



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

[www.savebennachie.com](http://www.savebennachie.com)

## **Campaign to Save a National Treasure takes Fight to Parliament**

The campaign to protect one of Scotland's best loved hills from a new four lane highway moves to the Scottish Parliament this week. The Save Bennachie Alliance has secured a consultation with the Scottish Government Minister responsible for Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity. The meeting with Cabinet Secretary Michael Matheson takes place at Holyrood on Wednesday 19 September 2018.

Six local MSPs from across the political spectrum will support the campaign at the meeting, including the local constituency MSP Alexander Burnett. Also attending will be the Aberdeenshire East MSP Gillian Martin, whose constituency includes Inverurie, and was recently appointed as Convenor of the Scottish Parliament's Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee.

The Scottish Government has pledged to upgrade the A96 Aberdeen to Inverness route to dual carriageway status by 2030. One of the options currently under consideration by engineering consultants Amey Arup Joint Venture involves a high level route to the west of Inverurie which would impact severely on Bennachie and the surrounding area.

The Save Bennachie campaign argues that this would ruin the environment for generations to come. The distinctive range has recently been declared a Special Landscape Area. Bennachie is home to protected species including Scottish wildcats, pine martens, otters and goshawks. More than 150 thousand people visit every year to walk, cycle, ride and run on the hill.

Ahead of the meeting, campaign spokesperson Margaret Garden said,

“We are grateful to the Minister for making time in his schedule to meet us. It is an indication that he takes our concerns seriously, and wishes to hear our argument at first hand. We know the Minister is a mountaineer, and we will impress on him that Bennachie is a national treasure. We will say that choosing to site a dual carriageway on the lower slopes of Bennachie would create a terrible legacy for our children and grand-children. It would have a devastating impact on the ecology of the hill, but it also does not meet the Government's own ambitions on integrated transport policy, greenhouse gas emissions or public health.

“Our campaign fully supports the need for better infrastructure in the north east of Scotland, but Bennachie is not the place for a dual carriageway. We believe there are better options which would have a win-win solution. Greater economic advantage would come from siting the dual carriageway close to larger centres of population, industry and transport hubs, while protecting our natural heritage will attract and maintain vital tourism income for the rural economy.”



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The consultants Amey Arup Joint Venture are expected to come forward with their shortlisted route options next month. At that time, there will be public meetings held to give details of the plans. The Save Bennachie campaign is urging anyone with an interest in the A96 project to attend one of these events and have their views recorded by the consultants.

Margaret Garden added,

“Time is short now, and we must take this opportunity to explain to the Minister why Bennachie is so important to the identity of north-east Scotland, so much so that it has earned the unofficial title of Scotland’s best loved hill. We are grateful for the cross party support of all our MPs and MSPs. We will leave Mr Matheson in no doubt that taking a dual carriageway over the foothills of Bennachie would be a disaster at many levels.”

**For more information contact Margaret Garden on 07876 495 555.**

#### **Notes for Editors**

Local MSPs who have indicated they will attend the meeting are Alexander Burnett, Gillian Martin, Mike Rumbles, Peter Chapman, Tom Mason and Liam Kerr.

For more detail about the A96 dualling process, and facts about Bennachie visit our Press Page on <https://www.savebennachie.com>