



WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

A Meeting of an **INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION** will be held in SF4 - Civic Offices on **THURSDAY 15 MARCH 2018 AT 9.30 AM**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Manjeet Gill', is positioned above the printed name.

Manjeet Gill
Interim Chief Executive
Published on 7 March 2018

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WOKINGHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

Our Vision

A great place to live, an even better place to do business

Our Priorities

Improve educational attainment and focus on every child achieving their potential

Invest in regenerating towns and villages, support social and economic prosperity, whilst encouraging business growth

Ensure strong sustainable communities that are vibrant and supported by well designed development

Tackle traffic congestion in specific areas of the Borough

Improve the customer experience when accessing Council services

The Underpinning Principles

Offer excellent value for your Council Tax

Provide affordable homes

Look after the vulnerable

Improve health, wellbeing and quality of life

Maintain and improve the waste collection, recycling and fuel efficiency

Deliver quality in all that we do

**For consideration by
Keith Baker, Executive Member for Highways and Transport**

**Officers Present
Tom Beck, Principal Planner
Luciane Bowker, Democratic and Electoral Services Specialist**

IMD NO.	WARD	SUBJECT	
2018/10	None Specific	MAJOR ROAD NETWORK CONSULTATION	5 - 96

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Agenda Item IMD10

INDIVIDUAL EXECUTIVE MEMBER DECISION REFERENCE IMD 2018/10

TITLE	Major Road Network Consultation
DECISION TO BE MADE BY	Executive Member for Strategic Highways and Planning
DATE, MEETING ROOM and TIME	15 March 2018 SF4 - Shute End 09:30
WARD	None Specific;
DIRECTOR	Interim Director of Environment - Josie Wragg

OUTCOME / BENEFITS TO THE COMMUNITY

A response is provided to the Department for Transport consultation on the creation of a new Major Road Network, a new process to manage and fund the Local Authority owns routes that support the National Strategic Route Network

RECOMMENDATION

That the Executive Member for Highways and Transport

- notes the contents of this report;
- approves the recommended response to the Department for Transport () consultation as detailed in this report (appendix 1); and
- authorises officers to return the recommended response to the Department for Transport on behalf of Wokingham Borough Council

SUMMARY OF REPORT

The consultation document proposes the creation and definition of a new Major Road Network (MRN) to support the Strategic Road Network (SRN). In practice, this means the major A roads that link up the motorway network will be given new status and access to funding that was previously ring fenced for use on the SRN. The newly defined MRN will be about the same size and mileage as the SRN and is defined on an interactive map showing the initial proposal for the MRN within the document – a link to the interactive map is in the supporting information at the end of this report. For Wokingham Borough this means the inclusion of the A329M/A3290, parts of the A33 and the A4.

The consultation recognises that ownership and responsibility for the roads that will make up the new MRN will remain with the council as Highways Authority and that they will not be taken over by a similar body to Highways England. To accompany the new network there will be a new funding stream, but as yet there is no defined mechanism for its allocation or indication of how much funding might be available. The consultation asks 16 questions; a recommended answers to these questions are given in this report.

The recommended response is aligned with the Thames Valley Berkshire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP), ensuring a consistent response to the MRN across Berkshire.

Background

On the 23rd December the Secretary of State for Transport, Chris Grayling, launched a consultation on the creation of the Major Road Network (MRN) for the most important local authority A roads, following on from the Transport Investment Strategy published by Department for Transport (DfT) in July last year.

The consultation proposes creation of a specific new funding stream dedicated to investment in this network (which is anticipated to be of a similar size to the existing Strategic Road Network (SRN)), with the aim of improving performance standards for all users whilst supporting economic growth and housing delivery.

This has been previously trailed by Government and builds on the Rees Jeffreys Road Fund Study: A Major Road Network for England. The consultation runs until 19th March 2018 and is seeking views on three main areas of the MRN programme:

- Defining the Network.
- Investment Planning.
- Eligibility and Investment Assessment Criteria.

MRN OBJECTIVES

The consultation highlights the core objectives for creation of the MRN as follows:

- **Reduce Congestion:** Through enhancement of the local road network to reduce delays and congestion, making journeys quicker, more reliable with environmental and safety improvements.
- **Support Economic Growth and Rebalancing:** Improving connectivity to boost economic activity and productivity, widening access to labour markets and encouraging further investments.
- **Support Housing Development:** Improving accessibility and unlocking land for housing development.
- **Supporting All Users:** Proposals for improvements to the MRN will need to consider all users, including pedestrians, cyclists and people with disabilities.
- **Supporting the Strategic Road Network (SRN):** Improvements to the MRN will need to consider relationships with the SRN, both directly but also providing resilience during disruption/roadworks on the SRN.

Aims for the MRN definition and the supporting funding and management processes are to:

- Form a consistent, coherent network;
- Provide funding certainty to enable improvements; and
- Provide clear roles for local and regional partners as well as Government.

CONSULTATION THEMES

Network Definition

The consultation lays out proposals for defining the network using objective analysis supported by local evidence as follows:

- Use of current traffic volume as a starting point for identifying the MRN;
- Use of qualitative evidence to identify a coherent network (identifying routes; removing isolated links; ensuring connections to major conurbations/economic centers and key transport hubs);
- Consider de-trunked roads;
- Review the MRN on a 5 year cycle.

Significant work has already been undertaken as part of the Rees Jeffreys Report and by a number of Sub-national Transport Bodies (STBs), Combined Authorities (CAs) and Local Authorities collating evidence to identify roads that should be included in the MRN.

Investment Planning

Proposals for identifying the MRN and prioritising/approving investment are laid out as:

- Strategic Transport Boards, or Regional Groups (e.g. Local Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)) will develop Regional Evidence Bases (to be updated every 2 years) that will include an assessment of the network, identification of priority corridors, development of specific interventions and potential sequencing over, at minimum, a 5 year period;
- Regional Packages of improvements to be developed (including scheme proposals from LAs) and submitted to DfT;
- In consultation with Regions a nationwide MRN investment programme will be created;
- Once in the programme LAs will be responsible for their development and delivery, with DfT responsible for business case approval at scheme level;

There will be a role for Highways England to support local, regional and national bodies involved in the MRN Programme.

Eligibility

The proposals for eligibility are laid out as follows:

- Proposals should be seeking a DfT contribution of over £20m and generally less than £50m, although in strong cases up to a maximum of £100m;
- Scheme types include: bypasses; new 'missing' links; widening of existing MRN roads; major structural renewals; major junction improvements; 'technology' schemes; and packages of improvements (along a specific corridor).

Consultation Questions and Wokingham Borough Councils Response

The full consultation document can be found at;

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/670527/major-road-network-consultation.pdf

There are 16 questions that are asked; these questions and our response are set out in appendix 1;

Analysis of Issues

The proposal for the creation of a MRN that sits between the SRN and the local road network is considered a sensible idea and is welcomed by Wokingham Borough Council along with access to the National Roads Fund previously ring fence for the SRN. The keys dates for this process are as follows;

- Consultation closes March 2018
- DfT response to the consultation – Summer 2018
- DfT will publish guidance – Autumn 2018
- The start of the National Roads Fund – 2020/21

For Wokingham Borough the indicative MRN network proposed shows the inclusion of the A329M/A3290, parts of the A33 and the A4. . The inclusion of these is agreed however there are a number of addition that would in our opinion qualify for inclusion in

the network, namely the B3270 and the remainder of the A4 to the Royal Borough Windsor and Maidenhead boundary. There are other routes within Wokingham Borough that may be considered suitable but at this time do not qualify for inclusion, e.g. A327. This could be considered a key routes and will be over time, however presently the traffic flows circa 14,000 AADF do not make it qualify. The proposal for the MRN to be refreshed every 5 years will enable these roads to be considered at a later date.

The core principle and the objectives for the MRN are all supported. However it is noted that the benefits that Public Transport and interventions for non-motorised users is under played or missing. Also the investment assessment criterion make no reference to Public Transport.

The proposal includes eligibility criteria which suggests that only proposals for contributions of £20 - £50 million would be considered. Whist the promotion of a package of interventions along a corridor may ensure proposals achieve this threshold, there needs to be a recognition that some schemes that cost considerably less than £20m can provide significant benefits in support of the MRN objectives.

A further consideration is that all roads designated as part of the MRN should meet a certain minimum standard to ensure consistency across the network. This standard will need to reflect the different needs between urban & rural roads and should include expected minimum standards for non-motorised users.

Finally, any revenue spending implications as a result of these capital investments must be considered and addressed accordingly. It should be expected that the day to day maintenance of the MRN within the councils area will remain with the local authority, however any increased cost for maintenance requirements as a result of the MRN standards being applied or as a result of increase asset management & maintenance must not adversely affect councils existing budget and maintenance funding will need to be adjusted accordingly.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE RECOMMENDATION

The Council faces severe financial challenges over the coming years as a result of the austerity measures implemented by the Government and subsequent reductions to public sector funding. It is estimated that Wokingham Borough Council will be required to make budget reductions in excess of £20m over the next three years and all Executive decisions should be made in this context.

	How much will it Cost/ (Save)	Is there sufficient funding – if not quantify the Shortfall	Revenue or Capital?
Current Financial Year (Year 1)	nil	nil	nil
Next Financial Year (Year 2)	nil	nil	nil
Following Financial Year (Year 3)	nil	nil	nil

Other financial information relevant to the Recommendation/Decision
N/A

Cross-Council Implications
N/A

SUMMARY OF CONSULTATION RESPONSES	
Director – Corporate Services	Josie Wragg
Monitoring Officer	Andrew Moulton
Leader of the Council	Charlotte Haitham Taylor

For Highways use only	
<i>If your item is not about a highways matter you do not need to complete the Town and Parish Council information or the Local Ward Member information</i>	
Town and Parish Councils	
Local Ward Members	

Reasons for considering the report in Part 2

List of Background Papers
Proposals for the creation of a Major Route Network https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/670527/major-road-network-consultation.pdf
Interactive Map of the Indicative MRN http://maps.dft.gov.uk/major-road-network-consultation/
Details on Transport for the South East (TfSE) https://transportforthesoutheast.org.uk/

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Department
for Transport

Proposals for the Creation of a Major Road Network Consultation

Moving Britain Ahead





Department
for Transport

Proposals for the Creation of a Major Road Network Consultation

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1. Foreword

**The Rt Hon
Chris Grayling MP**
Secretary of State for Transport



Our industrial strategy sets out how we are building a Britain fit for the future, creating a stronger, fairer and more productive economy that will allow us to prosper in the world. A central foundation of that productivity is infrastructure, the essential underpinning of our lives and work. Delivering our industrial strategy needs transport investment to connect people and businesses, and to move goods efficiently to their market. This will raise productivity and improve quality of life across our regions.

The Government is already acting on this – allocating over £61 billion in capital investment for transport infrastructure up to 2020/21. A large proportion of this spending will be on the rail and strategic road networks – routes which carry the highest volumes of traffic and where any delays impose high costs. Highways England and Network Rail are completing vital schemes which improve journeys for rail passengers, road users and freight operators, such as the construction of the new A556 dual carriageway that bypasses the communities of Tabley, Mere and Bucklow Hill which opened in March of this year.

To give our economy an even stronger boost, to unlock housing and to relieve communities overwhelmed with traffic we see a strong case for increasing investment on the most important roads currently managed by local authorities. We have built on the work of the Rees Jeffreys Road Fund report, *A Major Road Network for England*.¹ This consultation

document now puts forward proposals for creating a network of England's most important routes which complement our motorways and strategic trunk roads.

We propose to create a Major Road Network, of approximately the same mileage as the network for which Highways England is responsible. We propose to create a specific new funding stream which will be dedicated to investing in this network and raising the performance standards which motorists experience on it. The Government cannot deliver this programme in isolation; involving local and regional interests will ensure that the improvements are of most value to the economy. This consultation document seeks views on our plans for defining the major road network, investment planning and the criteria for eligibility and assessment.

Improving the roads in this network will enable more reliable travel for road users, more certainty over freight deliveries and more capacity for the journeys which are the lifeblood of our economy. This investment can improve quality of life by opening up land to allow much-needed housing and the development of bypasses to relieve communities of intrusive traffic.

Your responses will help identify how, through this initiative, we can seize this opportunity to deliver the best outcomes for road users and unlock wider benefits for our economy.

¹ <http://www.reesjeffreys.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/A-Major-Road-Network-for-England-David-Quarmby-and-Phil-Carey-Rees-Jeffreys-Road-Fund-Report-October-2016.pdf>

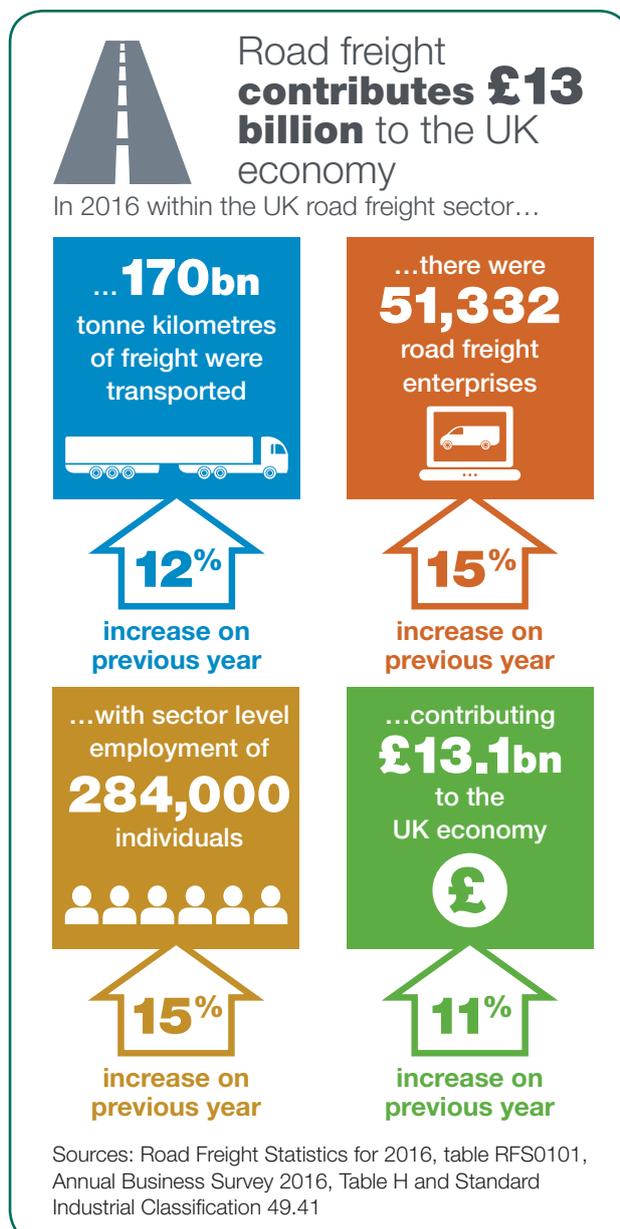
2. Executive Summary

Earlier this year, the Transport Investment Strategy was published. This set out how the Government is responding to today's transport challenges through transport investment, delivering the Industrial Strategy, while putting the travelling public at the heart of transport decision-making.

As part of the Strategy, the Government committed to creating a Major Road Network (MRN) across England. This consultation outlines the Government's proposals for this network and seeks views on its core principles, the definition of the network, investment planning, and eligibility and investment assessment.

In creating this network, the Government has five central policy objectives. These are:

- **Reduce congestion** – alleviating local and regional congestion, reducing traffic jams and bottlenecks.
- **Support economic growth and rebalancing** – supporting the delivery of the Industrial Strategy, contributing to a positive economic impact that is felt across the regions.
- **Support housing delivery** – unlocking land for new housing developments.
- **Support all road users** – recognising the needs of all users, including cyclists, pedestrians and disabled people.
- **Support the Strategic Road Network (SRN)** – complementing and supporting the existing SRN by creating a more resilient road network in England.



Consultation Focus

This consultation seeks views on three major themes: how to define the network; the investment planning process; and a set of eligibility and investment assessment criteria. In putting forward our proposals, we set out that the MRN will:

- Form a consistent, coherent network, alongside the SRN, to allow better coordination of road investment.
 - Provide funding certainty to roads in the network through use of the National Roads Fund, and raise standards and performance across the new network.
 - Provide clear roles for local and regional partners, who will support the Government to develop and deliver MRN schemes.
- To review the MRN every five years in line with the existing Road Investment Strategy cycle.

Defining the Network

The Government is proposing to shape the MRN using both an objective analytical basis, and local knowledge and requirements. To help respondents in providing their views, a map of an indicative MRN has been published as part of this consultation.

The consultation seeks views on the criteria being used to define the network. We propose:

- To use current traffic data as the starting point by which to identify those roads that should be considered for inclusion in the MRN.
- To use qualitative criteria in order to create a coherent and consistent network.
- To take into account evidence from local and regional partners concerning regional variations.
- To include, where appropriate, previously de-trunked roads.

Spinnaker Tower, Portsmouth



Investment Planning

The Government is proposing roles for local, regional and national bodies to support long-term strategic thinking about the investment needs of the MRN. While Ministers will be the ultimate decision-makers for the MRN Programme, the Government will look to local and regional bodies to work together to develop and prioritise packages of interventions for consideration.

This consultation seeks views on the nature and scope of these roles and how the Investment Programme for the MRN is developed and refreshed. We propose that:

- Local authorities and Sub-national Transport Bodies (STBs), or regional groups will develop Regional Evidence Bases that will include an assessment of the network and identification of priority corridors.
- Regional Evidence Bases will inform the development of the MRN Investment Programme.
- The Investment Programme will be reported on periodically, with both the Investment Programme and Regional Evidence Bases updated every two years.
- There will be a role for Highways England to support local, regional and national bodies involved in the MRN Programme.

Eligibility & Investment Assessment Criteria

MRN funding should target significant interventions which offer transformative solutions to the most economically important local authority 'A' roads, as well as providing value for money for the taxpayer. These solutions will include, but are not limited to, bypasses, major renewal work, major junction improvements, use of technology and the widening of existing MRN roads.

This consultation seeks views on the following proposals:

- MRN schemes will only be considered if they seek funding in excess of £20 million, up to a maximum ceiling of £100 million, and are supported by a local contribution.
- The investment assessment criteria used to assess MRN schemes will be based on the MRN objectives:
 - Reduce congestion
 - Support economic growth and regional rebalancing
 - Support housing delivery
 - Support all road users
 - Support the SRN



3. How Our Roads Are Currently Managed

England's existing road network consists of the Strategic Road Network and the Local Road Network (LRN). The SRN and LRN are funded and managed differently. However, users do not distinguish between the two networks when making journeys, and rightly expect a seamless experience.

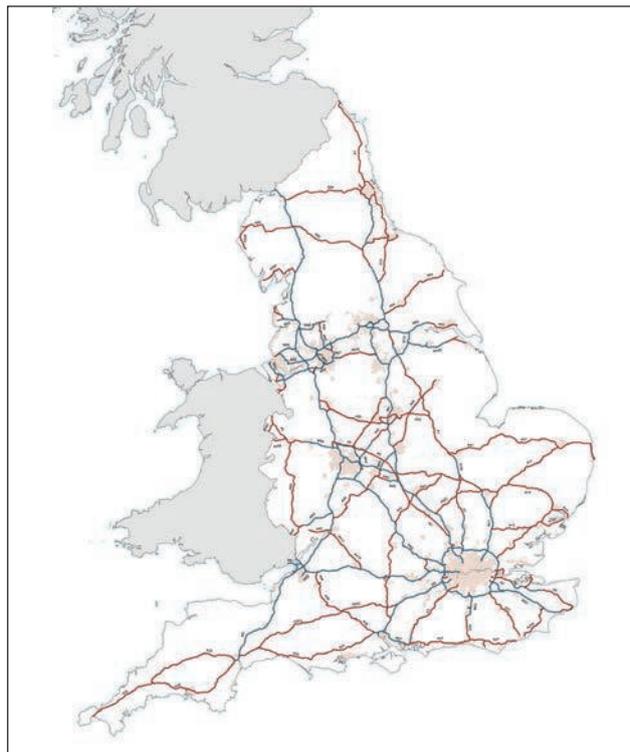
The Strategic Road Network

- Comprises nationally significant roads which connect the main centres of population. These roads provide access to major ports, airports and inter-modal freight terminals and the main cross-border routes to Scotland and Wales.
- Is the busiest part of the road network consisting of 4,400 miles (2% of our road network), but carrying a third of traffic and two thirds of HGV traffic.

The Local Road Network

- Consists of 184,100 miles of road, 98% of the entire road network.
- Responsibility is split between 153 local authorities (LAs).

Strategic Road Network Map



● Key Route Networks:

- Are being developed by combined authorities for their area – in order to improve the management of local roads.
- Will be a network of local roads identified as strategically important to the growth of the economy.
- Provide a city region-wide approach to managing strategically important roads, which allows for more efficient maintenance and action to reduce congestion.

Funding

The Local Road Network

LAs are funded to maintain their local road networks with sustained grant funding and other incentive-driven competitive schemes totalling £6.2 billion between 2015 and 2021. This is chiefly made up of the **Highways Maintenance Fund** and the **Pothole Action Fund**. £1.55 billion has also been allocated over the same period for small local roads schemes from the **Integrated Transport Block**.

Additional funding streams have been created to provide support to the local road network:

- The Department for Transport contributed £7 billion to the **Local Growth Fund** (LGF), to meet priorities set by Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs).
- The **Large Local Majors Fund** was launched in 2016 and provides funding for capital schemes that are too large to be funded from the regular LGF allocations to LEPs. It supports road and non-road schemes, such as tram extensions.
- £244 million has been awarded to LAs from the **National Productivity Investment Fund** to deliver small projects.
- At Autumn Budget 2017 a £1.7 billion **Transforming Cities Fund** was created to boost intra-urban connectivity in the largest English cities.

The Strategic Road Network

- The SRN is managed by Highways England and its funding is determined by Government through the statutory Road Investment Strategy (RIS) cycle.
- We are now mid-way through the first £15.2 billion RIS and have started planning for the second period beyond 2020.
- The RIS effectively provides long-term funding certainty to facilitate delivery, increase efficiencies and enhance capacity for the SRN, while supporting wider Government objectives including growth and productivity.
- Analysis from the Government's first RIS indicates that there can be significant value for money from investments in major road schemes.
- Through boosting the productivity of local economies and improving journey times for businesses and commuters major road schemes produce an average benefit of over £4 for every £1 spent.²



4. Opportunities to Improve

The SRN carries one third of England's traffic, despite only accounting for 2% of all roads by length. It was in recognition of the critical importance of the SRN that the Government moved to put funding for the SRN on a stable, long-term footing through the Highways England reforms. Building on this, the Rees Jeffreys (RJ) Road Fund Report highlighted a further set of economically important roads that deserve a similar level of attention to the SRN.

The RJ Report recognised the success of the 'roads reform' of the SRN, drawing links between the effective regime for delivering successive five-year programmes of investment on the SRN and the opportunities a similar approach could bring for LA 'A' roads.

The RJ Report highlighted that:

- These roads need to cater for an even broader mix of users than the SRN, including small businesses, commuters, manufacturers, freight, leisure and tourism.
- Many of these regionally important roads cross numerous LA boundaries. Their management can be inconsistent as different LAs take different approaches to different stretches of the same road. They require more consistent and coordinated management than the rest of the LRN.
- As part of the LRN, these significant LA 'A' roads do not receive the benefits of long-term funding certainty and efficiencies provided by RIS. There would be benefits in considering an investment planning pipeline across this network of LA 'A' roads.

- The entire road network would work more effectively if a portion of the National Roads Fund (NRF) were to be dedicated for LA major roads as well as the SRN. This would help close the funding gap between the two sets of roads.

These findings were central to the Government's decision, announced as part of its Transport Investment Strategy, to develop proposals for the MRN. This work is discussed in more detail in the following sections of this document.



5. A National Major Road Network

Introduction

In July 2017 the Department published the Transport Investment Strategy. This set out the Department's priorities and approach for future transport investment decisions. It described:

- Our investment in transport infrastructure.
- The priorities that will guide future investment decisions.
- The institutional frameworks within which those decisions will be taken.
- The actions we are taking to help us meet our ambitions.

This included how transport investment can deliver a stronger, fairer Britain – with priority for projects which cut congestion, support growth, boost Britain's global competitiveness, help rebalance the economy and unlock new housing. The creation of a MRN across England is a key step in the delivery of the strategy.



Objectives

The priorities identified by the Transport Investment Strategy are central to delivering a stronger, fairer Britain. These priorities form the backbone of the five MRN objectives:

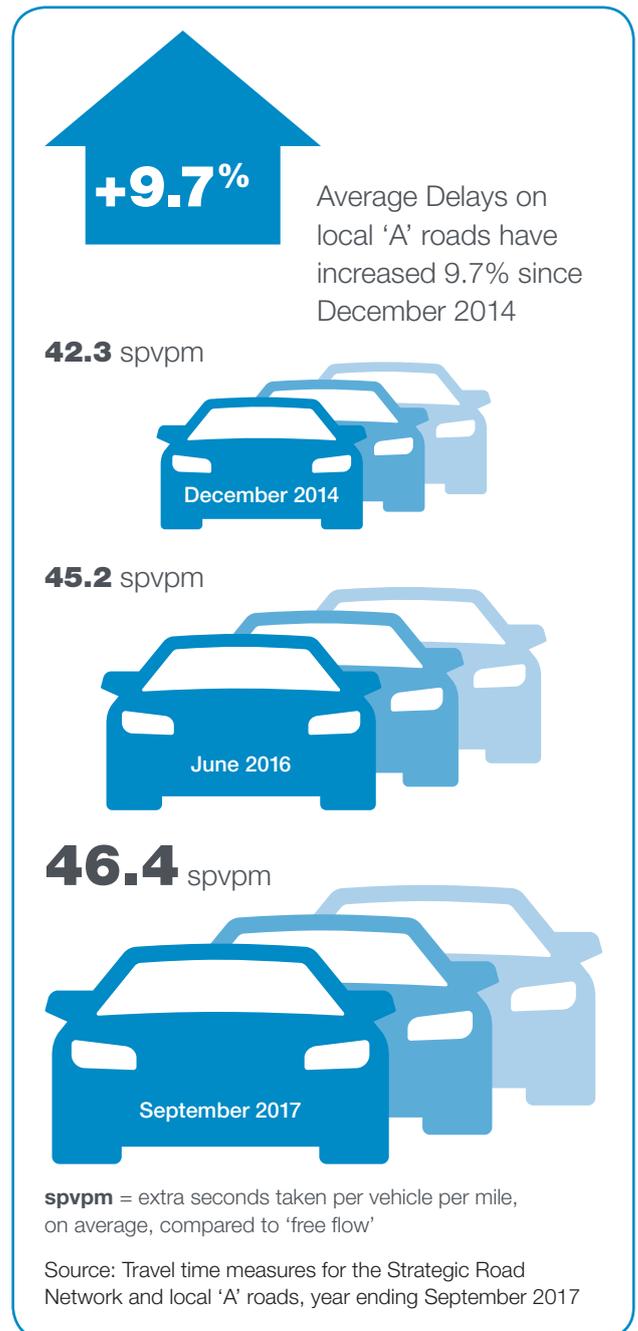
Reduce Congestion

Congestion creates delays and bottlenecks on heavily-used routes, and has a far-reaching economic impact.

- The RIS estimated that the year 2040 could see congestion on the SRN costing the freight industry £37 billion, and each household spending an average of 16 hours stuck in traffic a year.³
- Delays on local A-roads are significantly longer than on SRN roads.⁴

We need to upgrade and enhance the local road network, making it better able to cope with demand by adding capacity to reduce congestion and crowding. MRN investments will make journeys more comfortable and reliable for users, and make possible new trips that were previously impractical due to frequent or unpredictable delays.

Tackling congestion can also bring about environmental and safety improvements. Managing congestion needs to be environmentally sustainable, and solutions are not limited to adding extra miles of tarmac, but can also include making road layouts more efficient, or investing in the way the network is managed.



3 Road Investment Strategy: 2015-2020.

4 <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/travel-time-measures-for-the-strategic-road-network-and-local-a-roads-october-2016-to-september-2017>

Support Economic Growth & Rebalancing

Investment in our road network can better connect people and businesses to markets, boosting economic activity and productivity. This makes places more attractive to businesses and people, encouraging further investment. By improving the capacity, reliability, safety and connectivity of the network, road investment facilitates journeys for people and businesses and improves economic performance.

The Transport Investment Strategy set out our objectives and priorities for ensuring that regional rebalancing is taken into account as a part of transport investment decisions. This included making sure investments reflect the needs and priorities of different areas, taking into account the balance of spending between different regions and assessing investments for their contribution to rebalancing. We have recently published a new Rebalancing Toolkit and associated business case guidance which together are



designed to improve the focus, quality and transparency of 'rebalancing' evidence in investment decision-making and ensure that evidence is applied more consistently. We will consider how this new guidance will apply to the MRN programme as it is developed.

Over 16 billion miles were driven on local authority 'A' roads by vans and lorries in England in 2016



12.9bn van miles



3.5bn lorry miles

Source: Road Traffic Estimates for 2016, table TRA4205

Support Housing Development

We face an immense challenge to provide the houses that will support communities to grow sustainably. The Government's housing white paper recognises that transport infrastructure is key to unlocking development and delivering places people want to live. Road schemes can create new links between communities and workplaces to deepen local labour markets, connect housing developments to the network, provide new routes on city and commuter networks or contribute to creating places that promote wellbeing through the management of congestion or provision for public transport. MRN investment decisions will include consideration of how proposed schemes will unlock land for housing developments, and help to improve how transport is planned for new developments from the outset.



Support All Users

The MRN offers us the opportunity to support the needs of all road users. Proposals to improve the MRN, particularly through town and village centres, should consider the needs of both motorised and non-motorised users. In bringing forward proposals for improvements to the MRN, we will expect the needs of all users, including cyclists, pedestrians and disabled people, to be considered and benefits for them delivered as part of the solutions proposed.



Support the SRN

In practice the LRN and SRN appear as one network, with users passing seamlessly from one to the other. To support users' journeys and ensure a seamless transition between the two networks, MRN investments will also focus on improving flows between the SRN and the MRN and providing resilience to the SRN via the MRN during disruption or planned closures.



Case Study: Norwich Northern Distributor Road

The Department is providing £77.5m towards the cost of a 14 km dual carriageway route from the A47 Postwick Junction around the east and north of Norwich to a junction with the A140. Norfolk County Council is separately funding its extension to the A1067 (making a total route length of 20km). The road is due to open in spring 2018.

The existing transport network inhibits current and future housing and employment growth in Norwich. There is no northern bypass and no satisfactory routes for traffic to bypass this part of the city. Traffic therefore has to come into the city on radial routes and use the congested Inner Ring Road to reach the A47. The central road network is not designed (being medieval) to provide for significant car traffic.

The Norwich Northern Distributor Road is expected to reduced congestion on radial routes and the Norwich Outer Ring Road and prevent rat-running on inappropriate routes to the north of Norwich which have caused environmental problems. This scheme will help unlock the delivery of up to 10,000 new houses and 95 hectares of employment land, (largely for office employment) leading to the creation of around 12,200 jobs. Schemes similar to the Norwich Northern Distributor Road could be funded from the MRN in the future.



6. Our Proposals

This consultation and the questions it asks focus on the key decisions that will form the basis for the creation of a MRN in England. This includes the core principles that have guided our work to date and the three major areas of the MRN Programme around which this consultation is based:

- Defining the Network
- Investment Planning
- Eligibility & Investment Assessment Criteria

The detail of our proposals and the questions posed are set out in the following pages.



MRN Core Principles

In order to deliver the objectives previously described, we believe there are a number of fundamental principles that must be at the heart of our plans for the MRN and its programme of investment.

Increased Certainty of Funding

The creation of the MRN, and use of the National Roads Fund, needs to provide a long-term funding stream, secured across a number of years. This will enable investment planning and the creation of a MRN pipeline of investments, which over time will raise the standard and performance of the network.

A Coordinated Investment Programme

Many of the regionally important roads that will form the MRN cross numerous LA boundaries. This means that their management and prioritisation can vary across their length. MRN roads, whilst remaining the responsibility of LAs, should benefit from a more coordinated programme of investments.

A Consistent Network

The MRN must be consistent across England. To achieve this, it must be defined via a set of criteria and centrally agreed, with the final decision on inclusions resting with the Secretary of State. Its size must also ensure that an improvement in performance can be achieved across its entirety. Local and regional bodies will play a key part in developing and applying the criteria in their areas. This consultation, and the indicative network it sets out, is the first step in the engagement required to agree the MRN.

Clear Local, Regional & National Roles

LAs will remain responsible for the roads included in the MRN. However, to bring more joined-up focus on investment planning to these important roads we are setting out proposals as part of this consultation for how local, regional and national bodies will work together to deliver the MRN Programme.

A Focus on Enhancement & Major Renewals

MRN funding needs to bring about improvements in standards and performance across the network. Investments will therefore focus on enhancements or major renewal schemes. The day-to-day maintenance of the MRN will remain the responsibility of individual highways authorities with separate funding through existing arrangements. It is a guiding principle of the MRN that local highways maintenance funding should not be adversely affected by the creation of the MRN.

Strengthening Links with the Strategic Road Network

The RIS and MRN Programmes should not act in isolation. Both networks will play a key role in users' journeys and users should expect a seamless transition between the two. In developing the MRN, we will need to recognise its links with the SRN and ensure that the two programmes of investment are complementary. We expect regional bodies such as STBs to play a crucial part in ensuring that the two programmes are aligned.

Do you agree with the proposed core principles for the MRN outlined in this document?



Defining the Network

The extent of the network must strike a balance between capturing the most economically important regional roads and ensuring that its size is appropriate, enabling investments that can drive an improvement in performance across its entirety.

The definition of the MRN has already been the subject of detailed work by the RJ Report. Prospective STBs have also been developing proposals for networks within their areas. In developing proposals for the MRN, we have considered these pieces of work and the approach they took. It was clear that, as set out in our core principles, a consistent approach must be taken to defining the MRN across England.

Any definition must make the best use of local and regional knowledge to ensure that the most economically important roads are captured. To strike this balance appropriately, we are proposing the use of both quantitative and qualitative criteria to define the MRN. This approach ensures two things:

- The network is coherent, i.e. more than just a set of fragmented sections of road.
- The network has a sound, objective analytical basis, yet also has the flexibility to factor in local knowledge and requirements.

Our proposed use of quantitative and qualitative criteria to define the MRN is set out in more detail here.

Quantitative Criteria

Following analysis and quality assurance, we have concluded that the quantitative criteria used by the RJ Report are appropriate for defining the MRN. We therefore propose that traffic flow levels be used to identify an initial set of roads to be considered for inclusion in the network.

We propose that two criteria should be used:

- Roads where traffic flow is greater than a defined level.
- Roads where traffic flow is greater than a defined level (but lower than in criteria 1), and in addition, the proportion of HGV/LCVs⁵ on that section of road is also greater than a defined level.

In both cases traffic flow is measured by the Average Annual Daily Flow (AADF).⁶

The first criterion factors in particularly heavily trafficked roads, while the second factors in roads that are of particular economic importance for transporting goods. As discussed further on page 24, this stage only identifies a set of individual road sections as candidates for inclusion. These then require further work to create a coherent network.

⁵ Light Commercial Vehicles.

⁶ For more information on AADF please see here: <https://www.dft.gov.uk/traffic-counts/about.php>

We believe that the use of traffic data is the most robust way of identifying candidate roads for inclusion in the MRN. We have considered other possible criteria, such as congestion data. However, our analysis showed that the use of this data was not consistent with our wider objectives for the MRN, for example by failing to capture the full range of regional roads that play a vital role in supporting the country's economy.

Using the latest data to define a network

The network in the RJ Report was based on the road network and traffic levels in 2014. The Department intends to update this in the final network following consultation, to ensure that it is based on the latest available data.

Current vs. projected traffic levels

We do not propose to use projected traffic levels in an attempt to 'future-proof' the network. This is because there are numerous projection scenarios, insufficient certainty to choose between them, and the choice of scenario used will influence the final network. Published traffic projections present averages for particular regions and road types but they do not relate to individual roads. Using these averages to project traffic changes on specific sections of road adds further uncertainty. We therefore propose to use 'current' traffic levels to define the final network. We also recognise the need to ensure that the network remains relevant and up to date, and reflects changes to local economies such as new housing developments, business parks and transport hubs. Our plans for refreshing the network periodically are laid out on page 26.



De-trunked Roads

Between 2001 and 2009 Government took the decision to de-trunk a number of roads, removing them from the SRN and the management of Highways England's predecessor. This was done so that LAs could fully integrate the management and improvement of these roads with land use planning and local transport plans. Given these roads have historically been deemed of national interest we propose to include them, where appropriate, within the MRN.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the quantitative criteria outlined and their proposed application?

2

Qualitative Criteria

The MRN cannot be defined by quantitative criteria alone. This would fail to recognise local and regional characteristics and would produce a series of fragmented road links across the country. In order to define a coherent network, a series of qualitative criteria also needs to be applied.

This was an approach that the RJ Report also used to define their network. As with the quantitative approach outlined above, we propose to adopt the qualitative criteria used by the RJ Report, with some additions to better reflect the national objectives that we have already set out. These proposed qualitative criteria are:

Ensuring a Coherent Network: The MRN must be consistent and coherent across the country when considered alongside the SRN. In order to achieve this we propose the following:

- Adding links to join up stretches of road that meet the traffic thresholds to form continuous sections of road.
- Removing isolated links and those that form part of a corridor where most links did not reach the traffic thresholds.

Linking Economic Centres: Ensuring that major conurbations, airports, ports and other significant economic centres are connected via the MRN. This includes:

- Connecting all towns/cities with a population greater than 50,000.

- In specific circumstances we will consider using the MRN to connect economic centres with a population below this threshold. For example, towns that contribute substantially to the economy in peripheral areas.
- Connecting all major ports, airports and key transport hubs not already linked by the SRN.

Access to/Resilience for the SRN: As per our objectives, a key consideration in defining the MRN should be its interplays with the SRN, both in terms of access between the two and improving resilience if one should experience disruption or require long-term works.

Whilst the MRN will interact with locally defined Key Route Networks, we do not believe that this should be a factor in defining the MRN as a result of the different roles performed. As a regional network the MRN will principally connect different economic centres, whilst KRN support connections within single economic centres.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the qualitative criteria outlined and their application?





Indicative MRN

To support responses to this consultation we have developed and published, alongside this consultation document, an indicative map.⁷ This is largely derived from our work on the RJ Report, with some refinements and the addition, where appropriate, of those roads de-trunked between 2001 and 2009. Whilst this map is representative of how we would expect a future MRN to look, it is important to stress that it is not the final proposal. Further work will be required following consultation to refine the criteria based on the responses received and apply them to the latest traffic data. As part of this process we intend to undertake further engagement with local and regional bodies on the emerging network before publishing a final, agreed network.

Refreshing the MRN

It will be important for the MRN to remain relevant and reflect the latest data and changes to economic centres and road use. However, this must be balanced against the need to provide a stable platform on which the MRN Investment Programme can be delivered.

Through the RIS cycle the Department considers, at regular intervals, proposals for changing the extent of the SRN by trunking or de-trunking roads. We will make decisions about the appropriate shape of the SRN and MRN in a joined-up way to ensure that both networks are consistent, coherent and complementary.

We propose to review the MRN every five years to coincide with the existing RIS timetable. This will involve updating and

reviewing the data that are used and engagement with all bodies involved in the delivery of the MRN programme.

Have both the quantitative and qualitative criteria proposed in the consultation document identified all sections of road you feel should be included in the MRN?

4

Have the quantitative or qualitative criteria proposed in the consultation identified sections of road you feel should not be included in the MRN?

5

Do you agree with the proposal for how the MRN should be reviewed in future years?

6

⁷ The indicative map produced to support this consultation can be found at maps.dft.gov.uk/major-road-network-consultation

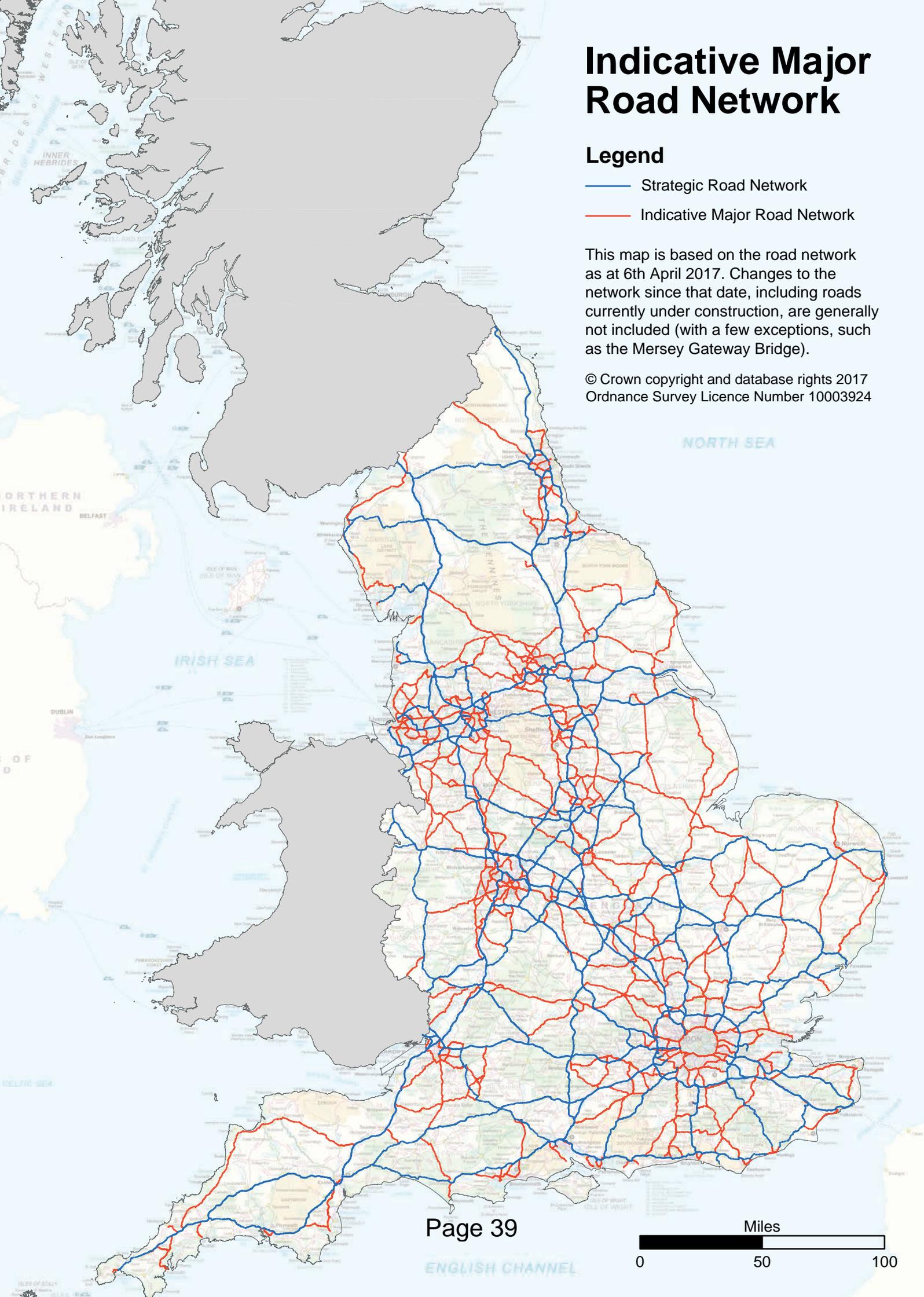
Indicative Major Road Network

Legend

- Strategic Road Network
- Indicative Major Road Network

This map is based on the road network as at 6th April 2017. Changes to the network since that date, including roads currently under construction, are generally not included (with a few exceptions, such as the Mersey Gateway Bridge).

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Investment Planning

The creation of the MRN should support long-term strategic consideration of investment needs in order to make best use of the targeted funding that will be made available from the National Roads Fund and deliver the best possible result for the user.

The important national and regional role played by roads included in the MRN means that individual LAs cannot plan investments in isolation, nor can decisions be completely centralised at either a regional or national level. As set out in the core principles section of this document we propose that, alongside the local role of highways authorities, there needs to be a strong regional focus for investment planning within a consistent national network. This is not only about LAs working more closely together, many already do, it is also about looking at these roads and the network they form from a regional and national perspective. This is something that at present individual LAs are not necessarily incentivised to do.

The creation of the MRN does not mean that its roads need to become the responsibility of a single organisation, and we are not proposing any changes to current LA responsibilities. Our objectives for the MRN can be achieved through an increased focus on these roads at all levels, local, regional and national. This will avoid unnecessary upheaval and retain local accountability. By working together on investment planning for the MRN in their region, areas can develop a long-term strategic approach to the improvement and enhancement of the MRN.

A Regional Evidence Base

STBs, where they exist, are best placed to carry out this important strategic role for the MRN. They are bodies designed to enable regions to speak with one voice on strategic transport planning and the skills and expertise that they are developing will be vital in delivering our objectives for the MRN. Where STBs have yet to be formed, such as in the East and South West of England we propose that LAs and LEPs should, in consultation with the Department, form agreed regional groups to manage this work, ideally using existing mechanisms. In London we envisage that TfL would take on this role.

We propose that STBs or regional groups would be responsible for developing a Regional Evidence Base which would be the basis for the development of a national MRN Investment Programme. Where STBs exist we expect that the Regional Evidence Base would be developed from the existing Statutory Transport Strategies for which STBs are responsible.

The Regional Evidence Base would be evidence based and should not be limited to performing a mechanical sifting exercise. As a minimum, the Department would expect them to comprise the following:

- An assessment of the overall condition of the existing network and its performance.
- The identification of network-wide issues and priority corridors.

- Analysis of potential region-wide solutions and the development of specific interventions to tackle the issues identified over at least a 5 year period, although we expect and encourage STBs or regions to look beyond this in their strategic planning.
- An assessment of the potential sequencing of the schemes identified.

First and foremost, the role of a Regional Evidence Base is to provide the data on which future investment decisions can be made. The documents should therefore be data led and underpinned by rigorous analysis. Guidance will be issued by the Department to support STBs and regions in the development of their evidence base and we would expect STBs and regions to work together and with the Department to ensure that, as far as possible, there is a consistent approach across the MRN Programme.

The Regional Evidence Bases would be assessed and prioritised across England by the Department and, in consultation with the regions, developed into an Investment Programme which would be approved by Ministers.

Our aspiration is for LAs and LEPs to work together within their regions, and with the Department at a national level, to better understand the needs of the MRN and plan investments accordingly. The aim is to develop the best possible evidence base to enable investments that will deliver an improved network and better outcomes for users.

The MRN Programme

The proposed process for the MRN programme is:

- The Department will issue guidance to regions on the development of Regional Evidence Bases. As well as supporting regions this will ensure that nationally important policies are reflected and that there is a consistent approach across England.
- Engagement at a regional level would allow the Department and bodies such as Highways England to provide support to both LAs and STBs / regional groups in the development of the Regional Evidence Bases.
- Based on the analysis of evidence, initial scheme proposals for investment would be put forward by LAs for inclusion in the Regional Evidence Base. These would be assessed and prioritised at a regional level, and developed into a coherent regional package before being submitted to the Department. We would propose to give regions flexibility on how they design and manage this part of the process.
- The Department, in consultation with the regions, would undertake analysis and national prioritisation based on the evidence provided to allow a nationwide MRN Investment Programme to be created.
- Once schemes are in the MRN Investment Programme LAs, in consultation with their region, would be responsible for their continued development. The Department will be responsible for individual scheme approval at Outline Business Case (OBC) stage and beyond.

- The Department will report on the MRN Investment Programme to reflect the progress made by individual schemes and the latest decision making.
- The MRN Investment Programme, and the Regional Evidence Bases from which it is formed, will also be updated every two years to allow for evidence to be refreshed and for new schemes to enter the programme.

We are proposing that the inclusion of schemes in Regional Evidence Bases is done when schemes are at an early stage, (broadly Strategic Outline Business Case). We do not believe that it would be a good use of money to develop OBCs for all schemes that might be submitted for consideration. In developing and agreeing the MRN Investment Programme, the Department will consider a moderate degree of over-programming to allow for schemes that either fail to demonstrate value for money or to progress to OBC stage as quickly as expected.

Following the launch of the MRN Programme during 2018, we will consider whether there is a need to identify schemes for early entry to the MRN Investment Programme.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the roles outlined for local, regional and national bodies?

7

What additional responsibilities, if any, should be included? Please state at which level these roles should be allocated.

8

Do you agree with our proposals to agree regional groupings to support the investment planning of the MRN in areas where no sub-national transport bodies (STBs) exist?

9

Are there any other factors, or evidence, that should be included within the scope of the Regional Evidence Bases?

10

Case Study: Morpeth Northern Bypass

£21m of DfT funding helped deliver the last section in the A1 - South East Northumberland link road, the Morpeth Northern Bypass. The 2.4 mile single carriageway bypass will relieve congestion in Morpeth as well as improve links to development sites in the town and in the surrounding area, including Blyth and Ashington.

In the future, the MRN could support schemes similar to this £32m bypass which opened in 2017. The Morpeth Northern Bypass improves highway capacity and will reduce traffic congestion in and around Morpeth and provide access to allocated development sites. It will help create over 5,300 jobs across South East Northumberland and between 1,700 and 3,000 jobs in Morpeth and open up large areas north of Morpeth for development of housing and employment land.

Funding

MRN funding will principally be focused on the development and delivery of schemes accepted for development to OBC as part of the MRN Investment Programme. The Department recognises that the development of Regional Evidence Bases will require additional work on the part of regions and their constituent local authorities, especially where there is no existing structure in place. We intend to work with regions and local authorities post consultation to understand better the potential requirements.

In the case of successful schemes, the Department's funding for their delivery would be fixed with the relevant local authority responsible for its effective delivery. As with other Government investment programmes where works are delivered by local authorities, we propose that there should be a requirement for local contributions towards the final cost of the scheme. This will act as an important incentive to ensure that the agreed scheme is delivered to programme and budget.

The Role of Highways England

A core principle of the MRN Programme is to bring more coordinated planning to these important roads. Given Highways England's experience in road investment planning and the need to ensure a seamless transition between the SRN and MRN we propose that Highways England, the body responsible for running the SRN, should also have a role in the MRN Programme.

Highways England, as the manager of the SRN, has a good track record on scheme development and delivery as well as the ongoing management of its network. They already have existing relationships with LAs on the development and delivery of road

schemes as well as on interactions between the local and strategic networks. In some cases this has seen LAs deliver schemes funded by Highways England, whilst in other cases the company has provided support to authorities in the delivery of schemes on their networks. The creation of the MRN offers the opportunity to build on and where necessary improve these existing relationships and take advantage of the skills and expertise Highways England have to support the delivery of the MRN Programme, while recognising that delivery of the RIS is their primary focus.

This role could include:

- **Programme Support:** Highways England could have a role in the governance of the MRN Investment Programme advising the Department on the development of the MRN pipeline and its interactions with the SRN, and providing wider support as needed.
- **Analytical Support:** Highways England could support the Department in analysing the Regional Evidence Bases in order to prepare advice to Ministers on the MRN Investment Programme.
- **Cost Estimate Support:** Highways England could support the Department in assessing scheme cost estimates.
- **Delivery Support:** Highways England could support, if required, LAs in the delivery of agreed MRN schemes. This could include advising LAs on design and development as well as supporting access to the supply chain to enable LAs to take advantage of economies of scale that may be available.

Do you agree with the role that has been outlined for Highways England?

11

Eligibility & Investment Assessment Criteria

Eligibility

The Department does not intend to replace existing funding streams such as formula funding for Highway Maintenance or Integrated Transport Block funding which may be directed to any LA roads including the MRN network.

For that reason, we propose that funding to improve and enhance the MRN should be targeted towards significant interventions that will transform important stretches of the network.

We propose that only proposals for contributions of £20 million or over will be considered for MRN funding.

As we want this fund to benefit all areas of the country and produce an improvement for users across the network we would expect that most funding requests would not exceed £50 million. Where there is a strong case we would be willing to consider scheme proposals requiring higher contributions, up to a maximum of £100 million.

To get the best value for money, regions and local authority promoters should work to minimise scheme costs through scheme optimisation and the securing of third party contributions, alongside local contributions.

Types of scheme that will be eligible for funding

- **Bypasses** or other new alignments to alleviate congestion in villages and towns and make through journeys quicker, safer and more reliable. In these cases MRN status would normally transfer from the old through route to the new bypass once complete. (Schemes for bypasses could also include measures to revive the old routes through town and village centres to benefit communities, for example through traffic calming and facilities for pedestrians and cyclists).
- **Missing Links** – new roads that link existing stretches of the MRN or SRN, for example a link between two radial routes on the edge of a town, or the final quadrant of a ring road that already circles three quarters of a town or city.
- **Widening of Existing MRN roads** where there is a known congestion pinch point or safety risk. This could include dualling and could be on or offline.
- **Major Structural Renewals** on roads, bridges, tunnels and viaducts on the MRN, where significant work needs to be done to renew the carriageway or to prevent closure or punitive weight restrictions. Such schemes will play a big part in raising the standard of the MRN.
- **Major Junction Improvements** such as grade separation that would improve the performance, flow or safety of the MRN. These could be junctions that link the MRN to the SRN or to other local roads.

Do you agree with the cost thresholds outlined?

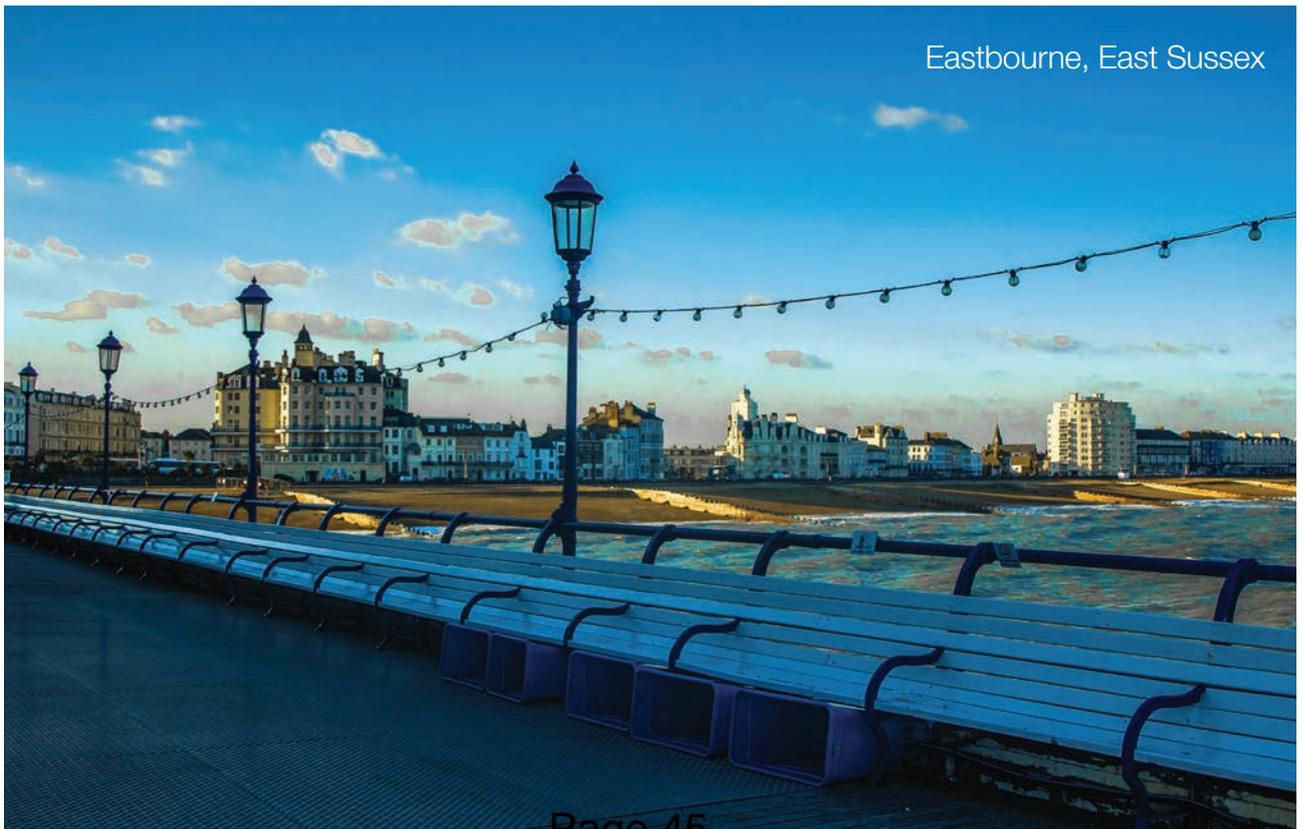
- **Variable Message Signs, Traffic Management and the Use of Smart Technology and Data** to raise the performance of defined stretches of the network across a region for the benefit of users will also be considered for funding through the MRN Programme.
- **Packages of Improvements** along a stretch of road, or corridor where a known issue has been identified. Such a package may include elements of safety, widening, junction improvements and new alignment. In these cases, although the scheme may be composed of physically distinct elements, the package as a whole must have a coherent and compelling strategic case that is greater than the sum of its parts. As with renewals, these packages would play a crucial part in raising the standard of the MRN.

Case Study: A13 Widening

This £79m scheme will widen the 3.5km A13 Stanford-le-Hope Bypass from two to three running lanes in each direction.

The A13 corridor in Thurrock links the nationally significant port infrastructure of Tilbury and the new London Gateway Port with the M25 and London. The main objective of the scheme is to increase highway capacity on the A13 in order to reduce congestion and remove constraints to development. This will help unlock the full potential of the corridor to deliver some 4,400 jobs and 700 homes.

The project is scheduled to be complete by spring 2020. Once established, the MRN may support similar road widening schemes.

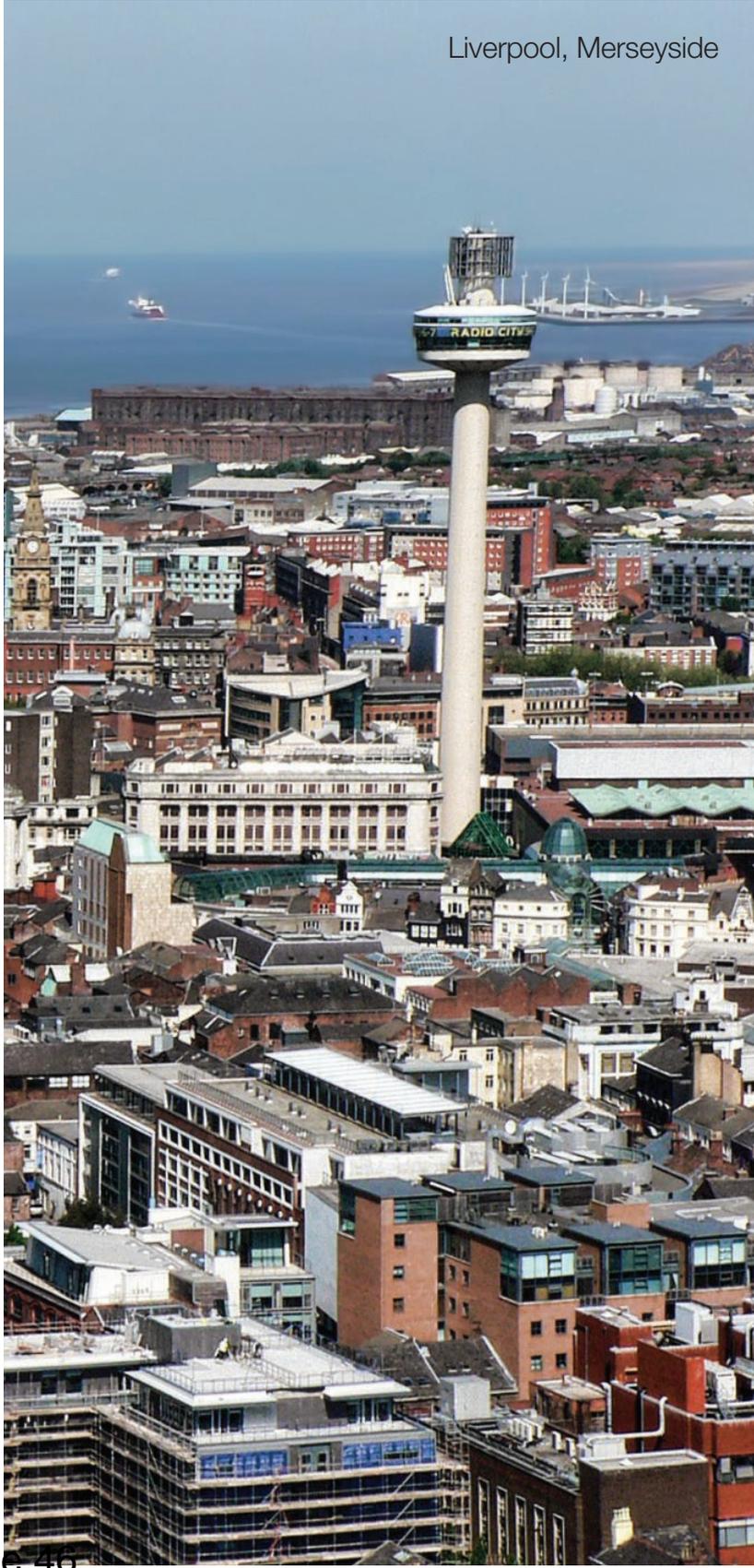


Exclusions

MRN funding will be focused on interventions that improve the roads defined as part of the MRN. We would not propose to provide funding for the following categories of scheme:

- Schemes on roads which are not on the MRN but simply have a single physical connection to the MRN would not automatically be eligible for funding. Such schemes would only be considered if a compelling case is made that the scheme would have a significant positive impact on the MRN or, in the case of a new road, that it would meet the criteria for being considered part of the MRN once complete.
- Schemes that are wholly on the SRN will not be considered for MRN funding unless there is a compelling case that the benefit is of a distinct local sub-national nature that would not warrant consideration through the Roads Investment Strategy process.
- Public transport enhancements, except where these are included as part of a wider intervention and their inclusion can be shown to support MRN objectives.
- Bids for non-specific LA wide packages or funding pots to cover general improvement of all MRN roads in an area will not be considered.

Do you agree with the eligibility criteria outlined?



Liverpool, Merseyside

MRN Investment Assessment

To support the development of Regional Evidence Bases and a national Investment Programme we are proposing that a clear set of criteria be developed. These support the Government’s overarching objectives for the MRN Programme whilst providing local and regional bodies the flexibility to develop proposals that support the delivery of local and regional objectives.

We propose that these criteria should be as follows:

Objective	Criteria
Reduce Congestion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Alleviate Congestion ● Environmental Impacts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Improve air quality and biodiversity – Reduce noise and risk of flooding – Protect water quality, landscape and cultural heritage sites
Support Economic Growth & Rebalancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Industrial Strategy: Support regional strategic goals to boost economic growth ● Economic Impact: Improve ability to access new or existing employment sites ● Trade & Gateways Impact: Improve international connectivity, e.g. access to ports & airports
Support Housing Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Support the creation of new housing developments by improving access to future development sites and boosting suitable land capacity
Support All Road Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Deliver benefits for non-motorised users, including cyclists, pedestrians and disabled people ● Safety Benefits: Reduce the risk of deaths/serious injuries for all users of the MRN
Support the SRN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Improve end to end journey times across both networks ● Improve journey time reliability ● Improve SRN resilience

Do you agree with the investment assessment criteria outlined?

14

In addition to the eligibility and investment assessment criteria described what, if any, additional criteria should be included in the proposal? Please be as detailed as possible.

15



Interaction with the Road Investment Strategy

Investment in the Strategic Road Network is managed through the RIS. In 2016, the Government set out the aims and processes of the next strategy (RIS2), and in December 2017 the Government opened a consultation on the evidence gathered to support the next RIS.

The MRN and RIS are designed to complement one another, and decisions about investment will be made in an integrated way. Highways England already plays an important role in setting RIS2, and will take on a significant role in shaping the MRN programme as well.

The RIS allows for investment away from the SRN in locations where this has a substantial effect on the quality of journey that this network provides. This means that in some cases it is possible that the RIS may invest in the MRN or wider local road network (just as the MRN fund may invest in the SRN in cases where there is a strong sub-regional benefit that would not play as decisive a role in the RIS). However, for the most part, the Government expects investment on the MRN to be funded primarily through the MRN Programme, and integration between the networks to be handled by the cooperation and coordination of the different investment programmes.

First Road Investment Strategy

Road investment delivers significant benefits for users and the economy.

Analysis of newly built roads shows...
Scheme-specific objectives met



94%

For every £1 spend, the average return was more than £4 in long-term benefits



The biggest benefits were:



Source: Analysis of all major schemes completed on the SRN from 2002-2010 using Post Opening Project Evaluations

Is there anything further you would like added to the MRN proposals?

7. Annex A – Consultation Questions

Core Principles

Do you agree with the proposed core principles for the MRN outlined in this document?

1

Defining the MRN

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the quantitative criteria outlined and their proposed application?

2

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the qualitative criteria outlined and their application?

3

Have both the quantitative and qualitative criteria proposed in the consultation document identified all sections of road you feel should be included in the MRN?

4

Have the quantitative or qualitative criteria proposed in the consultation identified sections of road you feel should not be included in the MRN?

5

Do you agree with the proposal for how the MRN should be reviewed in future years?

6

Investment Planning

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the roles outlined for local, regional and national bodies?

7

What additional responsibilities, if any, should be included? Please state at which level these roles should be allocated.

8

Do you agree with our proposals to agree regional groupings to support the investment planning of the MRN in areas where no sub-national transport bodies (STBs) exist?

9

Are there any other factors, or evidence, that should be included within the scope of the Regional Evidence Bases?

10

Do you agree with the role that has been outlined for Highways England?

11

Eligibility & Investment Assessment

Do you agree with the cost thresholds outlined?

12

Do you agree with the eligibility criteria outlined?

13

Do you agree with the investment assessment criteria outlined?

14

In addition to the eligibility and investment assessment criteria described what, if any, additional criteria should be included in the proposal? Please be as detailed as possible.

15

Other Considerations

Is there anything further you would like added to the MRN proposals?

16

8. How to Respond

The consultation period runs for 12 weeks, from Saturday 23rd December 2017 to Monday 19th March 2018. Please make sure that your response reaches us before the closing date as we will not be able to consider responses received later.

You are invited to respond to the consultation online at:

<https://www.gov.uk/dft#consultations>

Alternatively, you may send your response by email to: MRNconsultation@dft.gsi.gov.uk

Or by post to:

MRN Consultation
Department for Transport
2/15 Great Minster House
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

When responding, please tell us whether you are acting as an individual member of the public or representing the views of an organisation or group. If responding on behalf of a larger organisation, please make it clear who the organisation represents and, where applicable, how the views of its members were assembled. Please include your contact details if you would like to be informed when the response to this consultation is published.

If you would like further copies of this consultation document, or to receive it in a different format, you can contact us using the methods described above.



9. What Will Happen Next?

The Department will analyse consultation responses following closure of the consultation.

A formal consultation response will be published on gov.uk during summer 2018.

The Department will continue to engage with both local and regional bodies to support the finalisation of an MRN Programme to be launched in summer 2018.

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. Further information is available at:

<https://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
Zone 1/29 Great Minster House
London SW1P 4DR.

Email consultation@dft.gsi.gov.uk



Department
for Transport

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

Moving Britain Ahead



The Department for Transport has actively considered the needs of blind and partially sighted people in accessing this document. The text will be made available in full on the Department's website. The text may be freely downloaded and translated by individuals or organisations for conversion into other accessible formats. If you have other needs in this regard please contact the Department.

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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 that reads "Jesse Norman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J' and a long, sweeping tail.

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 2017¹.

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.

¹ Available at: 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 or you can contact us at 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

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

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

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

1. Background

1.1 Our goals for transport investment

In July 2017, the Department published its *Transport Investment Strategy*², setting out our vision for high-performing infrastructure that can enable the delivery of cross-Government objectives, in particular its Industrial Strategy³ and housing ambitions, proposed in *Fixing our broken housing market*⁴. 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.

² At: www.gov.uk/government/publications/transport-investment-strategy

³ At: www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/the-uks-industrial-strategy

⁴ At: 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 (NO₂) concentrations⁵. The plan will ensure that the UK meets the legal limits for NO₂ 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 Strategy⁶ 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).

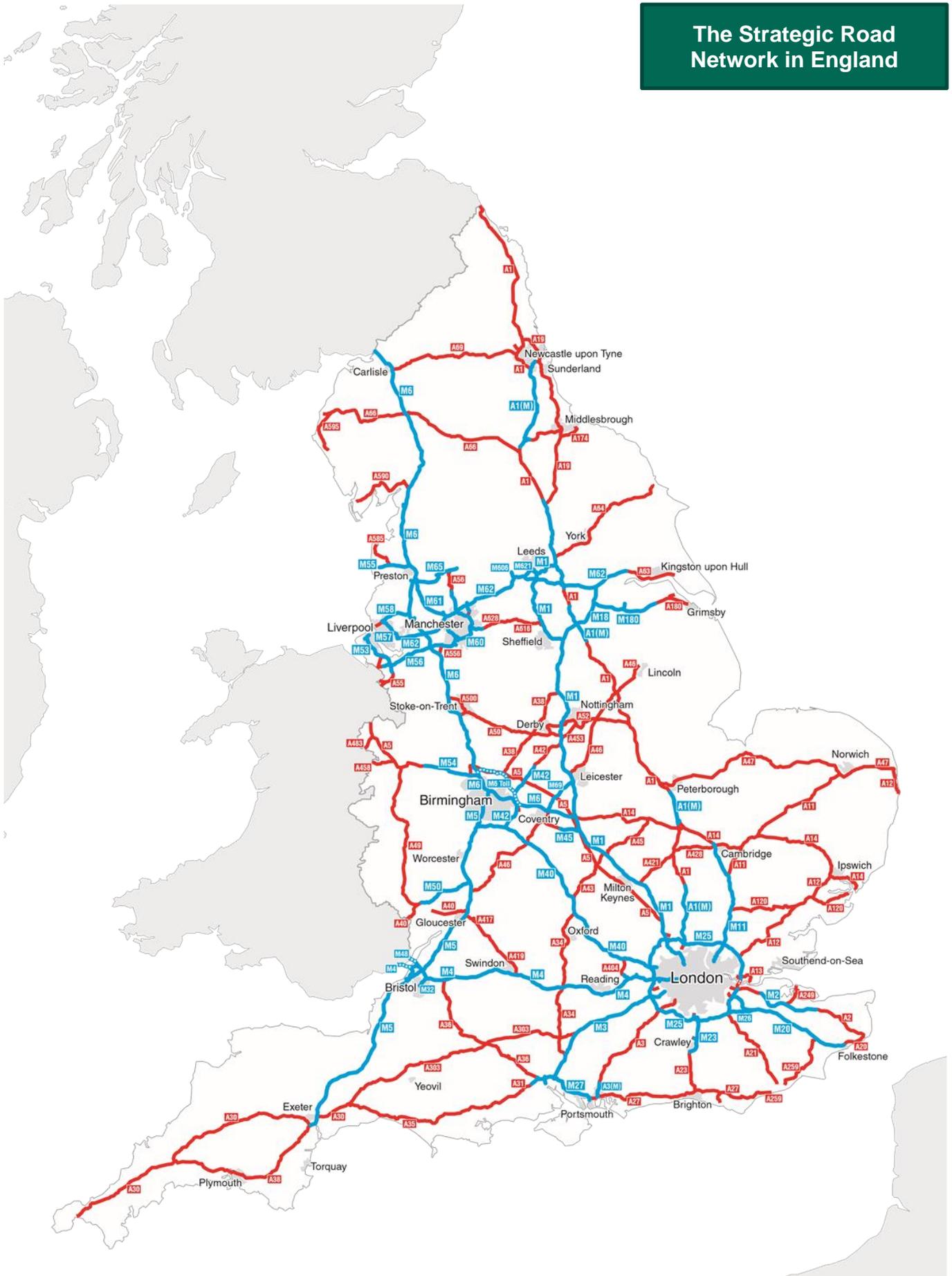
The network is managed by Highways England on behalf of the Government and, despite encompassing only 2% of the combined length of all of England's roads, it carries a third of all traffic, and over two thirds of all lorry traffic. From the start of RP2, the SRN will be funded from the National Roads 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.

⁵ At: www.gov.uk/government/publications/air-quality-plan-for-nitrogen-dioxide-no2-in-uk-2017

⁶ At: 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 it⁷.

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,

⁷ Road Investment Strategy post 2020: planning ahead at: 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 arrangements⁸. 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**⁹ – 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**¹⁰ – 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**¹¹ – 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**¹² – this joint research by ORR and Transport Focus provides advice on the kind of performance specification that users would like to see.

⁸ 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*.

⁹ At: www.gov.uk/guidance/future-investment-in-englands-motorways-and-major-roads#route-strategies-march-2017

¹⁰ At: www.gov.uk/government/collections/road-investment-strategy-post-2020

¹¹ At: www.gov.uk/guidance/highways-england-supporting-growth

¹² At: www.transportfocus.org.uk/research-publications/publications/measuring-performance-englands-strategic-roads-users-want/

- **Road users' priorities**¹³ – 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.

¹³ At: 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 document¹⁴, 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 RIS2¹⁵. 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)

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

¹⁵ At: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/analysis-to-inform-ris2-dfte-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).¹⁶

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**¹⁷ – 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

¹⁶ Consultation published at: www.nic.org.uk/publications/congestion-capacity-carbon-priorities-for-national-infrastructure/

¹⁷ Reports published at: www.transportforthenorth.com/reports/

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

- **Midlands Connect**¹⁸ – 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**¹⁹ – 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.

¹⁸ Reports published at: www.midlandsconnect.uk/publications/

¹⁹ Reports published at: 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*²⁰, 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.

²⁰ At: 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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Proposals for the creation of a Major Road Network

1. Introduction

As part of the Transport Investment Strategy, the government announced that it would take forward proposals to create the Major Road Network (MRN).

This middle-tier of economically and strategically important local authority 'A' roads will sit between the nationally-managed Strategic Road Network (SRN) and the rest of the Local Road Network. These roads will benefit from targeted funding available through a share of the National Roads Fund, with the aim to improve productivity and connectivity in our towns and cities.

In creating this network, the government has 5 central policy objectives. These are:

- **Reduce congestion** – alleviating local and regional congestion, reducing traffic jams and bottlenecks.
- **Support economic growth and rebalancing** – support the delivery of the industrial strategy, contributing to a positive economic impact that is felt across the regions.
- **Support housing delivery** – unlocking land for new housing developments.
- **Support all road users** – recognising the needs of all users, including cyclists, pedestrians and disabled people.
- **Support the SRN** – complementing and supporting the existing SRN by creating a more resilient road network in England.

This consultation seeks views on the government's proposals for how the MRN will achieve these policy objectives across 3 themes. These are:

- **defining the network**
- **investment planning**
- **eligibility and investment assessment criteria**

The proposals in this consultation outline how the MRN will:

- form a consistent, coherent network alongside the SRN that brings about the opportunity to better co-ordinate roads investment
- provide funding certainty to roads in the network, through use of the National Roads Fund, and raise standards and performance across the new network
- provide clear roles for local and regional partners, who will support the government to deliver and develop MRN schemes

Confidentiality

We thank all respondents for taking the time to read the consultation document and to respond to the consultation questions. Your views on the programme's core objectives and principles, as well as the major themes set out in the consultation, will contribute to the formulation of MRN policy.

2. Respondent details

Your contact details. We will only contact you if we need to clarify any of the answers you give us.

Your name

Your email

In what capacity are you responding?

- Central government, executive agency or non-departmental public body
- Local authority or combined authority
- Sub-national transport body, ADEPT or other regional partnership (public sector)
- Industry or business (private sector)
- MP / Councillor
- Member of the public
- Other (please specify):

In which region are you based?

- East Midlands
- London
- East of England
- North East
- North West
- South East
- South West
- West Midlands
- Yorkshire and the Humber

3. MRN core principles

Questions in this section relate to pages 20 to 21 of the consultation document, 'MRN Core Principles'.

In order to deliver our objectives for the MRN, we believe there are a number of fundamental principles that must be at the heart of our plans for a MRN and its programme of investment.

These are:

- **increased certainty of funding**
- **a consistent network**
- **a coordinated investment programme**
- **a focus on enhancement and major renewals**
- **clear local, regional and national roles**
- **strengthening links with the Strategic Road Network**

Q1. Do you agree with the proposed core principles for the MRN outlined in the consultation document?

- Yes
 No
 Don't know

4. MRN core principles

If you answered no, which core principle(s) do you disagree with? Provide an explanation why.

We agree with the six proposed core principles however there is a need to recognise the need to support all categories of road users. There appears to be a focus towards enhancement and major renewals and no reference to the benefits improvements to public transport or to non-motorised can bring to the MRN. In order to better promote non-motorised users it is also important the note the issues relating to road safety and as this is a key element of better journeys for all users. These should be acknowledged within the core principles.

5. Defining the network

Questions in this section relate to pages 22 to 27 of the consultation document, 'Defining the Network'.

The extent of the network must strike a balance between capturing the most economically important regional roads and ensuring that its size is appropriate, enabling investments that can drive an improvement to the level of funding available.

Any definition must make the best use of local and regional knowledge to ensure that the most economically important roads are captured. To strike this balance appropriately, we are proposing the use of both quantitative and qualitative criteria to define the network. This approach ensures:

- the network is coherent, i.e. more than just a set of fragmented sections of road
- the network has a sound, objective analytical basis, yet also has the flexibility to factor in local knowledge and requirements

Q2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the quantitative criteria outlined in the consultation document and their proposed application?

- Strongly agree
 Agree
 Neither agree nor disagree
 Disagree
 Strongly disagree

6. Defining the network - quantitative criteria

If you disagree or strongly disagree, what should be the quantitative criteria?

N/A

7. Defining the network - qualitative criteria

Q3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the qualitative criteria outlined in the consultation document and their application?

- Strongly agree
 Agree
 Neither agree not disagree
 Disagree
 Strongly disagree

8. Defining the network - qualitative criteria

If you disagree or strongly disagree, what should be the qualitative criteria?

Wokingham Borough Council agree with the majority of the proposals however with regard to Access to/Resilience for the SRN we believe that there needs to be a recognition that some local roads that run parallel to the SRN do play an important role in providing additional capacity along the corridor particularly in sections where the SRN is at or over capacity during peak period. In addition, it is important that local roads that feed the SRN are also recognised as being an integral part of the SRN/MRN. The use of the flow and qualitative criteria in these instances would be appropriate, however it would not be appropriate to exclude these roads because they are considered access routes.

Resilience for the SRN must be an important factor to consider. Whilst it is recognised that many of these routes serve as agreed tactical diversion routes for the SRN during incidents or road works on the SRN, many are also used far more often when the SRN is overloaded. To ensure that the additional capacity for the corridor is maintained it will be necessary to ensure that funding is available when needed and should therefore be considered for inclusion in the MRN.

9. Defining the network

Q4. Have both the quantitative and qualitative criteria proposed in the consultation document identified all sections of road you feel should be included in the MRN?

- Yes
 No
 Don't know

If no, explain how the criteria are failing to identify a section of road you feel should be included.

The indicative map of the MRN includes a number of key routes within the Borough of Wokingham that we agree should be in the MRN, namely the A329(M)/A3290, the A33 and parts of the A4. However we fail to understand why the A4 in its entirety is not included. In addition, the B3270 should be included. Both routes provide key routes through Berkshire, support the SRN and have traffic flows in excess of the quantitative criterion, link major employment and urban areas with significant populations. We also believe the A327 and A329 should also be considered.

Q5. Have the quantitative or qualitative criteria proposed in the consultation document identified sections of road you feel should not be included in the MRN?

- Yes
 No
 Don't know

If they have, explain why these roads should not be included in the MRN.

N/A

10. Defining the network – refreshing the MRN

It will be important for the MRN to remain relevant and reflect the latest data and changes to economic centres and road use. However, this must be balanced against the need to provide a stable platform on which the MRN investment programme can be delivered.

We propose to review the MRN every 5 years to coincide with the existing Road Investment Strategy (RIS) timetable. This will involve updating and reviewing the data that are used and engagement with all bodies involved in the delivery of the MRN programme.

Q6. Do you agree with the proposal for how the MRN should be reviewed in future years?

- Yes
 No
 Don't know

If you answered no, how should the MRN be reviewed in future years?

N/A

11. Investment planning

Questions in this section relate to pages 28 to 31 of the consultation document, 'Investment Planning'.

The creation of the MRN should support long-term strategic consideration of investment needs in order to make best use of the targeted funding that will be made available from the National Roads Fund and deliver the best possible result for the user. The important national and regional role played by roads included in the MRN means that individual local authorities cannot plan investments in isolation, nor can decisions be completely centralised at either a regional or national level.

As set out in the core principles section of the consultation document we propose that, alongside the local role of highways authorities, there needs to be a strong regional focus for investment planning within a consistent national network. The consultation document sets out roles for:

- **local bodies (such as local authorities and local highways authorities)**
- **regional bodies (such as sub-national transport bodies)**
- **national bodies (such as the department)**

Q7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the roles outlined in the consultation document for:

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neither agree not disagree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Local bodies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Regional bodies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
National bodies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If you have selected Disagree or Disagree Strongly for any of the proposed roles, what should the role involve? Specify which role you're referring to, ie local, regional or national.

N/A

12. Additional roles and responsibilities

Q8. What additional responsibilities, if any, should be included? State at which level these roles should be allocated.

No further comments

Q9. Do you agree with our proposals to agree regional groupings to support the investment planning of the MRN in areas where no sub-national transport bodies (STBs) exist?

- Yes
 No
 Don't know

If you answered no, explain how the MRN should be managed in regions where no STBs exist.

Wokingham Borough is in the Transport for South East (TfSE) region and also the Thames Valley Berkshire LEP area.

13. Investment planning – regional evidence base

We propose that STBs or regional groups would be responsible for developing a regional evidence base which would be the basis for the development of the MRN investment programme. Where STBs exist we expect that the regional evidence base would be developed from the existing statutory transport strategies for which STBs are responsible.

The regional evidence base would be evidence-based and should not be limited to performing a mechanical sifting exercise. As a minimum, the department would expect them to comprise the following:

- an assessment of the overall condition of the existing network and its performance.
- the identification of network-wide issues and priority corridors.
- analysis of potential region-wide solutions and the development of specific interventions to tackle the issues identified over at least a 5 year period, although we expect and encourage STBs or regions to look beyond this in their strategic planning.
- an assessment of the potential sequencing of the schemes identified.

Q10. Are there any other factors, or evidence, that should be included within the scope of the regional evidence bases?

- Yes
 No
 Don't know

If you answered yes, describe the additional factors or evidence you feel should be within the scope of the regional evidence bases.

N/A

14. Investment planning – the role of Highways England

A core principle of the MRN programme is to bring more coordinated planning to these important roads. Given Highways England's experience in road investment planning, and the need to ensure a seamless transition between the SRN and MRN, we propose that Highways England, the body responsible for running the SRN, should also have a role in the MRN Programme. This role could include:

- **programme support** - Highways England could have a role in the governance of the MRN investment programme advising the department on the development of the MRN pipeline and its interactions with the SRN, and providing wider support as needed.
- **analytical support** - Highways England could support the department in analysing the regional evidence bases in order to prepare advice to ministers on the MRN investment programme.
- **cost estimate support** - Highways England could support the department in assessing scheme cost estimates.
- **delivery support** - Highways England could support, if required, LAs in the delivery of agreed MRN schemes. This could include advising LAs on design and development as well as supporting access to the supply chain to enable LAs to take advantage of economies of scale that may be available.

Q11. Do you agree with the role that has been outlined in the consultation document for Highways England?

- Yes
 No
 Don't know

If you answered no, what should be the role of Highways England?

N/A

15. Eligibility criteria

Questions in this section relate to pages 32 to 35 of the consultation document, 'Eligibility and investment assessment criteria'.

The department does not intend to replace existing funding streams such as formula funding for Highway Maintenance or Integrated Transport Block funding which may be directed to any LA roads including the MRN network. For that reason, we propose that funding to improve and enhance the MRN should be targeted towards significant interventions that will transform important stretches of the network.

We propose that only proposals for contributions of £20 million or over will be considered for MRN funding. As we want this fund to benefit all areas of the country and produce an improvement for users across the network we would expect that most funding requests would not exceed £50 million, where there is a strong case we would be willing to consider scheme proposals requiring higher contributions, up to a maximum of £100 million.

To get the best value for money, regions and local authority promoters should work to minimise scheme costs through scheme optimisation and the securing of third party contributions, alongside local contributions. We are proposing the following schemes would be eligible for MRN funding:

- bypasses
- missing road links
- widening of existing MRN roads
- major structural renewals
- major junction improvements
- variable message signs
- traffic management and the use of smart technology and data
- packages of improvements

Q12. Do you agree with the cost thresholds outlined in the consultation document?

- Yes
 No
 Don't know

If you answered no, what should be the cost thresholds?

There should be some recognition that not all interventions that provide significant improvements to the network will meet the minimum threshold of £20m. Relatively minor schemes should not be excluded from the process just because they are 'cheap'. There should be a consideration for the strength of the business case and the schemes value for money.

The previous threshold for DfT funding for major project was £5m and this could be considered the lower threshold although schemes in the range of £2m-£5m should be considered on the merits of the business

Q13. Do you agree with the eligibility criteria outlined in the consultation document?

- Yes
 No
 Don't know

If you answered no, what should the eligibility criteria be?

There appears to be a presumption against Public transport enhancements. The criteria should be extended to include Public Transport and non-motorised user interventions. The provision for these modes have the potential to significantly reduce congestion along routes, one of the objectives for the MRN. The provision of MRT along these routes in addition to bus priority schemes at junctions would provide significant improvements for access to bus and coach services and facilitate modal shift from private cars.

16. Investment assessment criteria

To support the development of regional evidence bases and a national investment programme we are proposing that a clear set of criteria be developed. These support the government's overarching objectives for the MRN programme whilst providing local and regional bodies the flexibility to develop proposals that support the delivery of local and regional objectives.

We propose that these criteria should be as follows:

Objective	Criteria
Reduce Congestion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Alleviate Congestion ○ Environmental Impacts: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improve air quality and biodiversity ○ Reduce noise and risk of flooding ○ Protect water quality, landscape and cultural heritage sites
Support Economic Growth & Rebalancing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Industrial Strategy: Supports regional strategic goals to boost economic growth ○ Economic Impact: Improve ability to access new or existing employment sites ○ Trade & Gateways Impact: Improve international connectivity, e.g. access to ports & airports
Support Housing Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Support the creation of new housing developments by improving access to future development sites and boosting suitable land capacity
Supporting All Road Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Deliver benefits for non-motorised users, including cyclists, pedestrians and disabled people ○ Safety Benefits: Reduce the risk of deaths/serious injuries for all users of the MRN
Support the SRN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Improve end to end journey times across both networks. ○ Improve journey time reliability ○ Improve SRN resilience

Q14. Do you agree with the investment assessment criteria outlined in the consultation document?

- Yes
 No
 Don't know

If you answered no, what should the investment assessment criteria be?

Support for All Road Users should include Public Transport Interventions.

Q15. In addition to the eligibility and assessment criteria described what, if any, additional criteria should be included in the proposal? Please be as detailed as possible.

There must be acknowledgement of the benefits public transport interventions can provide to the MRN objectives.

17. Other considerations

Q16. Is there anything further you would like added to the MRN proposal?

It is important that all roads designated as part of the MRN should meet a certain minimum standard to ensure consistency across the network. This standard will need to reflect the different needs between urban & rural roads and should include expected minimum standards for non-motorised users.

Any revenue spending implications as a result of these capital investments must be considered and addressed accordingly. We expect that the day to day maintenance of the MRN within our area will remain with the local authority, however any increased cost for maintenance requirements as a result of the MRN standards being applied or as a result of increase asset management & maintenance must not adversely affect councils existing budget and maintenance funding will need to be adjusted accordingly.

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