

## PRESS RELEASE

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### **ABERDEEN BYPASS CAMPAIGNERS REACT TO DEMONSTRATION ON ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL FUNDING CUTS AND CLOSURE OF PUBLIC FACILITIES**

***Campaigners warn that, if AWPR is built as planned, the massive cost to Aberdeen Council will lead to more cuts in funding and the closure of more public facilities.***

Campaigners from Road Sense, (1) the community campaign against the proposed Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR), (2) reacted to today's (Saturday 05 April 2007) public demonstration against Council cuts and the closure of public facilities in Aberdeen.

The campaigners offered their support and sympathy for today's demonstrators, but warned that, if the AWPR is built as planned, the massive cost to Aberdeen City Council will lead to even more cuts in Council funding and the closure of more public facilities in Aberdeen in the future.

William Walton, Chair of Road Sense, said: *"The demonstrators have our support and our sympathy. Unfortunately, we cannot offer them any hope that Aberdeen City Council will find the extra cash it claims it would need to stem the proposed cuts and closures. The Council is committed to paying tens of millions of pounds towards the cost of the AWPR project in the coming years. This extra cost to Aberdeen City will undoubtedly lead to even more cuts in funding and the closure of more public services in the future."*

Under the current proposal for funding the AWPR, Aberdeen City Council is committed to pay 7.25 percent of the total cost of the project. Even at the projected total cost used by Ministers of £295 – £395 million, this would mean that Aberdeen City Council would be required to find £21 million – £29 million to pay for its share of the cost.

However, the Road Sense campaigners strongly question the projected cost for the AWPR project used by Ministers, claiming that the cost of the project has undoubtedly risen since that cost projection was made in 2005, especially, as the scope of the project has grown considerably, and as it has fallen behind schedule. Therefore, the cost to Aberdeen City taxpayers may be much more.

William Walton, Chair of Road Sense, added: *"We are convinced that the total and final cost of the AWPR project as proposed will be a great deal more than Ministers are currently stating, and we have yet to see an up-to-date costing for the project. This hike in the total project cost will mean that the cost to Aberdeen City Council will rise as well. This uncapped and over-the-top spending is simply unacceptable at a time when services are being cut and public facilities are being closed due to lack of cash, but is particularly so as the AWPR as planned will not relieve traffic congestion in Aberdeen city centre, or on the radial routes to and from the city. The new road will be a waste of Aberdeen City taxpayers money, which could be used better elsewhere."*

The Road Sense campaigners recently received documents from Transport Scotland using the Freedom of Information legislation. These documents showed that the AWPR as planned will not relieve traffic congestion in Aberdeen city centre, or on the radial routes to and from the city.

William Walton, Chair of Road Sense, continued: *"The taxpayers of Aberdeen City will pay tens of millions of pounds towards the AWPR project even though they will not enjoy much of the so-called, falsely stated benefit from it. This fact was known to Aberdeen City Council Leader, Kate Dean, when she and other Councillors committed the taxpayers of Aberdeen to this extra expenditure. At a time when Kate Dean is presiding over swingeing cuts in funding for public projects and facilities, it begs the question, why did she and her colleagues commit the Council to this uncapped and over-the-top spending?"*

The 7.25 percent of the total cost of the AWPR project that Aberdeen City Council is committed to pay has recently been reduced from 9.5 percent. Likewise, Aberdeenshire Council's share of the total cost of the AWPR project has recently been reduced from 9.5 percent to 7.25 percent.

William Walton, Chair of Road Sense, continued: *"This reduction is a clear indication to us of the escalating costs of the AWPR project, and the precariousness of the Aberdeen City finances. It is clear from its decision to cut its contribution to the total construction costs of the AWPR project from 9.5 percent to 7.25 percent that Aberdeen City Council realises that the cost of the AWPR is going to continue to spiral out of control."*

**ENDS**

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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](http://www.road-sense.org)

## **2. Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR)**

More information on the AWPR can be found at: [www.awpr.org](http://www.awpr.org)