

**Feedback to public engagement by Transport Scotland on the  
A96 Dual carriageway proposals – June 2017**

The FINDERNE Community Council (FCC) welcome the potential economic benefits that the upgrading of the A96 can bring to the area. We understand that an infrastructure project of this type cannot be achieved without having an adverse impact on some people and it would be inappropriate of the community council to object to any of the possible routes simply because they pass through the FINDERNE area.

We must, however, represent the interests of our constituents and as the next stage of the project design progresses we would ask that further interim consultations takes place ahead of the final announcement of a “preferred route”. A period of 18 months without any communication from Transport Scotland / Mott Macdonald SWECO (TS/MMS) would be inappropriate given the concerns of members of the public and we formally request that a Community Council Forum (CCF) is scheduled on a maximum of a 6 monthly basis.

It is fully understood that the amount of conclusive information available for sharing on this timescale may not be large. However, a scheduled session would provide a stimulus to encourage TS/MMS to share what they can. Any information, including a simple update on “work in progress” is significantly more engaging for the public potentially impacted than a long period of silence.

Our comments are restricted to the options which directly impact on FINDERNE – notably routes R2, R3, R4 and B1.

**Impacts on domestic residences**

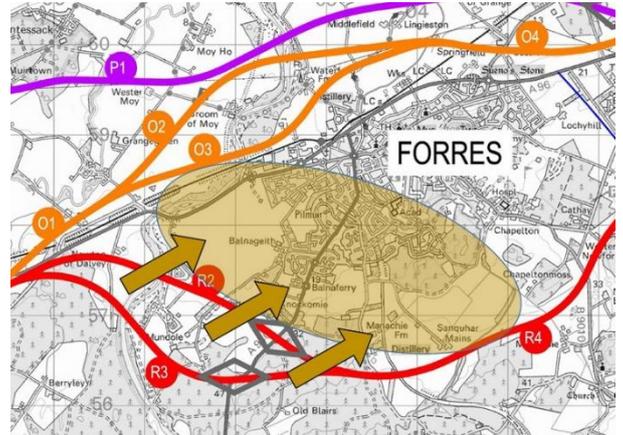
The statement was made by the Transport Scotland representative at the CCF of 29<sup>th</sup> June 2017, that none of the proposed routes required demolition of any domestic residences.

Whilst this may be correct in the absolute sense, there are a number of residences in the FINDERNE area which would be massively impacted by some of the proposed routes. One example of this would be Wester Newforres farm (National Grid reference NJ 05968 57869) where in order to achieve the route shown on the publicised maps, and avoid demolition of the farm, there would be a requirement to excavate a significant cutting into the hill below Wester Newforres quarry. In addition to having to endure the impact during construction, the resulting dual carriageway would be less than 25m from the farm house.

We have not spoken with the owner of the farm house (and these comments should not be taken in any way to represent their views) but we would ask Transport Scotland for a categorical assurance that the personal preferences of this owner (for compulsory purchase or Blight compensation), and other home owners in similar circumstances, will be considered at the earliest juncture and not left until the issuing of statutory orders stage.

## Impacts of Road Noise and Air Pollution

We have concerns about the air pollution and road noise impacts of the southern options R2 and R3. With over 95% of the residential area of Forres currently being to the south of the existing A96, and an equally high proportion of the industrial/commercial area being to the north, the prevailing wind direction (South westerly) takes air pollution and noise away from the populated part of the town. Both southerly routes would bring significant parts of the residential areas, including areas zoned by the Moray Council for future housing, into the area that would be adversely impacted by air pollution and noise. If a southerly route around Forres is selected we would wish to see



1. Detailed explanations on how the road design would mitigate against the adverse impact of noise.
  - a. We have a particular concern regarding the noise impact on the Cathay elderly care home at National Grid reference NJ 05891 58081 which would only be some 200m from the proposed R4 route.
  - b. Noise mitigation at domestic residences should be regarded as an absolute last resort as options for this, such as triple glazing, is only effective in certain conditions. Windows are often left open during summer evenings/nights and the benefits of triple glazing is then negated.
2. Modelling data which demonstrates that increases on NOX and Particulate Matter pollution will not approach, and certainly not exceed, the maximum levels permitted under environmental legislation. There is some considerable conflict currently between responsibilities for local air pollution levels and national levels and we would wish to see clear evidence that the “precautionary principle” was prevailing in any decisions taken.
  - a. We were pleased to hear at the Community Council Forum (CCF) that baseline measurements of NOX and PM will be taken along the north-eastern edge of the existing A96 so that this data can be used to model the impact on the south-western edge of Forres should a southerly route be decided upon.
  - b. We request an early sight of this base data.

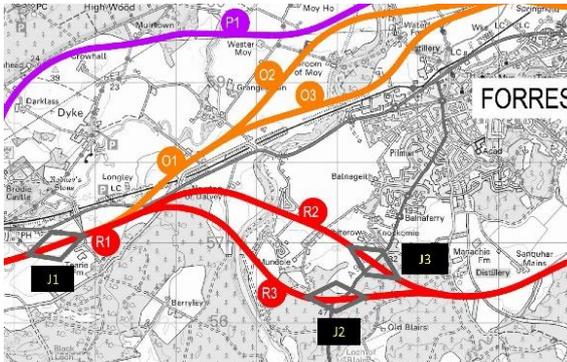
## Impact on Economic and social development of Forres

In the long term the expansion of Forres will be essential if economic growth in the area is to be sustained. It is clear from historical development, and The Moray Council’s “Local Plan”, that development of the town is best achieved in a southerly direction. The FCC would wish to see a clear demonstration by Transport Scotland, and The Moray Council, that the future economic health of Forres would not be constrained should a southern route for the A96 be chosen.

## Junction design and location

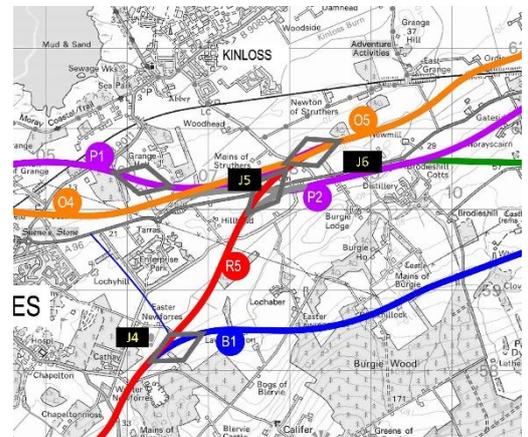
Should a southern route be selected we have concerns about the possible junctions on the A940 Forres-Grantown road (J2 and J3 on adjacent map). Given the location of these junctions we would wish to see a design which had the lowest possible impact on the environment.

We were pleased with the reassurance given at the CCF that either of these junctions would be in **addition to** the junction J1 west of the Findhorn crossing, as their use as the primary access for the western side of Forres would add significant commercial traffic to the road through a densely populated area.



We have concerns regarding the impact of route B1 and the associated junction (J4 - see map) in terms of the amount of traffic it will bring into the area to access the A96 compared to the alternative junctions J5 and J6. These more

northerly junctions appear to utilise the existing road network more effectively than junction J4. The location of route B1/J4 would mean that all of the east bound traffic from the western side of Forres and all the traffic from the Kinloss area would access the dualed A96 via the new road between Lochyhill and the Forres Enterprise Park. We would wish to see an explanation for the benefits of this proposal over simple alignment of a junction adjacent to the existing A96.



## Impact on woodland, local historical and environmental amenities

We are concerned that routes R2, R3, R4 and B1 would require permanent removal of a number of areas of woodland that are of local conservation, amenity and commercial value as well as being integral elements of the local landscape. Although we recognise that these woodlands are not located within any statutorily designated areas, their loss may nonetheless have potential impacts on the habitat of European protected species such as red squirrel and their removal will result in woodland fragmentation and associated loss of habitat connectivity.

We would wish to know the exact quantum and conservation status of woodland removal and a detailed assessment of how TS will mitigate this loss in respect of the Scottish Government's Policy on Control of Woodland Removal - i.e. where will an equivalent area of woodland (to that removed) be replaced in compensation - and how any effects on the habitat of European protected species will also be safeguarded and/or mitigated?

Given the importance of Dallas Dhu Distillery and The Dava Way to the area the FCC has concerns that either of the southern routes will have significant adverse effects on these amenities.

## Cost versus non-financial impacts

Some comments have already been made by representatives of TS and MMS that one of the potential advantages of a southern route is that the road would not have to cross the railway line twice and that this would obviate project costs.

Whilst we accept this as being factually correct, we do not believe that cost should be used as the deciding factor on what will be a critically important legacy project. Decisions have already been taken to incur higher costs than for base level requirements (e.g. for “end to end” dualling and the use of grade separated junctions) so it would be duplicitous to use costs as a simple decision point.

Furthermore, there has also been comments made that simple “costs” will not be the factor in the decision making and that rather a “cost/benefit” analysis would be used. There is no doubt that stating that the chosen option had the “best financial cost/benefit analysis” sounds more considered than it simply had the “lowest cost”. However, the reality is that in this case the two will mean exactly the same thing. The potential economic benefits to Forres and the local area (now that route “N” has been eliminated) will be the same whichever of the remaining routes are chosen. Therefore, with one side of the equation being a constant, the lowest cost option will always yield the best cost/benefit in purely financial terms.

We accept that cost is a critical factor given that this is a publically funded infrastructure project. We do not, however, accept that the non-financial factors are less import than cost.

For and on behalf of the Funderne Community Council.

July 2017