



TRANSPORT
SCOTLAND
CÒMHDHAIL ALBA

A96
DUALLING
EAST OF HUNTLY TO ABERDEEN

A96 Dualling

East of Huntly to Aberdeen scheme

Preferred option exhibition

transport.gov.scot/A96EHA

Welcome

Transport Scotland has been progressing options assessment work for the [A96 Dualling East of Huntly to Aberdeen scheme](#).

Following the initial route options public exhibitions in [October 2018](#), we held further engagement events in [May 2019](#) which presented the remaining options being taken forward to the next stage of design. In [October 2020](#), a design update taking account of feedback received at these earlier events was circulated to interested parties and made available on the project website.

The purpose of this [virtual consultation event](#) is to present the preferred option that has been selected following detailed assessment and which is being taken forward for further design development.

Anyone wanting to arrange a chat with the project team as they would have done were face-to-face events permitted, or to request hard copies of the virtual exhibition material, if for example you have no access to the online version, should contact the Thainstone project office at **01467 672 516** during normal working hours.

Transport Scotland staff and staff from its design consultants [AmeyArup](#) will be happy to assist you with any queries you may have. You can also complete our online or downloadable feedback form.



Further information can be found on the project website including downloadable versions of the exhibition panels, summary overview leaflet and feedback form:

transport.gov.scot/A96EHA



Existing A96 looking west near Blackhall roundabout



Existing A96 looking east at River Don Crossing

Background

2011

The then Cabinet Secretary for Infrastructure and Capital Investment launched the 2011 **Infrastructure Investment Plan (IIP)** which provided an overview of the Scottish Government’s plans for infrastructure investment over the coming decades. The document contains a commitment to complete the dualling of the A96 between Inverness and Aberdeen by 2030, thus completing the dual carriageway network between all Scottish cities.

Dualling the A96 will help tackle congestion in towns along the route, reduce journey times, improve journey time reliability and improve road safety for all those who use this important transport connection.



2013

In May 2013, the then Minister for Transport and Veterans set out how the A96 Dualling Programme would be progressed over the coming years. The outline strategy identified a series of initial packages of design and development work to be developed over the next few years with the objective of completing

full dualling between Inverness and Aberdeen by 2030. These packages of work included **Preliminary Engineering Services (Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) Stage 1 Assessment)** and **Strategic Environmental Assessment** work along the A96 between east of Nairn and Aberdeen.

2015

Transport Scotland presented the outcome of the Preliminary Engineering and Strategic Environmental Assessment work along the route between east of Nairn and Aberdeen in May 2015 at a series of **public information exhibitions** along the A96 corridor between Forres and Aberdeen. Based on the outcome of the preliminary work, the next stage of design was taken forward based on Western (46km), Central (31km) and Eastern (48km) Sections, starting with the Western Section (Hardmuir to Fochabers) in 2016 and followed by the Eastern (East of Huntly to Aberdeen) Section in 2017.

2017

In August 2017, Transport Scotland appointed the **AmeyArup Joint Venture** team to progress the design and assessment of the A96 Dualling East of Huntly to Aberdeen scheme. A series of **“Meet the Team”** events were held in November 2017 to give the local community an early opportunity to discuss the scheme with the team.

2018

Following on from the “Meet the Team” events, AmeyArup progressed the **DMRB Stage 2 Assessment** and following initial options assessment, these options were presented at a series of **public information exhibitions** held at Inverurie, Huntly and Blackburn in October 2018.

2019

The comments received from the October 2018 exhibitions were considered during the design development and assessment process and following on from this, a number of route options were deselected which was presented at a series of **public drop-in sessions** in May 2019. Feedback received from the May 2019 events has subsequently been incorporated as part of the ongoing design and assessment process.

2020

The **National Transport Strategy (NTS2)** published by the Scottish Government on 5 February 2020. It sets out an ambitious and compelling vision for Scotland’s transport system for the next 20 years. **There are four priorities** to support that vision as shown. The A96 Dualling Programme will align with these priorities.

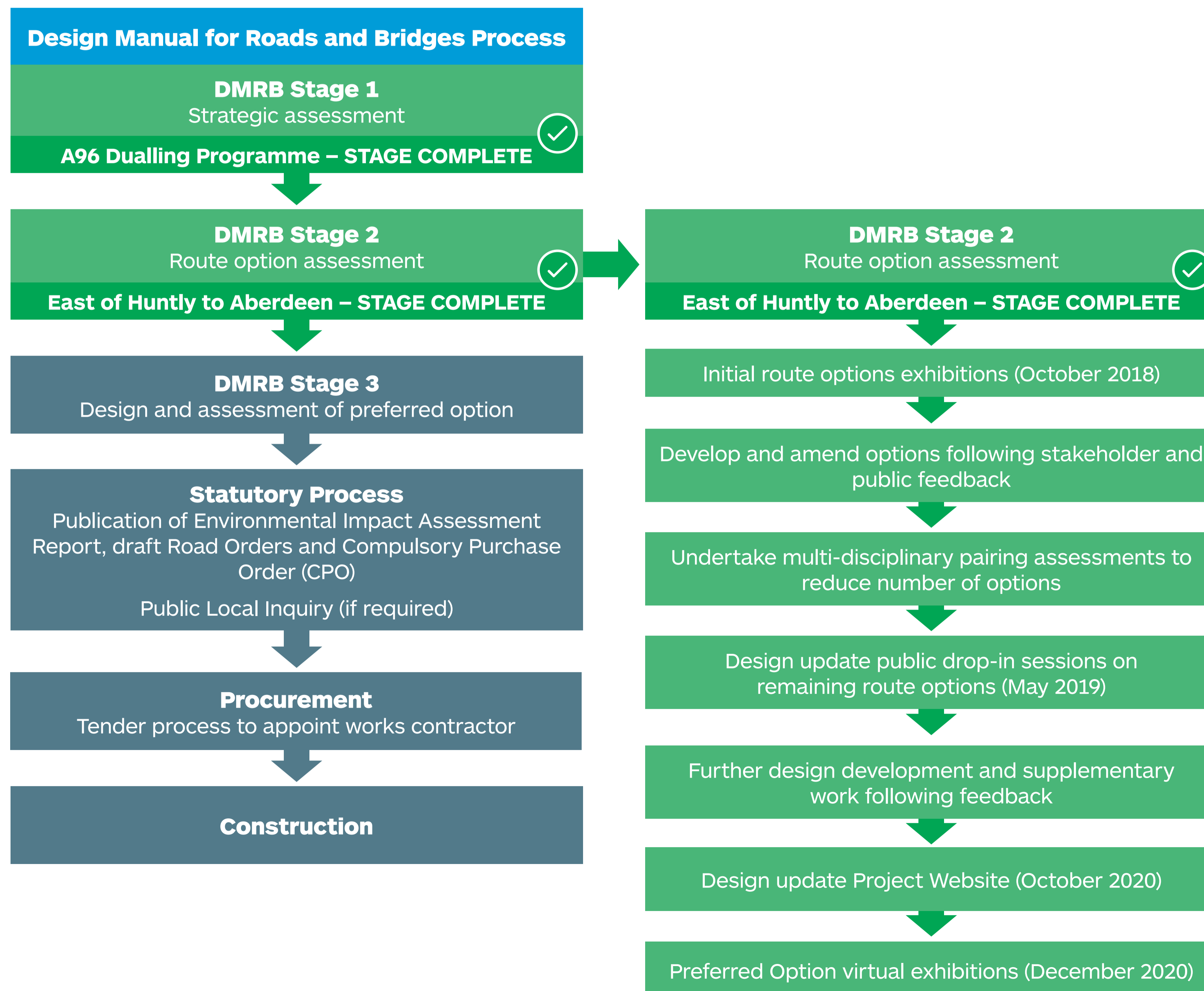
	Reduces inequalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will provide fair access to services we need Will be easy to use for all Will be affordable for all
	Takes climate action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will help deliver our net-zero target Will adapt to the effects of climate change Will promote greener, cleaner choices
	Helps deliver inclusive economic growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will get people and goods where they need to get to Will be reliable, efficient and high quality Will use beneficial innovation
	Improves our health and wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will be safe and secure for all Will enable us to make healthy travel choices Will help make our communities great places to live

NTS2 priorities

Also in 2020, some further design development work was undertaken to address public feedback comments where possible. A further **design update** was provided in October 2020 on the project website highlighting the changes to junctions and the addition of a new junction.

Scheme assessment process

Transport Scotland carries out a rigorous assessment process to establish the preferred option for a trunk road project.



The preparation and development of trunk road projects follows the project assessment process set out in the **Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB)**. This three-stage assessment process covers engineering, environment, traffic and economic considerations.

Throughout this assessment process, Transport Scotland consults with a diverse range of stakeholders, local communities and interested parties, including heritage, environmental and Non-Motorised User (NMU) groups such as pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians.

The **DMRB Stage 1 Assessment** of the A96 Dualling Programme was completed in 2015 and the **DMRB Stage 2 Assessment** for the A96 Dualling East of Huntly to Aberdeen scheme is now complete.

The **preferred option** has been announced for the A96 Dualling East of Huntly to Aberdeen scheme and is available for you to view. The next step is to progress the design development of the preferred option and carry out the **DMRB Stage 3 Assessment** which is anticipated to take two years to complete.

Scheme objectives

The design and assessment process considers the performance of route options against the scheme objectives. Performance is also assessed against the Scottish Government's five appraisal criteria, namely: **environment**, **safety**, **economy**, **integration** and **accessibility and social inclusion**.

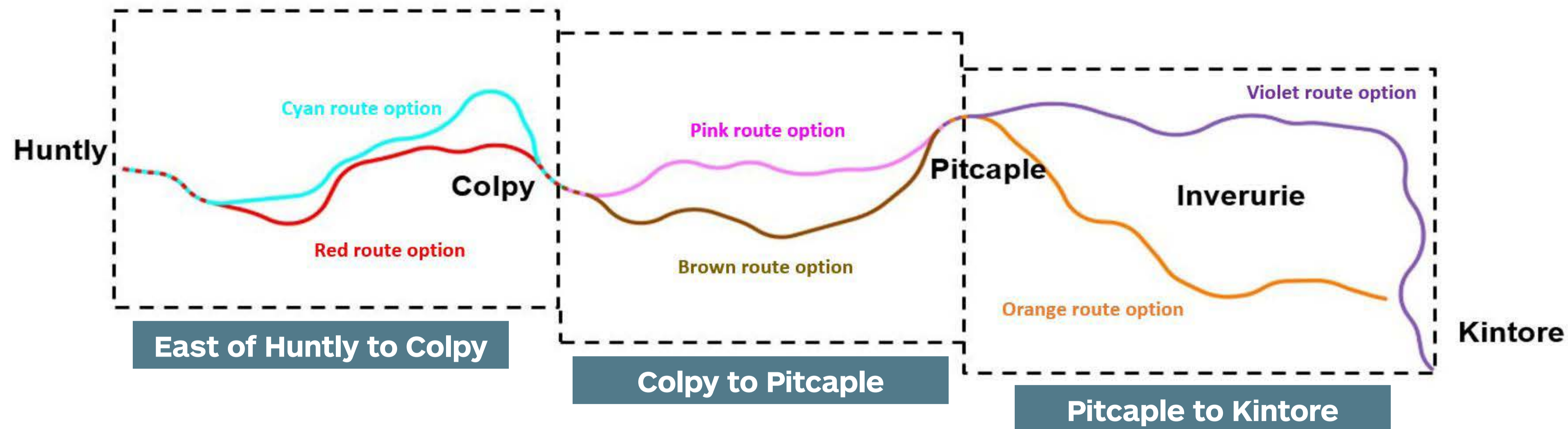
The scheme objectives are:

- **To improve the operation of the A96 and inter-urban connectivity through:**
 - Reduced journey times
 - Improved journey time reliability
 - Increased overtaking opportunities
 - Improved efficiency of freight movements along the transport corridor
 - Reduced conflicts between local traffic and other traffic in urban areas and strategic journeys
 - Improved network resilience
- **To improve safety for motorised and Non-Motorised Users (NMUs) through:**
 - Reduced accident rates and severity
 - Reduced driver stress
 - Reduced potential conflicts between motorised and Non-Motorised Users (NMUs)

- **To provide opportunities to grow the regional economies on the corridor through:**
 - Improved access to the wider strategic transport network
 - Enhanced access to jobs and services
- **To facilitate active travel in the corridor.**
- **To facilitate integration with public transport facilities.**
- **To avoid significant environmental impacts and, where this is not possible, to minimise the environmental effect on:**
 - The communities and people in the corridor.
 - Natural and cultural heritage assets.

Shortlisted options assessment

For the purpose of options assessment, the A96 Dualling East of Huntly to Aberdeen scheme has been divided into three geographical sections:

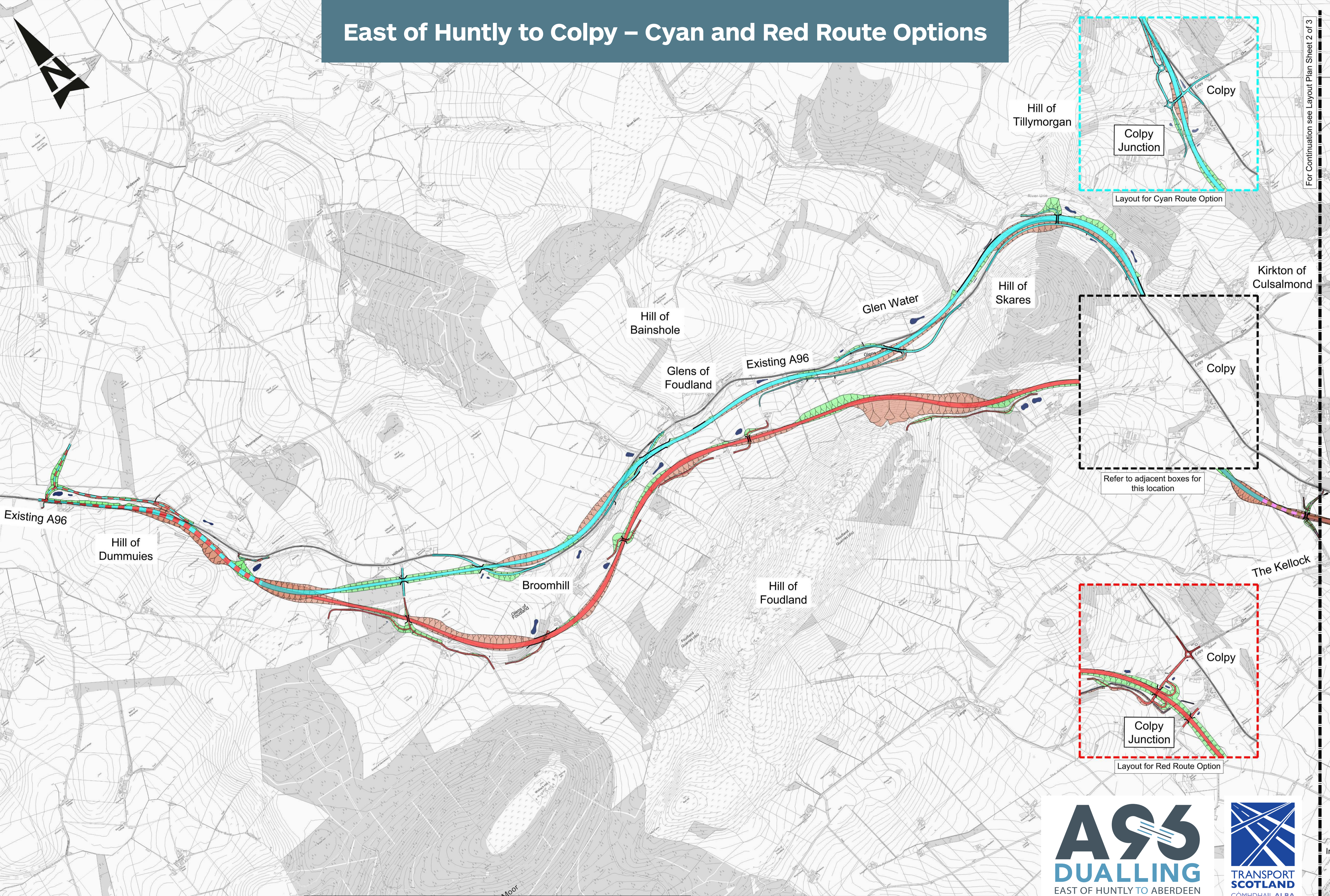


Option colours used in this summary diagram represent the **six route options** exhibited previously.

For each geographical section, the performance of a route option has been assessed to determine a preference. **Eight end-to-end assessments** were also undertaken to determine which combination of route options was best performing when compared to the other possible combinations.

The following panels summarise the outcome of the **engineering, environment, traffic and economic assessments** carried out and explain why a particular option is preferred.

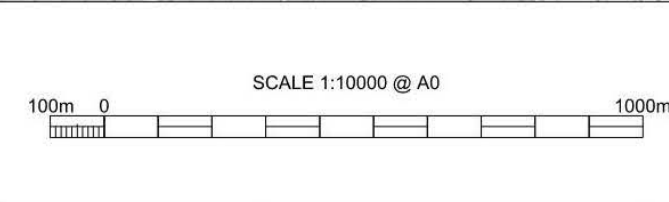
East of Huntly to Colpy – Cyan and Red Route Options



For Continuation see Layout Plan Sheet 2 of 3

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Cyan Route Option	Red Route Option	Cyan/Red Overlap	Pink/Brown Overlap	Embankment	Cutting	Structures	Drainage Features



The route options and junction layouts will be subject to further development as the scheme progresses. Connections to local accesses and Non-Motorised User routes will be developed following identification of the preferred route option. Earthworks shown are indicative only.

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East of Huntly to Colpy

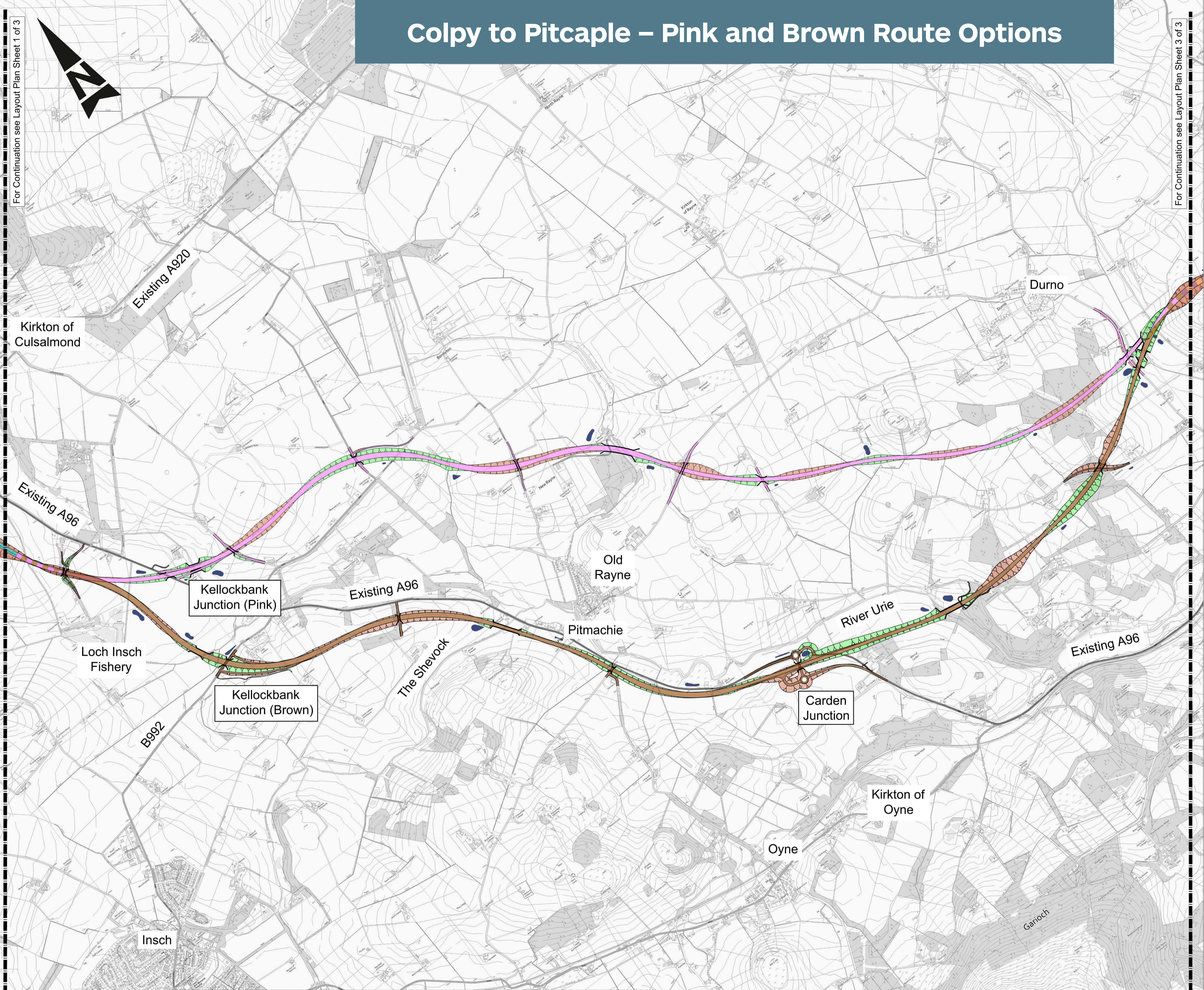
CYAN ROUTE OPTION PREFERRED

The Cyan route option is preferred for the following reasons:

- Results in less adverse effects on the landscape, since it is closer to the existing A96 corridor and avoids the steep topography through Hill of Foudland and Hill of Skares
- Has less impact on local ecology and nature conservation by passing through less undisturbed Wildcat Priority Area habitat
- Avoids a complex rock cutting through the former quarries at the Hill of Foudland
- Offline phased construction can be achieved, although there are interfaces with the existing A96 these can be built safely with disruption to road users kept to a minimum
- Has fewer interfaces with significant utility infrastructure including high pressure gas mains and electricity transmission lines
- Offers greater resilience benefits particularly with regard to winter weather

The Cyan route option is less expensive than the Red route option.

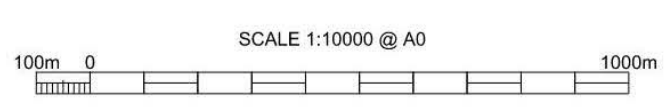
Colpy to Pitcable – Pink and Brown Route Options



For Continuation see Layout Plan Sheet 1 of 3

For Continuation see Layout Plan Sheet 3 of 3

Cyan/Red Overlap	Pink Route Option	Brown Route Option	Pink/Brown Overlap	Violet/Orange Overlap	Embankment	Cutting	Structures	Drainage Features



The route options and junction layouts will be subject to further development as the scheme progresses. Connections to local accesses and Non-Motorised User routes will be developed following identification of the preferred route option. Earthworks shown are indicative only.

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Colpy to Pitcaple

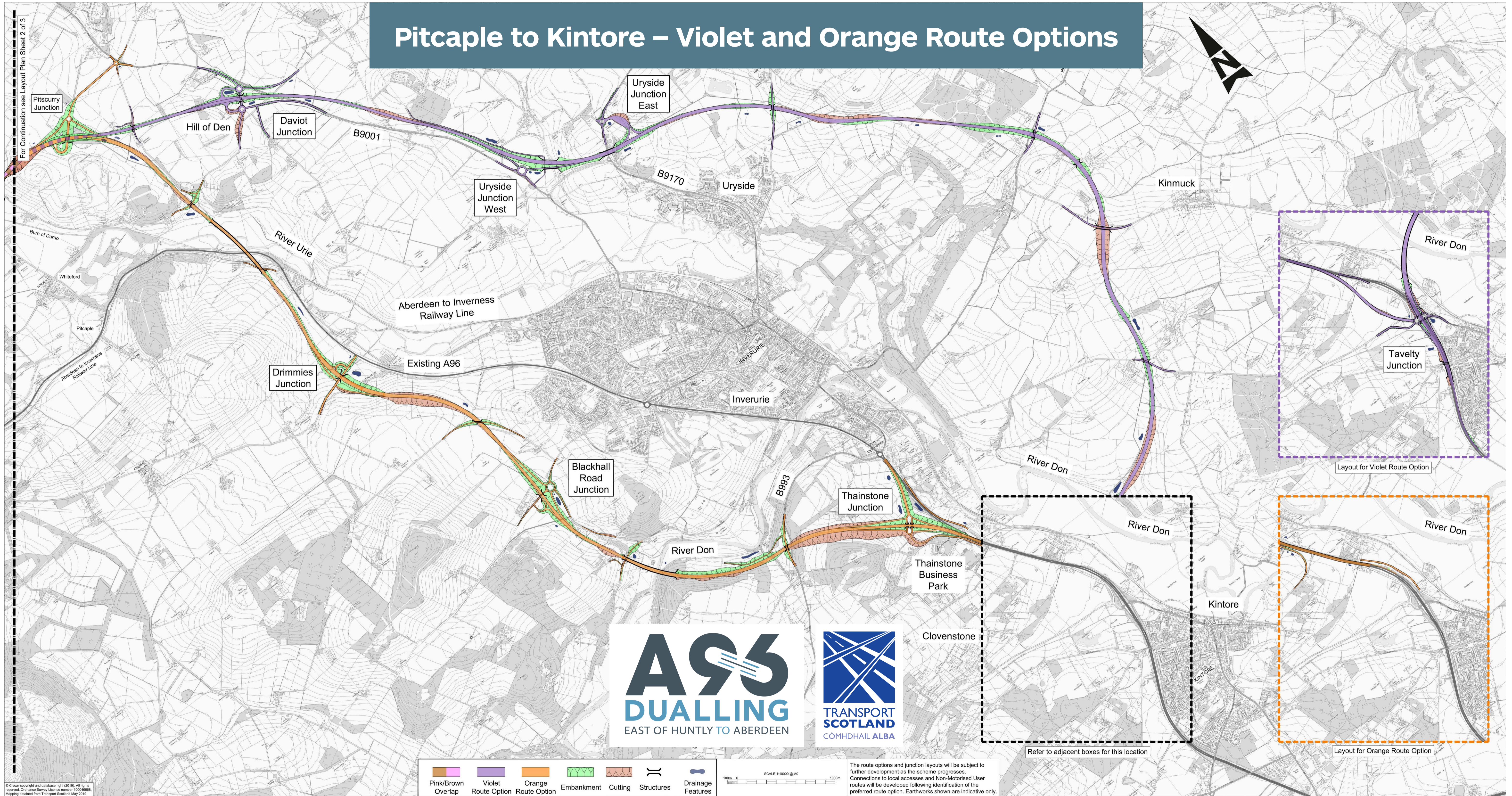
PINK ROUTE OPTION PREFERRED

The Pink route option is preferred for the following reasons:

- Results in less adverse effects on the landscape since it is better screened by the surrounding topography and so is less visible from higher elevations such as Bennachie and Meikle Wartle
- Has less adverse effects due to traffic noise and vibration since there are less receptors
- Affects fewer farm units and has less direct impact on prime agricultural land
- Has fewer impacts on local amenity including existing Non-Motorised User (NMU) routes
- Results in slightly less impact on ancient woodland and nature conservation areas including Logie Woodland
- Can be constructed offline with a lower number of significant structures and less extensive earthworks
- Is a shorter route with better journey time savings for all trunk road traffic, removing more strategic traffic from the existing A96

The **Pink route option** is less expensive than the Brown route option.

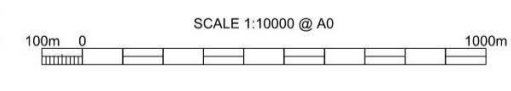
Pitcaple to Kintore – Violet and Orange Route Options



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- Pink/Brown Overlap
- Violet Route Option
- Orange Route Option
- Embankment
- Cutting
- Structures
- Drainage Features



The route options and junction layouts will be subject to further development as the scheme progresses. Connections to local accesses and Non-Motorised User routes will be developed following identification of the preferred route option. Earthworks shown are indicative only.

Refer to adjacent boxes for this location

Layout for Orange Route Option

Layout for Violet Route Option

For Continuation see Layout Plan Sheet 2 of 3

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Pitcaple to Kintore

ORANGE ROUTE OPTION PREFERRED

The Orange route option is preferred for the following reasons:

- Has less adverse effects on people and communities since there is fewer impacts on community facilities
- Results in less adverse effects upon the wider landscape since it is more contained within the undulating landscape
- Has less impact upon existing agriculture and forestry with significantly fewer farm units and less prime agricultural land affected
- Results in less adverse effects due to traffic noise and vibration since there are fewer residential receptors i.e. homes
- Provides better integration with future development of Inverurie, particularly to the south of Inverurie at Crichie
- Has greater opportunity for new Non-Motorised User (NMU) routes connecting more populated areas
- Involves less onerous construction works avoiding the complex crossing of the railway, the River Don and its wide floodplain at Kintore plus the need to reconfigure Tavelty Junction
- Provides better connections with the existing A96 providing improved operational resilience.

The **Orange route option** is slightly more expensive than the Violet route option but provides significantly better value.

Preferred option

The preferred option for the A96 Dualling East of Huntly to Aberdeen scheme is **Cyan-Pink-Orange**.

The drawings indicate the preferred option alignment, the designed layouts for all junctions and alterations to side roads. The location and layout of road drainage basins / ponds is indicative.

These aspects will be subject to further design and development as the scheme progresses. Environmental mitigation and Non-Motorised User (NMU) facilities will also be incorporated into the scheme design as part of the **DMRB Stage 3 Assessment**.

The design has the following key features:

- 36 km of new dual carriageway
- Six grade-separated junctions
- New crossings of the River Urie and River Don
- One crossing of the Aberdeen – Inverness railway line
- Major utility interfaces.

On opening, some of the key benefits the new A96 Dualling East of Huntly to Aberdeen scheme will provide include:

- Improved journey times and reliability for all trunk road traffic, including freight
- Significantly improved road safety for motorised and Non-Motorised Users
- Opportunities to facilitate active travel
- Better transport connections to Aberdeen City and between communities in Aberdeenshire and to the wider strategic transport network
- Supports sustainable economic growth by providing better transport connections and opportunities to grow the regional economy in the corridor.

What happens next?

Transport Scotland and its consultants AmeyArup will develop the preferred option further.

On completion of the DMRB Stage 3 Design Development and Assessment, which is anticipated to take two years, Transport Scotland will publish **draft Orders** and **Environmental Impact Assessment Report** for the A96 Dualling East of Huntly to Aberdeen scheme.

The **draft Road Orders** will define the line of the developed preferred option. The **draft Compulsory Purchase Order** will define the extent of land required to deliver, operate and maintain the scheme.

The next stage of the assessment process will include:

- Consultation with affected parties
- Further consultation with statutory bodies, community councils and other relevant interest groups
- Design development of the preferred option.
- Consultation on and design development of Non-Motorised User (NMU) facilities
- Environmental surveys and ground investigation works
- Identification of the land required for the scheme and preparation of draft Orders
- Environmental assessment of the developed preferred option and preparation of an Environmental Impact



Existing A96 looking east at Kellockbank

- Assessment Report.
- Development of suitable mitigation measures to reduce impacts on the environment. For example:
 - Appropriate construction management plans
 - Mammal (e.g. badger and otter) underpasses, ledges and fences
 - Landscape planting

Comments and feedback

Transport Scotland welcomes your comments and feedback on the preferred option. Please take time to consider the information presented and provide any comments you may have as soon as possible and by:

8 March 2021



Exhibition events held in May 2019

Comments can be made on the feedback forms available [here](#) or can be downloaded from the project website and sent by email or post. Please email your comments to:
a96dualling@transport.gov.scot

Or by post to:

A96 Dualling Team, Transport Scotland, Buchanan House, 58 Port Dundas Road, Glasgow G4 0HF

Should you have any specific accessibility requirements, or would like a hard copy, the preferred option leaflet and the exhibition panels can be made available on request in an appropriate format by contacting the project team at a96dualling@transport.gov.scot

Contact details

Should you wish to contact the project team, details for the stakeholder team are:

Stakeholder Coordinator:

Bonny Pailing Tel: **01467 672 516**

Email: bonny.pailing@arup.com


Landowner and Communities Manager:

Billy Gordon Tel: **01467 672 516**

Email: billy.gordon@amey.co.uk

By post: **AmeyArup, Office 7, Thainstone Business Centre, Thainstone, Inverurie, AB51 5TB**

All of the information from the virtual exhibition is available on the A96 Dualling East of Huntly to Aberdeen scheme website: transport.gov.scot/A96EHA

 Transport Scotland will consider your comments and feedback as part of the further design development and assessment of the scheme, and all submissions will be shared with our design consultant for the project. We may also use your submission to inform future reports or public documents related to this scheme.

If you choose to provide contact details with your submission, Transport Scotland will send you updates about the scheme, including invitations to future public engagement events. We will only use your contact details for the purpose of keeping you updated with the progress of this project. Your personal data will be deleted on completion of the project and you can opt out of receiving updates about the scheme from Transport Scotland at any time by contacting the project team.

The provision of contact details is optional and your comments will still be considered if provided anonymously. However, Transport Scotland will be unable to respond to your submission or update you on the scheme if you choose not to provide these details.



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