

## **A96 DUALLING EAST OF HUNTLY TO ABERDEEN FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (MAY 2019)**

### **SECTION A: THE SCHEME**

#### **A1. What are the benefits of Dualling the A96?**

Benefits of dualling the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen include:

- supporting sustainable economic growth by providing opportunities to grow the regional economies in 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 by improving environmental conditions in towns to be bypassed, where possible;
- supporting access to tourist and recreation sites; and
- facilitating active travel in the corridor.

#### **A2. Why is the A96 Dualling necessary?**

In December 2011, The Agenda for Cities, “Scotland’s Cities: Delivering for Scotland”, was published by the Scottish Government. The Agenda identifies connecting cities with strong, reliable and resilient transport infrastructure as a key characteristic to support growth. Published alongside this was the Scottish Government’s Infrastructure Investment Plan, providing an overview of plans for infrastructure investment over the coming decades. To complement the Agenda for Cities, the Infrastructure Investment Plan contains a commitment to complete the dual carriageway network between all of Scotland’s cities by 2030, including the dualling of the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen.

Within this context, an Inverness to Aberdeen Corridor Study Strategic Business Case was published in 2014 by Transport Scotland and seeks opportunities to address the growing economic and transport demands along the corridor. The Strategic Business Case (SBC) developed transport planning objectives for the Inverness to Aberdeen corridor taking cognisance of the national, regional & local policies and plans; and the problems and opportunities identified along the corridor.

The SBC demonstrated that the proposal to dual the A96 is the best way to meet the future needs of those living, working and travelling along the corridor in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Importantly the appraisal showed that the dualling is best able to meet the transport planning objectives by providing drivers with a consistent road standard that provides the best connectivity for those using the route, either end to end or to the many destinations along the corridor. Dualling the A96 will also complement the upgrade to the A9 and the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route/Balmedie-Tipperty

and will provide those people and businesses located along the corridor with the best possible access to Inverness and Aberdeen and onwards to the Central Belt. The appraisal concluded that the full dualling of the A96 would deliver significant wider economic and accessibility benefits.

A copy of the Inverness to Aberdeen Corridor Study Strategic Business Case is available from the Transport Scotland website at <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/6931/a96-strategic-business-case-inverness-to-aberdeen-sbc-final-17-september.pdf>

### **A3. When will a decision be taken on a preferred option for the scheme?**

A preferred option for the A96 Dualling East of Huntly to Aberdeen scheme will be identified once the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) Stage 2 assessment has been completed. Transport Scotland anticipates that a preferred option will be confirmed at the end of 2019.

### **A4. What is the programme for delivery of the scheme?**

Following consultation on the preferred option for the A96 Dualling East of Huntly to Aberdeen scheme in 2019, the design of the preferred option will be further developed, refined and assessed, during the DMRB Stage 3 process, which is expected to take approximately 2 years. Any necessary environmental mitigation will be designed and incorporated into the scheme and an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Report will be prepared and published. (Note: the Roads (Scotland) Act 1984 (Environmental Impact Assessment) Regulations 2017 changed the statutory title of the document reporting an EIA from Environmental Statement to EIA Report).

Draft Road Orders (which show the line of the proposed scheme) and a draft Compulsory Purchase Order (confirming the extent of land required to deliver, maintain and operate the scheme) will be prepared for publication at the same time as the EIA Report. The programme thereafter is dependent on the level of formal comment received to the published draft Orders and whether there is a need for a Public Local Inquiry. Construction of the scheme itself can only commence if the scheme is approved under the relevant statutory procedures and thereafter a timetable for its progress can be set. The Scottish Government has made a commitment to complete the dualling of the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen by 2030.

### **A5. Can improvements to the rail network be made instead of the A96 dualling?**

Improvements to the rail network in conjunction with improvements to the trunk road network are integral to achieving the Scottish Government's objectives for the Aberdeen to Inverness corridor as set out in its Infrastructure Investment Plan. Phase One of the rail improvements programme is due for completion later this year and includes; redoubling of track between Aberdeen and Inverurie; signalling

enhancements; platform extensions at Insh and Elgin; Forres station relocation (now complete) and track improvements and infrastructure to support two new stations at Dalcross (for Inverness Airport) and Kintore. These improvements are being taken forward in addition to the A96 Dualling Programme.

#### **A6. Will the new A96 be a Special Road?**

At this stage, there are no plans to promote the new A96 dual carriageway as a Special Road, which means that there will be no restrictions on the types of vehicles using it. The proposed road standard for the A96 Dualling East of Huntly to Aberdeen scheme is Category 7A, meaning that access to and from the dual carriageway will be restricted to grade separated junctions (ie. junctions with overbridges/underbridges and slip roads) in line with the A96 Dualling junction strategy.

### **SECTION B: SCHEME DESIGN AND DEVELOPMENT**

#### **B1. What process does Transport Scotland follow when developing a trunk road improvement?**

A rigorous assessment process is undertaken to establish the line for a trunk road improvement scheme. The three stage DMRB assessment process covers engineering, environment, traffic and economics. Transport Scotland also consults with the public and interested bodies with views being taken into account during the assessment process. The overall process, including the three stages of DMRB, for the development of a trunk road scheme follows a general sequence of:

- strategic assessment and identification of potential improvement strategies (DMRB Stage 1);
- development and assessment of route options and identification of a preferred option (DMRB Stage 2). This includes an engineering, environmental, traffic and economic assessment of each route option identified to inform the preferred option choice;
- development of preferred option proposals and preparation of an EIA Report (DMRB Stage 3);
- publication of statutory Road Orders (defining the line of the proposed scheme), Compulsory Purchase Order (defining the extent of land required to deliver, operate and maintain the scheme) and EIA Report for formal consultation; and
- procurement and construction of the scheme (subject to completion of the relevant statutory procedures).

The individual and combined durations of these phases of work are variable depending on factors such as technical complexity, environmental constraints and the scale and content of the works.

Further details on the stages of the process for promoting new trunk roads can be found on the Transport Scotland website at:

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/transport-network/roads/promoting-new-trunk-roads/>

## **B2. Can the scheme be delivered by widening the existing A96?**

The re-use/widening of the existing A96 has been investigated thoroughly as part of the early assessment work. The outcome of this work concluded that the existing A96 single carriageway is constrained at numerous locations by the standard of the existing road geometry, roadside properties and by a high density of existing junctions and accesses. This limits the opportunity for an online upgrade of the existing route through a number of sections, including the section at Inverurie. The assessment has determined that it is more suitable to develop the new dual carriageway offline from the existing road, with the existing A96 retained for use as part of the local road network to maintain access to land and property. This also helps to meet one of the scheme objectives to reduce the potential conflicts between local and strategic traffic journeys.

Regarding the section at Inverurie, the online widening of the existing A96 between Inveramsay Bridge and Port Elphinstone Roundabout (approximately 6.6 kilometres) was assessed against the A96 Dualling East of Huntly to Aberdeen scheme objectives and was found to perform poorly against the environmental and engineering criteria, including the proposed dual carriageway unavoidably encroaching into and permanently impacting on residential and commercial properties, including the need for demolition. Based on this, an online dual carriageway upgrade of the A96 through Inverurie was not considered further as part of the DMRB Stage 2 assessment.

Further information is provided in the “Online at Inverurie – Dualling Feasibility and Appraisal – East of Huntly to Aberdeen” Report available at:

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/online-at-inverurie-dualling-feasibility-and-appraisal-east-of-huntly-to-aberdeen-a96-dualling/>

## **B3. Do predicted traffic levels support the dualling of the A96?**

To inform the traffic assessment of route options, Transport Scotland has developed a strategic traffic model of the full A96 corridor from Inverness to Aberdeen. The model is informed by a comprehensive database of traffic and planning data, including numerous traffic surveys undertaken specifically for this scheme. The model forecasts future traffic conditions based on planning data outlined in local and national planning documents, including anticipated changes in traffic demands associated with land use development and committed infrastructure improvements, such as the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route/Balmedie-Tipperty and the Aberdeen to Inverness railway improvements. As part of the assessment process, each of the options are evaluated under forecast future traffic conditions.

As a result of the work carried out to date through the ongoing DMRB Stage 2 assessment, each of the options shown at the October 2018 Public Exhibitions have

demonstrated they achieve the Scheme Objectives and offer benefit to both trunk road and local road traffic. The forecasts of future traffic growth indicate that the dualling scheme will meet the recommended flow criteria for a dual carriageway outlined in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (TA46/97) which, in combination with the wider aims and objectives of the scheme, supports the dualling of the A96 between East of Huntly and Aberdeen.

**B4. Have you considered the impact of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route/Balmedie-Tipperty on traffic demand/flows in your assessment?**

As noted above, the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route/Balmedie-Tipperty has been included in the traffic modelling. However, new traffic surveys will also be undertaken once the traffic patterns have adjusted to the opening of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route/Balmedie-Tipperty, to further validate the model. These surveys will be used to check that the predicted impacts of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route/Balmedie-Tipperty in the A96 strategic model reflect the actual traffic patterns observed on site.

**B5. Will the route options assessment process take account of the traffic congestion through Inverurie?**

From the traffic modelling that has been carried out to date, including on-site traffic surveys, Transport Scotland is aware of the existing traffic congestion through Inverurie town centre. The route options assessment will consider the potential for each option to deliver benefits to both trunk road and local road traffic. The assessment considers the impact of each option in terms of change in traffic volume, traffic routing and journey time.

**B6. How is the cost of the route options considered as part of the assessment?**

A cost estimate for the A96 Dualling East of Huntly to Aberdeen scheme has not yet been prepared as route options are still being developed and assessed. Costs are considered and form part of the economic assessment within the DMRB Stage 2 assessment process, so these will be developed and published as part of the DMRB Stage 2 Scheme Assessment Report once complete.

**B7. What provision is being made for Non-Motorised Users (NMUs)?**

Facilitating active travel and improving safety for motorised and non-motorised users are two of the key objectives of this scheme. Suitable provision for all users, including pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians and vulnerable road users such as children, the elderly and mobility impaired is an important part of the A96 Dualling programme. The scheme will facilitate active travel in the area by providing NMU facilities. Specific NMU facilities will be identified and developed in consultation with

key stakeholders during the DMRB Stage 3 process once a preferred option has been identified. Existing designated local routes, including core paths, cycle and equestrian routes will be assessed and underpasses/overbridges or diversionary routes will be provided where appropriate in locations where the scheme would otherwise sever routes.

Transport Scotland recognises the contribution that local user groups can make in terms of gaining valuable local knowledge. We have set up a Non-Motorised User Forum to provide updates on emerging proposals and seek vital feedback. There will also be further consultation with the local community and interested parties as the scheme development continues.

### **B8. What are the proposals for crossing the River Don at Kintore?**

A significant structure will be required to cross the railway line, River Don and its associated floodplain for the violet route option. Options for the structural form and cost of any such crossing are still being developed and will form part of the DMRB Stage 2 assessment process which includes an assessment of engineering, environment, traffic and economics. Should this option be identified as the preferred option, a more detailed design would be developed during the DMRB Stage 3 assessment.

In terms of flood risk, we are working with the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) to ensure that the route options do not increase flood risk to any sensitive receptors. To that end, modelling of the crossing of the River Don and its associated flood plain, at Kintore, will be carried out at DMRB Stage 2, with a view to proving this can be achieved. We continue to engage with SEPA and Aberdeenshire Council about flooding and drainage aspects of the design. A consideration of flooding impact is discussed in FAQ C4 below.

While there is a proposed crossing of the River Don at Kintore, there are also a number of other significant watercourse crossings for other route options. We are considering the impact of these route options on river crossings across the study area.

### **B9. What will happen to the existing local road access?**

Access to all properties will be maintained. Access to the new dual carriageway will be from a number of grade separated junctions (i.e. junctions with overbridges/under bridges and slip roads) which provide safe access to and from the dual carriageway. Minor roads and private means of access will not have junctions onto the dual carriageway. On completion of the new dual carriageway, the existing A96 will be de-trunked and form part of the local road network which, where appropriate, will be connected to the proposed grade separated junctions. Where the existing local road network and access to individual properties is impacted by the new route, alternative access provision will be included within the scheme design to ensure connectivity.



**B10. How are you ensuring that the Preferred Option will reduce journey times and improve journey time reliability?**

The initial route options presented at the public exhibitions were taken forward because they perform well against the scheme objectives. All of the route options comply with current design standards for a Category 7A All Purpose Dual Carriageway, including compliance with gradient and width standards. Even where the routes may be longer, they offer journey time savings and improvements in journey time reliability when compared to travelling on the existing A96. This is because the routes are of a higher standard, with a 70mph speed limit. They also offer reduced delays and road safety improvements through the rationalisation of junctions, provision of grade separated junctions and improved overtaking opportunities. The traffic model used in the assessment of journey times takes into account vehicle operating costs and fuel consumption when calculating the user benefits of each of the options.

**B11. How have you considered the proposed route options in terms of winter/weather resilience?**

Regarding weather related aspects for the initial route options, AmeyArup have sought information on road closures and winter resilience issues from various authorities, including Aberdeenshire Council and Transport Scotland's Trunk Road Operating Company, BEAR Scotland. This information has informed the initial route options developed to date. As part of the design development and assessment work required, consideration will be given to the resilience of the route options and any mitigation measures that could minimise the impact to road users.

**B12. How will the scheme consider public transport users, including school buses?**

The scheme objectives include reducing journey times and improving journey time reliability for all road users, as well as facilitating integration with public transport facilities to benefit public transport users. AmeyArup have engaged with Aberdeenshire Council's Passenger Transport Unit from an early stage in the DMRB Stage 2 process which has identified current and future public transport strategies, including scheduled bus services, dial-a-bus and school passenger transport. The route options will be assessed against their potential to align with these passenger transport strategies, and the impact of the dualling on scheduled bus routes. AmeyArup will continue to consult with public transport providers as part of the development of the scheme in order to address the needs of public transport services that serve local communities in the vicinity of the A96.

**B13. What lighting will be provided on the dual carriageway?**

Due to its predominantly rural location, it is expected that the new dual carriageway will not be lit. However, local lighting may be required at junctions or underbridges dependant on their location and design. Details of lighting will be developed during the DMRB Stage 3 design process once a preferred option has been selected.

#### **B14. Why has Option Q been ruled out?**

Improvement Strategy Option Q was discounted in 2015 as part of the DMRB Stage 1 assessment on the grounds that it did not perform well against the A96 Dualling Programme objectives.

Acknowledging the feedback received from stakeholders and members of the public following the 2015 exhibitions and the more recent 'Meet the Team' events in 2017, a further review of Improvement Strategy Option Q was completed as part of the initial development of the A96 Dualling East of Huntly to Aberdeen scheme.

This review split Improvement Strategy Option Q into two parts. The A947 corridor that connects Oldmeldrum, Newmachar and Dyce has been deselected as a result of the engineering, environmental and traffic assessment work completed to date. However, the A920 road corridor from Colpy to Oldmeldrum forms part of a route that performs well against the scheme objectives and is therefore being considered further as part of the DMRB Stage 2 assessment.

#### **B15. Will there be upgrades to the existing A96 dual carriageway between Aberdeen and Inverurie?**

Improvements to the existing A96 dual carriageway and its junctions between the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route and Inverurie will be considered as part of the scheme development.

#### **B16. Will there be service facilities for electric charging points along the route?**

Electric charging points, along with other Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) such as monitoring and a communication system, will be considered as part of the development of the preferred option during the DMRB Stage 3 Process.

#### **B17. How will junction locations be determined?**

As part of the DMRB Stage 2 assessment, detailed traffic modelling, in tandem with the economic, engineering and environmental assessments, will be used to determine the form and location of the required junctions, so that they best serve local and strategic traffic movements.

### **SECTION C: ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES**

#### **C1. How will the environmental impact of the scheme be assessed?**

In addition to its proximity to a significant number of properties, the A96 passes through or close to a number of areas of wildlife, scenic and historic significance, with a wide range of nationally and internationally designated sites in the region. A96



dualling-related effects in and around such areas will be carefully considered through the design process, and later sensitively managed through construction phases to minimise risk of adverse effects.

Transport Scotland has undertaken a route-wide Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to determine and understand the environmental constraints, consider the potential impacts that alternative route corridor options may present on the surrounding environment, and to develop the strategic mitigation or guidance required to minimise risks. Two reports in connection with the SEA were published on 25 September 2014 and 6 November 2014 respectively and these can be viewed at <https://www.transport.gov.scot/projects/a96-dualling-inverness-to-aberdeen/a96-dualling-inverness-to-aberdeen/#42719>.

SEA outputs have informed the identification of route options for the scheme and work undertaken during the DMRB Stage 2 assessment will build on this work.

Transport Scotland and its consultants AmeyArup continue to engage with key statutory environmental authorities, including Scottish Natural Heritage, SEPA and Historic Environment Scotland with regard to the environmental sensitivities and potential environmental impacts of the proposals and to reduce these as far as possible through design and mitigation.

An Environmental Assessment of the route options will be undertaken as part of the DMRB Stage 2 assessment, taking account of the predicted impacts of each option. The findings of this work will inform the selection of a preferred option.

Once a preferred option has been identified, an assessment of the predicted environmental impacts during its construction and operation will be undertaken at DMRB Stage 3 through an EIA. Where practicable, mitigation to avoid or reduce impacts will be developed and incorporated in the scheme design during the DMRB Stage 3 process.

## **C2. How will environmental impacts of the preferred option be mitigated?**

An assessment of the predicted environmental impacts of the preferred option during construction and operation will be undertaken at the next stage of scheme development (the DMRB Stage 3 process). Where practicable, mitigation to eliminate or reduce impacts will be identified and included in the design development of the preferred option during the DMRB Stage 3 process. Details of potential impacts, mitigation and residual impacts will be presented in the EIA Report. The assessment will cover land use, geology, contaminated land and groundwater, the water environment, ecology, landscape, visual, cultural heritage, air quality, noise and vibration, non-motorised users, vehicle travellers, disruption due to construction, policies and plans and cumulative impacts.

## **C3. What measures are being taken to assess road traffic noise from the scheme?**

Road traffic noise will be assessed as part of the DMRB Stage 2 Environmental Assessment, where the potential noise impact of each option will be considered and the findings will help to inform the selection of a preferred option.

At DMRB Stage 3, the design of the preferred option will be developed. Traffic noise modelling and the assessment process will be used to help design appropriate sustainable mitigation measures which will be reported in the EIA Report. The assessment will predict traffic noise levels and the likely health effects at sensitive receptors, including dwellings, considering relevant legislation, standards and guidance (including World Health Organization guidance).

Acoustic mitigation measures may include earth bunds, false cuttings and acoustic barriers, which will seek to be in keeping with the local environment and take account of other constraints such as visual impact. Typically, low noise road surfacing material will be used on the dual carriageway to deliver benefits through reduced noise for nearby receptors. The EIA Report will set out the expected noise changes as a result of the developed preferred option, including the effects of the mitigation measures which are incorporated into the design.

#### **C4. How will the flooding impact of the scheme be taken into account?**

It is recognised that the scheme traverses areas which are known to experience flooding and are identified by SEPA as being subject to flood risk. A key element of the design and assessment of each option is to ensure that existing flooding patterns are not made worse by the scheme. During development of the route options flood modelling will be carried out to assess the potential impact of the options and to assist in the design of mitigation, where required. Such mitigation could include constructing the road on structures across parts of the flood plain, provision of flood relief culverts and the identification and construction of compensatory flood storage areas.

Additionally, the drainage design will include the provision of drainage features which will control the rate of run-off from the new road. The flooding and drainage aspects of the scheme are being designed in consultation with SEPA and Aberdeenshire Council. The findings from the flood risk assessments and any specified mitigation will be incorporated into the EIA Report.

#### **C5. How will visual and landscape impacts be assessed and mitigated?**

Visual impacts are considered during the DMRB Stage 2 design and assessment process and will feed into the identification of a preferred option.

Once a preferred option has been identified for the scheme, a detailed assessment will be undertaken of how it will potentially change people's views, including the views experienced by those living in the vicinity of the scheme. Where potentially significant adverse visual changes to views from residential properties are identified, mitigation measures will be developed to eliminate or reduce the impact. Mitigation

measures to help screen the road may include: minor revisions to the design of the route; earthworks, such as screening bunds; and tree and hedgerow planting.

In addition, we will be taking into account in our landscape appraisal the sense of place as part of the DMRB Stage 2 Scheme Assessment Report. Landscape effects will be further considered at DMRB Stage 3 and reported in the EIA Report.

### **C6. How are you considering the impact of the new dual carriageway on CO2 emissions?**

Air quality and CO2 emissions are considered as part of the current design and assessment work to identify a preferred option. The outcome of environmental assessment will be reported in the DMRB Stage 2 Route Options Assessment Report.

The Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009 requires the Scottish Government to publish regular plans for meeting future emissions reduction targets. Transport Scotland aims to reduce emissions from transport in ways that promote sustainable environmental and socio-economic wellbeing. As Scotland's economy and population grows, so too will the demand for the movement of goods and people. Independent research commissioned by Transport Scotland showed that as low emission technology accelerates, together with behaviour change, we will be able to accommodate increased transport demand and significantly reduced emissions. To achieve this the Scottish Government is phasing out the need to purchase a petrol or diesel powered car or van by 2032, a full eight years ahead of the UK. A sustainable, low carbon transport network brings many additional benefits to communities, businesses and the third sector. Transport Scotland is committed to maximising these co-benefits which means that individual transport projects should not be assessed in isolation but in combination with projects and Scottish Government policies.

### **C7. How are wildcats, including the Wildcat Priority Areas, considered as part of the design development?**

The Wildcat Priority Areas (WPA) in Scotland are set up to help manage and protect wildcat populations. WPAs are non-statutory designations and not protected by law. However, while WPAs are non-statutory designations, the wildcats themselves and their den sites have statutory legal protection. AmeyArup are conducting desk-based research, field surveys and liaising with relevant stakeholders, seeking to minimise the potential impact on wildcats throughout the study area.

## **SECTION D: LAND AND PROPERTY**

### **D1. Will those who suffer loss of property and/or land as a result of the preferred option receive compensation for those losses?**

At this stage of scheme development, a preferred option has yet to be identified. Once the preferred option has been identified and has been further developed through the DMRB Stage 3 process, Transport Scotland will identify the land required to construct, operate and maintain the scheme and thereafter will publish a draft Compulsory Purchase Order. Once the land has been acquired by the Scottish Ministers they will appoint the Valuation Office Agency to assess the level of compensation due for property or land compulsorily purchased. The District Valuer and staff from the Valuation Office Agency will discuss the level of compensation with each affected landowner and/or their professional advisor.

The assessment of compensation will depend on individual circumstances. The underlying principle is to put the landowner, in financial terms, so far as money can do so, in the same position as if property had not been taken. The assessment of compensation will take into account the value of property and the value of related effects (known as Severance, Injurious Affection and Disturbance). Further guidance on the Compulsory Purchase Process and Compensation is available from the Transport Scotland website at:

<https://www.transport.gov.scot/strategy-and-research/publications-and-consultations/j8908-00.htm>

In addition, 12 months after the opening of a new road, those who have not otherwise been compensated and who consider that their property has reduced in value by virtue of the operation of the new or altered road may be entitled to claim for compensation in that regard within the terms of Part I of the Land Compensation (Scotland) Act 1973. Again, the valuation of any such compensation will be assessed by the Valuation Office Agency.

### **D2. Will any properties be demolished as a result of the scheme?**

Route options are being designed to avoid property demolition wherever possible. It is acknowledged that some properties are in proximity to the route options being considered; however, the further design development and assessment work required will seek to minimise the impact of our proposals. The route options will be subject to further design and assessment works to determine the exact location of new road infrastructure in relation to nearby properties and any associated access arrangements.

### **D3. Will the impact on agricultural land be considered?**

The Environmental Assessment process includes consideration of the potential impacts of route options on agricultural land and land used for other purposes such as for development or by the community. As the route option designs are further developed and assessed, the potential for route options to affect farm units will be considered and mitigation measures will be developed to minimise the effects of the scheme from land take and farm severance where possible.

Following the identification of a preferred option, the DMRB Stage 3 assessment will consider the matter of farm severance in detail to inform further design development and discussions with affected landowners regarding accommodation works.

#### **D4. Will adjacent communities be isolated by the scheme?**

Where the new road passes between communities, consultation will be carried out during scheme development to identify how best to avoid or minimise any severance which may occur. It should also be noted that as proposals are developed, there will be further opportunities for the potentially affected parties to provide their vital feedback.

Transport Scotland will work closely with communities, landowners and local authorities during future stages of design to ensure any adverse impacts on existing access is minimised.

#### **D5. Will existing private infrastructure, such as land drainage and water supplies, be affected by the proposed options?**

Data on existing infrastructure that may be affected, including drainage, water supplies and wind turbines, is being gathered as part of the assessment process and in consultation with utility asset owners and suppliers. The impact on and mitigation for any privately owned infrastructure will be considered in more detail at DMRB Stage 3 in consultation with individual property and landowners.

#### **D6. Have you considered the economic impact on local businesses?**

The DMRB Stage 2 Assessment considers the potential impacts and benefits of the scheme on the local, regional and national economy.

There will be an assessment of potential direct impacts upon businesses, e.g. if land is lost from a recognised business or community facility, or where there is a loss of agricultural land.

### **SECTION E: EXHIBITIONS AND PUBLIC CONSULTATION**

#### **E1. How were people notified of the route options public exhibitions held in October 2018?**

The public information exhibitions held in October 2018 were promoted in the following ways:

- information was uploaded to the scheme website - <https://www.transport.gov.scot/projects/a96-dualling-inverness-to-aberdeen/a96-east-of-huntly-to-aberdeen/>
- letters were sent to all of the active Community Councils in the area and local MPs, MSPs and Councillors;

- letters were sent to over 2,000 individuals and organisations that previously asked to be kept informed of the progress of the A96 Dualling programme;
- advertising posters were distributed to over 200 locations across the scheme extents;
- press adverts were placed in the Press & Journal, Evening Express, Banffshire Journal, Buchan Observer, Deeside Piper, Fraserburgh Herald, Inverurie Herald, Ellon Times, Ellon Advertiser, Inverurie Advertiser, Turriff Advertiser, Huntly Express and Northern Scott; and
- Transport Scotland also published a news release with this information and advertised the events on its social media channels.

## **E2. What further consultation will take place? Will members of the public have further opportunities to comment on the scheme development?**

Transport Scotland is committed to undertaking a rolling programme of engagement to ensure that communities, businesses and individuals affected by the work are kept fully informed and their vital feedback taken into account. Transport Scotland's approach to stakeholder engagement for the A96 Dualling Programme is set out in its document, "A96 Dualling Inverness to Aberdeen Engaging with Communities" which is available on the Transport Scotland website at <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/2230/a96-dualling-engaging-with-communities-2015-online.pdf>.

The feedback we received following the exhibitions held in October 2018 will be taken into account as we look to announce a preferred option for the scheme by the end 2019.

A series of drop-in sessions are being held later this month to update local communities and road users on the design and assessment work undertaken since the October exhibitions. Details are:

- Tuesday 28 May 2019, 12noon to 7pm, Wyness Hall, Inverurie, AB51 3QB
- Wednesday 29 May 2019, 12noon to 7pm, Wyness Hall, Inverurie, AB51 3QB
- Thursday 30 May 2019, 12noon to 7pm, Kinellar Community Hall, Blackburn, AB21 0JQ
- Friday 31 May 2019, 12noon to 7pm, Gordon Arms Hotel, Huntly, AB54 8AF