

# Welcome

As part of the Scottish Government's ambitious A96 Dualling Programme, Transport Scotland has been taking forward design development for dualling the 31km section of the A96 between Inverness and Nairn, including a Nairn Bypass.

This exhibition summarises the outcome of the design and assessment work which is presented in the published draft Orders and Environmental Statement for the A96 Dualling Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) scheme.

Information on the following panels includes details of the proposed scheme and an explanation of the statutory process that is being followed.

Copies of the Environmental Statement Non-Technical Summary are available for you to take away.

Transport Scotland staff and their consultants will be happy to assist you with any queries you may have in relation to the scheme and the information presented here today.



# Introduction

The Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR), published in 2008, set out the Scottish Government's transport investment priorities over the coming decades, including upgrading the A96 between Inverness and Nairn to dual carriageway, as well as the creation of a Nairn Bypass.

The intention to fully dual the A96 was announced in December 2011, when Scottish Ministers published their Infrastructure Investment Plan. This contained the commitment to dual the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen by 2030, thus completing the dual carriageway network between all of Scotland's cities.

The A96 Dualling Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) scheme consists of a new 31km dual carriageway between Seafeld roundabout and a point approximately 3.5km east of Auldearn.

Public information exhibitions were held in November 2013 to present the route options being considered for the scheme and to seek public feedback on the scheme proposals.

The preferred route option for the scheme was announced in October 2014. Transport Scotland held a series of public exhibitions to present this information to the public. Vital feedback provided by members of the public following these exhibitions was used to help inform and further develop the scheme design. In May 2015, Jacobs



A96 at Newton of Petty

UK Ltd was appointed to take forward the design and assessment of the preferred option.

As part of the ongoing community engagement for the scheme, a series of drop-in sessions were held in February 2016 to give members of the public the opportunity to view and comment on proposed changes to the preferred option. Comments received helped the further development of the scheme proposals.

# Need for the scheme

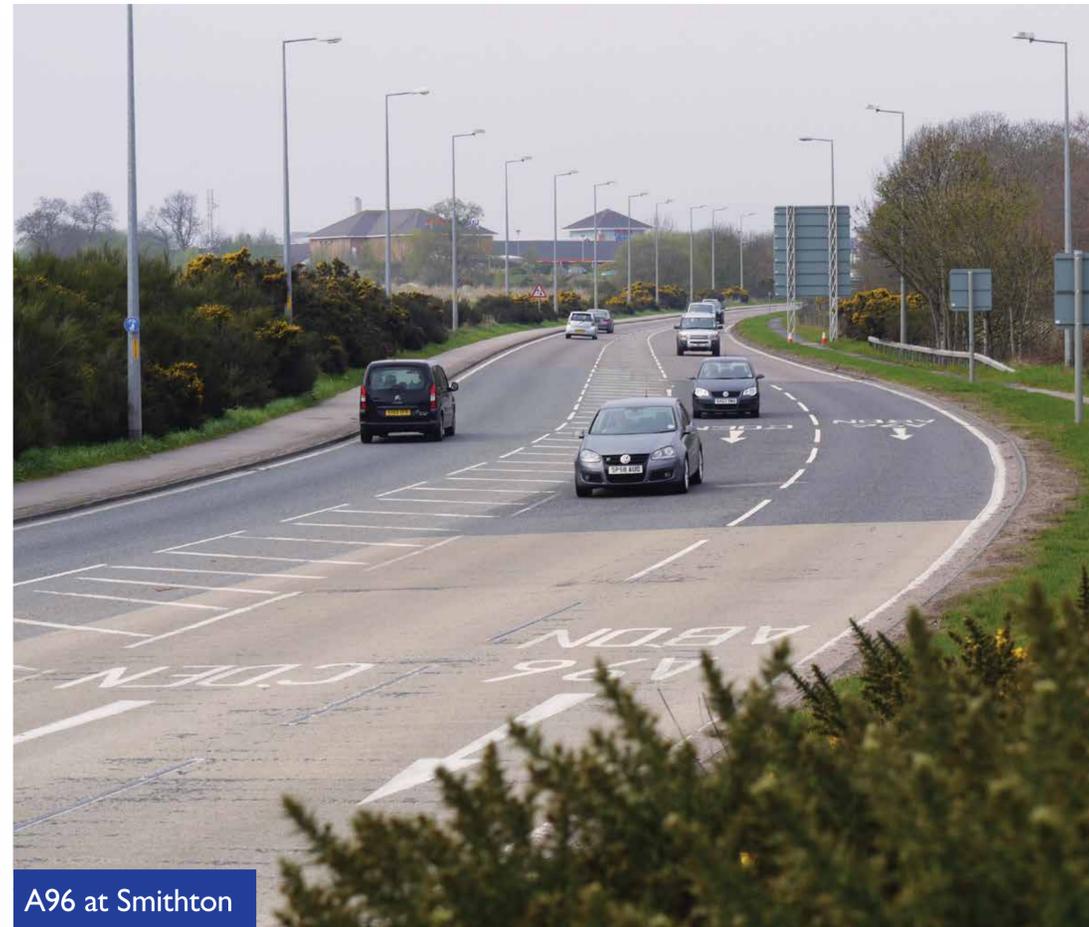
The A96 Aberdeen to Inverness trunk road is a strategic route linking Inverness to Aberdeen currently consisting of mostly single carriageway, with some overtaking lanes, and sections of dual carriageway at the western and eastern limits.

This scheme will upgrade the A96 between Inverness and Nairn (including the creation of a Nairn Bypass) and forms part of the wider strategy to fully upgrade the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen to dual carriageway.

Completely upgrading the entire A96 to dual carriageway will assist economic growth through improved access to the wider strategic transport network for road users and will enhance the public's access to jobs and services.

The upgrade to dual carriageway is also expected to reduce accident rates and accident severity, along with improving journey times and reliability.

The Nairn Bypass will reduce the amount of long-distance and heavy traffic on local roads. This will help ease congestion and bring environmental benefits to the town.



# Scheme objectives

The development of the A96 Dualling Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) has taken into account the scheme objectives and the Scottish Government's five appraisal criteria, namely: environment; safety; economy; integration; and accessibility and social inclusion. The scheme objectives are:

- to improve the operation of the A96 and inter-urban connectivity through:
  - reduced journey times
  - improved journey time reliability
  - increased overtaking opportunities
  - improved efficiency of freight movements along the transport corridor
  - reduced conflicts between local traffic and other traffic in urban areas
- to improve safety for motorised and non-motorised users through:
  - reduced accident rates and severity
  - reduced driver stress
  - reduced non-motorised user conflicts with strategic traffic in urban areas
- to provide opportunities to grow the regional economies on the corridor through:
  - improved access to the wider strategic transport network
  - enhanced access to jobs and services
- to facilitate active travel in the corridor
- to facilitate integration with public transport facilities
- to minimise the environmental effect on the communities in the corridor.



A96 at Nairn

# The proposed scheme

The proposed scheme includes the creation of approximately 31km of new dual carriageway, achieved through mainly offline construction i.e. away from the existing road.

The existing A96 that is replaced will be reclassified as a local road to maintain local access where required.

The proposed scheme also incorporates:

- the provision of approximately 30km of shared-use paths suitable for Non-Motorised Users (NMUs), for example pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians
- six grade-separated junctions
- 25 principal structures including a crossing of the River Nairn and three structures over the Aberdeen to Inverness railway line
- local road diversions
- major utility diversions.



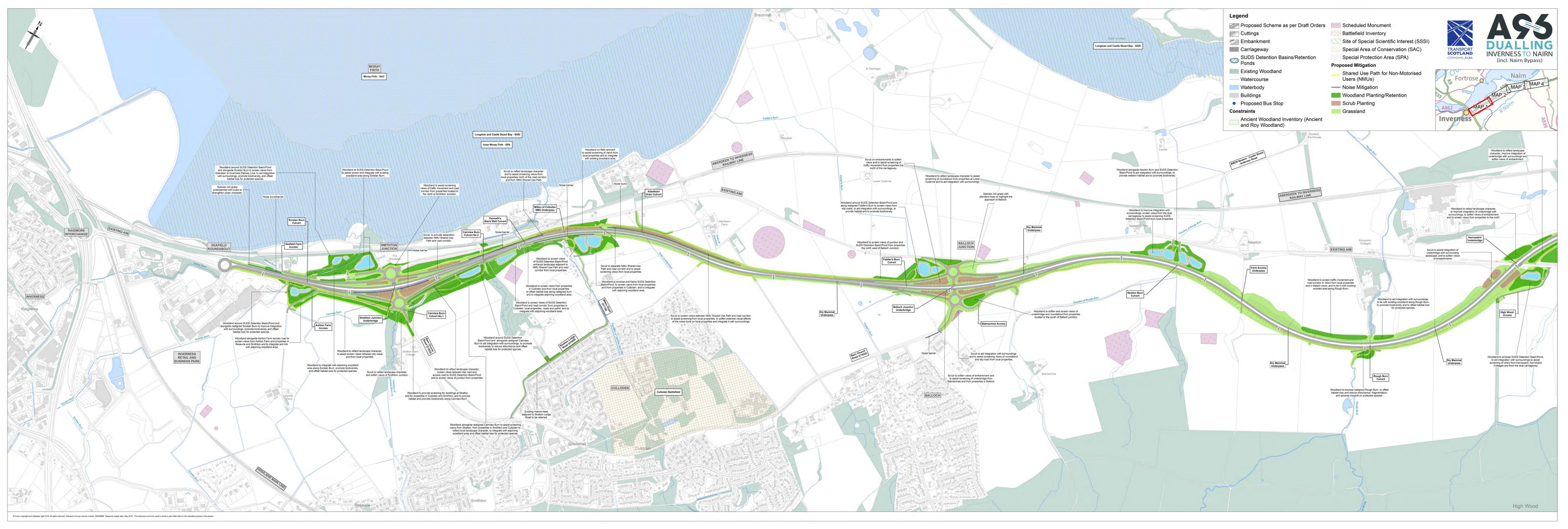
Visualisation of proposed Nairn East junction looking south

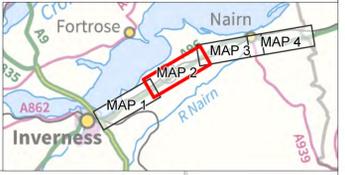


Visualisation of proposed Smithton junction looking towards Culloden



- Legend**
- Proposed Scheme as per Draft Orders
  - Cuttings
  - Embankment
  - Carriageway
  - SUDS Detention Basins/Retention Ponds
  - Existing Woodland
  - Watercourse
  - Waterbody
  - Buildings
  - Proposed Bus Stop
  - Constraints
  - Scheduled Monument
  - Battlefield Inventory
  - Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
  - Special Area of Conservation (SAC)
  - Special Protection Area (SPA)
  - Proposed Mitigation
  - Shared Use Path for Non-Motorised Users (NMUs)
  - Noise Mitigation
  - Woodland Planting/Retention
  - Scrub Planting
  - Grassland
  - Ancient Woodland Inventory (Ancient and Roy Woodland)





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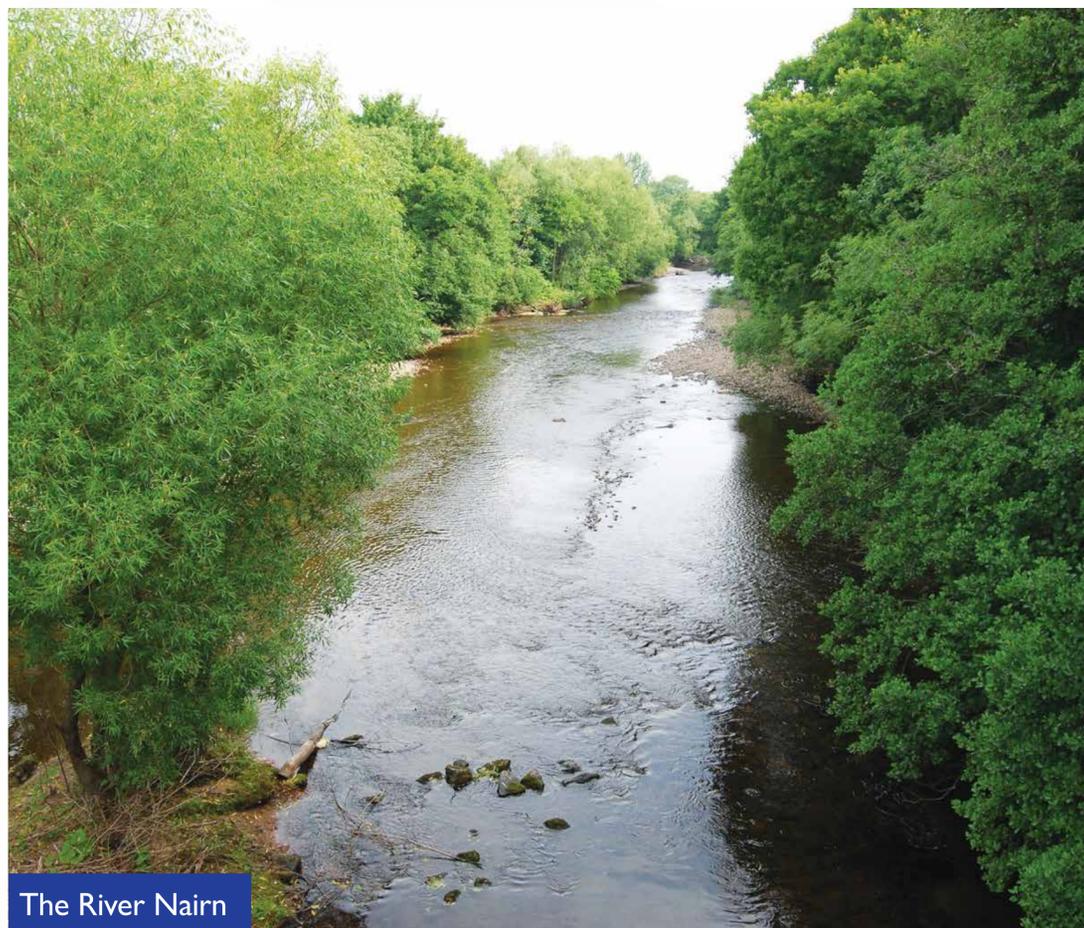
# Protection of the environment

The design of the scheme has been informed by detailed environmental assessments, which have considered the biological, physical and historic environment, local communities and landowners, and the current or planned future use of the land and wider environment.

One of the main considerations has been the need to avoid, or reduce, the potential for adverse effects on the environment.

An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the proposals has been carried out, with environmental constraints and issues identified and incorporated into the decision-making process throughout the development of the scheme.

Transport Scotland has published an Environmental Statement, which reports on the findings of the EIA. A non-technical summary of the Environmental Statement is available at this exhibition.



The River Nairn

# Environmental sensitivities

A wide range of environmental sensitivities were identified and assessed, with commitments as required to ensure the environment is protected through a range of mitigation measures.

Key considerations included:

- international and nationally designated ecological sites, including designations for a variety of bird species:
  - Inner Moray Firth Special Protection Area (SPA)
  - Loch Flemington SPA
  - Moray & Nairn Coast SPA
  - Inner Moray Firth Ramsar site
  - Moray & Nairn Coast Ramsar site
  - Moray Firth proposed Special Protection Area (pSPA)
  - Longman and Castle Bays Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
  - Kildrummie Kames SSSI
- presence of habitat for protected species (including otters, bats, badgers, water voles, red squirrels, pine martens)
- environmentally sensitive surface water features (including the River Nairn and its tributaries)
- existing areas of flood sensitivity – both river and surface water flood risks
- prime agricultural land across the route corridor



Farmland west of Boath House, Auldearn

- ancient woodland – approximately 12 hectares of ancient woodland within the overall study area
- cultural heritage features including scheduled monuments, archaeological remains, historic buildings and historic landscapes
- residential properties in the vicinity of the route – sensitive to noise, visual and air quality impacts.

# Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA)

The Environmental Statement contains full details of the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), including the mitigation we propose to avoid or reduce potential environmental impacts. A non-technical summary, available at today's exhibition, outlines the key issues in the Environmental Statement, including the beneficial and negative impacts considered to be of particular importance.

The Environmental Statement provides information regarding:

- air quality
- noise and vibration
- landscape and visual
- ecology
- geology and soils
- road drainage and water environment
- cultural heritage
- community and private assets
- all travellers
- materials
- policies and plans.



To inform the EIA process, we consulted widely with statutory consultees (The Highland Council, Historic Environment Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Scottish Environment Protection Agency), and non-statutory consultees including local interest groups. The project team has worked closely with these groups to develop a scheme that aims to reduce environmental impacts through careful design and by avoiding sensitive features.

# Anticipated environmental impacts

Environmental impacts associated with the scheme are anticipated to include the following:

- agricultural land-take and impacts on commercial forestry land
- ecological habitat loss, severance and fragmentation
- impacts on open and wooded farmlands and hill and valley landscapes
- indirect impacts on the settings of cultural heritage sites
- increases in traffic noise and reduction in air quality adjacent to the new route, although levels will remain within air quality standards
- temporary impacts during construction
- reductions in traffic noise and improvement in air quality within Nairn and along the existing A96
- improved views from the road and decreased driver stress
- enhanced Non-Motorised User (NMU) links for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians between communities and improved access to outdoor areas through a continuous link from Inverness to Nairn.



Isle View, Ring Cairn, south of the A96, near Lower Cullernie

# Environmental design and mitigation

The scheme passes through a rural area with some environmentally sensitive and protected areas, and also runs close to several communities and individual properties.

Therefore the environmental design incorporates the following:

- bridges and underpasses to maintain local access
- reconnection of field drainage systems and reinstatement of boundary features
- treatment of road drainage before discharging to watercourses
- measures to allow wildlife to pass through watercourse structures
- measures to allow wildlife to pass through embankments and over a cutting via an enhanced bridge
- landscaping designed for ecological benefit
- new habitats designed for individual species e.g. bats and badgers
- easing of embankments so that they integrate into landscape
- use of low road noise surfacing and acoustic barriers
- methods to minimise disruption during construction.



Visualisation of proposed Balloch junction



Visualisation of proposed Balloch junction from Barn Church Road

# Construction

Construction of the scheme can only commence if it is approved under the statutory procedures. Thereafter a timetable for progress can be determined. Construction of the scheme will generally take place offline from the existing A96 carriageway. The existing A96 will be reclassified as a local road to maintain local access where required.

The key construction features include:

- two lanes of traffic on the A96 to be kept open, as far as possible, to minimise disruption
- some lane closures may be required for particular activities such as bridge beam lifting and constructing the tie-ins. These operations will be restricted to night-time and weekends whenever possible
- measures to restrict the use of certain local roads during construction
- an estimated timescale of three to four years for the construction works to be completed over the full length of the scheme, although it may be possible to deliver the scheme in phases within the overall construction duration.

Further consultation with various stakeholders, such as The Highland Council, emergency services, utility companies and Community Councils, will be carried out as the construction contract documentation is developed.



Ground investigation works for the scheme

# Draft Orders and Environmental Statement

Plans showing the draft Orders are available for viewing at this exhibition. These are statutory documents that define the line of the proposed road and associated improvements.

A copy of the Environmental Statement is also available for viewing today, along with copies of the non-technical summary, which you can take away.

The draft Orders and the Environmental Statement are also available to view electronically on Transport Scotland's website at:

**[www.transport.gov.scot/project/a96-inverness-nairn-including-nairn-bypass](http://www.transport.gov.scot/project/a96-inverness-nairn-including-nairn-bypass)**

Hard copies of the draft Orders and Environmental Statement are available for inspection at the following locations during their normal opening hours:

- Inverness Library, Farraline Park, Inverness, IV1 1NH
- The Highland Council, ePlanning Centre, Glenurquhart Road, Inverness, IV3 5NX
- The Highland Council, Planning and Building Standards, 2nd Floor, Kintail House, Beechwood Business Park, Inverness, IV2 3BW
- Inshes Library, Inshes Road, Inverness, IV2 3RF
- Culloden Library, Keppoch Rd, Culloden, Inverness, IV2 7LL
- Ardersier Library and Service Point, Old School, Station Road, Ardersier, IV2 7SU
- Nairn Library, 68 High Street, Nairn, IV12 4AU
- The Highland Council, Nairn Service Point, The Court House, High Street, Nairn, IV12 4AU

and at:

Transport Scotland  
Buchanan House  
58 Port Dundas Road  
Glasgow  
G4 0HF



Visualisation of proposed Nairn West junction

# What happens next?

The draft Orders and Environmental Statement for the scheme were published on 29 November 2016. This marked the start of the statutory procedures and the formal consultation period.

Representations to the draft Orders, including objections, can be made in writing to Transport Scotland, **by 31 January 2017 at the latest**, to the address below:

Director of Major Transport Infrastructure Projects  
Transport Scotland  
Design Team 3  
7th Floor North  
Buchanan House  
58 Port Dundas Road  
Glasgow  
G4 0HF

Or by email to: [a96dualling@transport.gov.scot](mailto:a96dualling@transport.gov.scot)

Should formal objections to the draft Orders be received which cannot be resolved, there may be the need for a Public Local Inquiry (PLI) before the scheme can proceed. A timetable for construction can only be determined once the scheme itself has been approved under the statutory procedures.

## For further information

For further information on the A96 Dualling Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) scheme, please visit the Transport Scotland website at:

[www.transport.gov.scot/project/a96-inverness-nairn-including-nairn-bypass](http://www.transport.gov.scot/project/a96-inverness-nairn-including-nairn-bypass)

Information on the wider A96 Dualling Inverness to Aberdeen programme can be found at:

[www.transport.gov.scot/a96dualling](http://www.transport.gov.scot/a96dualling)