

## **Minutes of A96 Dualling Gathering, Chapel of Garioch Hall, 12/11/2015**

### **Those present included:**

Mark Worsley, Bob Smith, Sue Edwards, Lynda Bain, Margaret Garden, Brian Garden, Robert Mitchell, Ian Noble, Ian Coutts, Brian Murray, Samantha Tribe, Jamie Collins, Doug Mackie, Tineke Lilley, Graham Lilley, Willie Douglas, David Baillie, Shona Tait, Morris Tait, John Bain, Jackie Cumberbirch, Andrew Wainwright, Catrina Brown, Janet and Barry Harper, Lisa Wainwright, Claire Alexander, Sandra Lowson, Gary Whittington, Alan Reaper, James McDonald, George McWilliam, G and R Skinner, L Anderson, G Christie, Angela and Russell Hulme, John Wild, Iain Jarvies, Audrey Quaile, Bev Remp, Jane Smith, Jill Matthews, Mike and Catherine Leaney, Graham Chiverton, Mike Flaherty, Justin O'Malley, Rachel Warner Christine Maude

Apologies - Jolyon Robinson, Tim and Wendy Glasspool, Shona Owen, Alies Bartelds

### **• Introduction**

The purpose of the gathering was to inform local people what we have found out about the A96 dualling project, and how Option B South of Inverurie and Option C particularly would impact upon the local area, especially in relation to Bennachie.

Government process is driving the timeline, but the A 96 Aberdeen-Inverness will definitely be dualled, and it will be done to motorway standards, with very few junctions, in our area these will be at Inverurie, Inch and Huntly.

### **• What we Know**

Bob Smith explained events to-date and what he understands to be the on-going process.

The plan to dual the A.96 between Aberdeen and Inverness was included in the Infrastructure Investment plan (IIP) in December 2011. By May 2013 the Minister of Transport set out a programme and announced packages for the preliminary design. Contracts were awarded to Jacobs to carry out the Design Manual for Roads & Bridges (DMRB) Stage 1 Assessment with Halcow covering the Tier 1 & 2 Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). This work has been completed and the full reports were published in May 15.

Transport Scotland made presentations in Inverurie along with other towns on the route. A consultation period ran through to June 15 after the presentations which completed the stage one process. A considerable amount of information is available on the Transport Scotland web-site under 'A.96Dualling'.

Bob has been in touch with the A.96 Team at Transport Scotland to gain an understanding of the process going forward which is:

A.

A design contract notice has just been published for Stage 2 covering the Western Section from Nairn to Inverness. This will be awarded in January 16 which is on schedule with the original published plan.

B.

Stage 2 of covering the Eastern Section from Aberdeen to Huntly will be awarded late May 16. This is a two year contract culminating in the final options being made available for consultation. Following the assessment and consultation the preferred option will be selected.

C.

The project will then move forward to Stage 3 of Detailed Design and Assessment of the chosen route.

Mark and Bob are both of the view that we must work with the Consultant who will be appointed to cover the Eastern section. Rather than wait for the public consultation at the end of the process we should seek to work with the Consultant as route options are developed. This process will have to be on a positive input basis where our collective local knowledge is fed in at an early stage.

At this stage there are three variants of Option B involving Inverurie which are either a) North, b) using the existing A.96 and C) South of Inverurie. There is also Option C which heads on to Inch passing Inverurie to the South and Option D which heads North from Inveramsay although the new bridge will not form part of the dualling plan.

Bennachie is at considerable threat from Option B South of Inverurie and Option C.

In terms of time scale Consultants will not be active until June 16 but in the meantime we have to lobby all interested parties to build a clear picture as to why any route South of Inverurie will not resolve the chronic traffic problems in Inverurie and have a severely detrimental effect on Bennachie.

#### • Stakeholders an Interest Groups

Lynda Bain outlined stakeholders and interest groups to be contacted to support us. She asked for individuals who are members of these groups, or have associations with them, to come forward to contact them.

Please see the attached list of stakeholders and interest groups, along with details of those who have so far volunteered to contact them. Any offers of help with this would be very welcome.

#### • General Discussion/Suggestions/Way Forward

There was a great deal of positive discussion from the floor with lots of suggestions and excellent ideas, which gives us the foundations and clear ideas for some future actions including:

Potentially engaging an experienced specialist solicitor to represent the communities affected by Option B South of Inverurie and Option C. This would both speed us up and add weight with TS. Rachel Warner and David Baillie will discuss options, bearing in mind we need to avoid hiring someone with a vested interest in getting further work from TS. This would be on a fixed fee up front basis for advice and to show us where to go next. **Action- Rachel Warner, David Baillie**

It was suggested that we form a properly constituted community group, defining its aims and membership, office bearers etc. This was overwhelmingly approved. John Wild offered to research how to properly constitute such an organisation. **Action - John Wild**

Sandra Lowson attending a meeting on 18th at Tullynessle on how to apply for funding for community groups. She will find out whether we could apply. **Action -Sandra Lowson**

There was a discussion re Option Q, with the view expressed that this route would solve many problems by combining the A96 traffic with the Aberdeen- Banff traffic as well as taking the north traffic away from the Inverurie bottleneck. However Bob Smith indicated from his discussions with TS that this option is already off the table.

Sandra Lowson explained that they have been advised that in addition to getting our message over re which options we are against, we must tell them which options we are in favour of, and why.

There was a discussion about the route going around Keithall which has apparently been dropped due to Category A listing. However it was pointed out that Manar House and Aquorthies may also be A listed. This must be investigated. **Action- Mark Worsley**

The Baillies of Bennachie have a key role and Jackie Cummerbirch indicated that they could work in partnership with a community group and their solicitor to try to ensure that Bennachie must not be touched. Aberdeenshire Council are presently involved in a process which should ensure Bennachie is given Special Landscape Area status. However this will not be strong enough to stop the dual carriageway. A member of the group is attending the next Baillies meeting next week.

Website- Gary Whittington offered to create a website for the group.

Newspapers- suggested that we need to raise the profile of Bennachie in relation to the proposed routes, as well as the existence of the group.

Gary Whittington suggested that we email everyone with our proposals, form a committee and move on at the next meeting, to be held before Christmas.

The meeting ended with agreement on this.

Date and time of next meeting:

7.30 pm Thursday 3rd December