

A98 Fochabers to Aberdeenshire boundary

Review of Reported Injury Accidents 2013 to 2022

Concerns have been raised with regard to the number of accidents occurring on the A98 in recent years and a commitment was made to undertake a review of the accidents to establish if there were any trends or patterns which would inform any requirement for mitigation measures.

The A98 is a strategic route starting at the A96 in Fochabers, passing through an area of forestry commission land (Whiteash Hill Wood) and along the coastal plain to Cullen and the Moray boundary beyond. The road is a strategic route which carries both local and longer distance traffic, including commercial vehicles accessing harbours, distilleries and agriculture.

Traffic Flows and Vehicle Speeds

There are two permanent traffic counters sited on the A98; one in Arradoul and the other just to the east of B9018 junction between Cullen and the Moray boundary. These counters provide information on traffic volumes, the types of vehicles on the road and vehicle speeds. The following table summarises observed traffic counts and speed data from these two sites.

A98 Permanent Count Sites	AADT* (vehicles)		Average Speed (mph)	85th Percentile Speed (mph)
Arradoul (50mph)	9061	EB	46.9	52.6
		WB	48.5	54.7
East of B9018	4368	EB	51.1	59.1
		WB	51.4	59.3

* Annual Average Daily Traffic 2022

EB = Eastbound

WB - Westbound

Speed Limits

Speed limits on the public road network are informed by the roadside environment and the level of 'activity' adjacent to the public road. The A98 is a former Trunk Road which has been the subject of improvements over the years

to improve its alignment. The road is generally 7 metres wide with ample roadside verges. However on certain sections of the road there are frequent side road junctions (mainly private roads/tracks) and properties with direct accesses onto the road.

In 2009/2010 officers undertook speed limit reviews for all 'A' and 'B' Class Roads in Moray using the Scottish Government assessment criteria set out in their documents 'Setting Local Speed Limits' as described in the report to this committee on 13 October 2009 (Para 9 of the minutes refer).

The assessment included consideration of the speed limit in the rural settlement of Arradoul and found that when assessed against the criteria, the national speed limit could be considered. However as average (mean) speeds were between 41mph and 50mph, the existing 50mph speed limit, which has been in place since June 2001, was retained.

Reported Injury Accidents

Accidents are rare, random, multi-factor events always preceded by a situation in which one or more road users have failed to cope with their environment. When compared to Scotland as a whole, accident rates on all roads in Moray are low (see draft Road Safety Plan to 2030 Table on page 22).

When the numbers of reported injury accidents are low, the lack of statistical evidence means that it is difficult, if not impossible, to draw meaningful conclusions. Nevertheless, the draft Road Safety Plan highlights that 73% of drivers involved in reported injury accidents on the A98 reside in Moray, which indicates that drivers involved in accidents are likely to be familiar with the road.

Over the ten year period 2013 to 2022 there have been 33 injury accidents reported on the A98, resulting in 63 people being injured. Over the early years of this period a further 23 damage only accidents have been recorded. Damage only accidents are no longer recorded by the police and therefore the information is only useful to augment the injury accidents.

Recorded accidents on A98 Fochabers to Aberdeenshire 2013-2022

	Fatal	Serious	Slight	Damage Only	Grand Total	
2013			3	3	16	22
2014			3	2	3	8
2015			1	4	2	7
2016	1	1	1	1	1	4
2017			1	1	1	3
2018	1					1
2019	1	3	2			6
2020		1				1
2021				1		1
2022	1	1	1			3
Grand Total	4	14	15	23		56

Recorded casualties on A98 Fochabers to Aberdeenshire 2013-2022

	Fatal	Serious	Slight	Grand Total
2013		5	6	11
2014		3	4	7
2015		1	4	5
2016	1	3	1	5
2017		1	3	4
2018	1			1
2019	1	9	10	20
2020		2	4	6
2021			1	1
2022	1	1	1	3
Grand Total	4	25	34	63

Of the 4 accidents involving someone being killed one was a single vehicle, one involved multiple vehicles and a motorcycle. None were at a public road junction.

Of the remaining 29 injury accidents, 14 involved serious injury. This is where one party received wounds involving a broken major bone or overnight stay as a minimum.

Of the 33 injury accidents recorded in total:

- 2 involved pedestrians (1 in Cullen and 1 near Cullen);
- 1 involved a cyclist;
- 21 were not near a junction;
- 10 happened in the woods between A96 Fochabers East roundabout and Mill of Tynet (including 3 of the 4 fatal accidents);
- 4 happened around Mill of Tynet;
- 7 between Mill of Tynet and Arradoul;
- 1 in Arradoul;
- 9 between Arradoul and Cullen;
- 2 in Cullen;
- 25 happened during daylight hours; and
- 2 within street lit areas during darkness.

The diagram below shows the locations of accidents reported between 2013 and 2022:



Consideration of the above accidents shows no discernible pattern of accidents and no one location where there is a cluster of reported injury accidents.

There have been reports of concerns about 'near misses' at certain locations on the A98. These locations are generally where there are side roads (private) or individual accesses onto the A98. The presence of turning vehicles can increase the risk of an accident but there are measures that can be taken to reduce this risk including but not limited to, ensuring forward sightlines of stationary vehicles waiting to turning into a side road/access are available and ensuring that side roads and accesses have good visibility in both directions where they join the public road.

In order to minimise the numbers of new turning movements on the A98 into and out of private accesses and side roads, successive Local Development Plans have included a policy to only permit new accesses onto the A98 where there is a significant economic benefit or the access it to facilitate an allocated site within the plan (see Policy PP3 b) i).

Furthermore where proposed development would utilise an existing access, officers seek the provision of the required visibility splays and where this cannot be provided, object to the proposed development.

Where there is a history of reported injury accidents at a private access, the Roads Authority has the powers to seek the closure of such an access on road safety grounds. However there is a requirement to provide an alternative route if one does not already exist. This approach is generally the last resort, and only taken forward when all other options have been exhausted.

There have also been concerns raised regarding the speed of traffic on the A98 being a contributing factor to reported injury accidents and 'near misses'. It is recognised that there are sections of the road (generally the long straight sections of road where forward sightlines are good) where a number of vehicles have been observed driving at excessive speeds. There are therefore three Road Safety Camera sites in operation on the A98; one at Slackend, one near Broadley and one near Carnoch Farm with the aim of improving driver behaviour by targeting those travelling at excessive speeds. Further information on Road Safety Cameras can be found in the draft Road Safety Plan to 2030.

Finally, there have been concerns raised regarding a recent accident on the A98 in Arradoul. The Council has yet to receive the report from Police Scotland for this particular accident. Anecdotal evidence states that excessive vehicle speeds may have been a contributing factor. Council officers have passed the data collected from the permanent traffic count site in Arradoul to Police Scotland so they can use it to inform their accident reporting.