

PRESS RELEASE

Thursday 17 April 2008 – for immediate use

CAMPAIGNERS RESPOND TO SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE PUBLIC LOCAL INQUIRY INTO PROPOSED ABERDEEN BYPASS...

...but complain that they are still experiencing difficulties in obtaining relevant information

Campaigners from Road Sense, (1) the community campaign against the proposed Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR), (2) today (Thursday 17 April 2008) responded to the Scottish Government's announcement of the Public Local Inquiry (PLI) into the proposed new road (3).

In a press release released today (3), the Scottish Government announced that a pre-inquiry meeting for the AWPR PLI will be held in Aberdeen on Tuesday 13 May 2008, and that the actual PLI will be scheduled to begin in August 2008.

William Walton, Chair of Road Sense, said: *"Road Sense welcomes the announcement of the pre-inquiry meeting and PLI into the AWPR, and we look forward to having the opportunity to make our case. We have strong and compelling, factual arguments against the new road as it is currently proposed, despite being denied access to all of the information that should be available to us."*

"We are also looking forward to the opportunity to expose the many flaws and half truths in the arguments put forward by Transport Scotland over the past years in promoting the AWPR project, and to being able to present our own proposed measures for alternative, sustainable transport improvements in and around Aberdeen."

The Road Sense campaigners are complaining that they are still experiencing difficulties in obtaining relevant information, despite personal commitments from both the First Minister, Alex Salmond, and the Transport Minister, Stewart Stevenson, that they would receive this information prior to the PLI.

The campaigners state that the PLI should not go ahead until all of the relevant information has been made available, including a comprehensive, complete and up-to-date re-costing of the AWPR project as it is currently proposed.

Scottish Government Ministers continue to promote the AWPR project using a projected cost of £295-£395 million, which was first presented in 2005. The Road Sense campaigners claim that the cost has undoubtedly risen in the meantime, as the scope of the project has changed, as it has grown considerably, and as it has fallen behind schedule.

Mr Walton added: *"We believe that the PLI shouldn't be allowed to begin until a comprehensive, complete and up-to-date re-costing of the AWPR project as currently proposed has been undertaken and made public. The project has changed and grown so much since 2005, that the projected cost being used by Ministers to justify it, cannot be correct, and therefore the cost/benefit ratio being used to justify the project is wrong. We believe the project as it now stands will not work, and represents poor value for money."*

The Road Sense campaigners have been preparing for the PLI for several months now, and have their expert witnesses in place. These include one of the UK's leading transport consultancies, one of the UK's leading experts on sustainable transport, and a leading landscape architect.

Mr Walton continued: *"Our expert witnesses are in place and we have secured the support of some of Scotland's leading environmental charities and pressure groups. We firmly believe that we can win at the PLI."*

Mr Walton added: *"We have an assurance from First Minister, Alex Salmond, that any final decision on the AWPR will be based on the findings of the PLI, so we are confident that this over-priced, badly-thought-out, environmentally-damaging monster road will not be allowed to go ahead."*

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Editors Notes:

1. Road Sense

Road Sense was formed in January 2006 and is a group that includes residents from across the Aberdeen area who are objecting to the proposed AWPR. See: www.road-sense.org

2. Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR)

More information on the AWPR can be found at: www.awpr.org

3. Scottish Government Announcement (Press Release)

Ministers have appointed Reporters David Gordon and Scott Ferrie to conduct the public local inquiry on the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route. A pre-inquiry meeting will be held at 1pm on Tuesday, May 13 in the Gordon Suite at the Aberdeen Exhibition and Conference Centre, Bridge of Don, Aberdeen. The pre-inquiry meeting is solely to discuss the administrative arrangements for the inquiry. No discussion will take place concerning the relative merits of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route. With Ministers having accepted the need in principle for the road, the inquiry will focus on the technical and environmental aspects around the choice of route. The Reporters will consider all evidence prior to making recommendations to Ministers for their consideration. If Ministers decide to proceed with the scheme, it will go before parliament for final approval. It is likely that the inquiry will start in August 2008. An exact timescale will only be available after the pre-inquiry meeting. Letters are today being sent to objectors and other interested parties to inform them of their options should they wish to make further representations, including appearing at the inquiry, and the arrangements for the pre-inquiry meeting. The pre-inquiry meeting is also being advertised in the area.

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