



**TRANSPORT  
SCOTLAND**



An agency of



SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

# A96 Threapland Junction Improvements Environmental Statement Addendum Non-Technical Summary



January 2009



## INTRODUCTION

Scott Wilson was commissioned by Transport Scotland to prepare an Environmental Statement (ES) in accordance with the Environmental Impact Assessment (Scotland) Regulations 1999. This was published in October 2008 and is referred to as the A96 Threapland Junction Improvements Environmental Statement, October 2008 (ES).

Following the publication of the ES, it was noted that the boundary of the Loch Oire Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) was incorrectly depicted within the ES. In order to address this issue, the SSSI boundary has been corrected and the Loch Oire Road vehicle turning area has been relocated so that it does not impinge upon the SSSI. The boundaries of the Ancient Woodland Inventory sites have also been corrected. In both these cases the corrections have no bearing on the findings of the original environmental statement. Also, a residential receptor, Cambria, has been added and some tree removal from within the grounds of Tilhill was unnecessary therefore appropriate revisions have been made. As a result, an ES Addendum has been prepared as an update on the original ES as published in October 2008.

This document is the Non-Technical Summary of the Addendum and should be read in conjunction with the original ES and Non-Technical Summary

as the Addendum only addresses the changes to the original Scheme.

The A96 Inverness to Aberdeen trunk road is an important strategic link in the National Trunk Road network and the efficient operation of the road is essential for the economic development of northeast Scotland. In addition to its essential strategic role, the A96 within the study area serves as part of the local road network, providing access to the local centres of Elgin, Keith, Fochabers and Mosstodloch for employment, shopping and recreational activities.

The section of the A96, at Threapland, identified for improvement runs from approximately 200m west of the access to Threapland Garden Centre for a distance of 1200m eastbound along the existing A96. This area includes the junctions at Threapland and Loch Oire Road.

The proposed scheme, as shown in Figure 1, increases safety at Threapland junction by improving visibility along the A96 and upgrading the junction itself to comply with current road design standards. As part of the scheme, Loch Oire Road junction would be closed to vehicles. This introduces safer traffic movements through the study area.

There has been much concern expressed in recent years over the safety of the junctions accessing the trunk road, in particular the number and severity of the accidents within the study area.



## WHY THE ROAD IMPROVEMENT IS NECESSARY

The relatively high level of traffic combined with the sub-standard road geometry has led to a poor accident record. There have been 29 accidents, including one fatality, recorded in the past 10 years.

The main objective of the Scheme is to reduce accidents on the A96 at Threapland by improving the standard of the junction and the approaches.

### Background

To date the Scheme has been subject to a Scottish Transport Appraisal Guidance (STAG) appraisal to examine outline improvement strategies, a DMRB Stage 2 Scheme Options Assessment and a Value Review to identify a preferred option. Subsequently, the Scheme has received a full Risk Analysis to identify potential risks and mitigate these where possible and a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit to identify and address any road safety issues.

Consultations have taken place, throughout the entire Scheme development and design process, with residents, landowners, local businesses, bus companies, local community groups and other interested parties in order to gather opinions and any possible recommendations with regards to operation of the Scheme. Where practicable, amendments have been included in the Scheme design to deal with any pertinent issues that have been raised during these consultations.

The design of the Scheme is to be in accordance with the Government's appraisal criteria for the assessment of trunk road schemes, namely to take account of integration, economy, safety, environmental impact and accessibility.

### STAG

The application of STAG to road schemes states: 'all major road projects are required to be subject to full STAG Appraisal'.

The requirements for a STAG appraisal had been effectively covered by previous work on the A96 Route Action Plan, and consequently it was agreed that a review of STAG was all that was required.

This review concluded that two options be considered, these being an online solution with improved visibility splays and an offline improvement.



### DMRB Stage 2 Scheme Assessment

The two Scheme Options, online and offline, were developed to a sufficient level of design for assessment purposes, so that a Preferred Scheme could be identified. The assessment was carried out in accordance with the requirements for Stage 2 Assessment given in the DMRB Standard TD 37, 'Scheme Assessment Reporting'.



The options, methodology and findings are described in full in the Stage 2 Scheme Assessment Report (S100630/REP/16). This concluded that Option 1 – Online, was preferred overall in terms of engineering, operational, traffic, economic and environmental issues, and provided the best value for money while addressing all the Scheme objectives. Neither option had a significant environmental impact, however, the offline implications of Option 2 resulted in a greater impact overall.

## THE SCHEME

The Scheme, as shown in Figure 1, incorporates improvements to the vertical geometry of approximately 1.2km of the A96 carriageway at Threapland with no alteration to the current horizontal alignment. The junction at Threapland will be upgraded, with the realignment of the south leg providing a more favourable right-left staggered junction. On the A96 ghost island markings will be introduced at Threapland junction to provide an element of shelter to right-turning vehicles. One junction on the A96, at Loch Oire Road, will be stopped up with the remaining existing accesses being rationalised. Driver visibility will be significantly improved in the area with the existing carriageway cross-section being amended to meet the appropriate standards including the widening of verges and the cutting back of side slopes. This will lead to improved visibility throughout the junction approaches and hence increase driver safety.

As part of the ongoing scheme design and development, provisions for cyclists and pedestrians have been enhanced since the DMRB Stage 2 Assessment process was undertaken, with sections of shared cyclepath/footpaths provided on both sides of the A96. An uncontrolled crossing facility will also be provided to enable pedestrians and cyclists to cross the A96 carriageway more safely.

## SCHEME CHANGES

The Scheme has been slightly modified to ensure that no construction activity takes place

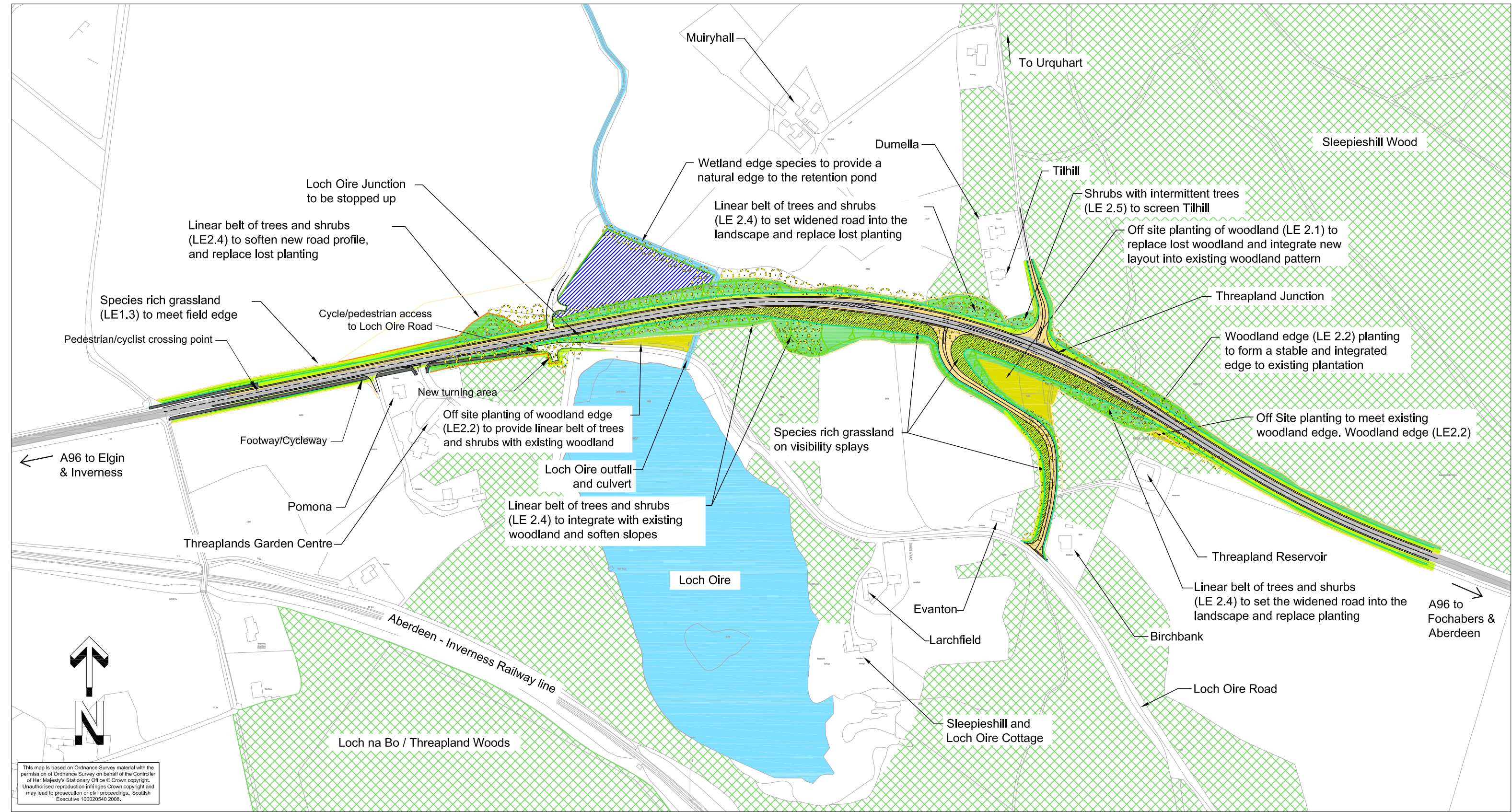
within the SSSI and in such a way that no additional landtake is required.

Although the changes are minor in nature, each Chapter of the original ES has been reviewed in order to identify whether the proposed changes raise any new issues or result in impacts that require more detailed investigation and/or additional mitigation measures.

The changes to the original Scheme are described below:

The vehicle turning area situated at the west end of Loch Oire Road is to be relocated so as to avoid any encroachment into the Loch Oire SSSI. It will remain in compliance with Moray Council Development Control Guidelines. The turning area will be kerbed with all run-off from this area draining back towards Loch Oire Road which will subsequently outlet into Loch Oire Outfall Drain north of Loch Oire Road. This will prevent any run-off from entering the SSSI. The proposed cycleway alignment will subsequently alter slightly to accommodate this design change. The relocated turning area will result in the construction of an additional 50m<sup>2</sup> of carriageway compared to the original layout. However, this will also remove the need for approximately 140m<sup>2</sup> of cycletrack.

The southern section of the turning area will be approximately 1m above existing ground level which may require the construction of a small retaining structure. Should this be necessary, this will be provided in such a way so as not to adversely affect the appearance of the existing surroundings. Strengthened embankments will be constructed over a length of approximately 27m along the south side of the A96 in order to provide adequate area for construction of the Loch Oire Road vehicle turning area. The steepened embankment is not considered to pose any stability issues.



This map is based on Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationary Office © Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Scottish Executive 100020540 2008.

LEGEND			Notes:
	Existing main carriageway		Existing trees to be removed
	Proposed new carriageway		Existing woodland / scrub to be retained
	Existing watercourses		Visibility splay
	Proposed retention pond		Fence line
	New planting - Species rich grassland (LE 1.3)		New planting - Native trees and shrubs
	Off site planting		Wetland edge planting

1. Road markings only indicative
2. Stagger distance at Threapland Junction:85m
3. Loch Oire junction to be closed to all vehicles



## ADDITIONAL ASSESSMENT

The findings of the original Environmental Statement were summarised under the following specialised topic headings and were re-appraised, with any necessary changes reported in the Environmental Statement Addendum. It should be noted that not all environmental topics have been covered here as some were scoped out of the ES due to having very little or negligible effects. The baseline environmental constraints are shown in Figure 2.

### Cultural Heritage

No changes required to the previously published Environmental Statement of October 2008. A correction is made to the original NTS with regard to the relocation of the AA Sentry Box. This will be relocated to an appropriate roadside setting, approximately 1km east (not west, as previously stated) of its current location adjacent to the A96.

### Disruption Due to Construction

No additional works are required and therefore there are no substantial changes to this chapter. There have been some minor alterations to the text with respect to the location of Loch Oire relative to the proposed works and also to identify the residential property of Cambria (located within 100m of the Scheme) as a main receptor during the construction period. Figure 4.1 has been updated to show the new position of the vehicle turning area.



### Ecology and Nature Conservation

The amendments to this Chapter relate primarily to the significance of effects on Loch Oire SSSI as a result of changes to the location and layout of the vehicle turning area. The additional assessment concluded that there would be no change in the nature of significance of effects. Figure 5.1 has been amended to show the correct SSSI boundary and a more accurate representation of the Ancient Woodland Inventory sites.



## Landscape and Visual Effects

No changes to the text required from the previously published Environmental Statement of October 2008. Figure 6.3 has been updated to show the new position of the vehicle turning area and to eliminate tree removal from within the grounds of the property of Tilhill.

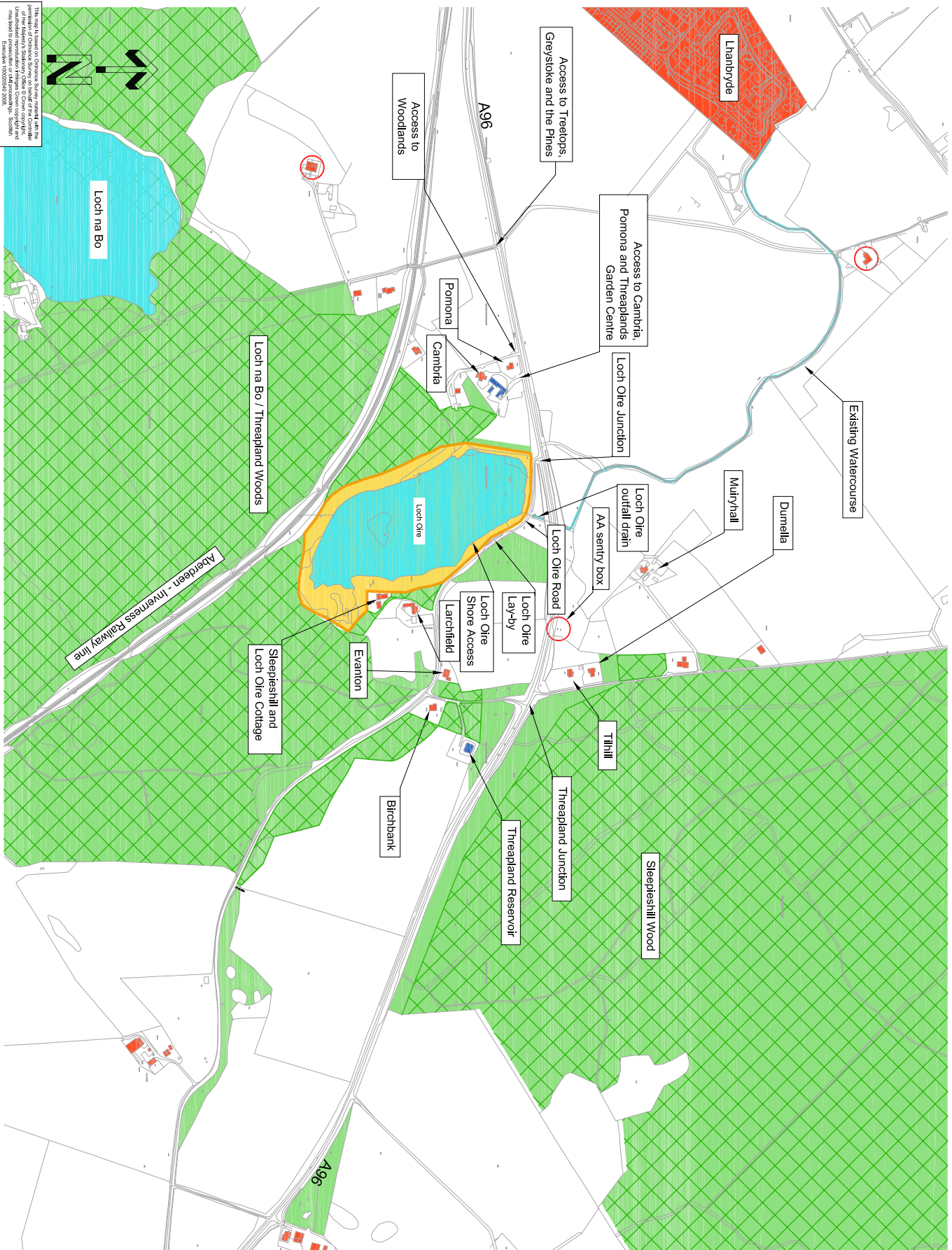


## Land Use

The new location and layout of the Loch Oire Road vehicle turning area involves a reduction in landtake as it is now situated outwith the SSSI. The text of Chapter 7 has been updated to reflect these changes and also to include Cambria, Sleepieshill and Loch Oire Cottage as residential properties in close proximity to the Scheme and to identify Cambria as a main receptor. Figure 7.1 has been updated to show Cambria as a residential receptor.

## Water Resources

The Water Resources chapter has been updated to reflect revised proposals for the drainage design of Loch Oire Road vehicle turning area which seek to minimise the risk of surface water run-off into Loch Oire. With the implementation of the appropriate mitigation measures, it is predicted that there will be no significant impacts on the water resources.



This map is based on Ordnance Survey aerial data and the presence of other features shown on the map of the Ordnance Survey may not be reproduced or used in any way without the permission of the Ordnance Survey. Copyright © 2014 Ordnance Survey. All rights reserved.

**LEGEND**

- Residential/Receptor
- Commercial / Business
- Waterways
- Woodland / Forest
- Ancient Woodland Inventory site
- Listed Buildings
- SSSI site and boundary





## WHAT HAPPENS NEXT

Depending on the nature and number of objections received, a Public Local Inquiry into the Statutory Orders may be held, together with the hearing of any opinions that may be expressed by members of the public on the Environmental Statement. If a Public Local Inquiry is held, then everyone who has supported, objected to, or made other representations about the Statutory Orders and the Environmental Statement will be informed as to the date and venue. Notices confirming the date and venue will appear in the local press at least six weeks prior to any inquiry commencing.

## FURTHER INFORMATION

Copies of the draft Notice of the Addendum to the Environmental Statement, Environmental Statement and the Environmental Statement Addendum will be available for inspection, during normal business hours, free of charge at the following locations:

Transport Scotland  
Buchanan House  
58 Port Dundas Road  
Glasgow  
G4 0HF

Moray Council  
Council Office  
Academy Street  
Elgin  
IV32 7JB

Lhanbryde Post Office  
32 St. Andrews Road  
Lhanbryde  
Elgin  
IV30 8NZ

Fochabers Public Library  
55 High Street  
Fochabers  
IV32 7DY

Urquhart Post Office  
Station Road  
Urquhart

## IV30 8LQ

Copies of the Environmental Statement Addendum including the Non-Technical Summary for the ES Addendum, can also be purchased from Transport Scotland, Buchanan House, 58 Port Dundas Road, Glasgow, G4 0HF, in paper or electronic format (CD-Rom) at a cost of £125 (paper) and £15 (CD).

The A96 Threapland Junction Improvement Environmental Statement, Environmental Statement Addendum and corresponding Non-Technical Summaries have been prepared by:

Scott Wilson Scotland Ltd  
23 Chester Street  
Edinburgh  
EH3 7EN

## YOUR VIEWS

If you wish to support, comment on or make a representation to the draft Notice of the Addendum to the Environmental Statement, or comment on the Environmental Statement Addendum, you should write, no later than the date published in the draft Notice of the Addendum to the Environmental Statement, to Transport Scotland at the address below:

The Chief Road Engineer  
Transport Scotland  
Buchanan House  
58 Port Dundas Road  
Glasgow  
G4 0HF