



**REPORT TO: WEALTHIER AND FAIRER GROUP ON 21 MAY 2009**

**SUBJECT: STRATEGIC TRANSPORT PROJECTS REVIEW: MEETING WITH THE MINISTER FOR TRANSPORT**

**BY: MORAY COUNCIL, HEAD OF DIRECT SERVICES**

**1. REASON FOR REPORT**

1.1 This report is presented to inform the Group of a recent meeting with the Minister for Transport regarding the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR) in relation to Moray.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

2.1 It is recommended that the Committee considers the content of the meeting with the Minister for Transport concerning the Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR).

2.2 It is recommended that the Council's Transportation Manager will prepare an assessment of Elgin's traffic flows on the A96 in Elgin for a subsequent meeting with the Minister and will present a report of that meeting to this Group.

**3. BACKGROUND**

3.1 Following the disappointment that much needed Trunk Road improvements in Moray were not included in the Government's recent STPR documents, a request for the Minister of Transport, Stewart Stevenson, to meet with representatives of Moray Council resulted in a meeting in Edinburgh on 12th March 2009. The Deputy Convener, Councillor Allan Wright, Councillor John Russell, the Head of Direct Services and the Transportation Manager met with the Minister and a senior official from Transport Scotland.

3.2 The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the exclusion of an Elgin by-pass from the Strategic Transport Projects Review, to establish a way forward in jointly relieving Elgin's traffic problems on the A96, and also to inform the Minister of the importance of the A95 to Moray businesses exporting goods from the area.

3.3 The meeting was constructive and the Minister recognised that the Strategic Transport Projects Review covers a period of 20 years but that things will change and, as a consequence, outcomes will have to be reviewed. It is necessary to look forward but the STPR is mainly a framework on how projects should be delivered and how decisions should be made. It is not a

list of projects and if the situation changes, then outcomes should also change. Above all it was subject to availability of funds.

- 3.4 The Minister was receptive to a request for joint working between Moray Council officers and Transport Scotland officials to firstly agree the base traffic flow information, and then consider joint objectives resulting in a masterplan to improve traffic flow on the A96 within Elgin. He also recognised the necessity to balance the conflict between removing through traffic from the town centre and the centre's economic development."

The main conclusions of the meeting were:

- Whilst there is no commitment to an Elgin by-pass, it remains on the longer term agenda and there will be detailed discussion between Council and Transport Scotland officials to discuss traffic flow figures recorded in the by-pass submissions and those in the Strategic Transport Projects Review. The Minister accepted that it was reasonable that previous studies had indicated different traffic flows because "they asked different questions".
  - At top level, the two organisations will discuss other ways in which traffic can move more easily through and around Elgin and the Minister has said he wants another joint meeting late in the summer to discuss the outcome of these talks, with timing of delivery included.
  - The economic importance of the A95 to whisky and food exports and the tourist industry was accepted and that Transport Scotland will continue to consider the need for improvements to sections of this route, together with other and existing competing priorities. At the same time there will be rail passenger and freight improvements to provide opportunities to take more commercial traffic off the roads.
  - The scale of proposed developments at RAF Lossiemouth will demand infrastructure investment and there should be approaches to the Ministry of Defence for a 'developer contribution' to works outside the base.
  - That all of the discussions between now and the summer should result in an agreed, fact-based masterplan for traffic on the A96 in Elgin.
- 3.5 Council officers have already started work on re-examining the historical traffic data to agree a "common starting point" with Transport Scotland. The outcome of future discussions with Transport Scotland will be reported back to this Group.

**4. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS**

**(a) Corporate Development Plan/Community Plan/Service Improvement Plan**

The report relates to the key priority of Moray's Connectedness in the Wealthier and Fairer Action Plan. It also relates to the Community Planning Partnership priority of Roads and Transport.

**(b) Policy and Legal**

The report takes account of the HITRANS Regional Transport Strategy and the National Transport Strategy.

**(c) Resources (Financial, Risks, Staffing and Property)**

There are no direct financial implications for the Council or Partnership as a result of the outcome of the STPR, but there will clearly be an adverse impact on the economy of Moray in the longer term.

The work agreed to be carried out with Transport Scotland will be afforded high priority and absorbed by existing staff resources but this may well result in delays to other transport development work.

**5. CONCLUSION**

**5.1 The report summarises the main areas of agreement reached at the recent meeting between Moray Council representatives and the Minister for Transport, held to discuss the Government's Strategic Transport Projects Review and its impact on transport in Moray.**

**5.2 An agreed way forward will require joint working between Transport Scotland and Moray Council officers to agree a masterplan approach to improving traffic flow on the A96 in Elgin. Progress on this will be discussed at a further meeting with the Minister in late summer 2009, and another report will be brought to this Group after that.**

Author of Report: Gordon Holland, Transportation Manager.  
Ref: GRH/LD

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: 07 May 2009

Designation: Head of Direct Services Name: Sandy Ritchie