



03 March 2026

Ali Angus

Transport Planner, Jacobs

By email: [AWPR\\_evaluation@jacobs.com](mailto:AWPR_evaluation@jacobs.com)

Dear Sirs,

### **The AWPR: impacts on Active Travel**

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this review of the impacts of the Aberdeen Western Peripheral Route (AWPR) on active travel. We believe this is important because lessons should be learned which may then be applied in any other road construction schemes – the A96 dualling for example. The review is equally important because AWPR mitigation in and around Aberdeen is as yet incomplete, despite seven years having passed since the road opened.

### **About us**

ACF is an established cycle campaign and advocacy group formed in 2003. Although we cannot claim to represent all Aberdeen cyclists, we have in excess of 350 members. Our aims, as set out in our constitution, are noted at the foot of this page.<sup>1</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> A) To encourage cycling and to promote the benefits of cycling to the individual and the wider community B) To advocate for a safer cycling environment and improved cycle facilities in Aberdeen. C) To campaign for cycling to be an integral part of planning and transport strategies and practice, in order to provide the widest possible access to cycling as a healthy and efficient means of travel for work and leisure.

## Introduction

During the planning and design of the AWPR, ACF argued repeatedly for a parallel cycle track. We still believe this would have been the correct approach and transport policy as it is now (2026) would support that. The error of not having provided a parallel route for cyclists has locked in the disbenefits for many years to come and active travel in and around Aberdeen will suffer as a result.

When considering what effects the AWPR has had, it is of course difficult to isolate effects from other changes over the same period. Notably, the oil and gas economy of Aberdeen has declined and fewer people now work in that sector. Secondly, the 2020 pandemic and subsequent changes to working practices should have reduced traffic because many people now work at home for at least part of their working week. However, we are also aware of the recognised effect of induced demand whereby, over time, traffic volumes expand to fill up new road capacity. This was acknowledged at the time the AWPR was being developed, and various promises were made to “lock in the benefits” to prevent traffic expansion.

([https://www.nestrans.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/LITB\\_AWPR\\_300508.pdf](https://www.nestrans.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/LITB_AWPR_300508.pdf) ) We are not convinced that many of these promises have yet been delivered on.

## Direct effects

In terms of cycling between the city and Shire the AWPR severed four pre-existing core cycle routes. Although mitigations have been built, the impact on cyclist convenience, safety and journey times varies significantly:

1. National Cycle Route 1 North. The Formartine and Buchan Way (former railway line/off-road cycle path) underpasses the AWPR. The surface is wider and smoother than it was before the AWPR. So if anything the AWPR mitigations here have slightly improved journey times and safety. However, more could have been done to provide access on and off the F&B Way, such as adjacent to Parkhill roundabout (B977, a service track from Little Goval cottages runs north of SUDS ponds but does not connect to the F&B Way).
2. Westhill-Kingswells. To the north of the A944, the shared use walking/cycling path underpasses the AWPR and on-demand traffic signals allow people on foot/bikes to cross the four side and slip roads. Some aspects of the initial construction had to be remedied within the first few years after opening because of poor design. The journey for cyclists remains slower and less convenient than it was prior to the AWPR. Other sections of this route (such as adjacent to Prime 4 business park) remain sub-standard and unsafe, and should have been a priority for post-scheme mitigation. On the south side of the A944, cyclists – or pedestrians - approaching the A944-AWPR intersection roundabout from the local access road to the south (connecting to Kingshill Wood and

thereafter to Counteswells / Blacktop) are left stranded on the wrong side of the dual carriageway with no safe or controlled crossing point.

3. Deeside Way (NCN 195). The shared use walking/cycle path overpasses the AWPR on Station Road in a diversion from its original route. The new route is marginally longer and so slightly less convenient. Signage on the approaches to the bridge is poor (a cyclist may be confused as to whether they are supposed to be on the carriageway or whether the pavement is shared use). The crossing point over the B979 is poorly thought out and we believe a signal-controlled crossing point would be justified, or at the minimum a central refuge. The mitigation at the junction to the north, connecting to Culter House Road, although a significant de-tour, is adequate and likely to be of use to local dog walkers for example. We suspect it is little used by cyclists.
4. National Cycle Route 1 South of the City.
  - a. First and second crossings (on the A956 spur). NCN1 is on a relatively quiet rural road where it overpasses the AWPR: with the mitigations in place, there are no changes in journey time or safety. However our perception is that these 'local roads' are only slightly less busy than previously and there has been no real improvement or benefit in terms of their attractiveness for cycling.
  - b. Third and fourth crossings (on the A90 near Cookney). NCN1 is on a quiet rural road where it overpasses the AWPR: with the mitigations in place, there are no changes in journey time or safety.
  - c. Fifth crossing ([on the A90](#)). NCN1 is on a quiet rural road where it passes under the AWPR: with the mitigations in place, there are no changes in journey time or safety.
  - d. Sixth crossing (Megray Junction) - there is very poor cycling provision at this high-speed and high volume roundabout: it presents a significant safety issue and is a disincentive to active travel. Southbound, the short section of shared-use path adjacent to the B979 which bypasses the roundabout only goes as far as the junction beyond the A92 underpass, where there is a pedestrian (only) crossing of the slip road, where cyclists are forced to dismount, and are then stranded on the wrong side of the carriageway with no safe way to rejoin. This layout is extremely poor and seems to show a total failure to consider, or to understand, the needs of cyclists. North-bound, the short SUP does not even go as far as the entrance to the Ury Estate housing development, the last 50 metres or so having only a narrow footway and a 'cyclists dismount' sign.

## Indirect effects

Our overall impression is that AWPR *has* provided some congestion relief on main thoroughfares (e.g Anderson Drive, Market St, Wellington Road, King St and Great Northern Road), and *has* reduced the HGV traffic on roads linking George IV bridge back to Anderson Drive (e.g. Riverside Drive/Riverside Terrace, Great Southern Rd and Broomhill Rd). However, without re-allocation of road space and prioritisation of junctions for active & sustainable travel modes along the *full length* of those routes, they remain deeply unappealing routes for people on bikes. Roundabouts on these major routes are major barriers to active travel - such as for cyclists crossing east-west at the Anderson Drive junctions with Cromwell Road, Queens Road, King's Gate, Cairncry Road, Rosehill Drive. Lower levels of traffic should allow all of these to be amended to signal controlled junctions which would be far more user friendly and safer for cyclists and pedestrians. Ironically the major intersection at Westburn Road which *is* signal controlled has no integral pedestrian crossing. Similarly roundabouts on Wellington Road (both ends of Queen Elizabeth Bridge) and Great Southern Road (King George VI bridge) have negligible / very poor and disconnected pedestrian and cycle crossing facilities. Another example is at Mugiemooss Road / A92 intersection (also an NCN 1 crossing point).

King St is another example of a main route, heavily used by cyclists, at least in part because it is the direct and obvious connection from the city centre to the University campus. Levels of HGV traffic on this route remain very high and it is not clear that there has been any real benefit (to active travel) from the AWPR.

On the periphery of the city, so-called local roads such as the B979, B999 and B997 probably have lower volumes of traffic than prior to the AWPR construction. The same would apply to roads such as Kepplehills Drive and Whitestripes Road. However, many cyclists would still find these intimidating or unsafe places to ride, particularly at peak times. In some cases, reduced volume of traffic results in higher vehicle speeds, and less congestion on some of these roads increases their attraction as 'rat runs'. There is an obvious opportunity for many of these examples (and other similar routes) to be formally designated as 'walking & cycling friendly' with speed limits reduced to 30 or 40 mph and/or traffic management measures to deter rat-running.

In some places, our strong impression is that local or minor roads are being used as rat-runs to avoid congestion around AWPR junctions. This is particularly noticeable at the A944 interchange where significant congestion of east-west traffic, and/or traffic using the AWPR slip-roads occurs at peak times. As a result, increasing amounts of traffic are using connections via Counteswells (Blacktop and Easter Ord roads, between Westhill and the city) as well as Kirk Brae to Cults. This is only exacerbated by the new housing development and the failure to follow through on the planned closure of Counteswells Rd as a through route during later stages of

that development. Westhill Road, past Cairdhilllock Farm, has also now developed into a busier rat run, we would again say because traffic is avoiding congestion at the A944/B9119 junction or at the A944 / Straick Road roundabout. It is most bizarre that the speed limit on the A944 between Maidencraig and Westhill is now 40mph (a dual carriageway with a design speed of 60 mph?) and yet on these minor / unclassified rural roads (where for the most part there is no footway), the speed limit is mostly still 60mph. Clearly this does not improve their appeal as places to walk or cycle, or for equestrian use.

These locations we have cited should be seen as examples only, and we expect that similar effects occur at other points around the route. We do not have the resources or capacity to report comprehensively on each section.

### **Proposed mitigation schemes**

We are aware that funding was provided for construction of active travel routes between Murcar and Blackdog, and also at Craibstone. At the time of writing, almost exactly seven years after the AWPR opened, no construction work has begun on either of these projects. We find this shocking but broadly indicative of the attitude towards cycling as a second or third-class mode of transport.

### **Summary & conclusion**

Overall, we sense the northeast lost a unique window of opportunity to improve active travel in parallel with delivering the AWPR. Seven years after the road opened, mitigation measures remain incomplete and drivers have become accustomed to "the new normal." This almost certainly means we now face stiffer public resistance to re-designing routes, or re-allocation of road space in favour of sustainable transport than would have been the case in 2019.

I hope you find these comments useful. We look forward to reading the completed report in due course.

Yours faithfully,

**Gavin Clark**

**Chair, Aberdeen Cycle Forum**

