

**Annex G – Extracts from note to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity from Transport Scotland for parliamentary question S5W-22460 – 17 April 2019.**

**All answers to written Parliamentary Questions are available on the Parliament's website, the search facility for which can be found at:-**  
**<http://www.parliament.scot/parliamentarybusiness/28877.aspx>**

On 12 March 2019 the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity, Michael Matheson MSP, met with Lewis Macdonald MSP to discuss the A96 Dualling East of Huntly to Aberdeen scheme and why the option of dualling the existing A96 at Inverurie was not being taken forward.

Following the meeting a letter was issued by the Cabinet Secretary on 1 April 2019, covering the points of the meeting and confirming that early assessment work established it would be more suitable to develop a new dual carriageway remote from the existing Trunk Road at Inverurie, with the existing A96 being retained for use as part of the local road network.

On the 4 April 2019, Lewis McDonald asked a further supplementary question on the back of Gilliam Martin MSP's oral question on what impact the AWPR is having on traffic flow and congestion on other roads in the north east - **S5O-03108**:

**Lewis Macdonald (North East Scotland) (Lab):** The cabinet secretary will know that Transport Scotland's decision last year to rule out dualling the A96 at Inverurie was based on data from 2017. Given what he just said about the need to use up-to-date data, will he instruct Transport Scotland to revisit that decision on the basis of new data following completion of the AWPR?

**Michael Matheson:** From the meeting that I had with Lewis Macdonald and the subsequent letter that I wrote to him, he is well aware of the reasons for Transport Scotland taking the options for routes that it has set down. My letter to him sets out in detail the approach that Transport Scotland has taken, and it explains the data that was used to inform the approach. Lewis Macdonald will be aware that there are specific constraint issues about the online upgrading option. Undertaking a project of the nature of dualling the A96 results in significant disruption and challenges. Those issues have been given due consideration, and we will continue to consult on that, as we go forward with the routes that have been proposed by Transport Scotland.

Route options deselected at this stage of the assessment process included those that pass through the Bennachie Special Landscape Area, and those using the existing A96 single carriageway corridor through Inverurie which identified that from an engineering and environmental perspective that an online dualling option would have significant/ adverse effects on people and communities due to the proximity of properties, businesses and community facilities in that area.

Traffic survey data also highlighted that a significant volume of A96 traffic is generated from areas to the north of Inverurie and routes through the town to access the A96 at Blackhall and Port Elphinstone roundabouts. To maintain adequate access to and from Inverurie, these junctions would require to be replaced by grade separated junctions. However, due to the existing development constraints at Blackhall Roundabout a grade separated junction along with associated slip roads at the current location would have further major impacts on surrounding properties.

It was also identified that construction of this alignment on the existing A96 would be very difficult to achieve without potential diversion routes through Inverurie for long periods of time during the construction period.

Other construction issues also included the Upperboat Bridge where the replacement of this structure would require the closure of St. James's Place which could not occur at the same time as Blackhall Road was closed.

In April 2018 additional work was undertaken to determine the feasibility of progressing an online improvement of the existing A96 through Inverurie prior to the design Second Fix Alignment development including assessing the impact of a new grade separated junction at Blackhall Roundabout.

It concluded that an online dual carriageway upgrade of the A96 through Inverurie should be de-selected and not considered further as part of the route options assessment process (DMRB Stage 2 Assessment). This conclusion was approved by the A96 Programme Board in August 2018.

As confirmed at the meeting with Mr Macdonald MSP on 12 March 2019 and in the Cabinet Secretary's subsequent letter of 1 April 2019, Transport Scotland will hold further public consultations in Spring 2019 to provide an update on the route option design and assessment work. This will include providing the reasons for deselecting the online option at Inverurie. Transport Scotland will also offer to meet with the A96 Action Group who have suggested that the on-line option at Inverurie is put back on the table.

The A96 Dualling East of Huntly to Aberdeen: Online at Inverurie – Dualling Feasibility and Appraisal report has already been issued to a member of the A96 Action Group following a Freedom of Information request and Transport Scotland has now made it available to view on the A96 Dualling pages of its website.