



Working to protect and defend Bennachie and its surrounding area from the A96 dual carriageway

www.savebennachie.com

As you will be aware, the A96 Inverness-Aberdeen will be upgraded/re-routed to dual carriageway status by 2030. Two of the route options under consideration around Inverurie will impact Bennachie and its surrounding areas. Please refer to the attached map to see the current route options being considered for the eastern section.

Design consultants, Amey Arup Joint Venture have recently been appointed for a 20 year, £50 million contract covering the design and delivery of the Eastern Section-Huntly-Aberdeen. These consultants will come up with their preferred route options within 2 years of the contract award. The final decision on the actual route will be made by the Cabinet Secretary for Economy Jobs and Fair Work, and the Minister for Transport.

This means that the next 2 years will see the route of the new A96 in the Garioch decided. Once the consultants have arrived at their preferred route choice it will be nigh on impossible to alter it.

That's why it is so important to act now, to raise public awareness of the very real threat to an unspoiled Bennachie. The groundswell of public opinion backing the campaign has been overwhelming.

Through the Save Bennachie Alliance, over 811 individual members are joining forces with local and national organisations including the Bailies of Bennachie, Oyne Community Association, Kemnay, Kintore, Cluny, Midmar and Monymusk Community Councils, Mountaineering Scotland, North East Mountain Trust, Cosmic Hillbashers, Cairngorm Club, Ramblers Scotland, Woodland Trust, Aberdeenshire Environmental Forum and the Inverurie Business Association, with others currently considering joining.

Details of the Save Bennachie Campaign can be found at www.savebennachie.com our Facebook page, and Twitter account @SaveBennachie. Facebook followers are now at over 2400, our reach is over 12,000 per month.

Whilst the Save Bennachie Campaign is a strictly non-political cause, we do have cross party support-Bennachie is above party politics. Our ethos is to run a positive, constructive campaign to influence the decision makers.

We aim to demonstrate, through positive means, the factors which make it wholly inappropriate to site a dual carriageway in the Bennachie area, and the very considerable opportunities which would be created by siting it to the east of Inverurie.

150,000 visitors come to Bennachie annually for recreational purposes. A Special Landscape Area, an **unspoiled** Bennachie is a valuable and massively used resource in terms of physical and mental health, education and tourism. As the oil and gas industry declines, so the importance of tourism to the area increases, bringing many economic benefits to the local economy. It is therefore increasingly important to protect and preserve Bennachie.

Routes crossing the foothills of Bennachie will be at a high level, with safety, winter resilience and environmental issues through increased emissions. These routes would be at a distance from centres of industry and population, so would have a negative impact on economic growth, and offer no opportunity of promoting an integrated transport network and the use of public transport. Route C, over 15 miles long, which would impact Bennachie most severely, would have to be built in its entirety at huge public cost.

The Save Bennachie Campaign firmly believes that siting the dual carriageway to the east of Inverurie would create significant opportunities for the whole area. As per calls from Aberdeenshire Council Infrastructure Services Committee, Transport Scotland has a rare opportunity, through joined up thinking with Aberdeenshire Council, to implement the most cost effective solution for both the A96 and A947 projects.

Each working day, 68% of traffic approaching Inverurie on the A96 from the south turns off at the two roundabouts entering Inverurie, causing major traffic congestion and safety concerns in the town. Any route to the west of Inverurie is a missed opportunity to alleviate this major problem.

Given our level of public and political support, and our ethos of working positively and constructively, we are calling for the Minister for Transport to instruct the design consultants to engage meaningfully with the Save Bennachie Campaign, involve us fully in the process to arrive at a preferred route choice which will both protect Bennachie and add value to the Inverurie area.

We are calling on the Minister for Transport and Cabinet Secretary for the Economy, Jobs and Fair Work to rule out the route options which would impact Bennachie at the earliest opportunity.

The coming months will be critical for the future of Bennachie as we have come to know it. Do not underestimate that this is a very real threat to our hill. That's why it is so important for all who value this special place and who want to preserve it for future generations to support this campaign, lobby the key influencers, take part in the consultation events, and say a huge NO to the A96 dual carriageway impacting Bennachie.

Full details of our campaign can be found on our website, www.savebennachie.com

Our Save Bennachie Campaign, One Year On Report, which contains full details of our arguments and the figures quoted above, will shortly be published.