



A96 Dualling Inverness to Aberdeen

November 2013

A96 Dualling – Inverness to Aberdeen

Introduction

The A96 is the trunk road linking the cities of Inverness and Aberdeen. The 160 kilometre-long road runs from Raigmore Interchange at Inverness to Haudagain Roundabout at Aberdeen and passes through various towns and villages along the route.

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

Given the length of the road and the many challenges posed by the route, this project will require detailed and robust engineering and environmental appraisal work.

Dualling this vital road in the North of Scotland is a significant undertaking which requires careful in-depth planning and design to ensure we deliver the right scheme. Transport Scotland would like to receive your comments on the early stages of the A96 dualling programme which will enable us to take account of your important feedback.



This leaflet provides a summary of the exhibition panels including the key steps which must be completed in order to produce a suitable design for the road including the Preliminary Engineering Assessment and Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Benefits of dualling the A96

Dualling the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen will improve the operational performance and level of service by:

- **reducing journey times**
- **improving journey time reliability.**

It will also improve safety for motorised and non-motorised users by:

- **reducing accident rate and severity**
- **reducing driver stress.**

In addition, dualling the A96 will benefit the towns to be bypassed by:

- **reducing severance**
- **improving environmental conditions.**

The programme also seeks to facilitate active travel, for example walking and cycling in the corridor; and to enhance integration with public transport facilities.

The dualling programme

On 9 May 2013 the Minister for Transport and Veterans set out how the A96 dualling programme would be taken forward.

This announcement identified packages of design and development work to be progressed over the next few years, with the objective of completing full dualling between Inverness and Aberdeen by 2030.

The initial work packages to be taken forward are:

- **preliminary engineering and strategic environmental assessment work along the A96 corridor (Stage 1 Assessment)**



- **on-going route option design work between Inverness and Nairn, including the Nairn Bypass (Stage 2 Assessment)**
- **assessment of possible route options for bypasses around Forres, Elgin, Keith and Inverurie. This work package will be progressed following completion of the preliminary engineering and strategic environmental assessment work in approximately 12-18 months' time.**

Opportunities

The dualling of the A96 provides a number of opportunities for businesses, motorists and local communities such as promoting sustainable economic growth, improving business productivity and access to wider markets for business, the potential to enhance tourist and recreational areas, improved lay-bys and rest areas, a consistent road standard and better operational and winter reliance of the route.

Key facts

Dualling the A96 will be complex and challenging and will require careful planning and design to ensure the right scheme is in place before construction even starts. Key facts about the A96 scheme include:

- **the length of the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen is approximately 160km (99 miles)**
- **the combined total of the existing dual carriageway sections between Inverness and Aberdeen is approximately 18 kilometres (11 miles)**
- **the sections to be dualled total approximately 142 kilometres (88 miles).**

The length to be dualled is 17 times the length of the M74 completion, nine times the length of the M80 Steps to Hagsgs project and over three times the length of the of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR).



The planning process

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

The three-stage assessment process covers traffic and economics, engineering and environment. Throughout this process, Transport Scotland consults with a large number of people and interested bodies.

Following Stage 1 it is likely that the scheme will be divided into sections for further assessment at Stage 2 and 3. Further details on the three-stage assessment process are provided below and on the project website.

The Scottish Government, through Transport Scotland, has an excellent record of delivering major, complex transport infrastructure projects on time and budget.

Stage 1 (Strategic Assessment)

- **undertaking strategic planning and development of improved transport links between Inverness and Aberdeen**
- **identify the economic, engineering, traffic and environmental advantages and disadvantages and constraints associated with broadly defined improvement strategies**
- **a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) report will be published for comment.**

Stage 2 (Route Options Assessment)

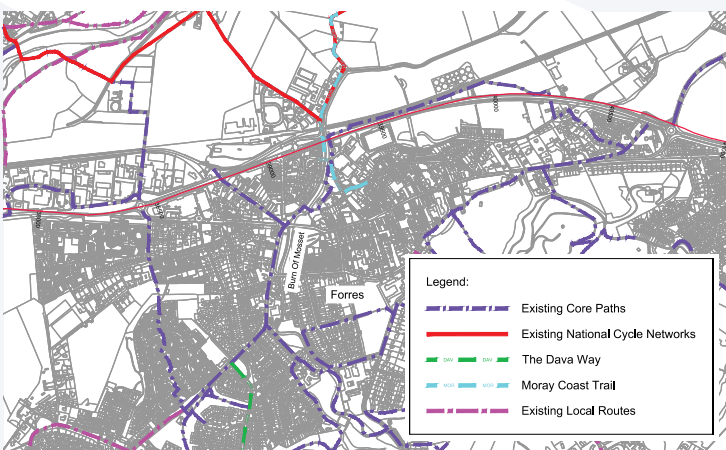
- **development and assessment of route options for upgrading the A96 from single to dual carriageway. This includes an engineering, traffic, economic and environmental assessment of the potential impacts of each option to inform the route choice**
- **at the end of this stage the options will be made available for public consultation**
- **following this assessment and public consultation, the preferred option is then selected and taken forward to the detailed stage.**

Stage 3 (Detailed Design and Assessment)

- **detailed assessment and definition of the preferred dualling option**
- **an Environmental Statement is prepared and the land required for the dualling is identified.**

Statutory Process (Publication of Environmental Statement and Orders)

- **the draft Compulsory Purchase Order (defining the extent of the proposed land required to deliver the scheme), the draft Roads Orders (defining the line of the proposed infrastructure) and the Environmental Statement are published**



- any statutory objections which are lodged during the defined period but remain unresolved are then considered at a Public Local Inquiry (PLI)
- if the objections are upheld following the PLI, the scheme may have to be amended and taken through the statutory process again. If the objections are resolved or dismissed, then the draft orders are finalised and made
- after this point the legal permissions have been obtained and the preferred option can proceed with the necessary acquisition of land.

Accessibility

Transport Scotland has already met with local authorities and Regional Transport Partnerships.

It will hold future meetings with organisations such as Sustrans, Cycling Touring Club Scotland, The British Horse Society, Ramblers Scotland and Scotways to maximise the opportunities the dualling of the A96 provides for cyclists, ramblers, equestrians and other non-motorised road users and welcomes your comments. Please take this opportunity to provide any information you have on active travel (e.g. walking and cycling) and recreational routes in your area.

Engaging with communities

A rolling programme of regular public engagement from Inverness to Aberdeen will be undertaken to ensure that businesses, communities and individuals affected by the work are kept fully informed.

Local perspectives on the main risks and opportunities for the A96 dualling are not only welcome, but absolutely vital, and Transport Scotland welcomes your feedback.

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Surveying the corridor

To help us deliver our plans, a significant amount of survey work will take place along the A96 corridor.

Transport Scotland and its consultants will be engaging with specialist groups and landowners and will continue to visit the area to collect data. This is helping to identify constraints and assess the potential impacts on a wide range of environmental factors such as ecology, land use, archaeology, geology and drainage.

Extensive traffic surveys have already been carried out along the route to improve the understanding of traffic volumes and patterns.



Assessing the engineering challenge

The preliminary engineering assessment process will consider options to improve the route which meet the objectives of the scheme. It will identify the engineering, environmental, traffic and economic constraints, advantages and disadvantages of broadly defined route corridors.

Existing information is being collated and, where this is deemed inadequate, surveys will be undertaken to ensure the results of this assessment are comprehensively reported.

Environmental challenges

The A96 passes through, or close to, outstanding areas of wildlife, scenic and historic significance, with a wide range of nationally and internationally designated sites, including Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Special Areas of Conservation (SAC) and Special Protection Areas (SPA), Ramsar sites and Scheduled Monuments and battlefields.

A96 dualling-related effects in and around such areas must be carefully considered through early design phases, and sensitively managed through construction phases. It is extremely important that this built and natural heritage is conserved, not only for its inherent beauty and value, but also for its contribution to the tourist industry.

Transport Scotland engages with key statutory authorities including Scottish Natural Heritage, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency and Historic Scotland to determine effective solutions to these environmental challenges.



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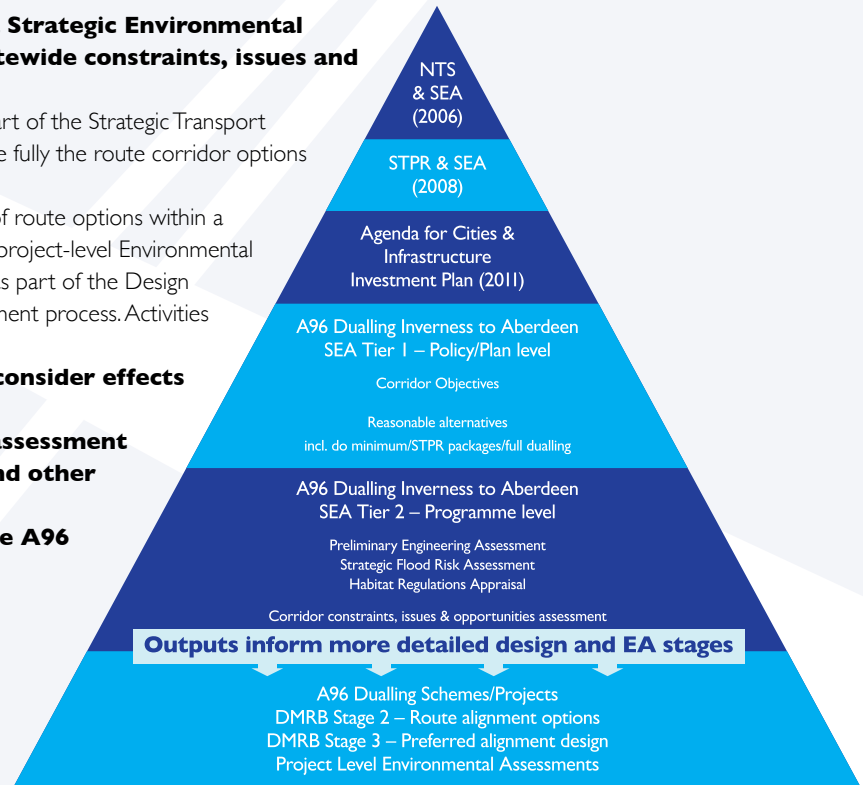
Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)

Transport Scotland is undertaking a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to assess the routewide constraints, issues and opportunities for A96 dualling.

This will build on the SEA undertaken as part of the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR) and will consider more fully the route corridor options available for A96 dualling.

SEA outputs will inform the development of route options within a wide corridor, as well as a detailed design and project-level Environmental Impact Assessment which will be undertaken as part of the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) assessment process. Activities being undertaken as part of the SEA include:

- **habitats regulations appraisal to consider effects on SAC, SPA and Ramsar sites**
- **route-wide (strategic) flood risk assessment**
- **engaging with statutory bodies and other interested stakeholders**
- **collation of constraints around the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen and consideration of significant environmental issues and risks**
- **development of strategic environmental principles and mitigation guidance for later design stages.**



What happens next...

The information collected through survey work and these exhibitions will be used to inform the preliminary engineering and strategic environmental assessment work. We will share the outcomes with you during public consultation in 2014.

There will be further opportunities for public consultation throughout the design and development process and Transport Scotland will consider points raised during consultation and act upon them where reasonable and appropriate.

We welcome your comments on the preliminary assessment of dualling the A96 between Inverness to Aberdeen. Please leave them in the comments box provided at this exhibition or e-mail: a96dualling@transportscotland.gsi.gov.uk

Or post your feedback form to us at:

**A96 Dualling Team, Transport Scotland, Buchanan House,
58 Port Dundas Road, Glasgow G4 0HF**

by 31 January 2014.

Further information

Please visit www.transportscotland.gov.uk/a96dualling or email the project team at a96dualling@transportscotland.gsi.gov.uk