



Department  
for Transport

# Shaping the Future of England's Strategic Roads Consultation on Highways England's Initial Report

**Moving Britain Ahead**



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# Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Ministerial Foreword                              | 4  |
| Introduction                                      | 6  |
| Purpose of document                               | 6  |
| Scope of consultation                             | 6  |
| How to respond                                    | 8  |
| Freedom of Information                            | 8  |
| Consultation principles                           | 9  |
| 1. Background                                     | 10 |
| 1.1 Our goals for transport investment            | 10 |
| 1.2 The SRN in England                            | 11 |
| 1.3 Defining the Strategic Road Network           | 13 |
| 1.4 Roads reform and the role of Highways England | 13 |
| 2. The Road Investment Strategy                   | 15 |
| 2.1 The first Road Investment Strategy            | 15 |
| 2.2 RIS2  | 15 |
| 2.3 Key aims of RIS2                              | 16 |
| 2.4 The RIS2 process                              | 16 |
| 2.5 Progress so far                               | 16 |
| 3. Highways England's Initial Report              | 19 |
| 3.1 The Initial Report and associated documents   | 19 |
| 3.2 Summary of the Initial Report                 | 19 |
| 4. Users' views                                   | 22 |
| 5. Wider perspectives                             | 23 |
| 5.1 National Infrastructure Commission            | 23 |
| 5.2 Sub-national transport bodies                 | 23 |
| 5.3 External impacts of the SRN                   | 25 |
| 6. Analysis                                       | 26 |
| 7. What will happen next                          | 27 |
| 8. Full list of consultation questions            | 28 |

# Ministerial Foreword

The strategic road network (SRN) is a vital piece of our national infrastructure. Around 95% of all the people in England use it every year.

Most of England's SRN, the country's motorways and major A-roads, was planned in the 1930s and built from the 1950s. Over the following decades, traffic volumes on the SRN have grown hugely, so that today one-third of all traffic, and two-thirds of heavy goods vehicle traffic, travels via this network—even though it includes only 2% of all roads in England by length.



There is no doubt that the SRN is critical both to our prosperity and to the ability of people to lead their lives as they want. We need it to function effectively, integrated with local roads and other transport modes, for the good of drivers, businesses and the economy.

Over recent years investment in the SRN has not, however, increased to meet the growing demand. The result was that the performance of the network declined, and congestion, noise and air quality worsened in various busy parts of the network. This could not be allowed to continue. A modern country needs modern roads. In 2014, the Government decided on a massive programme of reform and new investment.

We created Highways England as a customer-focused steward of the SRN, with secure five-year funding periods and clear statements on what that funding should enable in the form of a Road Investment Strategy (RIS).

Rather than allowing investment to proceed in an ad hoc, piecemeal fashion, each RIS sets a clear strategic vision for the SRN, a specification of the performance that Highways England must deliver, an investment plan for new enhancements, and a statement on the funds available to achieve this.

Now we are preparing to take the next step. From 2020, the SRN will be funded from the National Roads Fund, resourced by the Vehicle Excise Duty paid by motorists in England. This brings additional certainty to the funding stream for Highways England and an even closer connection with the road users who pay for the services they provide.

This consultation will inform the development of the RIS for the first full period to be funded in this way. As a Department, we are determined that it should reflect the needs of road users and all those affected by the SRN, so I would urge you to take part.

It is a privilege to be Roads Minister at such a critical juncture in the history of the SRN. I look forward to receiving your input as we shape the future of England's strategic roads together.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Jesse Norman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jesse" and the last name "Norman" clearly distinguishable.

**Jesse Norman MP**

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Roads, Local Transport and Devolution

# Introduction

## Purpose of document

The Government will shortly take decisions about the Strategic Road Network (SRN) in the second Road Investment Strategy (RIS2), which covers the period 2020-2025. This document summarises evidence and proposals provided to us about the SRN and RIS2, and the analytical strategy we have adopted. It seeks your comments on:

- Highways England's proposals in its Strategic Road Network Initial Report (referred to here as the Initial Report);
- Our analytical approach and whether it is sufficiently robust; and
- Whether we have heard the full range of views that should be incorporated into the RIS2 programme, including about the shape of the SRN.

The principal focus of this document is the set of proposals made in Highways England's Initial Report, which outlines their view on the current state of the SRN, its potential future needs, and their proposed priorities for the next Road Period (RP2), covering the financial years 2020-21 to 2024-25.

The document also provides contextual information for the Initial Report. It notes connections to wider government objectives and reports published by other organisations concerned with the opportunities and impacts created by the SRN.

It asks a series of questions about the Initial Report and the Department's analytical approach for developing RIS2, both published alongside this consultation document. We recommend you read these documents before answering the questions.

Other reports have been published in support of the Initial Report. These give more information on Highways England's planning for the long term future of the SRN, and the analytical work supporting the development of RIS2. The consultation does not ask questions about these documents; they are provided in order to give more assurance on those matters to interested parties. It is not necessary to read them in order to answer the questions in this document.

The aim of this process is to ensure that investment reflects and meets the needs of road users and the wider public, whose responses to this consultation will form a significant part of our evidence base for making decisions on how best to maintain, operate and improve the SRN in RP2 and beyond.

## Scope of consultation

This consultation concerns the future of England's SRN, which comprises the country's motorways and major A-roads. It is managed by Highways England, the Government-owned company responsible for managing the network. A map of the SRN is provided on page 11.

All other roads in England, known as ‘local roads’, are managed by local highway authorities. Decisions about investment in these roads are generally made locally, outside the scope of the RIS and this consultation. However, a RIS may commit to investment in the local road network, or indeed other transport modes, where it is anticipated that doing so would have a positive impact on the operation of the SRN.

In July 2017, the Secretary of State announced his intention to form a ‘Major Road Network’ (MRN), which will encompass the most important local roads. The shape and funding of improvements to this network is subject to a separate consultation, due to begin in December 2017<sup>1</sup>.

Strategic roads in the other nations of the UK are managed by the appropriate devolved administration, and consequently are outside the scope of this consultation. Nevertheless, we welcome responses to this consultation from all parts of the UK, in particular where this can improve our understanding of how the English SRN connects and contributes to the effective operation of neighbouring networks and the success of the UK economy.

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<sup>1</sup> Available at: [www.gov.uk/dft#consultations](http://www.gov.uk/dft#consultations)

# How to respond

The consultation period began on 13 December 2017 and will run until **Wednesday 7 February 2018** inclusive. Please ensure that your response reaches us before the closing date. If you would like further copies of this consultation document, it can be found at [www.gov.uk/dft#consultations](http://www.gov.uk/dft#consultations) or you can contact us at [RISFuture.Consultation@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:RISFuture.Consultation@dft.gsi.gov.uk) if you need alternative formats (Braille, audio CD, etc.).

You are invited to respond to the consultation via the form on our website: [CLICK HERE TO RESPOND](#)

Alternatively, you may send your response by email to:  
[RISFuture.Consultation@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:RISFuture.Consultation@dft.gsi.gov.uk)

Or by post to: [SRN Initial Report Consultation](#), Department for Transport, 3/24 Great Minster House, 33 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 4DR

When responding, please state whether you are responding as an individual or representing the views of an organisation. If responding on behalf of a larger organisation, please make it clear who the organisation represents and, where applicable, how the views of members were assembled.

If you have questions about this consultation please contact us using the email or postal address given above. Further background information on RIS2 can be found at: [www.gov.uk/government/collections/road-investment-strategy-post-2020](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/road-investment-strategy-post-2020)

## Freedom of Information

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) or the Environmental Information Regulations 2004.

If you want information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence.

In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information, we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Department.

The Department will process your personal data in accordance with the Data Protection Act (DPA) and in the majority of circumstances this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

## Consultation principles

The consultation is being conducted in line with the Government's key consultation principles which are listed below. Further information is available at [www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/consultation-principles-guidance)

If you have any comments about the consultation process please contact:

Consultation Co-ordinator, Department for Transport, 1/29 Great Minster House, 33 Horseferry Road, London SW1P 4DR  
Or email: [consultation@dft.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:consultation@dft.gsi.gov.uk)

# 1. Background

## 1.1 Our goals for transport investment

In July 2017, the Department published its *Transport Investment Strategy*<sup>2</sup>, setting out our vision for high-performing infrastructure that can enable the delivery of cross-Government objectives, in particular its Industrial Strategy<sup>3</sup> and housing ambitions, proposed in *Fixing our broken housing market*<sup>4</sup>. The Transport Investment Strategy sets out four goals for our infrastructure investment:

- Create a more reliable, less congested, and better connected transport network that works for the users who rely on it;
- Build a stronger, more balanced economy by enhancing productivity and responding to local growth priorities;
- Enhance our global competitiveness by making Britain a more attractive place to trade, invest and visit; and,
- Support the creation of new housing.

The Strategy also sets out four actions to help realise these goals:

- Ensure our investment consistently meets the needs of users and helps to create a balanced economy;
- Focus on getting the best value out of the network and our investment;
- Retain a resolute focus on delivery; and,
- Remain adaptable in the face of change.

RIS2 will be vital to meeting the ambition of the Transport Investment Strategy as the SRN provides a crucial means of connecting people and goods to other modes of transport, including aviation, maritime and rail. Better integration between different modes of transport means smoother journeys, improved trade routes and enhanced connectivity between people, businesses and places.

The Industrial Strategy sets out how we are building a Britain fit for the future – how we will help businesses create better, higher-paying jobs in every part of the United Kingdom with investment in the skills, industries and infrastructure of the future. An efficient, well-connected SRN will be vital in facilitating these aims, enabling UK businesses to import and export goods more smoothly, and unlocking jobs and new business opportunities by connecting more people to more places. There is also a strong skills agenda, which RIS2 investment can support.

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<sup>2</sup> At: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-investment-strategy](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-investment-strategy)

<sup>3</sup> At: [www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/the-uks-industrial-strategy](http://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/the-uks-industrial-strategy)

<sup>4</sup> At: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/fixing-our-broken-housing-market](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fixing-our-broken-housing-market)

Enhancing connectivity across the country can also help Government tackle the issues outlined in its *Fixing our broken housing market* paper. It is clear that more homes need to be built to meet the high demand for housing, and by better connecting villages to towns and towns to cities, we can encourage investment in new houses and help create places where people want to live.

We also recognise that the SRN can have a significant impact on the environment through which it runs. This impact can be detrimental to biodiversity, air and water quality; and also to people living, working or enjoying recreation nearby. These are all things that matter to us and we will ensure that our activity is aligned with the strategies and activities of other government bodies active in these fields, wherever possible incorporating natural processes in the response to them (e.g. using trees as barriers to noise and absorbers of carbon).

For example, the Department in partnership with Defra has published a plan for tackling roadside nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) concentrations<sup>5</sup>. The plan will ensure that the UK meets the legal limits for NO<sub>2</sub> in the shortest possible time, including road links on the SRN. It sets out £3bn of investment to support better air quality and cleaner transport, and reiterates our commitment that we will end the sale of new conventional petrol and diesel cars and vans, with almost all such vehicles on the road being zero-emission by 2050. It is important that the SRN is ready to respond to this challenge.

In addition, the Government's Litter Strategy<sup>6</sup> recognises the negative impacts of litter and graffiti and describes Highways England's commitment to tackle these problems on the SRN. Among actions on our part, we stated our intention to consider developing a revised litter cleaning key performance indicator for RIS2.

## 1.2 The SRN in England

The SRN comprises England's nationally significant motorways and A-roads which connect the major centres of population (including links to Scotland and Wales) and traffic generators (such as ports, airports, rail and logistics hubs, which are the big sources of HGV traffic).

The network is managed by Highways England on behalf of the Government and, despite encompassing only 2% of the combined length of all of England's roads, it carries a third of all traffic, and over two thirds of all lorry traffic. From the start of RP2, the SRN will be funded from the National Roads Fund (NRF), financed directly from Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) raised in England. The NRF will ensure:

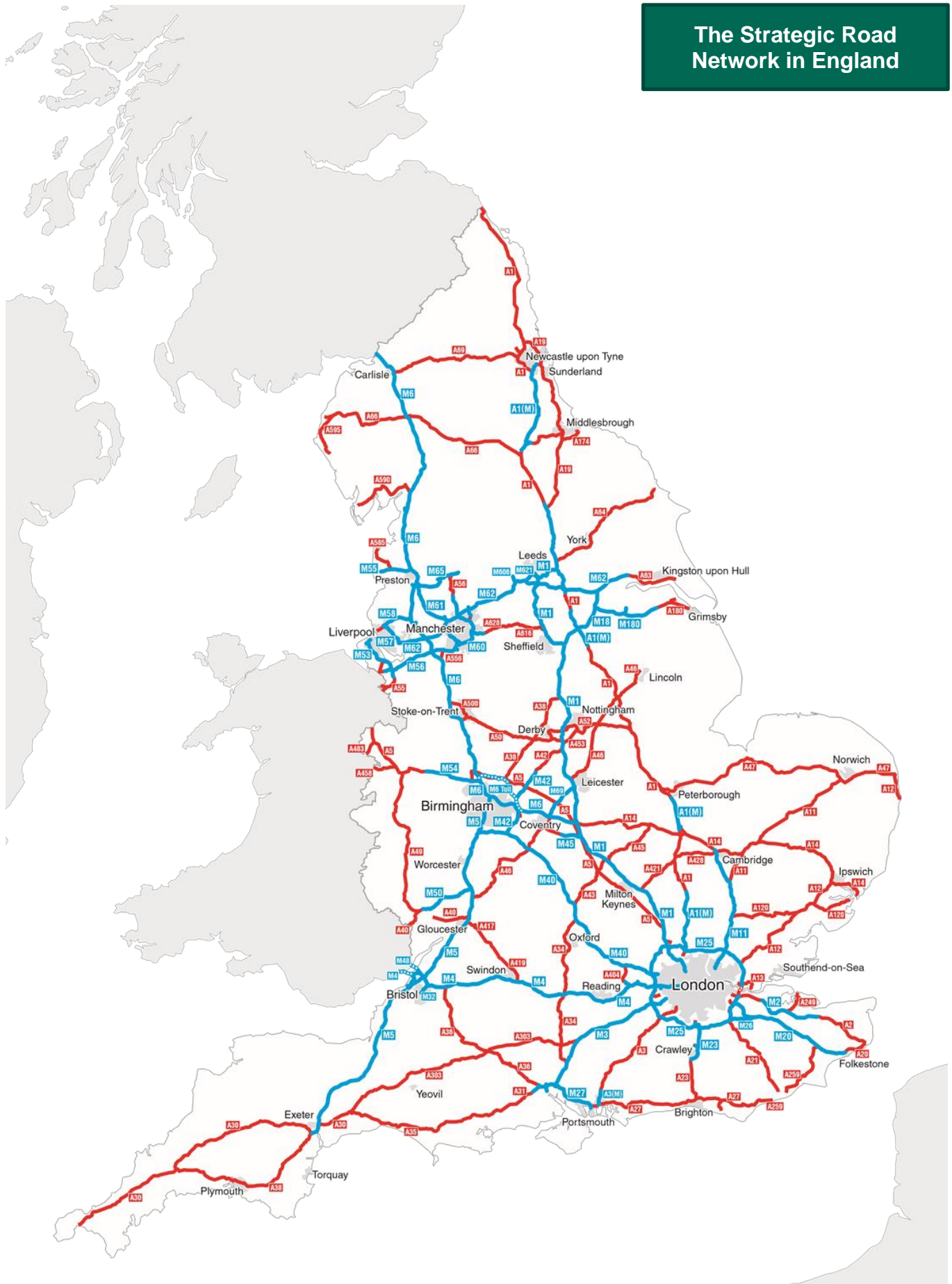
- Stable long-term funding for major roads, creating a lasting answer to decades of underinvestment;
- The supply chain can invest for the long-term, confident of a stable supply of future work, creating jobs and bringing down the cost of infrastructure; and,
- Road users know that their VED will be spent directly on improving roads.

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<sup>5</sup> At: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/air-quality-plan-for-nitrogen-dioxide-no2-in-uk-2017](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/air-quality-plan-for-nitrogen-dioxide-no2-in-uk-2017)

<sup>6</sup> At: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/litter-strategy-for-england](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/litter-strategy-for-england)

## The Strategic Road Network in England



## 1.3 Defining the Strategic Road Network

In the late 1990s, the Department set about a substantial programme of transferring roads from the SRN to local highway authorities (a process known as detrunking), with the aim of giving local communities greater control over roads in their area. The new SRN that emerged was set out with the intention that it would:

- Link the main centres of population;
- Facilitate access to major ports, airports and rail terminals;
- Enable access to peripheral regions; and
- Provide key cross-border routes to Scotland and Wales.

These criteria were qualitative, rather than quantitative. A purely numbers-based approach would have biased the system towards heavily-used urban roads, and would have made connections to less densely-populated areas appear redundant. Transfers also required the consent of the relevant local highway authority; in cases where this could not be secured the road remained part of the SRN. Since the end of the detrunking programme, there has been no further significant reassessment of the shape of the SRN.

As part of our ongoing efforts to modernise and improve England's road network, we recently announced our intention to use the NRF to enhance funding for the most important local roads, which would be identified as the MRN. Over the next few months we will consult on a proposed definition of the MRN, the objectives that will be used to prioritise investment decisions, and governance of the process (as mentioned on page 6).

Given the detailed thinking that will be underway on defining the shape of the MRN, we consider it makes sense to also think about the shape of the SRN at the same time so that the two networks are complementary and that ownership of roads properly reflects their purpose in the transport network. Since investment in both networks will be funded from the NRF, this can be a careful consideration of what makes most sense from the perspective of road users and an assessment of strategic need, rather than being driven by funding considerations.

Therefore, we are inviting suggestions about changing the extent of the SRN as part of this consultation. By doing so, we can ensure that any changes in the shape of the SRN that result can be factored into the RIS2 investment plan and performance specification. We propose to continue to use the four-point definition of the SRN set out above and any suggestions we receive will be judged against those criteria.

We are not making any proposals for the transfer of specific roads to or from the SRN at this stage. We will reflect on responses to this consultation, and those to the MRN consultation about the definition of that network, with a view to achieving a coherent approach for both networks. Any changes of ownership between Highways England and local highway authorities that would result from the definition of both networks would be subject to discussion between the relevant parties before they are finalised.

## 1.4 Roads reform and the role of Highways England

Established in 2015, Highways England is a government-owned company responsible for maintaining, operating and enhancing England's SRN (roads are

devolved in the rest of the UK). As a government-owned company, Highways England can operate flexibly and efficiently, helping it work efficiently. Government continues to set the budget for Highways England, and takes decisions on key areas of investment such as major road schemes.

This is just one element of the reforms made in connection with the Infrastructure Act 2015 which changed how the SRN is managed:

- Government sets a long-term road investment strategy (the RIS) and investment plans for a five year period, and which is protected against change.
- Office of Rail and Road (ORR) acts as a monitor to ensure the model is accountable to the public & road users.
- Transport Focus acts as the independent road user watchdog for the SRN, assimilating views of users across the country and promoting their interests.

Overall, the 2015 reforms expect to save £1.2bn by 2020 and at least £2.6bn by 2025. They also provide stability and long-term security for the SRN, allowing Highways England and the Department to plan coordinated packages of improvements that complement each other and minimise disruption. It allows us to tackle long-term strategic challenges such as:

- Population shifts;
- Climate change; and,
- Technological advances.

## 2. The Road Investment Strategy

### 2.1 The first Road Investment Strategy

In 2014, the Government launched the first ever Road Investment Strategy (RIS1), pledging over £15 billion of investment to help modernise our SRN during the first road period (2015 to 2020) and the first year of RP2.

Halfway through the RIS1 programme, significant progress has already been made by Highways England to improve safety and reliability on the SRN, so that drivers, cyclists, and other users have better journeys, while also tackling the negative impacts that the network can have on the environment and people living around it.

While Highways England delivers on the commitments set out in the first RIS, we also need to look ahead to shape the future of the network.

### 2.2 RIS2

The second RIS will set out: investment in the SRN during the second road period (2020-2025); the performance specification we will expect Highways England to adhere to during that period; and a strategic vision for the future of the SRN looking towards 2050.

RIS2 will cover investment in the operation, maintenance and renewal of the existing network as well as new enhancements. Through investment in current infrastructure and new construction where it is justified, we expect to improve safety, journey reliability, and the environmental and physical design impacts of the SRN.

It will also involve completing the schemes from the first RIS and progressing other schemes that have been announced already, such as the Lower Thames Crossing. These schemes are likely to require all the funding available for SRN enhancements in the first half of RP2, meaning that any new schemes agreed in RIS2 would be for construction later in RP2 and beyond.

Though RIS2 will be set by government, the Department is working in partnership with Highways England, ORR and Transport Focus to help develop it. Furthermore, we are committed to making this process open and transparent, and welcome input from all interested parties, in particular users of the network and others affected by its presence (for example, people who live nearby).

The boundaries of the SRN should not be a barrier to action. It is possible that investment may involve spending money off the SRN. For example, investment in a neighbouring local road or an alternative mode of travel may help the SRN to function better. We will take into account the outcome of the consultation currently underway on the MRN mentioned earlier when deciding RIS2.

We launched the process of developing RIS2 in March 2016 with a document that set out our key aims for RIS2 and the four phases of work for delivering it<sup>7</sup>.

## 2.3 Key aims of RIS2

Our five key aims, central to how we aspire to measure success in RP2, are:

- **Economy** – Providing investment that yields increased productivity and economic output.
- **Network Capability** – We need a network that can meet future demands on it and support growth for the long term.
- **Safety** – England has some of the safest roads in the world and the SRN is the safest part of all, per mile driven. However this is no cause for complacency and we remain committed to reducing deaths and injuries on our nation's roads.
- **Integration** – Very few journeys start or end on the SRN; almost all will use other transport networks. We will therefore seek new opportunities for linking the SRN with local roads, major roads and other modes of transport.
- **Environment** – It is vital that we continue to drive the transition to a decarbonised network that is environmentally and locally sensitive. We will continue to tackle the negative external impacts of the SRN, and aim for RIS2 to make a positive contribution to the environment and air quality.

## 2.4 The RIS2 process

The four phases for developing and delivering RIS2 are:

- **Research (2016-2018)** – gathering evidence about the performance of the SRN and future pressures on it. This consultation represents the final part of the research phase before we enter the decision phase, though analysis will continue throughout the remaining phases.
- **Decision (2018-2019)** – utilising the evidence gathered, determine an affordable, deliverable strategy that meets the five key aims.
- **Mobilisation (2019-2020)** – responding to the published RIS2, Highways England readies its teams and supply chain.
- **Delivery (2020-2025)** – implementation of RIS2 commitments for RP2.

This consultation marks the last stage of the Research Phase. RIS2 will be published at the end of the Decision Phase, and Highways England's Delivery Plan will be published toward the end of the Mobilisation Phase.

## 2.5 Progress so far

During the Research Phase, the Department, Highways England, ORR and Transport Focus have sought to build a substantial body of evidence that we can use to inform our decision-making for RIS2, involving a wide range of interested parties,

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<sup>7</sup> Road Investment Strategy post 2020: planning ahead at: [www.gov.uk/government/publications/road-investment-strategy-post-2020-planning-ahead](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/road-investment-strategy-post-2020-planning-ahead)

in particular road users, and testing what we've learned at regular intervals. Among the ways in which this engagement has been carried out are:

- **Highways England's online mapping tool:** This was an open opportunity for anyone to provide feedback on the performance of specific parts of the SRN, information which was used to develop the 18 route strategies (see below).
- **Transport Focus road user research:** Transport Focus has surveyed SRN users across the country on a variety of different topics as well as its general annual survey of road user satisfaction, the National Road Users' Satisfaction Survey (NRUSS).
- **Sub-National Transport Bodies' research and strategy development:** Local authorities in four parts of the country have agreed to form a sub-national transport body, each at varying stages in developing formal governance arrangements<sup>8</sup>. We intend to use the outputs of their research into the transport priorities for their areas in RIS2 and have engaged them in our work during the Research Phase.
- **Highways England Regional Events:** During July, Highways England hosted a series of seven events around the country which afforded attendees the opportunity to suggest issues to address in RIS2, all of which have been noted for consideration in our decision-making. A total of 343 people representing 262 organisations attended these events nationwide.

During this Phase, a number of documents have already been published outlining what has been learned through this evidence gathering and engagement activity:

- **Route Strategies**<sup>9</sup> – 18 reports by Highways England covering different sections of the SRN, each providing a high level overview of performance and constraints on the existing road network, as well as recommendations of areas for further study.
- **Strategic Studies**<sup>10</sup> – six strategic studies undertaken jointly by the Department and Highways England to address complex problems on the road network, and which are likely to require a long-term plan (potentially covering road and public transport options) in response.
- **The Road to Growth**<sup>11</sup> – Highways England's plan for optimising the economic impact of the SRN. It provides important economic context for the Government's future investment in roads.
- **Measuring performance of England's strategic roads: what users want**<sup>12</sup> – this joint research by ORR and Transport Focus provides advice on the kind of performance specification that users would like to see.

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<sup>8</sup> The four bodies, running broadly from north to south geographically, are: *Transport for the North*, *Midlands Connect*, *England's Economic Heartland*, and *Transport for the South East*.

<sup>9</sup> At: [www.gov.uk/guidance/future-investment-in-englands-motorways-and-major-roads#route-strategies-march-2017](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/future-investment-in-englands-motorways-and-major-roads#route-strategies-march-2017)

<sup>10</sup> At: [www.gov.uk/government/collections/road-investment-strategy-post-2020](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/road-investment-strategy-post-2020)

<sup>11</sup> At: [www.gov.uk/guidance/highways-england-supporting-growth](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/highways-england-supporting-growth)

<sup>12</sup> At: [www.transportfocus.org.uk/research-publications/publications/measuring-performance-englands-strategic-roads-users-want/](http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research-publications/publications/measuring-performance-englands-strategic-roads-users-want/)

- **Road users' priorities**<sup>13</sup> – a report from Transport Focus that establishes road users' chief concerns about the SRN and outlines their priorities for improvements in RIS2.

Highways England's Initial Report, which is the focus of this consultation and described in the next chapter, provides more detail about the above activities and draws on the publications that emerged. Those publications continue to form part of our overall evidence base which, together with the Initial Report and the responses to this consultation, we will use to inform our decision-making for RIS2.

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<sup>13</sup> At: [www.transportfocus.org.uk/research-publications/publications/road-users-priorities-for-the-road-investment-strategy-2020-25/](http://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research-publications/publications/road-users-priorities-for-the-road-investment-strategy-2020-25/)

## 3. Highways England's Initial Report

### 3.1 The Initial Report and associated documents

Highways England's Initial Report, published alongside this consultation document<sup>14</sup>, represents a key milestone in the process of devising RIS2. It provides Highways England's assessment of the current state of the network, users' needs, potential maintenance and enhancement priorities, and future developmental needs and prospects. This report, drawing on evidence from stakeholders across the country, is at the heart of the evidence base we will use to determine what RIS2 should cover, and that is why we want to know what interested parties think of what it says.

Alongside the Initial Report, Highways England has also published two associated documents. This consultation does not ask questions about those documents, but may provide helpful additional detail for those with particular interests in these areas:

- Connecting the country: planning for the long term
- Analytical methods used to inform RIS2

Alongside this consultation paper, the Department has published its proposed analytical strategy for RIS2<sup>15</sup>. We are consulting on that approach, which is introduced in summary in chapter 6.

### 3.2 Summary of the Initial Report

The Initial Report provides an informative statement of Highways England's priorities (safety, customer service and delivery) and the progress it has made to date. It also describes how the company has thought about future investment needs, listening to its customers, stakeholders and the Secretary of State for Transport as shareholder, as well as improving its understanding of the SRN infrastructure, performance and future challenges.

In section 4.4.3 of the Initial Report, Highways England proposes that investment in the network over the coming twenty years should work towards achieving consistency around four categories of road:

- Smart motorways (routes with the highest demand, evolving with technology)
- Motorways (in their current form)
- Expressways (the busiest A-roads, with better design, technology and on-road response and alternative routes for non-motorised users and slow vehicles)
- All-purpose trunk roads (other strategic A-roads)

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<sup>14</sup> At: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/highways-englands-strategic-road-network-initial-report>

<sup>15</sup> At: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/analysis-to-inform-ris2-dfcs-strategy>

Section 5.3.6 further proposes a phased implementation for creating expressways, which would ultimately end with their designation as motorways. Highways England suggests this will allow many benefits to be delivered sooner while working towards full achievement of the ambition for these routes.

**We would welcome your views on this proposal for four categories of road and the development of Expressways.**

Section 5 sets out Highways England's proposed investment priorities for RIS2, covering operational, infrastructure and enhancement priorities in successive sections (shown in brackets in the table below):

| Operational (5.1)                               | Infrastructure (5.2)                    | Enhancement (5.3)                                    |
|---|---|--|
| Customer service                                | Road surface                            | Completing RIS1 schemes                              |
| Better information                              | Structures                              | Strategic studies and other studies                  |
| Better roadworks                                | Drainage                                | RIS1 for RIS2 schemes                                |
| More reliable journeys                          | Geotechnical                            | Smart upgrades to the busiest motorways              |
| Seamless journeys                               | Vehicle restraint systems               | Developing expressways                               |
| Managing more smart motorways and expressways   | Lighting                                | New schemes  |
|   | Road signs and markings                 | Tackling local priorities                            |
| Preparing for connected and driverless vehicles | Tunnels                                 | Coordination with HS2 and Heathrow Airport expansion |
|   | Soft estate                             |  |
| Supporting electric vehicles                    | Traffic signals and roadside technology | A stable pipeline of improvements                    |

Within these sections, Highways England makes a number of important proposals. For example:

- Greater freedom of action for Highways England regarding messages that can be displayed on variable message signs.
- For road surfaces, make investment choices that favour lower whole life costs and invest in improved drainage to increase both road and flood resilience.
- Proceed with smart motorway upgrades as a continuous programme rather than individual schemes to minimise disruption to road users.

**We would welcome your views on these 27 proposed priority areas and the specific suggestions made within each.**

Last year, we provided an additional £220m for Highways England to increase capacity, reduce journey times and improve safety on the SRN. This fund is for

smaller schemes at existing junctions, roundabouts and slip roads, and is bringing benefits to communities, the economy and housing developments across the country. In Section 5.3.8, Highways England proposes that a similar fund, which can be delivered at regional level responding to local priorities, be included in RP2.

**We would welcome your views on the proposal for a local priorities fund.**

In Section 5.3.11, Highways England proposes a range of studies that could begin during RP2 to address in particular connectivity and resilience issues facing the SRN. The suggested themes cover free-flow connections at important junctions; the 'last mile' connections to key economic destinations; multi-modal integration hubs to help relieve congestion; strategic orbital routes for cities; and upgrades for specific routes including the A1, M60 south east quadrant and the M6 Manchester to Birmingham.

**We would welcome your views on these proposals for future studies.**

The current RIS provides five Designated Funds to help tackle specific issues affecting the SRN. In Section 5.4, Highways England proposes this approach should continue in RIS2 but that the scope of the five funds should be altered to cover:

- **Growth and Housing:** The current fund helps support schemes required to unlock growth, is working well and Highways England recommend that it continues in RIS2.
- **Wellbeing and Environment:** The report recommends having a more holistic environment fund that covers human wellbeing and the natural, built and historic environment, continuing a green retrofit for the existing network.
- **Connecting Communities:** To provide more, safer and better links for pedestrians, cyclists and equestrians, and also to help connect communities and encourage people to make sustainable travel choices.
- **Innovation:** Continuing the existing fund to support finding innovative ways of improving safety, customer service, operation, maintenance and construction of the SRN.
- **Roadside facilities:** Highways England supports a recommendation by Transport Focus for a roadside facilities fund in RIS2, and suggests this could be used in partnership with motorway service area operators.

Highways England also suggests a number of changes to the management of the funds, in particular adopting the model of the Growth and Housing Fund for other designated funds, spreading the use of joint working with interested groups to help determine allocation of funds.

**We would welcome your views on these proposals for Designated Funds.**

In Section 6.3, Highways England proposes changes to the way in which its performance is measured and targets set. It suggests that the RIS2 performance framework should be in two parts: one a set of data that Highways England must report that will be of interest to its customers and wider stakeholders; the other a set of performance measures and targets that Highways England can directly influence.

**We would welcome your views on these proposals for monitoring Highways England's performance.**

## 4. Users' views

From the start of RP2, the cost of the SRN will be borne fully by users paying VED, through the direction of receipts from the tax into the NRF. It is important, therefore, that users receive a service that they consider represents good value for the money they have paid. Research has shown that road users are realistic about the fact that roads will be busy at certain times and can plan around that, but they do believe management of the network can – and should – be better.

In its report on road users' priorities for RIS2 (referred to above in paragraph 2.5), Transport Focus identifies them as:

- **Enhanced safety** – further reductions in the number of accidents on the SRN, including those which do not result in death or serious injury.
- **Improving journey times** – reducing congestion and increasing predictability through better operation of the network and investment in new capacity.
- **Improved surface quality, signage and lighting** – a zero-tolerance approach to deficiencies in quality (road surface, signage, road-markings and lighting – aspects of the infrastructure that impact directly on user experience).
- **Better information** – providing the information road users, including the logistics industry, need to take informed decisions at times of disruption, whether planned or unplanned.
- **Improved roadside facilities** – addressing deficiencies, particularly in provision for lorry drivers and users of Highways England's 'A' roads.
- **Better integration with other roads** – addressing the downsides of split responsibility between Highways England and other highway authorities at junctions and ensuring diversion routes are up to scratch.
- **Meeting the needs of bus and coach operators and their passengers** – improving access to communities along and just off the SRN, as well as exploring options to enhance connections between longer-distance services.
- **Improved provision for cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians** – addressing the needs of those who travel along Highways England's 'A' roads as well as those needing to cross the SRN.
- **Future-proofing new investment** – making sure investment made in RIS 2 is ready to accommodate advances in vehicle and navigation technology, such as connected and autonomous vehicles (CAVs).

Complementary work undertaken by Transport Focus with ORR on how users want to see Highways England's performance measured (also covered in paragraph 2.5) highlights how journey times and factors influencing them are the key requirements for drivers, while safety is the priority for cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians.

## 5. Wider perspectives

### 5.1 National Infrastructure Commission

The National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) provides government with impartial, expert advice on major long-term infrastructure challenges. The NIC is preparing a National Infrastructure Assessment (NIA) which will analyse the UK's long-term economic infrastructure needs, outline a strategic vision over the next 30 years and set out recommendations for how identified needs should be met. As a first stage, the NIC is consulting on priorities for national infrastructure (until 12 January 2018).<sup>16</sup>

The interim NIA examines seven key areas, one of which is entitled 'A revolution in road transport', and proposes a vision and priorities for helping meet the country's needs up to 2050. It then proposes a series of questions about those proposals. A final RIA, produced in the light of responses to those questions, is due to be published in 2018.

In setting RIS2, we will take account of the NIC's findings and recommendations as set out in the NIA generally and through studies of specific infrastructure needs, for example the Oxford-Cambridge growth corridor.

### 5.2 Sub-national transport bodies

The four sub-national transport bodies (STB) are developing their understanding of transport priorities, including in relation to the SRN, that can help unlock economic growth and enhance quality of life in their respective areas. Each STB is at a different stage in this work, reflecting their different stage of maturity, and we can expect more detail to emerge from their research over the coming years.

Recognising the expertise and local knowledge that has gone into their work to date, we want to draw as much as possible on the resulting evidence as we decide RIS2. Some highlights of this work include:

- **Transport for the North**<sup>17</sup> – TfN plans to consult publicly on its Strategic Transport Plan during the period of this consultation. The Northern Powerhouse Independent Economic Review identified that by improving connectivity across the North the economy could grow by £100bn and create an additional 850,000 jobs above business as usual.

TfN's Initial Major Roads Report has already identified a Major Road Network for the North and seven Strategic Development Corridor priorities. Many of the interventions will cover the SRN and include opportunities for multi-modal

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<sup>16</sup> Consultation published at: [www.nic.org.uk/publications/congestion-capacity-carbon-priorities-for-national-infrastructure/](http://www.nic.org.uk/publications/congestion-capacity-carbon-priorities-for-national-infrastructure/)

<sup>17</sup> Reports published at: [www.transportforthenorth.com/reports/](http://www.transportforthenorth.com/reports/)

integration within the North as well as improving connectivity with Scotland, Wales and the Midlands Connect area.

- **Midlands Connect**<sup>18</sup> – The concept of Midlands Connect is that by working together the local authorities across the Midlands can set out a clear agenda to the Department and its delivery partners about transport priorities in its region. These priorities are set out in its Strategy, published in March 2017.

East–West connections are poor in the region, and Midlands Connect’s strategy addresses this as well as ensuring access to ports and airports. The strategy also realises the region’s position at the heart of the country and the importance of those national connections. Finally, Midlands Connect is keen to stay at the forefront of innovative technology, futureproofing its work to ensure the needs of not just today’s consumers are met but also those in the future.

By working with Highways England, Midlands Connect can ensure that the plans for the RIS2 process take into consideration these regional needs. Its evidence-led approach has enabled it to develop a programme, based on the growth of four main economic hubs and six growth corridors. This programme has been endorsed by all its partners and additional funding secured from the Department to develop our strategy into real world solutions.

Midlands Connect’s early work to determine the issues and potential solutions on the Midland Motorway Hub (formerly known as the Birmingham Box) will lead to a number of further pieces of work which will inform studies going forward into 2018. Solutions to this area are most likely to come from the surrounding roads rather than the M5/M6 and M42.

The first stage of this is a study on the A46 when, considering the route as a whole from Gloucestershire to the Lincolnshire Coast, Midlands Connect can look at the purpose of the route in its regional and national importance, as well as its role as a resilient alternative to other roads on the SRN.

- **England’s Economic Heartland**<sup>19</sup> – realising the economic potential of the Heartland has been identified by Government as a priority for the UK: three of the six current strategic studies, including the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway and A1 East of England, are central to this ambition. The MRN will be a key component of the Heartland Transport Strategy, work on which is being taken forward co-funded by local partners and the Department.

The transformational growth enabled by delivering a multi-modal solution (comprising East West Rail and the Expressway) makes the identification of the MRN all the more central to ensuring future investment in major roads is aligned with plans for economic and housing growth. The Strategic Road Investment Priorities statement outlines current detail on EEH priorities.

- **Transport for the South East** – as the newest STB, TfSE is still at the early stages of its thinking, but it has produced an early prioritisation of schemes for consideration in RIS2. These include responses to the development of the Lower Thames Crossing and our M25 South West Quadrant strategic study, as well as improving performance of the M23/A23, A27/M27, A21 and A3.

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<sup>18</sup> Reports published at: [www.midlandsconnect.uk/publications/](http://www.midlandsconnect.uk/publications/)

<sup>19</sup> Reports published at: [www.englandseconomicheartland.com/Pages/consultation-responses-and-reports.aspx](http://www.englandseconomicheartland.com/Pages/consultation-responses-and-reports.aspx)

## 5.3 External impacts of the SRN

A number of groups interested in the external impacts of the SRN have published a joint report, *Rising to the Challenge*<sup>20</sup>, which suggests a range of measures we could take to address these impacts as we work towards our goals of no net loss of biodiversity through Highways England's activities by 2020 and a net gain by 2040. In particular it recommends that RIS2 adopt the principles of:

- **Fix it first** – focusing on better maintaining the existing SRN, improving safety and retrofitting the network to achieve better environmental outcomes.
- **Integrated strategy** – decision-making should be integrated with thinking on public transport, local transport, rail freight and non-motorised users.
- **Environmental leadership** – ensuring strong environmental management systems and targets for Highways England, particularly on carbon reduction.

Drawing on these principles, their report promotes (amongst other things) opening up Highways England data, support for cleaner vehicles, improved road design, and actions to tackle air quality, water and noise pollution.

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<sup>20</sup> At: [www.bettertransport.org.uk/sites/default/files/research-files/Rising-to-the-Challenge-2017\\_0.pdf](http://www.bettertransport.org.uk/sites/default/files/research-files/Rising-to-the-Challenge-2017_0.pdf)

## 6. Analysis

Analysis is a complex and important part of how we both gather and utilise evidence as part of the development of RIS2. Alongside the Initial Report, Highways England has published a paper setting out its analytical platform, the assurance framework it is applying to the analysis and planned future developments.

The Department's analysts are working closely with colleagues in Highways England to ensure there is a sound, well-understood evidence base available for both organisations to draw on through the decision-making process. Alongside this consultation we have also published a strategic outline of the approach we are taking on analysis for RIS2.

Our aim is for relevant, robust and trusted analysis. That is to say that it must support decision making in all key RIS2 areas, provide sound information that can be relied upon when forming decisions, and that policy-makers, analysts and key stakeholders are prepared to believe the methods and results.

Our strategy describes analytical work we have done to date, for example scenario modelling to inform the strategic vision and the use of comprehensive outcome models to develop performance specification targets, and how we are using the work of Highways England, ORR and Transport Focus. It also explains how investment appraisal takes account of the interests of users, as identified by Transport Focus.

In addition, it sets out our intention to address a number of key issues that are core to ensuring we have a robust evidence base, including:

- **Induced traffic** – we are conscious that new and wider roads can generate additional demand for road transport and our aim is to ensure that our modelling takes full account of this effect so we have a sound understanding of the potential benefits of investment options.
- **Wider economy impacts** – the mechanisms by which road schemes impact on the wider economy are complex, which can make it hard to fully capture the benefits they bring; we aim to assess these impacts better for RIS2.
- **Air quality, greenhouse gases and noise** – addressing our environment key aim for RIS2 demands a good understanding of how the decisions we make can improve air quality, emissions, and noise pollution.
- **Landscape, townscape, heritage assets and biodiversity** – enabling a better understanding of how different investments impact on these matters and how to value them.

Our assurance system comprises several layers of checks to ensure the robustness of analysis, which includes the use of an expert panel of internationally recognised experts as well as the use of the Department's Joint Analytical Development Panel and the Chartered Institute of Highways Engineers to test our approach.

## 7. What will happen next

The public consultation represents the final part of the evidence-gathering Research Phase for RIS2. We will analyse all responses received by the deadline and, three months after the consultation has closed, publish a summary of them together with an indication on how we will take them into account in the development of RIS2. Subject to the responses we receive, we may choose to investigate specific issues raised by the consultation in more detail with interested parties.

We will use all the evidence gathered during the Research Phase and this consultation to inform decisions on the content of RIS2. This is a statutory process, involving the Department, Highways England and the ORR. We intend to announce the result of this process of decision-making in 2019, after which Highways England will engage with interested parties on mobilisation and implementation, prior to the start of RP2 on 1 April 2020.

## 8. Full list of consultation questions

In the light of the information presented in this consultation document, we would welcome your responses to the following questions about the Initial Report:

### Question 1

Do you think Highways England's proposals will deliver what users of the SRN want?  
If not, what could be done differently?

### Question 2

Do you think Highways England's proposals will deliver what businesses want?  
If not, what could be done differently?

### Question 3

Do you think Highways England's proposals meet the needs of people affected by the presence of the SRN?  
If not, what could be done differently?

### Question 4

Do you agree with Highways England's proposals for:

- Four categories of road and the development of Expressways (Initial Report sections 4.4.3 and 5.3.6)
- Operational priorities (Initial Report section 5.1)
- Infrastructure priorities (Initial Report section 5.2)
- Enhancement priorities (Initial Report section 5.3)
- A local priorities fund (Initial Report section 5.3.8)
- Future studies (Initial Report section 5.3.11)
- Designated funds (Initial Report section 5.4)
- Performance measures and targets (Initial Report section 6.3)

If you disagree with any of these, what could be done differently?

### Question 5

Are there any other proposals in the Initial Report that you do not agree with?  
If so, which ones and what could be done differently?

### Question 6

Do you agree with Highways England's assessment of the future needs of the SRN (Initial Report section 4.4)?

If not, how would you change the assessment?

### **Question 7**

How far does the Initial Report meet the Government's aims for RIS2 (economy, network capability, safety, integration and environment – described in paragraph 2.3)?

Which aims could Highways England do more to meet and how?

### **Question 8**

Do you think there should be any change in the roads included in the SRN (described in paragraph 1.3)?

If so, which roads would you propose are added to or removed from the SRN, and why?

### **Question 9**

Is there anything else we need to consider when making decisions about investment in the SRN?

If so, what other factors do you want considered? Please provide links to any published information that you consider relevant.

In addition, in relation to the analytical approach summarised in Chapter 6 and set out in more detail in the strategy document accompanying this consultation:

### **Question 10**

Does the analytical approach taken have the right balance between ambition, robustness, and proportionality?

If not, what do you suggest we do differently?

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