

PRESS RELEASE

SCDI Comments on Scottish Government Transport Announcements for Highlands & Islands

10 December 2008

The Scottish Council for Development and Industry (SCDI) has welcomed the Scottish Government's announcement of transport investment in the Highlands and Islands over the next 20 years, especially in dualling the A9 and called for projects to be delivered as soon as possible.

Gareth Williams, SCDI Highlands and Islands Manager, said:

"The Highlands and Islands economy has long suffered from underinvestment in our transport infrastructure. Overall, the Scottish Government has recognised this and we welcome the commitments which it has made and the priority which it has given to economic growth. In particular, the A9 is one of Scotland's key strategic routes and the fulfilment of the pledge to dual it between Inverness and Perth will greatly boost Highland businesses and help to attract major investment to the region. We are also very pleased by the major upgrades to the A96 corridor and Nairn bypass which will unlock nationally significant development potential in this area.

"We are, however, very disappointed that there is not more investment in the A96 and other roads in Moray, concerned that the Inverness Trunk Link Road is not going ahead and we would like to have seen bigger improvements to the A82 and A9 north of Inverness. The plans for public rail are also short of ambition for a 20-year programme. There is a lack of clarity about the Inverness-Aberdeen proposals and the plans for the Highland Line do not go beyond those already announced.

"A timetable for delivery is critical. We need the Scottish Government to set out a clear plan for when all these projects will be constructed. While this announcement focuses on strategic routes, there are also many smaller scale upgrades which are important for the Highlands and Islands' economy and will build on these improvements. We hope that these will also be delivered."

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