



A96 Inverness to Nairn (incl. Nairn Bypass)

November 2013

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Introduction

The Strategic Transport Projects Review (STPR), published by Transport Scotland in 2008, set out the Scottish Government's transport investment priorities over the coming decades.

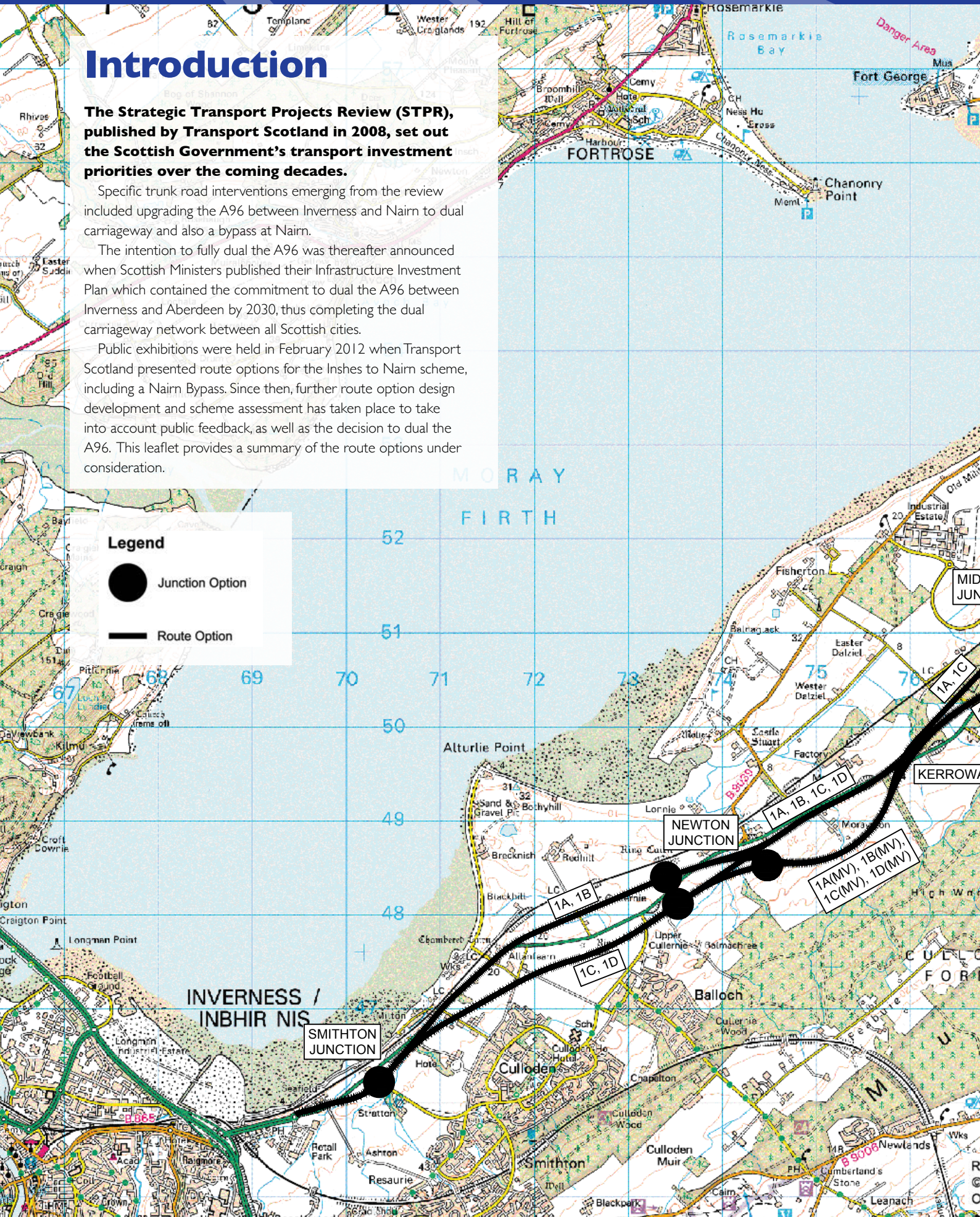
Specific trunk road interventions emerging from the review included upgrading the A96 between Inverness and Nairn to dual carriageway and also a bypass at Nairn.

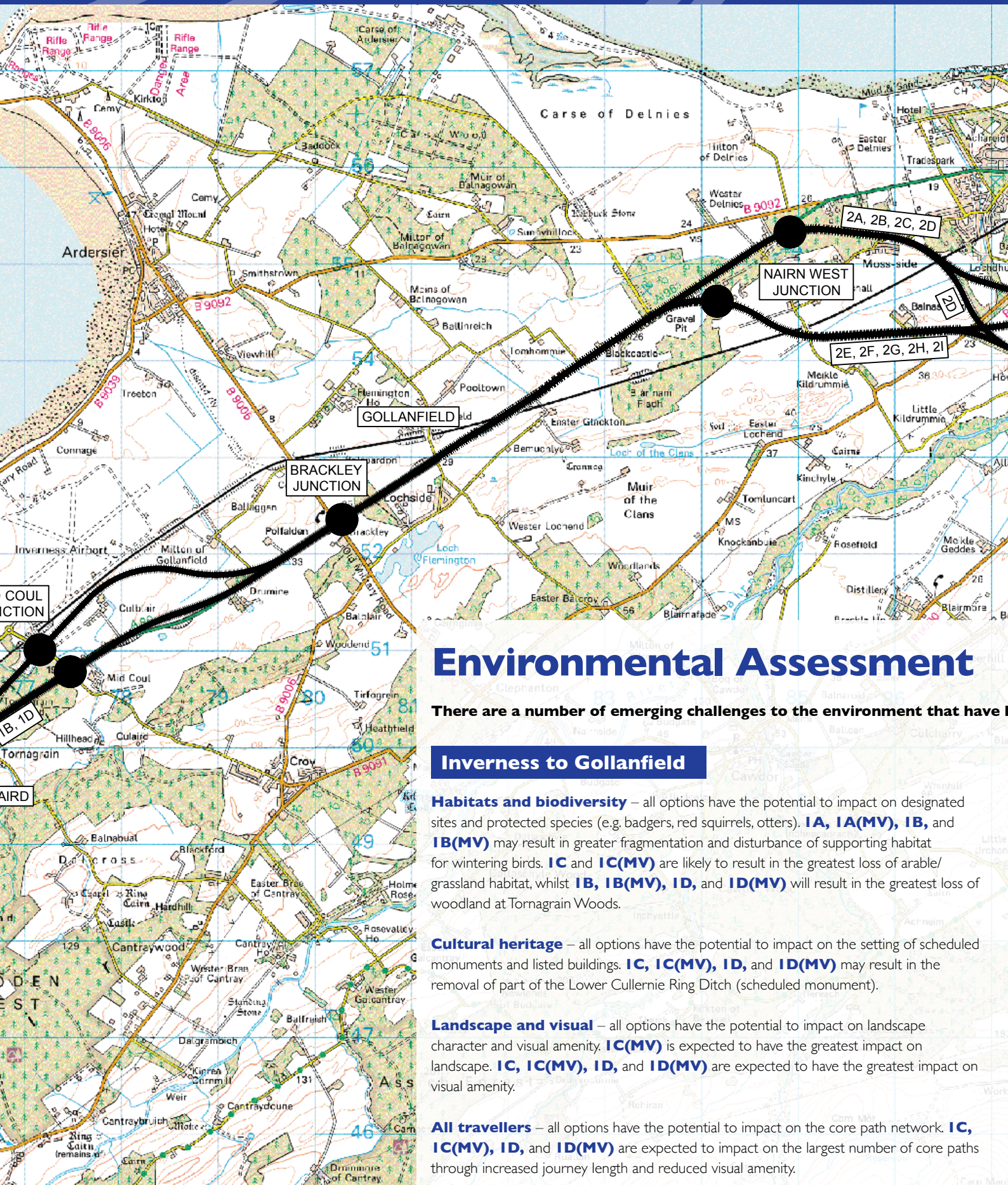
The intention to fully dual the A96 was thereafter announced when Scottish Ministers published their Infrastructure Investment Plan which contained the commitment to dual the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen by 2030, thus completing the dual carriageway network between all Scottish cities.

Public exhibitions were held in February 2012 when Transport Scotland presented route options for the Inshes to Nairn scheme, including a Nairn Bypass. Since then, further route option design development and scheme assessment has taken place to take into account public feedback, as well as the decision to dual the A96. This leaflet provides a summary of the route options under consideration.

Legend

- Junction Option
- Route Option





Environmental Assessment

There are a number of emerging challenges to the environment that have

Inverness to Gollanfield

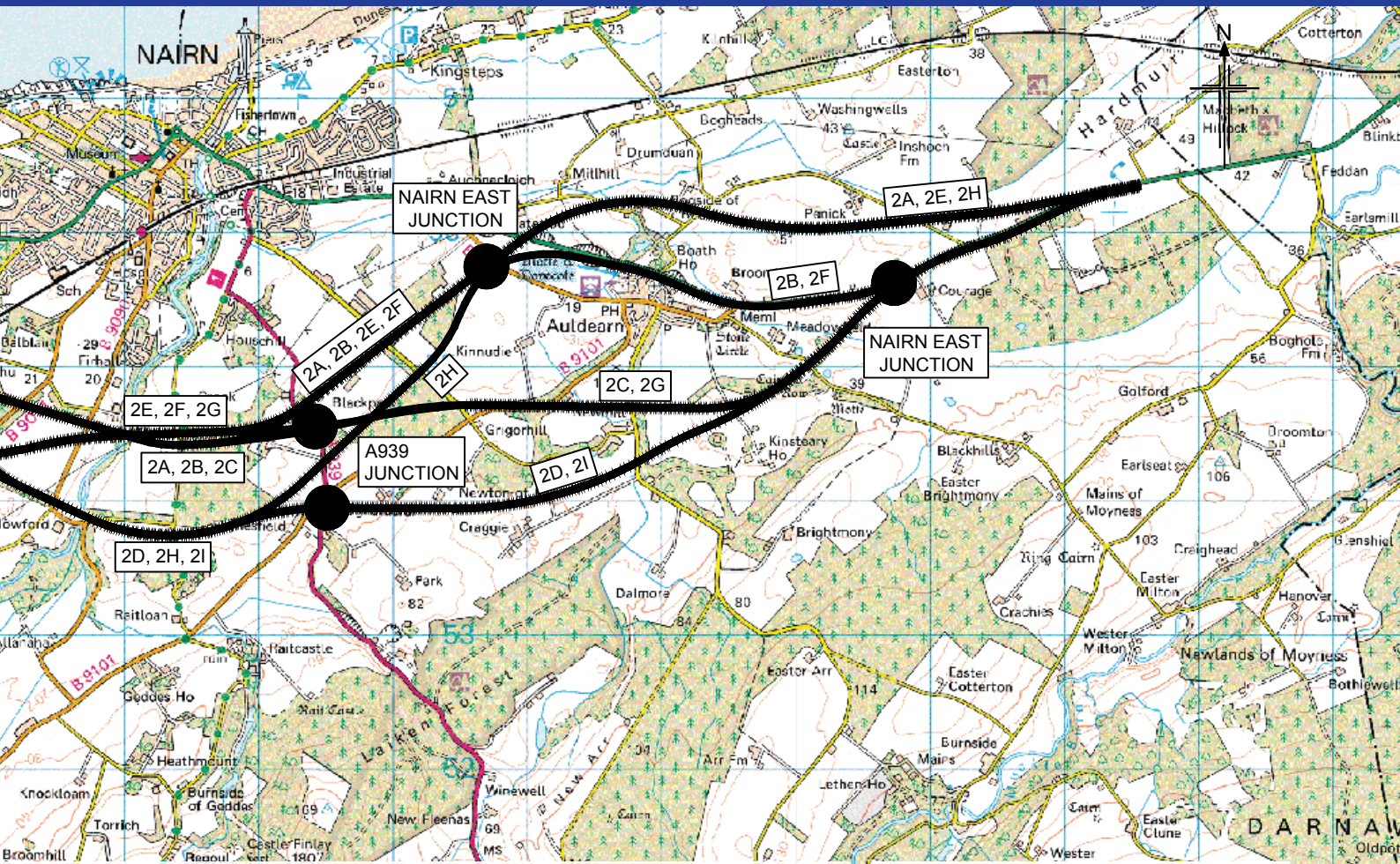
Habitats and biodiversity – all options have the potential to impact on designated sites and protected species (e.g. badgers, red squirrels, otters). **IA, IA(MV), IB, and IB(MV)** may result in greater fragmentation and disturbance of supporting habitat for wintering birds. **IC and IC(MV)** are likely to result in the greatest loss of arable/grassland habitat, whilst **IB, IB(MV), ID, and ID(MV)** will result in the greatest loss of woodland at Tornagrain Woods.

Cultural heritage – all options have the potential to impact on the setting of scheduled monuments and listed buildings. **IC, IC(MV), ID, and ID(MV)** may result in the removal of part of the Lower Cullernie Ring Ditch (scheduled monument).

Landscape and visual – all options have the potential to impact on landscape character and visual amenity. **IC(MV)** is expected to have the greatest impact on landscape. **IC, IC(MV), ID, and ID(MV)** are expected to have the greatest impact on visual amenity.

All travellers – all options have the potential to impact on the core path network. **IC, IC(MV), ID, and ID(MV)** are expected to impact on the largest number of core paths through increased journey length and reduced visual amenity.

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been identified. For example:

Nairn Bypass

Habitats and biodiversity – all options have the potential to impact on designated sites and protected species (e.g. badgers, bats, red squirrels, otters) through habitat loss and fragmentation and potential pollution. **2D, 2E, 2F, 2G, 2H,** and **2I** are likely to have greater impact on the Kildrummie Kames SSSI.

Cultural heritage – all options have the potential to impact on the setting of scheduled monuments and listed buildings. **2C, 2D, 2G,** and **2I** are likely to result in the removal of part of the Meadowfield Enclosure (scheduled monument). **2A, 2B, 2C, 2E, 2F, 2G,** and **2H** have the potential to remove unknown remains associated with the Auldearn battlefield, whilst **2A, 2B, 2E, 2F,** and **2H** reinforce existing severance of the battlefield.

Landscape and visual – all options have the potential to impact on landscape character and visual amenity. **2E, 2G, 2H,** and **2I** are expected to have the greatest impact on landscape character, with **2F** and **2G** expected to have the greatest visual impact.

All travellers – all options have the potential to impact on core paths and National Cycle Network Route 1. **2A, 2B, 2C,** and **2D** are likely to impact on the largest number of core paths through increased journey length and reduced visual amenity.



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The scheme

The new 30km dual carriageway scheme, from the roundabout for Inverness Retail Park to a point approximately 3km east of Auldearn, can be divided into two sections:

- Inverness to Gollanfield
- Nairn Bypass.

Inverness to Gollanfield

The current route options have been developed from the alignments presented at public exhibitions in 2012.

There are two route options between Smithton and Newton and two between Kerrowaird and Brackley, giving four route options, IA to ID. These options are all on-line past Morayston and an alternative off-line Morayston Variant (MV) is being considered for each IA (MV) to ID (MV). This results in eight possible route combinations in this section.

Nairn Bypass

The decision to dual the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen has changed the route options under consideration from the options



shown at the 2012 public exhibitions.

There are two route options being considered on the west side of Nairn, two proposed locations for crossing the River Nairn and four options past Auldearn. Not every combination of these is feasible, therefore only nine route combinations are being considered to bypass Nairn (2A to 2I).

Constraints

A thorough review of the existing corridor has been undertaken to determine the present engineering and environmental constraints. These are summarised below:

Engineering constraints

- existing A96
- local road network and numerous direct accesses onto A96
- Inverness to Aberdeen railway line
- Inverness Airport
- flat low-lying ground
- minor watercourses
- flood plain of Alton burn
- Tornagrain Development areas
- scattered residential development
- utilities – 132kV transmission lines, oil pipeline, gas pipeline
- active and redundant quarry workings
- soft ground and areas of peat bog.

Key environmental constraints

- European Protected Sites:
 - Moray Firth (SAC)
 - Inner Moray Firth (SPA)
 - Loch Flemington (SPA)
 - Moray and Nairn Coast (SPA)
- SSSIs – Longman and Castle Stuart Bays and Kildrummie Kames
- ancient and plantation woodlands
- protected species – red squirrels, badgers, bats and otters
- flood risk – e.g. River Nairn, Alton Burn, Ardersier Burn, Cairnlaw Burn and Auldearn Burn
- scheduled monuments
- Category A, B and C listed buildings
- Auldearn battlefield (1645)
- development land allocation
- landscape and visual impacts
- outdoor access – e.g. core paths and National Cycle Network.

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Impacts on the environment

The impacts of each route option on the following topics are being assessed as part of the on-going environmental assessment:

Air quality – at sensitive receptors (e.g. residential areas, schools and hospitals).

Noise and vibration – at sensitive receptors (e.g. residential areas, schools and hospitals).

Landscape and visual – landscape character and visual amenity for built and outdoor receptors.

Habitats and biodiversity – e.g. designated sites, habitats and protected species.

Cultural heritage – archaeological remains, historic buildings and historic landscapes e.g. scheduled monuments, listed buildings and battlefields.

Geology and soils – geology, groundwater and contaminated land sites.

Community and private assets (including agriculture) – due to land-take and potential community severance.



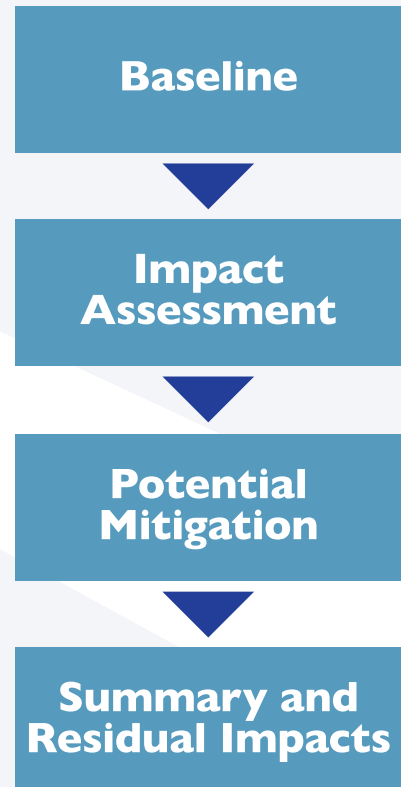
Development land – land allocation for development or land with planning permission.

All travellers – users of core paths, rights of way and the National Cycle Network and impacts on vehicle travellers.

Materials – material resources and waste management.

Water environment – water quality, geomorphology and flood risk.

Following these assessments, the impacts will be recorded and suitable mitigation will be considered.



What happens next...

Transport Scotland is seeking to reach a position of confirming a preferred route for the A96 Inverness to Nairn (incl. Nairn Bypass) in 2014.

The options presented are currently the subject of a full engineering, environmental and traffic and economic assessment (Design Manual for Roads and Bridges Stage 2 assessment – route option assessment).

We invite your comments on these route options using the feedback form. Please leave them in the comments box provided at the exhibition or email:

a96dualling@transportscotland.gsi.gov.uk

You can also post to:

**A96 Dualling Team
Transport Scotland
Buchanan House
58 Port Dundas Road
Glasgow
G4 0HF
by 31 January 2014**

The feedback from this public consultation will be taken into account during the route option assessment process.

Further information

More information is available at the project website: **www.transportscotland.gov.uk/a96dualling**

If you have any queries or any comment on the project, please contact:

**A96 Dualling Team, Transport Scotland, MTRIPS, Buchanan House,
58 Port Dundas Road, Glasgow G40HF**

Telephone: 0141 272 7100

Email: **a96dualling@transportscotland.gsi.gov.uk**