

A96 Dualling Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) **Frequently Asked Questions – February 2015**

Section A: The Scheme

A1 Why is the A96 Inverness to Nairn including Nairn Bypass project required?

The Strategic Transport Projects Review, published in 2008, identified a programme of strategic transport interventions necessary to support the future effective operation of Scotland's transport network. This included, at Intervention 18, upgrading the A96 to dual carriageway between Inverness and Nairn, and at Intervention 22, enhancement of the A96, including a bypass of Nairn. In addition the Infrastructure Investment Plan, published in December 2011, provides an overview of the Scottish Government's plans for infrastructure investment over the coming decades. Contained within the document is a commitment to dual the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen.

A2 What is the justification for dualling the A96?

Scotland's Cities: Delivering for Scotland [2011], set out the Scottish Government's intention to develop and exploit the strongest assets and most productive resources of Scotland's cities and their regions to optimise their contribution to sustainable economic growth for all of Scotland. One of the key characteristics that will support the growth of Scotland's Cities is the connectivity between cities through strong digital and transport infrastructure. In terms of transport infrastructure, this can be achieved through the improvement of journey times and journey time reliability. Through its Infrastructure Investment Plan the Scottish Government has made a commitment to dual the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen.

It is anticipated that dualling the A96 will:

- Reduce journey times and improve journey time reliability between Inverness and Aberdeen and, in combination with the dualling of the A9, improve connectivity to the Central Belt.
- Promote economic growth.
- Improve road safety.
- Reduce driver stress.
- Improve the environmental conditions and reduce severance in bypassed communities.
- Offer the opportunity to improve pedestrian, cyclist and equestrian facilities.
- Improve access and connections to public transport.
- Improve accessibility to tourist and recreation sites.
- Complete the dual carriageway network between all of Scotland's cities.

A3 When will work start and when will the new road be open?

The overall timetable for the A96 dualling programme is set by the Scottish Government's commitment to complete dualling of the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen by 2030. In terms of the Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) scheme, Transport Scotland is in the process of procuring a multi-disciplinary consultant to take forward the development, assessment and promotion of the preferred option for the scheme. This will allow Transport Scotland to appoint a design consultant early in 2015 to further develop the preferred option and look to publish draft Orders and Environmental Statement for the scheme in 2016 for



formal public comment and feedback. Progress thereafter will depend on the level and nature of comments received to the published draft Orders.

A4 What is the current cost estimate for dualling the A96 between Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass)?

The current estimated cost for the scheme is £375m-£475m (Q1 2014 prices, excluding VAT). The broad range reflects the early stage of development of the scheme and gives a truer picture of the inherent risks and uncertainties associated with planning and constructing such a major piece of infrastructure. As the scheme becomes more developed and the risks associated with its construction are better understood then we would expect to be able to narrow the range of the estimated cost. We will be carrying out value engineering on the proposals to deliver the best value for taxpayers money.

Section B: Scheme Design and Development

B1 What process do 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 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 for the development of a trunk road scheme follows a general sequence of:

- strategic assessment and identification of potential improvement strategies (Stage 1);
- development and assessment of route options and identification of a preferred route (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 route proposals and preparation of an Environmental Statement (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 and maintain the scheme) and Environmental Statement for formal consultation; and
- Procurement and construction of scheme.

The individual and combined durations of these phases of work are variable depending on factors such as technical complexity; environmental constraints; public support/opposition; and 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:

<http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/road/promoting-new-trunk-roads>

B2 How was the preferred option chosen?

The outcome of the route option assessment process for the scheme is fully documented in the A96 Dualling Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) DMRB Stage 2 Scheme Assessment Report which is available from Transport Scotland's website at <http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/project/a96-inverness-nairn-including-nairn-bypass>.

The purpose of this report is to document the factors that have been taken into account in the assessment of the route options, considering the scheme objectives and the engineering, environmental, traffic and economic constraints, advantages and disadvantages associated with each.

B3 What happens to direct accesses onto the current A96?

In general there will be no direct accesses onto the new dual carriageway. All access onto the dual carriageway should be via grade separated junctions (i.e. junctions with slip roads and fly-overs or underpasses). Where possible, lengths of the existing A96 will be retained for local access and these will provide connections to the dual carriageway junctions.

Current proposed alternative access to properties is shown, where required, on the preferred option drawings which can be found on the Transport Scotland website at:

<http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/project/a96-inverness-nairn-including-nairn-bypass>.

However, further consultations with affected landowners will be undertaken at the next stage of design development to develop access arrangements to land and property.

B4 What provision is being made for non-motorised road users?

Suitable provision for non-motorised users is an important part of the scheme development, particularly where the route crosses existing local roads and other routes used by non-motorised users.

The non-motorised users (NMU) strategy for the scheme is being developed and the key principles are:

- Maintain local community connectivity
- Provide suitable facilities for non-motorised users to cross the A96 dual carriageway
- Enhance provision for non-motorised users in the A96 corridor with facilities to supplement the local Core Path Network, National Cycle Network and Green Networks.

NMU facilities will be developed as part of the next stage of design development, including consultation with relevant local interest groups.

B5 What will happen to the A96 bus stops provision for the existing public transport services in the A96 corridor?

The project objectives include improving journey times for all road users, including public transport. Between Inverness and Nairn, it is anticipated that public transport will continue to use the existing A96 single carriageway and serve existing bus stops.

Between Brackley and Blackcastle consideration will be given at the next stage of design development as to the best way to maintain suitable local links across the Aberdeen – Inverness Railway for public transport, including school bus services and non-motorised users.

We are consulting with public transport providers as part of the scheme development in order to address the needs of public transport, including those services that currently deviate from the A96 in the scheme development. As the project moves forward we will continue to engage with them so that bus services and bus stops on the proposed route are properly planned.

B6 Why is the existing A96 not being used as one of the carriageways of the new dual carriageway?

The existing A96 is not well-suited to on-line dualling due to the current road standard, and the high frequency of road junctions and direct accesses to land, property and businesses which would need to be stopped-up and alternative access provided.

The existing A96 single carriageway will remain as a local road providing essential access to land property and business along the scheme.

B7 Why are grade separated junctions being used?

The A96 Dualling Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn bypass) scheme is being developed in line with Scottish Ministers' commitment to providing a high quality dual carriageway with grade separated junctions (i.e. junctions with slip roads and fly-overs or underpasses) between Inverness and Aberdeen.

The form and design of each junction along the scheme will be developed further during the next stage of design development.

B8 Will Granny Barbour's Road be stopped up?

During development of the route options it was considered that the A939 to the west provided a suitable local road crossing of the proposed dual carriageway for vehicular traffic. If Granny Barbour's Road (U3010 Blackpark – Grigorhill – Newmill Road) was to remain open to traffic there could be a greater impact on Blackpark Farm, Russell's Wood and the high pressure gas main in this location. Further consideration will be given to these issues at the next stage of design development.

Section C: Environmental Issues

C1 How were environmental impacts considered as part of the route option assessment process?

An assessment of the environmental impacts of each route option was carried out as part of the Stage 2 route option assessment process.

The environmental assessment of route options followed the process set out in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges and covered the following topics: air quality; noise and vibration; cultural heritage; landscape and visual; habitats and biodiversity; geology and soils; materials; all travellers; community and private assets, and; drainage and the water environment. Specialist staff, with experience in each of these fields, examined the baseline conditions and then assessed the impact of each of the route options.

As part of the assessment a number of site surveys were carried out. A habitat survey was undertaken by ecologists to record vegetation and wildlife to inform the baseline ecology assessment. A watercourse survey has also been undertaken in order to assess the features of the watercourses in the study area. Landscape specialists visited the site in order to assess the visual aspects of the route options and a site meeting was held with Historic Scotland in order to consider the Auldearn battlefield site.

The findings of the environmental assessment were used by the project team in the overall route options assessment process.

C2 How will environmental impacts of the preferred scheme be mitigated?

Part 3 of the DMRB Stage 2 Scheme Assessment Report includes the environmental assessment of the route options a copy of which is available from the Transport Scotland website at <http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/project/a96-inverness-nairn-including-nairn-bypass>. Each chapter of the environmental assessment includes a section titled “Potential Mitigation” which describes the typical ways in which the potential impacts could be mitigated.

An assessment of the environmental impacts of the developed preferred option, during construction and operation will be undertaken at the next stage of scheme development (i.e. Stage 3 development of preferred option). Where practicable, mitigation to avoid or reduce impacts will be identified and implemented as part of the development of the preferred option, for example:

- noise mitigation in the form of earthworks bunds or noise barriers;
- earthworks proposals designed to minimise the impact of cuttings and embankment slopes and to enable integration with the surrounding landscape;
- planting to replace trees lost during the construction phase at junctions and bridges to help assimilate the new structures into the surrounding landscape; provide screening to reduce visual impacts of the road, structures and lighting; and reinforce the character of the existing landscape, including individual trees, tree lines, hedgerows and areas of woodland (e.g. scrub, riparian, broadleaved, mixed);
- provision of new habitat, which would aim to reduce fragmentation of existing vegetation types, creating new linkages or more ecologically resilient functional units, thus enhancing the wider environment;

- provision of mammal ledges in culverts and under bridges. Where ledges are inappropriate or where no culverts exist, dry mammal underpasses could be provided instead; and
- artificial setts or holts could be constructed for loss of badger or otter habitat. Boxes could be erected for birds, bats, pine marten and red squirrel and artificial refuges could be created for great crested newts. In addition, planting could provide opportunities for above ground lying-up sites for otter and great crested newt, and foraging habitat for other species.

Details of potential impacts, mitigation and residual impacts will be presented in an Environmental Statement which will be published at the same time as the draft Orders. The assessment will 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.

C3 What measures will be taken to address road traffic noise from the project?

Noise and vibration was considered as part of the Stage 2 environmental assessment (i.e. during the route option assessment process). Full details of the assessment are in Chapter 9 (Noise and Vibration) of the DMRB Stage 2 Scheme Assessment Report which is available from the Transport Scotland website at:

<http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/project/a96-inverness-nairn-including-nairn-bypass>.

Noise and vibration will be considered further at the next stage of design development for the preferred option:

- Noise monitoring surveys will be undertaken to measure the current noise levels at designated receptor locations.
- Road traffic noise impacts will be studied in detail in order to identify locations where mitigation against noise of the road may be required. The approach to mitigation will be reported in the Environmental Statement.
- The scheme design will include mitigation where appropriate.
- This takes the form of, for example, earth bunds or fencing, in keeping with the local environment. Also typically low noise road surfacing materials will be used.

C4 How will people know if they are entitled to noise insulation?

During the next stage of design development, noise monitoring surveys will be undertaken to measure the current noise levels at designated receptor locations. Noise modelling will be undertaken to predict changes in noise levels as a result of the developed preferred option. Properties which may qualify for noise insulation will be identified in the Environmental Statement which will be published at the same time as the draft Orders. Further assessments will be carried out in accordance with the Noise Insulation (Scotland) Regulations 1975. This includes noise surveys pre and post construction and at years 5, 10 and 15 after opening of the road. Properties which meet the specified criteria will be eligible for noise insulation. Where there is a predicted noise increase of greater than +1 dB, above a noise level of 68 dB $L_{A10-18hr}$, secondary glazing may be provided at particular rooms within the affected property.

C5 Will the scheme drainage affect flooding?

It is recognised that the scheme traverses areas which are part of flood plains. In common with current practice on other road schemes, it is anticipated that the drainage design for this scheme will require to demonstrate that the scheme does not create any additional flooding risk. This is typically achieved by incorporating attenuation ponds within the drainage design for the scheme. In the event that the scheme traverses an area of flood plain, compensatory storage measures may be required to eliminate any additional flooding risk. It should be noted that the drainage proposals and effects on flood plains are subject to review by the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA).

C6 What will be done to protect animals both during construction and post construction?

Habitats and Biodiversity was considered as part of the Stage 2 environmental assessment (i.e. during the route option assessment process). Potential mitigation is considered in section 11.9 (pages 11-62 to 11-64) of Chapter 11 (Habitats and Biodiversity) of the DMRB Stage 2 Scheme Assessment Report which is available from the Transport Scotland website at: <http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/project/a96-inverness-nairn-including-nairn-bypass>.

Habitats and Biodiversity will be considered further at the next stage of design development. Further environmental surveys will be carried out in order to gather information which will go into an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA). The information gathered will be used to assess the scale of the impact and to develop appropriate measures (e.g. mammal fencing and underpasses) to minimise identified potential impacts. The results of these assessments will be reported in an Environmental Statement which is published at the same time as the draft Orders.

Section D: Land and Property

D1 Will property and land owners and businesses affected by the chosen preferred route receive compensation for any losses incurred?

As the preferred option is developed the Scottish Ministers 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 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. Basically 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 <http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/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 How will severance to my land be addressed?

It is recognised that the effects of the scheme may include severance of land. During the development of the preferred option, consultations will be undertaken with all landowners affected by the preferred option. Should the preferred option affect your land it is at this stage that we would undertake this consultation with you.

D3 How has the impact on agricultural and forestry land been assessed?

As part of the environmental assessment, a specialist Consultant (Scottish Agricultural College) has provided an assessment of the effects of the route options on agriculture, forestry and sporting land uses. The findings of this assessment were taken into account as part of the overall route option assessment process.

Full details of the assessment are in Chapter 16 (Community and Private Assets) of the DMRB Stage 2 Scheme Assessment Report which is available from the Transport Scotland website at:

<http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/project/a96-inverness-nairn-including-nairn-bypass>.

Section E: Exhibitions & Public Consultation

E1 Will the public have further opportunities to comment as the selected preferred option is developed?

The vital feedback we have received following the exhibitions held in October 2014 will be taken into account during the development of the preferred option. Further consultations will also be undertaken as part of the design and development of the preferred option to ensure that communities, businesses and individuals affected by the work are kept fully informed and their vital feedback taken into account as we further develop scheme proposals.

Transport Scotland expects to appoint a design consultant in early 2015 to further develop the preferred option and look to publish draft Orders in 2016 for public comment.

E2 How can I register an objection to the scheme?

The overall process for the development of a trunk road scheme is described in section B1 above.

Upon publishing draft Road Orders (which will define the line of the proposed scheme) and Environmental Statement, a minimum 6 weeks formal consultation period commences during which anyone who wishes to do so can comment or submit objections to the scheme. There is no specific format for an objection to the draft Orders other than it must be in writing.

Following the period for receipt of objections the Scottish Ministers will then consider all written comments and objections received and try and resolve any objections received if possible. Should statutory objections, e.g. from landowners whose land is to be purchased for the scheme, be received and not be resolved through negotiation, then a Public Local Inquiry (PLI) will be held. However, any member of the public may raise a non-statutory objection to the scheme. If only non-statutory objections are received, the Scottish Ministers may, if they are satisfied that the holding of a PLI is not necessary, dispense with such an Inquiry.

If a PLI is held, then an independent Reporter will be appointed by the Scottish Ministers to hear evidence from all parties and make findings and recommendations to the Scottish Ministers in relation to the scheme. The Reporter determines how the inquiry is to proceed; generally he or she will try to keep proceedings informal whilst ensuring that all parties are able to have their say in an organised and orderly manner. After considering the Reporter's recommendations, the Scottish Ministers will decide whether or not to proceed with the scheme.

Transport Scotland expects to appoint a design consultant in early 2015 to further develop the preferred option and look to publish draft Orders in 2016 for formal public comment. The consultation period following publication of draft Orders in 2016 is the point during which the public can formally comment or object to the scheme.