's draft Inverness East Development Brief. The Highland Council has confirmed a preference for variant B.
- **Variant B** when compared to variant A, minimises severance of existing agricultural landholdings and would require less prime agricultural land.
- Whilst there are differences between A and B in terms of engineering design, environmental assessment and traffic performance, on the whole these are minor and there are no overarching features or benefits of variant A which have been identified as being sufficient to outweigh the above factors which favour variant B.



The outcome of this review is that **variant B** will be progressed for further development and assessment at DMRB Stage 3. Variant A will not be considered further.

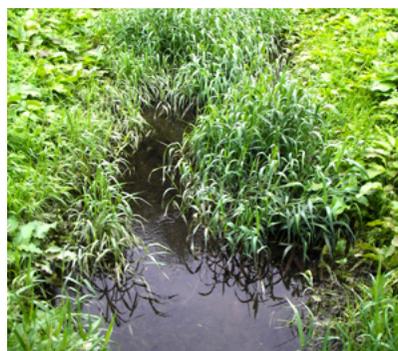
Environmental update

The environmental effects of the proposed scheme are being investigated in more detail and will be published in an Environmental Impact Assessment Report.

Surveys are being undertaken in the local area around the preferred option to gather detailed information about the existing environmental conditions (and update the information previously gathered for the DMRB Stage 2 Route Options Assessment).

These include:

- **Ecological surveys:** existing habitat and species which may be present in the area
- **Landscape and visual surveys:** existing landscape character and the views from various locations within the study area
- **Noise surveys:** the existing noise levels present at various locations within the study area
- **Archaeological surveys:** the potential for buried archaeological remains particularly around the designated scheduled monument at Ashton Farm
- **Non-Motorised User surveys:** current conditions, locations and usage levels of the existing path network for



Inshes Burn Raigmore – Good water vole potential

pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians.

We are also gathering information from other existing data sources, and consulting with statutory bodies (The Highland Council, Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), Scottish Natural Heritage, and Historic Environment Scotland), and other environmental interest groups.

Environmental specialists are working with the design team to assess the scale and nature of environmental impacts and refine the design of the preferred option where necessary.

Environmental mitigation proposals will also be developed and these could include:

- Construction management plans
- Providing safe crossing points with fencing for protected species like badger and otter (e.g. mammal underpasses and ledges)
- Landscape planting
- Noise barriers or environmental bunds.

What happens next?

Transport Scotland and its design consultant, Jacobs, are continuing to take forward the development and assessment of the preferred option for the scheme (DMRB Stage 3 Assessment).

Transport Scotland will look to publish draft Road Orders, Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) and an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report for the A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton scheme in 2019.

The **draft Road Orders** will define the line of the developed preferred option.

The **draft Compulsory Purchase Order** will define the extent of the land required to deliver and maintain the scheme.

The **EIA Report** will record a detailed assessment of the impact of the developed preferred option on the environment and what steps have been taken to mitigate negative effects where possible.

Work is ongoing and includes:

- Consultation with affected parties
- Further consultation with statutory bodies, Community Councils and other relevant interest groups
- Design development of the preferred option
- Ground investigation works
- Identification of the land required for the scheme and preparation of draft Orders
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the proposed scheme and preparation of corresponding EIA Report
- Development of suitable mitigation measures to reduce impact on the environment.



Looking west from Cradlehall towards Raigmore



Artist's impression of the proposed scheme

Comments and feedback

Transport Scotland welcomes your comments and feedback. Please take time to consider the information presented and provide any comments you may have as soon as possible and by:

28 June 2018

You can provide your comments to us by:

- using the relevant feedback form and leaving it in the Feedback Box at the exhibition
- email or post the feedback form to us.

Feedback forms are also available to download on the Transport Scotland website.

Email comments to: a9a96-inshes-smithton@transport.gov.scot

Post to: **A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton team, Transport Scotland, Buchanan House, 58 Port Dundas Road, Glasgow G4 0HF**

Further information

For further information on the A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton scheme, please visit Transport Scotland's website:

transport.gov.scot/projects/a9a96-inshes-to-smithton

About your comments and feedback

Transport Scotland will consider your comments and feedback as part of the further design development and assessment of the scheme, and all submissions will be shared with our consultants. We may also use your submission to inform future reports or public documents related to this scheme.

If you choose to provide contact details with your submission, Transport Scotland will be able to send you updates about the scheme, for example invitations to future public engagement events. If you wish us to do so, please provide your consent when you contact us using the details opposite. You can withdraw your consent at any time by contacting the project team.

The provision of contact details is optional and your comments will still be considered if provided anonymously, however Transport Scotland will be unable to respond to you if you choose not to provide these details.