

Annex A – Extracts from briefing document to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity from Transport Scotland on 22 November 2018.

## **A96 Dualling East of Huntly to Aberdeen (Eastern Section)**

- Transport Scotland held the first public exhibitions for the A96 Dualling Programme – a Scottish Government commitment to provide a dual carriageway between Inverness and Aberdeen – in November 2013. These exhibitions provided information on the design, development and assessment process we follow when undertaking major road construction projects.
- Following this early engagement, we continued to increase our knowledge of the area leading to our development of broadly defined improvement strategies that illustrated how dualling of the A96 might be achieved. This information was presented to the public in 2015, with the feedback received being used to inform future stages of design development.
- In July 2017 AmeyArup was appointed to undertake detailed route option assessment work (DMRB Stage 2 assessment) on the 42km East of Huntly to Aberdeen section (the Eastern Section), and it is anticipated that this next stage of assessment will take two years to complete.
- Public and political interest in the Eastern Section has increased following the appointment of AmeyArup as design consultant. Early public engagement took place following the appointment of AmeyArup, with over 1,000 people having attended the ‘Meet the Team’ events held in Inverurie, Huntly and Blackburn between 8-10 November 2017. Dialogue with the local Community Councils also commenced with initial meetings of the Community Council Forums having taken place on 7 December 2017 in Huntly and Inverurie. The feedback received during the Meet the Team events held in November 2017 and Community Council Forums has been taken into account during the development and assessment of initial route options for this section of the A96 Dualling.
- The initial options under consideration for this section of the A96 Dualling were presented to the public at events held in Inverurie, Huntly and Blackburn between 8-11 October. 2,141 people attended the exhibitions over the 4 days.
- The initial route options placed on display at these public exhibitions will be the subject of significant design development and appraisal in accordance with the DMRB Stage 2 Assessment process. This will involve more detailed environmental appraisal of each route option, including assessments on air quality, noise and vibration, people and communities, policy and plans, materials, cultural heritage, landscape and visual, nature conservation, geology, soils, hydrology, contaminated land, road drainage and the water environment. This work in tandem with detailed engineering, traffic and economic assessment will enable identification of a preferred route option for the scheme, which we anticipate will occur in 2019.
- The vital feedback and comments that we receive on the initial options will be fully considered as we develop our proposals for the A96 Dualling East of Huntly to Aberdeen scheme.

- Two campaign group Save Bennachie Alliance and A96 Action have been established to provide comment on the scheme proposals. The former had meetings with both Mr Brown and Mr Matheson, and the later have recently posted a Facebook video encouraging the public to post a tick box pro-forma to “Transport Scotland, Transport Minister, Scottish Government Representatives, Aberdeenshire Councillors & Community Councillors”. A large number of these pro-forma have been received.
- Meaningful engagement with communities and other stakeholders forms a key part of our work to ensure that communities, businesses and individuals affected by the work are kept fully informed and their vital feedback taken into account. The Save Bennachie Alliance and A96 Action Group feedback is vital to this process and will be considered in full along with the concerns expressed by other groups that we might receive.
- Further public consultation will be held as part of our ongoing engagement to give the local community and road users the chance to comment on our developing plans for the route before we announce the emerging preferred option.