

PE2132/A: Publish a timeline for the dualling of the A96 between Inverness and Nairn by Easter 2025

Transport Scotland written submission, 14 January 2025

Thank you for your email dated 13 December 2024 regarding petition number PE2132: Publish a timeline for the dualling of the A96 between Inverness and Nairn by Easter 2025. I am responding in my capacity as Director of Major Projects.

As the Cabinet Secretary for Transport advised Parliament during her A96 Statement to Parliament on 29 November 2024, the current favoured position of the Scottish Government is to fully dual the A96 and we are already starting the dualling process from Inverness to Nairn, including Nairn Bypass.

I can confirm that the made Orders for the A96 Dualling Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) scheme were published on 12 March 2024. As no legal challenge was received during the six weeks following publication of the made Orders, this completes the statutory process for the scheme.

Completion of the statutory process clears the way for Ministers to take title to the land (i.e. complete the acquisition process) included in the made Compulsory Purchase Order which is required to construct the scheme and Transport Scotland is pressing ahead with the procedural steps to make this happen as soon as possible. It is currently expected that the process to take title to the land (via a General Vesting Declaration procedure) will be completed in the coming months.

I can advise that work is also underway to determine the most suitable procurement option for delivering the A96 Inverness to Nairn including Nairn bypass dualling scheme and thereafter a timetable for progress can be set in line with available budgets.

This is a complex exercise which looks at a number of factors including how the project can be delivered most efficiently by industry whilst minimising disruption to road users.

It is fundamental that contracting authorities allow sufficient time to properly consider the range of procurement routes available for any given project. This is important to ensure that the chosen procurement option generates sufficient competition to maximise value for money, delivers against the objectives of the intervention and complies with all statutory and regulatory requirements.

As part of this work, consideration will be given to the feasibility and attractiveness of combining with adjacent schemes to form larger contracts or splitting the scheme and delivering through smaller contracts, for example the Nairn Bypass.

It is expected that the work to determine the most suitable procurement option and develop the business case will take a further 12 months and this assessment work would closely align with the Mutual Investment Model (MIM) assessment work being undertaken on the A9 Dualling. The decision on the use of MIM for the A96 Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) would need to follow after, or be considered alongside, the A9 decision which is currently expected at the end of

2025. We will also include consideration of delivery options for the adjacent A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton scheme (part of the Inverness and Highland City Region Deal) as part of this work.

Director of Major Projects
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