

**REPORT TO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE
SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 24 JANUARY 2012**

SUBJECT: FUTURE TRUNK ROAD DUALLING – A9 and A96

BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR (ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee that following the recent Government announcement regarding proposals to upgrade the A9 and A96 Trunk roads to dual carriageway standard, an invitation has been received from Transport Scotland to engage in the first stages of planning the improvements.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section G (16) of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to exercising the functions of the Council as Roads Authority.

2. RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 **The Committee is asked to note the report and agree that officers should write to Transport Scotland welcoming the early approach, and assuring them of the Council's willingness to engage at all levels in future work to advance this project.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 In December 2011 the Government announced its intention to dual the A9 Trunk road between Perth and Inverness, and also the A96 between Aberdeen and Inverness by the year 2030.
- 3.2 The Government's Infrastructure Investment Plan 2011 was published on 6 December 2011 and the document can be sourced at:

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/12/05141922/10>.

It recognises the importance of transport to growth of the Scottish economy.

"Investment in Scotland's transport is a key enabler for enhancing productivity and delivering sustainable growth. Transport directly supports the Government's Purpose and an effective transport infrastructure is critical to delivering most of the Government's Performance Indicators."

- 3.3 Whilst most of the transport infrastructure improvement proposals contained in the Investment Plan reflect the contents of the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR) published in December 2008, there also is a new commitment to dualling of the A96 between Aberdeen and Inverness. The STPR had concentrated most of the proposed improvements to this transport corridor on rail travel, with the exception of the section between Inverness and Nairn and

a proposed bridge improvement at Inveramsay. Section 3.1.1 of the Investment Plan under “Transport” states that

“Securing the consents necessary to allow the upgrading of the A9 between Perth and Inverness to dual carriageway standard by 2025 is a major programme in itself. Following this with the upgrading to dual carriageway of the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen will provide a long term pipeline for design and construction skills securing many jobs in our vital construction sector.”

- 3.4 Whilst the proposed upgrading of the A96 appears to be scheduled near the end of the current Investment Plan timeline, the Council has received an invitation from Transport Scotland for officers to engage in workshops with officers from neighbouring Local Authorities, Regional Transport Partnerships and other groups to start preliminary planning of the A9 and A96 improvements. The list of stakeholders also includes Scottish Enterprise, SE, HIE, CBI Scotland, SNH, SEPA, Historic Scotland, Cairngorms National Park Authority and others. The meetings are scheduled for February and March 2012 and the Committee will be kept informed of any significant progress with this project.

4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Single Outcome Agreement/ Service Improvement Plan

Dualling of the A96 in particular conforms with the SOA in respect of improved roads and transport and also in support of economic development. Support and lobbying for an Elgin Bypass is one of the Council's priorities.

(b) Policy and Legal

The local Transport Strategy highlights the need for up-grading of the A96 to dual carriageway standard.

(c) Financial implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report.

(d) Risk Implications

There are no known risks arising directly from this report, but the existence of Government proposals to dual the A96 will have a bearing on the future status of the Council's proposals for an A96 Elgin Bypass and for the bypass “lines” that are currently indicated in the Moray Local Plan.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no staffing implications.

(f) Property

There are no property implications.

(g) Equalities

All discussions on future road improvement schemes, no matter how preliminary, will take account of access needs for all users.

(h) Consultations

Gordon Sutherland, Planning and Economic Development Manager has been consulted and his comments have been incorporated into the report.

Alasdair McEachan, Legal Services Manager (Commercial and Conveyancing) has been consulted and his comments have been incorporated into the report.

5. CONCLUSION

5.1 The Committee note that officer engagement with Transport Scotland will take place in the near future and agree that officers should write to Transport Scotland welcoming the early approach, and assuring them of the Council's willingness to engage at all levels in future work to advance this project.

Author of Report: G Holland, Transportation Manager

Background Papers: Scottish Government Infrastructure Investment Plan
(December 2011)

Letter from Transport Scotland 20 December 2011

Ref: