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Scottish Parliament
Edinburgh
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03 February 2026

Dear Convener,

**Net Zero, Energy and Transport (NZET) Committee
A96 Dualling Update**

Following my appearance before Committee this morning and my update to Parliament this afternoon in response to Parliamentary Question S6W-43512 on the Scottish Government's commitment to dual the A96, I would welcome the opportunity to provide a written update to the NZET Committee.

As I confirmed this morning, I would like to reiterate that the position of the Scottish Government has not changed: we support fully dualling the A96 and we are already starting the dualling process from Inverness to Nairn, including a Nairn Bypass.

We remain committed to dualling the A96 and are pressing forward steps to make this happen. The commitment to progressing A96 dualling is included in the [Scottish Spending Review 2026](#) along with the [Infrastructure Delivery Pipeline 2026](#), both of which were published on Tuesday 13 January 2026.

Investment in the trunk road network over the four year Capital Spending Review period to 2029/30 will allow us to make further progress on dualling the A96 between Inverness and Nairn, including the Nairn Bypass, and the adjacent A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton link road.

With the land acquired for both schemes in 2025, funding is included in the 2026/27 draft Budget to commence the delivery of advanced works. This will include vital archaeological investigation works and other key environmental and ecological measures, along with significant work to facilitate complex Public Utility diversions.

In parallel to the advanced works, this investment in 2026/27 will also allow Transport Scotland to continue to take forward the work to determine the most suitable procurement option for delivering these schemes and further develop the Business Cases.

The Scottish Government's preference would be to deliver the A96 Dualling Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) as one project. However, due to the continued fiscal challenges, it is planned that we will take forward a phased approach to delivery, starting with the Nairn Bypass, followed by the remaining sections of the scheme, from Seafeld, east of Inverness, to Balloch and then on from Balloch to the Nairn Bypass.

Completion of the preparatory work, including approval of the Business Cases, will enable a firm timetable for delivery to be set as part of the annual budget setting process, with a view to commencing procurement of the main works contract for the Nairn Bypass and the A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton link road within this capital spending review period.

The Capital Spending Review allows for the commencement of the construction of the A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton link road in 2028/29 and the Nairn Bypass in 2029/30, subject to business case approval and confirmation of funding beyond the spending review period. We also expect to commence the delivery of advanced works for the Seafeld to Balloch section of the scheme during this capital spending review period.

Despite the current fiscal position and following the A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton and A96 Dualling Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) schemes, the Scottish Government will continue to progress improvements to the A96 eastwards, including an Elgin Bypass. Next steps in taking forward an Elgin bypass will include further route development and preparatory considerations.

As part of the then Bute House Agreement the Scottish Government agreed to undertake a review of the A96 corridor. The detailed appraisal stage of the A96 Corridor Review was published in November 2024 and Transport Scotland has consulted on the draft outcomes.

The 12-week consultation, which ended on Friday 21 February 2025 with over 1,400 responses received, provided the public and other stakeholders with the opportunity to fully consider and feedback on the findings from the appraisal. The feedback received has been collated and analysed by Transport Scotland with a report summarising this feedback published on 19 June 2025.

The Scottish Government has listened to the important views of the people of the north and north east along with stakeholders on the draft outcomes from the review and that is why a phased approach to dualling the A96 is its response to the Review. It is clear to this government how vital improvements are to the route to improve safety, remove strategic traffic from settlements along the corridor and support economic growth in response to the fiscal challenges this country continues to face.

I trust this information is helpful for the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fiona Hyslop', with a stylized, cursive script.

FIONA HYSLOP
Cabinet Secretary for Transport