A96 DUALLING INVERNESS TO ABERDEEN
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
SEPTEMBER 2015

General

Q. When will work start and when will the new road be open?
A. The Scottish Government has given a commitment to complete the dualling of the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen by 2030. The construction programme for individual schemes within the overall dualling programme will take shape during future design and development stages.

Q. Why will dualling take so long?
A. 2030 is in fact extremely challenging given the design, assessment and statutory procedures we must complete. We must ensure that all options for dualling are considered and consulted upon so that we minimise the potential impacts on those living along and using the A96 corridor.

Q. What is the justification for dualling the A96?
A. The Scottish Government's Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR), published in 2008, set out a number of transport priorities for the Inverness to Aberdeen corridor to be met by 2032. These transport priorities included rail enhancements, new stations at Kintore and Dalcross, strategic park and ride at Dyce, upgrading the A96 to dual carriageway between Inverness and Nairn, a bypass of Nairn, a new bridge at Inveramsay, and a targeted programme of measures to reduce accident severity.

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 (IIP), 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 Scotland's cities by 2030, including the upgrade of the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen to dual carriageway.

This renewed focus on developing and promoting economic growth through Scotland's cities and their regions reflects current and future aspirations for planned development along the corridor. These have been revised since STPR and will consequently have potential implications for, and impact on, the performance of the corridor's strategic transport networks.

Within this context, an Inverness to Aberdeen Corridor Study Strategic Business Case (SBC) was published in 2014 by Transport Scotland to build upon the evidence base of the STPR and seeks opportunities to address the growing economic and transport demands along the corridor.

The SBC developed transport planning objectives for the Inverness to Aberdeen corridor taking cognisance of the national, region and 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 21st 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 planned upgrade to the A9 and the construction of the A90 Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR), 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.

Q. What affect will it have on the economy of the north east?
A. Dualling of the A96 is intended to benefit the regional economies, generating economic growth. It is an objective of the A96 Dualling Programme to provide opportunities to grow the regional economies on the corridor through improved access to the wider strategic transport network and enhanced access to jobs and services.

Q. What is the current journey time between Inverness and Aberdeen by car and how much time would be saved by dualling the road?
A. The current average journey time between Inverness and Aberdeen (city centre to city centre) by car is approximately 2hrs and 40mins. Based on the information currently available it is estimated that the dualling of the road would provide an estimated time saving of approximately 35 minutes, reducing the overall journey time to approximately 2hr and 05mins.

Q. How does the A96 Dualling Programme relate to development proposals?
A. The dualling programme is being developed taking into consideration the local development proposals of the relevant Local Authorities. We have been consulting with Local Authorities during the DMRB Stage 1 process and will continue to work them during the future design stages. The local development plans will be considered further at DMRB Stage 2 in identification and assessment of route options for the three sections.

Q. Why not improve the Inverness to Aberdeen railway instead?
A. Improvements to the rail network in conjunction with improvements to the trunk road network are integral to achieving the Governments objectives set out in the Infrastructure Investment Plan.

In addition to dualling the A96, the Scottish Government has embarked on a five-year, £5 billion programme of railway investment across the network, supporting the delivery of key projects such as the Aberdeen to Inverness Rail Improvements project, which will deliver significant journey time improvements and greater connectivity for both passenger and freight services operating on this corridor by 2030.

The long-term goal of the Aberdeen to Inverness Rail Improvements project is to:

- Reduce journey times to around 2 hours between the two cities;
- Provide an hourly service between the two cities, and enhanced commuter services at either end of the route, including a half hourly service between Aberdeen and Inverurie; and
- Facilitate improved access to the rail network through the delivery of new stations at Dalcross and Kintore.

Phase One of the project will deliver a package of improvements including: the redoubling of track between Aberdeen and Inverurie, signalling enhancements, platform extensions at

Insch and Elgin, Forres station relocation and track improvements and infrastructure to support two new stations at Dalcross and Kintore by 2019.

Q. How did Transport Scotland advertise the Public Exhibitions in advance?
A. Transport Scotland advertised the Public Exhibitions in both local and national press (commencing on Monday 4 May 2015), by distributing over 500 posters to towns and villages throughout the A96 corridor and via Transport Scotland's social media accounts. In addition Transport Scotland wrote to stakeholders, for example MSPs, MEPs, Local Authorities and Community Councils, as well as members of the public who previously attended the November 2013 exhibitions on the Dualling Programme and provided us with contact details to inform them of future Public Exhibitions.

The Public Exhibitions were held at locations throughout the A96 corridor between 11 and 21 May 2015 where members of the public were able to view the exhibition material. Members of staff from Transport Scotland and their consultants were on hand to answer any queries.

All of the information from both the November 2013 and May 2015 Public Exhibitions are available on the Transport Scotland website at the following link:

http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/road/a96-dualling-inverness-aberdeen/community-engagement

A96 Dualling Inverness to Aberdeen DMRB Stage 1 Assessment

Q. What process does Transport Scotland follow when developing a trunk road improvement?
A. Transport Scotland carries out a rigorous assessment process to establish the preferred line for a trunk road improvement. The three stage assessment process, based on the standard of good practice set by the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB), covers environment, engineering, traffic and economics. Transport Scotland also consults with the public and interested bodies such as Local Authorities, SEPA, SNH and Historic Scotland 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 (DMRB Stage 1);
- development and assessment of route options and identification of a preferred route (DMRB Stage 2). This includes an engineering, environmental, traffic and economic assessment of each route option identified to inform the preferred route option choice;
- development and assessment of preferred route option proposals and preparation of an Environmental Statement (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 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.

Q. What is the outcome of the DMRB Stage 1 Assessment?
A. Based on the findings of the preliminary engineering and environmental work we have been taking forward it is recommended that four broadly defined improvement strategies (Options B, C, D and N) are taken forward for further assessment at the next stage of design development (i.e. DMRB Stage 2 route option assessment).

In addition, the preliminary work we have been taking forward has identified emerging strategies for the dualling including the standard of dual carriageway, the approach to non-motorised user facilities, how we will locate lay-bys, and how we will plan junctions and accesses.

Further information on the DMRB Stage 1 Assessment can be found on the Transport Scotland website at the following link:

http://www.transportscotland.gov.uk/project/a96-dualling-inverness-aberdeen/preliminary-engineering-services-pes

Q. Why were the plans on display not more detailed to show the route of the proposed dual carriageway?
A. The preliminary assessment work we have been taking forward is the first step in developing a robust plan to improve connectivity between Inverness and Aberdeen. Transport Scotland carries out a rigorous assessment process to establish the preferred line for a trunk road improvement. The three stage assessment process, based on the standard of good practice set by the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB), covers environment, engineering, traffic and economics.

DMRB Stage 1 assessment is a preliminary assessment and usually involves a broad, strategic approach to developing and assessing indicative improvement strategies to allow the identification and consideration of the environmental, engineering, traffic and economic advantages, disadvantages and constraints associated with the developed improvement strategies. Improvement strategies are different high level approaches to providing a dual carriageway between Inverness and Aberdeen, for example a bypass to the north or south of towns along the existing A96. It is important to note that the improvement strategy options presented at the May 2015 exhibitions do not represent specific corridors or route alignments. These will be developed at the next stage of the design process which is the route options assessment stage (i.e. DMRB Stage 2 Assessment).

The DMRB Stage 2 assessment will involve the identification and assessment of route options developed from the broadly defined improvement strategies progressing from the Stage 1 assessment. The completion of the route option assessment stage will lead to the identification of a preferred route option for each section.

Q. How were the Improvement Strategies identified and assessed?
A. A sifting exercise was undertaken as the initial approach to the identification and assessment of indicative improvement strategy options. This process involved a two-part study of the alternative improvement strategies with varied advantages and disadvantages.

Sixteen alternative improvement strategies were identified which included both near online and offline strategies and part route and whole route strategies.

In Sifting Part 1, sixteen improvement strategies were assessed against the six programme objectives identified, to ensure those taken forward satisfied all, or in some cases most, of the six programme objectives. At the end of Sifting Part 1, Options B, C, D, E, N and P satisfied all the A96 Programme Objectives and as such proceeded to Part 2 of the sifting process.

In Sifting Part 2, the improvement strategies were assessed at a high level against both DMRB criteria (engineering, environmental and cost) and a general assessment of deliverability. Sifting Part 2 comprised an assessment of the improvement strategies to identify options which were significantly less advantageous than others and therefore removed from further consideration.

As a result of the findings of Sifting Part 2, Options B, C, D and N proceeded to the DMRB Stage 1 Assessment. Options E and P were not recommended to proceed due to the significant engineering and cost disadvantages associated with the tunnelling required for both of these options.

Q. Why has Option C been taken forward to DMRB Stage 2? Will this Option impact on the Bennachie Mountain?

A. Transport Scotland is at the very early stages of the design and assessment process for this section of the A96 with no route options having been developed at this stage. It is important to note that the improvement strategies presented at the exhibitions are representative of high level approaches to providing a dual carriageway between Inverness and Aberdeen, for example a bypass north or south of towns along the existing A96, and do not represent specific corridors or route alignments. Route options will be developed and assessed at the next stage of the design process which is the route options assessment stage (DMRB Stage 2) and will take into account the engineering and environmental constraints identified during the DMRB Stage 1 assessment including the topography of the mountain, the potential impact on the recreational use of the mountain, the potential visual impact on the mountain and distant views to the mountain.

In order to understand the constraints to the A96 Dualling programme, a thorough review of the existing corridor has been undertaken to identify the present engineering, environmental, traffic and economic features to provide an understanding of how the dualling programme may positively or negatively impact these features. Transport Scotland has also undertaken a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to assess the route-wide constraints, issues and opportunities for dualling the A96.

Improvement Strategy Option C was developed an alternative to Option B to provide a more direct route between Kintore and Huntly. This option also avoids a number of engineering and environmental constraints which are present on the approach to and around Inverurie.

The SEA identified for Option C the potential for major adverse environmental effects on biodiversity and landscape. The potential for significant effects on soils, water and flooding, population and human health and historic environment are also predicted.

The potential environmental effects of Option C have been taken into account in conjunction with engineering, traffic and economic assessment as part of the DMRB Stage 1

assessment. The topography of Option C has been identified as a key issue in the DMRB Stage 1 assessment in order to avoid steep gradients, significant earthworks and potential impacts on winter maintenance.

The outputs from the preliminary engineering and strategic environmental assessment work will inform the next stage of development which is the route options assessment process (i.e. DMRB Stage 2 assessment). During the next stage of development, route options will be developed and assessed. This will include an engineering, environmental, traffic and economic assessment of the potential impacts of each option to inform a preferred option choice.

The full details of the environmental assessment of Option C are presented in Section 6 of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Tier 2 Environmental Report.

Q. Why has Option N been taken forward to DMRB Stage 2? What will be the environmental and visual impacts of this option on Pluscarden Valley and the Pluscarden Abbey?

A. Transport Scotland is at the very early stages of the design and assessment process for this section of the A96 with no route options having been developed at this stage. It is important to note that the improvement strategies presented at the exhibitions are representative of high level approaches to providing a dual carriageway between Inverness and Aberdeen, for example a bypass north or south of towns along the existing A96, and do not represent specific corridors or route alignments. Route options will be developed and assessed at the next stage of the design process which is the route options assessment stage (DMRB Stage 2) and will take into account the engineering and environmental constraints identified during the DMRB Stage 1 assessment including the topography of the valley and potential visual impact on the valley and Abbey.

In order to understand the constraints to the A96 Dualling programme, a thorough review of the existing corridor has been undertaken to identify the present engineering, environmental, traffic and economic features to provide an understanding of how the dualling programme may positively or negatively impact these features. Transport Scotland has also undertaken a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to assess the route-wide constraints, issues and opportunities for dualling the A96.

Option N was developed as an alternative to Option B to provide a more direct route between west of Forres and east of Elgin. This option also avoids a number of engineering and environmental constraints which are present on the approach to and around Forres and Elgin.

The SEA identified for Option N the potential for major adverse environmental effects on biodiversity, water and flooding and landscape (including potentially significant landscape effects in the Pluscarden Valley). The potential for significant effects on soils, population and human health and historic environment are also predicted. Pluscarden Abbey, including its setting and surrounding land which forms the Pluscarden Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) and the Pluscarden Area of Special Control (Moray Local Plan 2008) were identified and assessed in the early work we have been progressing.

The potential environmental effects of Option N have been taken into account in conjunction with engineering, traffic and economic assessment as part of the DMRB Stage 1 assessment.

The outputs from the preliminary engineering and strategic environmental assessment work will inform the next stage of development which is the route options assessment process (i.e. DMRB Stage 2 assessment). During the next stage of development, route options will be developed and assessed. This will include an engineering, environmental, traffic and economic assessment of the potential impacts of each option to inform a preferred option choice.

The full details of the environmental assessment of Option N are presented in Section 6 of the Strategic Environmental Assessment Tier 2 Environmental Report.

Q. What non-motorised user facilities will be provided as part of the A96 Dualling Programme? Will a parallel end-to-end non-motorised user facility be developed?
A. The A96 Dualling Programme with be developed taking into account the programme objective of promoting active travel. Suitable provision for non-motorised users, including cyclists, is therefore an important part of the dualling programme.

Non-motorised user (NMU) facilities will be developed as the dualling programme moves forward to more detailed stages of design development, in consultation with local communities and interest groups.

An emerging NMU strategy, for which consultations are ongoing, is being developed as part of the preliminary engineering work we have been taking forward. Key principles to be followed for crossing the A96 include; no NMU at-grade crossings; NMU crossing points in close proximity to each other will be combined; crossings to make use of other grade separated crossings (e.g. junctions); and crossing points solely for the use of NMUs will be provided where site specific requirements can be demonstrated.

Q. What will be the standard of road and what form will the junctions take on the A96?
A. The A96 Dualling will be designed as a DMRB Category 7A All Purpose Dual Carriageway which, in accordance with the DMRB, requires the provision of grade separated junctions for major junctions to produce a high quality strategic route. This category of road does not permit the use of at-grade minor junctions but does allow limited access via a left in/left out junction. However, it is acknowledged that site specific constraints and environmental impacts may prohibit absolute Category 7A provision throughout the A96 Dualling.

Due to the high number of junctions and accesses along the existing route in combination with the aspiration for grade separated junctions, the junction and access strategy shall rationalise junctions and close gaps in the central reserve. A complete assessment of the existing junctions and accesses will be undertaken during the future stages of design. Transport Scotland will work closely with landowners and local authorities during the future stages of design to ensure any adverse impacts on existing junctions and accesses due to the dualling are minimised.

Q. Will lay-bys and rest areas be provided on the A96 and will they impact on my business?
A. Lay-bys will be provided as part of the dualling programme and designed in accordance with the DMRB and Transport Scotland's Roads for All Good Practice Guide. The location of lay-bys will be developed during future stages of design development.

The strategy for provision and spacing of rest areas shall take into account bypassed towns, local amenities and the possible provision of parking facilities in towns. Transport Scotland will work closely with local authorities during the future stages of design with regards to both rest area locations and rest area provisions, to minimise the impact on the services currently provided or proposed within local communities.

Q. Will a public transport strategy and public transport facilities be developed as part of the dualling programme?
A. The programme objectives for the A96 dualling include reducing journey times and improving journey time reliability for all road users, including public transport as well as facilitating integration with public transport facilities. Transport Scotland will be consulting with public transport providers as part of the dualling programme in order to address the needs of public transport, including those services that currently deviate from the A96. This will also include discussions with relevant local authorities in relation to school drop off points. As the dualling programme moves forward Transport Scotland will continue to engage with public transport providers and local authorities so that bus services and bus stops affected by the proposed route are properly integrated.

Q. Will any properties be affected by dualling the A96?
A. Due to the early stage we are at in the dualling programme this is unknown at present. However, given the scale of the project it is likely some property acquisition will be required. The exact number of acquisitions, if any, will be determined as the design develops over the coming years.

Q. If my property is required will I receive compensation?
A. Following the DMRB Stage 2 route options and DMRB Stage 3 assessments, 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 his 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. 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/sites/default/files/documents/rrd_reports/uploaded_reports/j8908/j8908.pdf

Q. Will the existing Forres Bypass be upgraded to dual carriageway?
A. Sixteen broadly defined improvement strategies were developed and assessed as different high level approaches to providing a dual carriageway between Inverness and Aberdeen. One of these strategies, Option A, was developed to approximately follow the line of the existing A96, including through Forres.

Following a sifting exercise, the sixteen improvement strategies were reduced to four, namely Options B, C, D and N which were taken forward to be assessed in a DMRB Stage 1 Assessment. Option A, which included an upgrade of the current Forres Bypass, was sifted

out at Sifting Part 1 as this strategy was assessed as not meeting the A96 Dualling Programme objectives.

The existing A96 single carriageway is highly constrained on both sides through Forres. The constraints include residential properties, industrial estates, the football ground and the Aberdeen to Inverness Railway line all in close proximity to the road, severely limiting the available width to widen the road to dual carriageway and accommodate any required junctions. The existing at-grade junctions, roundabouts and accesses would be required to be upgraded to grade separated junctions and / or rationalised in accordance with the proposed Junction Strategy.

To avoid these significant constraints, it was assessed that an offline bypass to the north or south of Forres would be required. Based on the findings of the preliminary work we have been taking forward, in the proximity of Forres it is recommended that broadly defined improvement strategy Options B and N are taken forward for further assessment at the next stage of design development (i.e. DMRB Stage 2 route option assessment).

Q. Fochabers bypass has only recently been completed. Will this bypass be incorporated into to new A96 dualling scheme?
A. The Fochabers and Mosstodloch Bypass, opened Spring 2012, was a project promoted as a medium term solution to the traffic and environmental problems in Fochabers and Mosstodloch. This alignment was chosen over others principally because of its ability to utilise the existing Spey Crossing, and so avoid the construction of a new bridge and thereby avoid direct impact on the River Spey Special Area of Conservation. The bypass comprises 1.3km of single carriageway with the remaining 4.2km constructed as a 3 lane Wide Single Carriageway (WS2+1) to allow for overtaking opportunities. Upgrading the recently constructed A96 Fochabers & Mosstodloch Bypass to dual carriageway standard will require extremely careful consideration of the engineering and environmental challenges. As such, all possible route options including both online and offline options will be considered at the next stage of design development (i.e. DMRB Stage 2 route option assessment).

Q Why does the A96 Inveramsay Bridge improvement not include for future provision of a dual carriageway?
A. A dual carriageway for this section of road was considered at the initial stages of the scheme but it was found that it is not possible to incorporate a dual carriageway into the existing trunk road alignment in the vicinity of Inveramsay Bridge due to site constraints.

The aim of the scheme is to maximise the economic life (benefits) of the proposed Inveramsay Bridge improvements. It should also be noted that even once the A96 dualling is complete, the existing single carriageway road and bridge at this location will be used for local access. So whilst the road may be de-trunked the benefits of the new bridge will continue to be realised on by local traffic.

A96 Dualling Inverness to Aberdeen DMRB Stage 2 Programme

Q. What are the next steps for the dualling programme?
A. Based on the outcome of the preliminary work we have been progressing it is proposed to progress the next stages of design development (i.e. DMRB Stage 2 route option assessment) as three geographic sections in addition to the Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) section which is being taken forward separately. The three sections are:

- The Western Section, which extends from the tie-in of the Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) scheme to the east of Nairn to the east of Fochabers (approximately 46 km).
- The Central Section, which extends from east of Fochabers to east of Huntly (approximately 31 km).
- The Eastern Section, which extends from east of Huntly to the proposed junction with the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (approximately 42 km).

It is proposed that the DMRB Stage 2 assessment work will commence early 2016 with the western section followed by the eastern section (mid 2016). The central section will follow in 2019.

Q. Will the A96 Dual Carriageway be constructed as three sections (Western, Central and Eastern) in addition to the Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) section?
A. It is too early to say. The completion of DMRB Stage 2 Assessment and the identification of preferred options for each section will inform subsequent stages of assessment, promotion and construction.

Q. Will the public have further opportunities to comment as the dualling programme is developed?
A. All comments received following the exhibitions held in May 2015 will be reviewed and carefully considered as we take this work forward to the next stage of deign development (i.e. route option assessment). Further public consultations will be undertaken as we further develop our proposals to ensure that communities, businesses and individuals affected by the work are kept fully informed and their vital feedback taken into account.

A96 Dualling Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Q. What is the current stage of the A96 Dualling SEA?
A. The Environmental Report has been completed which presents the detailed findings of the SEA and the public consultation period has now closed.

All comments received on the A96 Dualling Programme are being considered by Transport Scotland and the SEA team. The SEA will be concluded through the preparation of a Post Adoption Statement.

Q. What impact will the dualling have on the natural environment?
A. 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 must be carefully considered through early design phases, and sensitively managed through construction phases to minimise risk of adverse effects.

Transport Scotland is currently undertaking a route-wide Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to determine and understand the environmental constraints, consider the potential impacts that alternative options may present on the surrounding environment, and to develop the strategic mitigation or guidance required to minimise risks.

SEA outputs will inform the next stage of development which is the route options assessment process (i.e. DMRB Stage 2 assessment). During the next stage of development, route options will be developed and assessed. SEA Outputs will also inform the detailed design and project level Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of a preferred route option, to be undertaken as part of the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) assessment process.

Transport Scotland is engaging with key statutory environmental authorities, including Scottish Natural Heritage, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and Historic Scotland, throughout the SEA and DMRB process stages to identify possible environmental challenges which will need to be addressed as more detail becomes available through later stages.

Q. How does the SEA help with the dualling programme?
A. The SEA process assists in improving the programme by helping avoid adverse impacts and enhancing the potential environmental benefits at an early stage in the design development. It also ensures that this is done openly with public input.

Q. Who was consulted regarding the SEA?
A. As part of the SEA process, Scottish Natural Heritage, Scottish Environment Protection Agency and Historic Scotland are statutory consultees. The Environmental Report was also issued for public consultation with copies of the report available on Transport Scotland's website. In addition, a series of public exhibitions were held in venues along the route corridor in May 2015.

Q. What further environmental work will be undertaken after the SEA is completed?
A. The current work on the A96 dualling programme will conclude with the final report from the preliminary engineering assessment team and the SEA documentation.

This is consistent with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) Stage 1 approach. Once Transport Scotland has completed all necessary decision making procedures on the dualling programme, they will determine how to procure the next stages of design, engineering, traffic, economics and environmental work.

The work would be undertaken in accordance with the next stage of DMRB (Stage 2) and ultimately lead to identification of a preferred route option for each section of the A96 Dualling for design and assessment at DMRB Stage 3. This is a process which will take several years to complete and the level of environmental input and assessment will increase in detail as the stages progress.

Q. How will road traffic noise be considered?
A. Road traffic noise impacts will be studied in detail during future stages of design development and, where appropriate, mitigation provided. This mitigation takes the form of, for example, earth bunds or fencing, in keeping with the local environment. In addition, typically low noise road surfacing materials will be used. Noise surveys and modelling work will be undertaken to quantify changes in noise levels as a result of the final preferred scheme. Properties which may qualify for noise insulation will be identified in the Environmental Statement.