

Citizen Participation and Public Petitions Committee
Wednesday 11 March 2026
6th Meeting, 2026 (Session 6)

PE2132: Publish a timeline for the dualling of the A96 between Inverness and Nairn by Easter 2025

Introduction

Petitioner The Inverness Courier

Petition summary Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to publish a clear timeline for the dualling of the A96 between Inverness and Nairn and the construction of a bypass for Nairn, ensuring that this timeline is made public by Easter 2025.

Webpage <https://petitions.parliament.scot/petitions/PE2132>

1. [The Committee last considered this petition at its meeting on 26 November 2025.](#) At that meeting, the Committee agreed to write to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport.
2. The petition summary is included in **Annexe A** and the Official Report of the Committee's last consideration of this petition is at **Annexe B**.
3. The Committee has received a new written submission from the Cabinet Secretary for Transport, which is set out in **Annexe C**.
4. The Cabinet Secretary provided a more recent update to the Scottish Parliament, in response to a Government Initiated Question lodged by Kevin Stewart MSP. A copy of this is included at **Annexe D**.
5. [Written submissions received prior to the Committee's last consideration can be found on the petition's webpage.](#)
6. [Further background information about this petition can be found in the SPICe briefing](#) for this petition.
7. [The Scottish Government gave its initial response to the petition on 14 January 2025.](#)
8. Every petition collects signatures while it remains under consideration. At the time of writing, 512 signatures have been received on this petition.

Action

9. The Committee is invited to consider what action it wishes to take.

CPPP/S6/26/6/5

**Clerks to the Committee
March 2026**

Annexe A: Summary of petition

PE2132: Publish a timeline for the dualling of the A96 between Inverness and Nairn by Easter 2025

Petitioner

The Inverness Courier

Date Lodged

13 December 2024

Petition summary

Calling on the Scottish Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to publish a clear timeline for the dualling of the A96 between Inverness and Nairn and the construction of a bypass for Nairn, ensuring that this timeline is made public by Easter 2025.

Background information

For decades, people in Nairn and surrounding areas have called for a bypass to take traffic from the A96 trunk road out of its town centre.

In 2011 the Scottish Government pledged to complete the dual carriageway network between all of Scotland's cities – including the dualling of the A96 and Nairn Bypass, with a preferred route published in 2014.

In March 2024, Made Orders were published and the process for the acquisition of land required for the scheme started in May 2024.

At present there is no timeline for when the project is set to be delivered.

After more than a decade of delays, local communities continue to face worsening traffic congestion, pollution, and road safety risks.

With significant developments set to bring thousands of new residents and workers to the area, urgent action is needed to address these growing challenges which will further impact the livelihoods of communities affected.

Annexe B: Extract from Official Report of last consideration of PE2132 on 26 November 2025

The Convener: PE2132, lodged by *The Inverness Courier*, calls on the Parliament to urge the Scottish Government to publish a clear timeline for dualling the A96 between Inverness and Nairn and for the construction of a bypass for Nairn, and to ensure that that timeline is made public by Easter 2025.

In fact, we last considered the petition after Easter 2025, when we wrote to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport. The response informed us that the Scottish ministers took title of the land acquired through the general vesting declaration—or GVD—process on 21 April.

As for a timetable for progress, the cabinet secretary stated that that would be set in line with available budgets, following completion of the work to determine the most suitable procurement option for delivering the schemes. The cabinet secretary indicated that that work would align with the work on assessing the mutual investment model—the MIM—for the dualling of the A9. Therefore, the decision on the use of the MIM for the A96 would be considered alongside or following the A9 decision, which the cabinet secretary expected “later in 2025”. Since then, there have been no further public updates regarding that work.

Do colleagues have any suggestions on how we might act?

David Torrance: In the light of the evidence and the delays in implementation, I wonder whether we can consider writing to the Cabinet Secretary for Transport to ask for updates on the Scottish Government’s assessment of the most suitable options for the procurement and construction of the A9 dualling project between Inverness and Nairn, including the Nairn bypass scheme. We could also ask for the Scottish Government’s assessment of the mutual investment model for the A96, which was due to be considered this year alongside the MIM assessment of the dualling of the A9, and ask about the Scottish Government’s progress on developing a detailed timeline for the project, as asked for in the petition.

Fergus Ewing: I am grateful to Mr Torrance for those suggestions, with which I heartily concur. Obviously, I have a strong constituency interest, and have had such an interest for 26 years now, and I know that the Nairn bypass scheme was promised to be delivered as part of the dualled A96 by 2030. That ain’t gonna happen. In the summer, Nairn is probably about as congested as any town in Scotland, because there is really only one way in and one way out for most traffic. Increasingly, smaller roads are being used as rat runs to cut out delays arising from using the A96 to go through Nairn, which can take up to an hour. However, that is causing huge concern and, indeed, road traffic incidents.

This is a serious matter. *The Inverness Courier* held a public meeting that the transport secretary attended, to be fair to her, but she was not able to answer questions about the timeline or the financing, despite the fact that the Scottish Government’s budget is now £7,000 million a year. There is more than enough money over the next few years to deliver on the promises that have, I am sad to say, been broken.

Lastly, on the A96 as a whole, a sum of no less than £92 million has been spent on the dualling programme, including the section from Smithton to Auldearn, but not an inch of tarmac has been laid. How that can possibly have been achieved is something that is completely beyond me and my constituents.

I hope that, in writing to the minister, we can ask when she will make the statement to Parliament that has been promised. Will it happen this year, or will it happen at the very fag end of this session of Parliament, in the same way that an announcement about a section of A9 dualling was made in February or March 2021—a section that, incidentally, has not yet been dualled?

This has been a tale of woe. I do not wish to take up the committee's time, but it is a highly important matter for the people of Nairn and the Highlands.

The Convener: I think that that is understood, but do you agree with Mr Torrance's proposal?

Fergus Ewing: Yes, I do.

The Convener: Are other colleagues content?

Members *indicated agreement.*

Annexe C: Written submission

Cabinet Secretary for Transport written submission, 22 December 2025

PE2132/D: Publish a timeline for the dualling of the A96 between Inverness and Nairn by Easter 2025

Dear Convener,

Thank you for your letter dated 1 December 2025 regarding petition number PE2132: Publish a timeline for the dualling of the A96 between Inverness and Nairn by Easter 2025.

I would like to reassure the Committee that the Scottish Government remains committed to dualling the Inverness to Nairn section including the Nairn bypass.

Any update on the A96 Dualling Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) scheme would need to take account of budgetary decisions and the draft Infrastructure Strategy and draft Infrastructure Delivery Pipeline informed by the forthcoming Scottish Government Budget and Spending Review Statement (BSRS) scheduled for 13 January 2026.

Ahead of setting out a delivery timetable the Government needs to look at all possible ways of delivering the road improvement.

Consideration of the most suitable procurement and funding option for the scheme is being undertaken alongside the consideration of the A9 decision on Mutual Investment Model as has previously been intimated to Parliament. When complete, this work will assist in the identification of the preferred approach to procurement and construction and will inform the delivery timeline for the scheme.

Finally, as I advised the Committee earlier this year, we have already secured title to the land necessary to deliver this scheme, a step that illustrates the Scottish Government's commitment to deliver this project.

I hope this is of assistance.

Yours Sincerely,

FIONA HYSLOP

Cabinet Secretary for Transport

Annexe D: Government Initiated Question

Question reference: S6W-43512

- **Asked by:** Kevin Stewart, MSP for Aberdeen Central, Scottish National Party
- **Date lodged:** 2 February 2026
- **Current status:** Initiated by the Scottish Government. Answered by Fiona Hyslop on 3 February 2026

Question

To ask the Scottish Government whether it will provide an update to the Parliament on its commitment to dual the A96, and what the investment in the draft Scottish Budget 2026-27 and the Capital Spending Review will deliver for the people of the north and north east.

Answer

The position of the Scottish Government has not changed: we support fully dualling the A96 and we are already starting the dualling process from Inverness to Nairn, including a Nairn Bypass.

I can confirm today that we remain committed to dualling the A96 and are pressing forward steps to make this happen.

The commitment to progressing A96 dualling is included in the [Scottish Spending Review 2026](#) along with the [Infrastructure Delivery Pipeline 2026](#), both of which were published on 13 January 2026.

Investment in the trunk road network over the four year Capital Spending Review period to 2029/30 will allow us to make further progress on dualling the A96 between Inverness and Nairn, including the Nairn Bypass, and the adjacent A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton link road.

With the land acquired for both schemes in 2025, funding is included in the 2026-27 draft Budget to commence the delivery of advanced works. This will include vital archaeological investigation works and other key environmental and ecological measures, along with significant work to facilitate complex Public Utility diversions.

In parallel to the advanced works, this investment in 2026-27 will also allow Transport Scotland to continue to take forward the work to determine the most suitable procurement option for delivering these schemes and further develop the Business Cases.

The Scottish Government's preference would be to deliver the A96 Dualling Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) as one project. However, due to the continued fiscal challenges, it is planned that we will take forward a phased approach to delivery, starting with the Nairn Bypass, followed by the remaining

sections of the scheme, from Seafield, east of Inverness, to Balloch and then on from Balloch to the Nairn Bypass.

Completion of the preparatory work, including approval of the Business Cases, will enable a firm timetable for delivery to be set as part of the annual budget setting process, with a view to commencing procurement of the main works contract for the Nairn Bypass and the A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton link road within this capital spending review period.

The Capital Spending Review allows for the commencement of the construction of the A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton link road in 2028-29 and the Nairn Bypass in 2029-30, subject to business case approval and confirmation of funding beyond the spending review period. We also expect to commence the delivery of advanced works for the Seafield to Balloch section of the scheme during this capital spending review period.

Despite the current fiscal position and following the A9/A96 Inshes to Smithton and A96 Dualling Inverness to Nairn (including Nairn Bypass) schemes, the Scottish Government will continue to progress improvements to the A96 eastwards, including an Elgin Bypass. Next steps in taking forward an Elgin bypass will include further route development and preparatory considerations.

As part of the then Bute House Agreement the Scottish Government agreed to undertake a review of the A96 corridor. The detailed appraisal stage of the A96 Corridor Review was published in November 2024 and Transport Scotland has consulted on the draft outcomes.

The 12-week consultation, which ended on 21 February 2025 with over 1,400 responses received, provided the public and other stakeholders with the opportunity to fully consider and feedback on the findings from the appraisal. The feedback received has been collated and analysed by Transport Scotland with a report summarising this feedback published on 19 June 2025.

The Scottish Government has listened to the important views of the people of the north and north east along with stakeholders on the draft outcomes from the review and that is why a phased approach to dualling the A96 is its response to the Review. It is clear to this government how vital improvements are to the route to improve safety, remove strategic traffic from settlements along the corridor and support economic growth in response to the fiscal challenges this country continues to face.