

Report to the Cabinet

Meeting to be held on Thursday, 1 February 2018

Report of the Head of Service - Planning and Environment

Part I

Electoral Divisions affected:
All

Department for Transport Consultation: Shaping the Future of England's Strategic Roads

(Appendix 'A' refers)

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Executive Summary

The Government will shortly be taking decisions about future investment priorities for maintaining, operating and improving the Strategic Road Network (SRN) it will implement through the second Road Investment Strategy (RIS2) covering the financial years 2020-21 to 2024-25 (Road Period 2). The Department for Transport has launched a consultation seeking views on Highways England's proposals in its Strategic Road Network Initial Report. This report summarises the County Council's proposed response as set out in Appendix 'A'.

Recommendation

The Cabinet is recommended to approve the attached 'Appendix A' as the County Council's response to the consultation.

Background and Advice

The Government will shortly be taking decisions about future investment priorities for maintaining, operating and improving the Strategic Road Network (SRN) it will implement through the second Road Investment Strategy (RIS2) covering the financial years 2020-21 to 2024-25 (Road Period 2). To assist this process and to ensure that investment reflects and meets the needs of road users and the wider public, the Department for Transport has launched a consultation seeking views on Highways England's proposals in its Strategic Road Network Initial Report. The deadline for receipt of responses is Wednesday 7th February 2018. The Initial Report sets out the views of Highways England on the current state of the SRN, its potential future needs and Highways England's priorities for Road Period 2.

Whilst the County Council welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Initial Report, a number of the consultation questions are clearly targeted at users of the SRN or those affected by it, for example, businesses and residents living in close proximity to SRN routes. It is therefore proposed that the County Council submit a general response focused on those issues that are of relevance and priority to the County Council as a local highway authority.

It is worth noting that on 23rd December 2017, the Department for Transport launched a parallel 12 week consultation on proposals to create a Major Road Network, to which a separate response is being prepared for consideration by Cabinet at its March meeting.

From April 2020, the Government will fund investment in the SRN from the new National Roads Fund, resourced by the Vehicle Excise Duty paid by motorists in England. The SRN comprises nationally significant routes including most motorways and the most important 'A' class roads. Highways England is the government company charged with operating, maintaining and improving the SRN on behalf of the Secretary of State for Transport. The SRN is 4,300 miles long, accounting for only 2.4% of all roads in England by length but carrying a third of all traffic and two thirds of all heavy goods vehicle traffic. Roads comprising the SRN generally exhibit some of the following characteristics:

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

In Lancashire, the size of the SRN has reduced progressively since the late 1990s with the responsibility for many former trunk roads transferred to the local highway authorities (Lancashire County Council, Blackburn with Darwen Council and Blackpool Council). The SRN currently comprises the following:

- **M6** Greater Manchester Boundary to Cumbria Boundary
- **M55** M6 Junction 32 (Broughton) to Junction 4 (Peel Hill)
- **M58** M6 Junction 26 (Orrell) to Merseyside Boundary
- **M61** M6 Junction 30 (Bamber Bridge) to Greater Manchester Boundary
- **M65** M6 Junction 29 (M6) to Junction 10 (Burnley)
- **M66** A56 (Edenfield) to Greater Manchester Boundary
- **A56** M66 (Edenfield) to M65 Junction 8 (Hapton)
- **A585** M55 Junction 3 (Kirkham) to Fleetwood

RIS2 will cover investment in the operation, maintenance and renewal of the existing SRN as well as new enhancements. It will also include completion of any outstanding schemes from the first Road Investment Strategy period and a number of other schemes already announced such as the Lower Thames Crossing. These schemes are likely to require all of the funding available for SRN enhancements in the first half of the RIS2 period; hence, any new schemes agreed in RIS2 would be for construction later in that period and beyond. Furthermore, as part of RIS2 the Government will consider funding improvements on the local road network or an

alternative mode of transport where there is clear evidence that such investment will be of benefit to the SRN.

Highways England's Initial Report comprises an informative statement of its priorities (safety, customer service and delivery) and the progress it has made to date. The report also sets out how the company has thought about future investment needs following extensive consultation with customers, stakeholders and the Secretary of State for Transport as shareholder, as well as improving its understanding of SRN infrastructure, performance and future challenges. Highways England is proposing that investment in the SRN over the next 20 years should focus on achieving consistency around four categories of road:

- Smart motorways (routes with the highest demand, evolving with technology);
- Conventional motorways (in their current form);
- Expressways (a new concept for the busiest 'A' class roads in the SRN, with better design. Technology and on-road response and alternative roads for non-motorised users and slow vehicles);
- All-purpose trunk roads (the remaining 'A' class roads in the SRN).

As part of the consultation, the DfT is seeking views on the proposed four categories and the development of Expressways. The new 'Expressway' concept essentially comprises the upgrading of a number of existing 'A' class roads in the SRN to provide motorway performance and enhanced technology similar to that already being introduced as part of current 'Smart' motorway upgrades. Expressways will be dual carriageways with grade-separated junctions; non-motorised users and slow moving vehicles will not be permitted.

The DfT is also asking for views on the current size of the SRN, specifically whether there are local roads the DfT should consider including in the SRN and conversely, whether there are roads currently in the SRN that should be removed.

Consultations

N/A

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Risk management

If the County Council does not submit a response, it will forgo an opportunity to influence the Government's decisions about future investment priorities on the Strategic Road Network.

Financial

There are no financial implications.

Legal

There are no legal implications.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
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None

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

N/A