

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 19 February 2025
3rd Meeting, 2025 (Session 6)

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

Introduction

Petitioner The Inverness Courier

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to publish a clear timeline for the dualling of the A96 between Inverness and Nairn and the construction of a bypass for Nairn, ensuring that this timeline is made public by Easter 2025.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2132>

1. This is a new petition that was lodged on 13 December 2024.
2. A full summary of this petition and its aims can be found at **Annexe A**.
3. A SPICe briefing has been prepared to inform the Committee's consideration of the petition and can be found at **Annexe B**.
4. Every petition can collect signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 389 signatures have been received on this petition.
5. The Committee seeks views from the Scottish Government on all new petitions before they are formally considered.
6. The Committee has received a submission from Transport Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government, which is set out in **Annexe C** of this paper.
7. Members may wish to note that [Transport Scotland is undertaking a public consultation on the outcomes of the A96 Corridor Review](#), which is due to close on 21 February 2025.

Action

8. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take on this petition.

Clerks to the Committee
February 2025

Annexe A: Summary of petition

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

Petitioner

The Inverness Courier

Date Lodged

13 December 2024

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to publish a clear timeline for the dualling of the A96 between Inverness and Nairn and the construction of a bypass for Nairn, ensuring that this timeline is made public by Easter 2025.

Background information

For decades, people in Nairn and surrounding areas have called for a bypass to take traffic from the A96 trunk road out of its town centre.

In 2011 the Scottish Government pledged to complete the dual carriageway network between all of Scotland's cities – including the dualling of the A96 and Nairn Bypass, with a preferred route published in 2014.

In March 2024, Made Orders were published and the process for the acquisition of land required for the scheme started in May 2024.

At present there is no timeline for when the project is set to be delivered.

After more than a decade of delays, local communities continue to face worsening traffic congestion, pollution, and road safety risks.

With significant developments set to bring thousands of new residents and workers to the area, urgent action is needed to address these growing challenges which will further impact the livelihoods of communities affected.

Annexe B: SPICe briefing on petition PE2132



Brief overview of issues raised by the petition

The A96 is a trunk road that links Inverness (Raigmore interchange) and Aberdeen (Craibstone roundabout). It passes through, or around, several towns including Nairn, Forres, Elgin, Keith, and Inverurie.

The single carriageway section of the A96 between Inverness and Nairn is roughly 15 miles long. The dualling of this part of the road was first mentioned in the final report of [the Scottish Government's Strategic Transport Projects Review, published in October 2009](#), which slated it as a priority for investment. The [Infrastructure Investment Plan 2011](#) then committed the Scottish Government to the dualling full length of the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen by 2030, following the completion of A9 dualling – which was then expected to happen by 2025.

Transport Scotland launched a consultation on options for dualling the A96 between Inverness to Nairn in November 2013 and, following consideration of issues raised during this consultation, announced a preferred route in October 2014. This was followed by [the publication of Draft Orders](#), which when approved give legal authority to build the road, in November 2016.

A public inquiry was held in late 2018 to consider objections to specific proposals in the Draft Orders. Following consideration of the report of the public inquiry, [Scottish Ministers agreed that the Orders could be made](#) subject to amendment. The [Road Orders and Compulsory Purchase Order](#) were made on 22 February 2024 and came into force on 12 March 2024.

It is worth noting that [the Bute House Agreement, the joint policy programme of the SNP and Scottish Green Party Government between August 2021 and April 2024](#), stated that Scottish Government would "...take forward a transport enhancements programme on the A96...This will include...dualling from Inverness to Nairn."

The latest update on the Inverness-Nairn dualling project is provided in the answer to [a Parliamentary Question published on 17 January 2025](#), which states:

"The publication of Made Orders for the A96 Dualling Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) scheme in 2024 is a strong sign of the Scottish Government's commitment to build this key project. Further to this, the Scottish Government has confirmed through its Programme for Government, that Transport Scotland will take forward the final stage of the process for acquisition of land required to construct the project, and progress work to determine the most suitable procurement option.

Funding is included in the 2024-25 budget and draft 2025-26 budget to take forward this work – thereafter a timetable for procurement and construction phases can then be set in line with annual budget setting process for future years.”

Alan Rehfish
Senior Researcher
27 January 2025

The purpose of this briefing is to provide a brief overview of issues raised by the petition. SPICe research specialists are not able to discuss the content of petition briefings with petitioners or other members of the public. However, if you have any comments on any petition briefing you can email us at spice@parliament.scot

Every effort is made to ensure that the information contained in petition briefings is correct at the time of publication. Readers should be aware however that these briefings are not necessarily updated or otherwise amended to reflect subsequent changes.

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Annexe C: Written submission

Transport Scotland written submission, 14 January 2025

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

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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
Transport Scotland**