

Chris,

In response to the replies provided by Aberdeenshire Council and Transport Scotland in relation to the questions I originally asked following the meeting with the Petitions committee I'd like to make the following response.

- My original questions are below in black
- Copies of Transport Scotland and Aberdeen City Councils responses are included in [Blue](#)
- And my latest round of comments are in [red](#).

Original Question from Petitioner – Murray Cooper

1. When the decision was made to link the AWPR and the Balmedie to Tippetty upgrade, who made the decision and what was the criteria for making that that decision?

Transport Scotland – Ainslie McLaughlin

“The decision to combine the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route and Balmedie to Tippetty (AWPR\B—T) was confirmed in the publication “Scotland Spending Plans and Draft Budget 2011-12 in November 2010.

The NPD model has been adopted by the Scottish Government in cases where value for money assessments of risks, costs and benefits over the life of the asset indicates that a structured long term partnership arrangement between public and private parties would offer the most cost effective method of infrastructure delivery”.

Petitioner – Murray Cooper

The statement provided above by Transport Scotland does not answer the question that was asked. I specifically asked “Who” i.e. which individuals made the decision and specifically what was the criteria used to evaluate the AWPR and the B-T projects. How were the pros and cons of merging them and delaying the delivery of the B-T section and its impact on the people of the NE assessed?

As such again I request that either the specific information is shared or a statement from the relevant department is issued confirming that they don't know who specifically made the decision and they don't know what criteria was used, if that is in fact the case.

Original Question from Petitioner – Murray Cooper

2. Is it still the right decision for the AWPR and the Balmedie to Tippetty projects to be linked? i.e. is the decision making criteria used to link the two projects in 2011 still valid given that currently the Balmedie to Tippetty upgrade could be delivered up to 5 years later than was originally promised.

Transport Scotland – Ainslie McLaughlin

“I can confirm that the decision making criteria used to link the two projects in November 2010 are still valid”.

Aberdeen City Council – Valerie Watts

“It is not possible to unlink the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) and the Balmedie – Tippetty Dualling Project without incurring further significant cost and delay to both projects. Both projects are currently being procured under a single Non Profit Distribution (NPD) contract. The Contract Notice for the single contract was published on 18 January 2013 in the Official Journal of the European Union and the Public Contracts Scotland procurement portal. Four pre-qualification submissions were received on 4 March 2013.

Following a pre-qualification assessment, four bidders were invited to participate in a competitive dialogue process. This process is now underway with a number of dialogue meetings having now been held with prospective bidders.

Unpicking the contract now would also mean that bidders have incurred “wasted costs which would also impinge on bidder confidence for any future bids, not only for these projects but nationally.”

Petitioner – Murray Cooper

Neither of the 2 responses above answers the question that was asked in section 1. It’s not clear to me that any thought or consideration has been given as to the impact on the economy of the NE of Scotland due to the delay in delivering this road upgrade. Obviously it is going to cost money to separate these projects however is that cost more or less than the cost to the economy and people of the NE as a result of the delay? Has anyone even calculated it? If so what is it?

Original Question from Petitioner – Murray Cooper

3. If the answer to 2 is yes it is right that the two projects remain linked can anything be done to ensure that the Balmedie to Tippetty section of the overall project is given priority. And a public commitment made to deliver this upgrade by a certain date i.e. no later than 2015, or 16 for example? Has such a requirement been included within the invitation to tender and if not why not?

Aberdeen City Council – Valerie Watts

“The complete delivery of the AWPR\B-T Project has been identified as three distinct phases. The Balmedie-Tippetty section is identified as Phase 2 but it should be noted that all three phases have the same start date, that is when the Contract starts on site and is currently programmed to be late Autumn 2014. The current timescale for completion of the Balmedie to Tippetty section of the project will form part of the dialogue with bidders in the procurement process”.

Petitioner – Murray Cooper

The statement above from Aberdeen City Council (As Project Lead) is very concerning i.e. that the B-T part of the overall AWPR/B-T project is phase 2 of a 3 phase project. And it will start in Q4 2014 but they don’t know when it will finish and they won’t know until they have spoken to the bidders as it’s up to them?

Surely there should be a clear steer to Aberdeen City Council from Transport Scotland and the Scottish Government that the B-T project is the top priority in the overall scheme. In order to try and recover from the significant delay incurred by their decision to link it to the AWPR in the 1st place, as

such it should be clear to all the Project Leaders the bidders and most importantly the people of the NE that the B-T project is the overall priority.

Furthermore rather than engaging with the bidders to see when B-T project can be accommodated within the overall project. Aberdeen City Council should be making the bidders aware that the B-T section is the priority and that any bidder who can show an early delivery of this section will be favoured over their competitors?

Original Question from Petitioner – Murray Cooper

4. If the answer to 2 is no, (i.e. the projects should be split apart) can the decision to split the projects be made quickly and the work commenced asap to allow the project to be delivered before the end of 2014? If not why not? If they are split how quickly could the Balmedie to Tipperty upgrade be delivered? And is this substantially earlier than if the projects remain together?

Petitioner – Murray Cooper

Obviously this question has not been answered by either party as its clear there is no desire or appetite to split the projects apart?

Original Question from Petitioner – Murray Cooper

5. If none of the above is achievable can a commitment be made to develop and implement suitable temporary measures on the existing road infrastructure to improve the traffic flow and reduce the delays particularly at peak times? Again if this is not something that can be supported please explain why not? If it is something that can be supported what is the high level time line for developing and implementing such measures.

Transport Scotland – Ainslie McLaughlin

“We are currently scheduled to award the NPD contract for the AWPR/B-T project in the autumn of 2014. Where possible Transport Scotland and the funding partners will look at opportunities to deliver early benefits to the people in the North East in advance of the full scheme opening. We will work closely together with bidders to identify the Balmedie to Tipperty scheme could be completed early in the programme which would significantly improve the traffic flow and reduce delays on this important section of the A90”.

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The point of this question has been missed; as such a further response is required.

The question asked if the projects are not to be split and if there is no commitment to deliver the completed B-T part of the project within the next 6-12months then can someone commit to looking into traffic flow improvement measures on the existing section of A90 asap. In order to improve the lives of the people of the NE while they await the completion of an upgrade that they were promised by 2013, which has now been delayed through no fault of theirs until at least 2016!!!

As an example of the daily experience of the people impacted, I've included pictures page 4 which was taken at 06:22hrs on Wednesday the 11th of September 2013 i.e. a normal commuting day where no accidents or weather issues had occurred and already people were queuing over a 5 mile

stretch of the A90 exactly where the B-T project would be if it had been delivered as promised, a map is also included for reference on page 5.

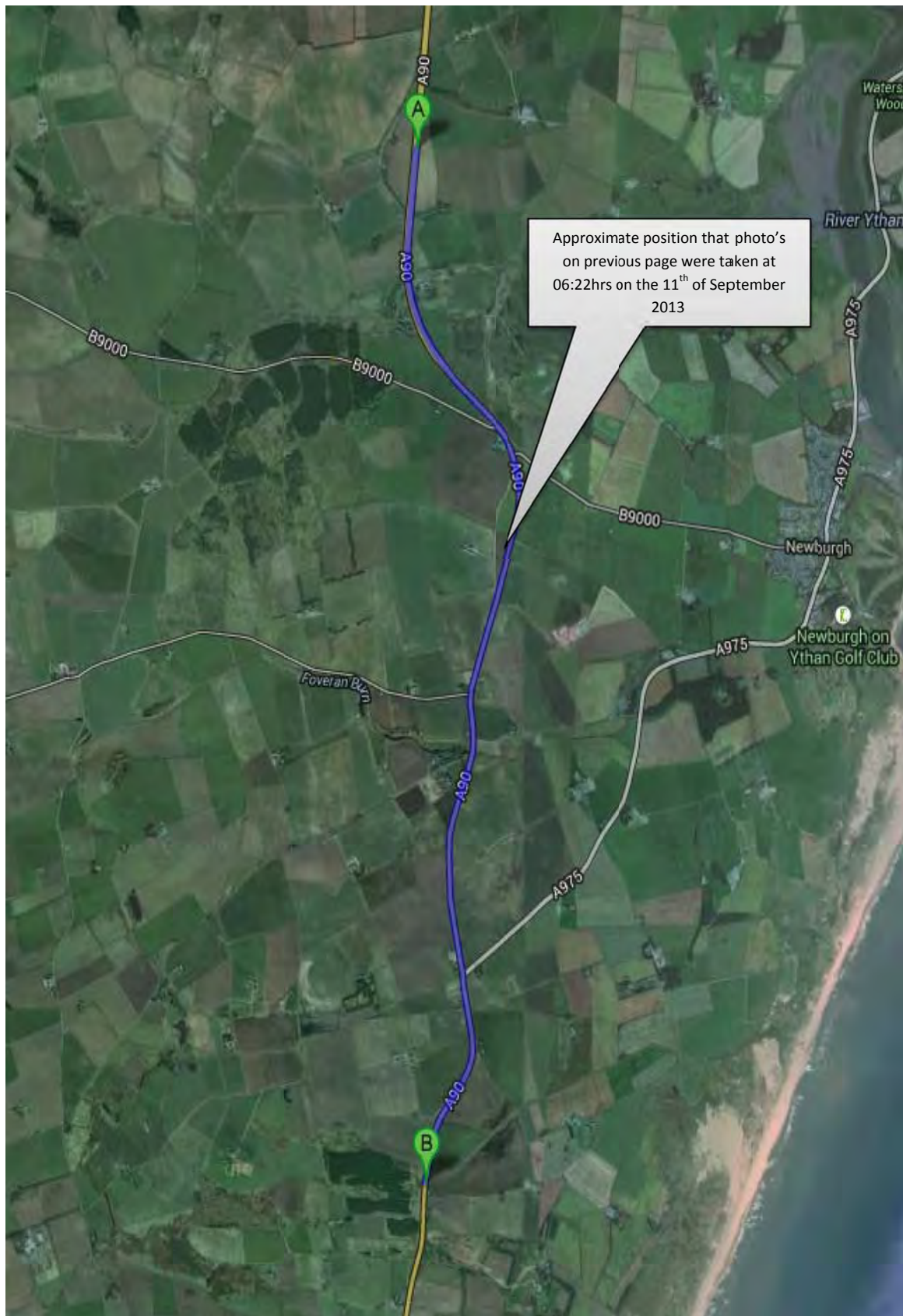
06:22hrs on Wednesday the 11th of September 2013 looking south towards Foveran



06:22hrs on Wednesday the 11th of September 2013 looking north towards Tipperty



Map highlighting the section of A90 that traffic sits nose to tail from around 6-6:30am until 9am and 3:30 – 7pm every work day!!



Petitioner – Murray Cooper

So in conclusion despite the Petition the Petition committee meeting and the round of questions we still don't know

- Who specifically decided to link the AWPR and the B-T projects?
- What criteria was used to do this?
- Was the criteria valid and is it still valid?
- Exactly when the B-T project will be completed?
- Why the B-T project is not being given any sort of priority given that it was promised to be complete by 2013 and it's clearly not going to be now.

We do know

- That the B-T project will not be delivered by 2013
- It won't be completed by 2014
- That neither Transport Scotland or Aberdeen City Council know when it will be delivered
- That the people from the communities of the NE such as Ellon, Mintlaw, Boddam, Peterhead, Strichen, Fraserburgh, Rosehearty, Sandhaven etc etc etc. Will get to queue on a substandard road network for at least 2 more years than the Scottish Government said they would!!.
- That there is no interest in providing short term traffic flow improvement options.

As such I once again ask the Petitions Committee to keep the Petition Open and to again press the various central and local government departments to provide:

- Clear, specific and honest answers to the questions.
- And most importantly to support in obtaining written commitment from Transport Scotland and Aberdeen City Council that the B-T project is the No1 priority within the overall project.
- And to force the responsible organisation to publish a date by which the B-T project will be complete and the public able to use that road.
- And to make that promise within the next 2 months not is Q4 2014 as is currently planned.