

STRATEGIC ROAD INVESTMENT – CALL FOR EVIDENCE

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February 2023

1. How effectively the RIS2 enhancements portfolio has been managed to date;

ADEPT has no evidence on how the RIS2 enhancements portfolio has been managed to date.

2. Whether risks to the enhancements’ portfolio for the remainder of the RIS2 period are being well managed;

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3. What the impacts of delays and cost overruns are on the overall programme, and whether the revised programme can be delivered to schedule and on budget;

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4. What progress is being made on planning for the next Road Investment Strategy;

From the local highway authority (LHA) perspective, the level of engagement on RIS3 planning and development is poor. Despite promises of collaboration, the experience of many LHAs is that development stages are presented as a fait accompli, with no real opportunity to influence or amend. The experience of RIS2, with the final programme being announced including schemes in a LHA area that the LHA had never heard of, must be avoided in the future.

5. What lessons from RIS2 need to be incorporated into RIS3 to ensure it is achievable and delivers on policy objectives;

National Highways must ensure that schemes in RIS3 are deliverable. The Office of Rail and Road (ORR), in their annual assessment of National Highways’ performance¹, notes that wider construction costs, inflationary pressures and other factors including planning (e.g. time to obtain DCO consent) have led to higher project costs and longer programme durations. This has meant that a number of projects previously marked for delivery in the period 2020 to 2025, will no longer be delivered. In addition, the length of time taken to reach a decision to deliver RIS schemes is extensive, and in many instances, will mean the scheme that is delivered is effectively “out of date”. RIS3 needs to see streamlined processes and decision-making if costs are to be contained within the funding envelope.

¹ https://www.orr.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-07/annual-assessment-of-national-highways-performance-2022-web_0.pdf

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One of the objectives of RIS2 was for National Highways to work in partnership with other transport bodies. This must significantly improve as a part of RIS3 and include closer working with sub-national transport bodies (STBs) and LHAs. Many LHAs often find National Highways engagement superficial and too late. Real consideration of the local growth scenario is often missing, meaning Strategic Road Network (SRN) schemes being developed and eventually delivered are not fit for purpose at as soon as they are completed. National Highways tends to work in isolation with no real understanding of the interaction with the local growth agenda (driven by Government planning / National Planning Policy Framework requirements) and highway network challenges.

Early communication and improved information across the board from the RIS development process itself to individual RIS scheme development is needed. This applies equally for LHAs and STBs. For example, Midlands Connect set out in their RIS priorities document that *“Our partners across the Midlands are looking for clarity on what input they can expect in developing a future Road Investment Strategy that builds on Midlands Connect’s already close, collaborative relationship with Highways England”*².

6. Whether the Government’s current and forthcoming roads investment programme is meeting the current and future needs of consumers and business;

The RIS2 vision was a SRN that supports the economy, is greener, safer and more reliable, more integrated and smarter.

At a strategic level, the schemes being delivered as a part of the Government’s current and forthcoming roads investment programme are helping to support housing and economic growth across England, by providing more capacity and improving the connectivity of people and businesses. However, project delays have reduced the number of schemes that National Highways plan to open before 2025, from 43 schemes to 38 schemes³. This will limit housing and economic growth in areas where project delays have been experienced.

In addition, the inability of National Highways to amend schemes in light of Local Plan development during the years of early development and design work, means in many cases these expensive schemes are not fit for purpose when they are (eventually) delivered.

As set out in the RIS2 strategy, the SRN makes extensive and effective use of environmentally and visually sensitive ‘green infrastructure’, modern materials and careful planting, including trees. Together, these help to minimise and mitigate the air, light, noise, visual and water quality impacts of the SRN on those living or working nearby and sustain wildlife habitats. The SRN also supports the increased delivery of EV Charge Points and transition of vehicles to zero emissions. This should be continued as a part of RIS3. However, to support the government’s legally binding net zero commitments, greater emphasis should be placed on reducing embodied (e.g. construction) and user generated emissions (e.g. use of internal combustion engine vehicles). The ADEPT [Live Labs 2 programme](#) - a £30m three-year, UK wide programme funded by DfT – is focused on tackling the long-term decarbonisation of highways

² <https://www.midlandsconnect.uk/media/1563/ris-2-priorities-final-online-20032019.pdf>

³ https://www.orr.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-07/annual-assessment-of-national-highways-performance-2022-web_0.pdf

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infrastructure and assets across local roads. A key element of Live Labs 2 is to share learning, and we will actively engage with National Highways. This engagement needs to extend to LHAs to maximise the opportunity to work across the Local Road Network (LRN) and SRN to reduce road user emissions. This is particularly important in meeting net zero requirements for those LHAs where the SRN emissions are far greater than LRN emissions for their administrative area.

National Highways has adopted the Safe System' approach to road safety management. RIS2 has the goal of 'Zero Harm', aiming to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured on the SRN to a level approaching zero by 2040. Effort and work on improvements to road user safety should continue as a part of the development of RIS3.

National Highways is working on creating a more reliable road network. The National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) examined the resilience of the UK's infrastructure and provided recommendations in Spring 2020. It recommended that a framework for resilience should deliver infrastructure that is resilient to a range of future challenges which requires specific actions between 2021 and 2024:

- Government should publish a full set of resilience standards every five years, following advice from regulators, alongside an assessment of any changes needed to deliver them.
- Infrastructure operators should carry out regular and proportionate stress tests, overseen by regulators, to ensure their systems and services can meet government's resilience standards, and take actions to address any vulnerabilities
- Infrastructure operators should develop and maintain long term resilience strategies, and regulators should ensure their determinations in future price reviews are consistent with meeting resilience standards in the short and long term.⁴

National Highways is aiming to create a 'smarter' SRN. However, following the 2020 Transport Committee report, government paused the rollout of smart motorway schemes until 5 years' worth of safety data is available. ADEPT urges the government to follow key recommendations set out in the Transport Committee report, including retrofitting more emergency areas across existing ALR schemes, conducting an independent evaluation of the effectiveness of stopped vehicle detection technology, exploring the introduction of the emergency corridor manoeuvre to the Highway Code and investigating the benefits of health and safety assessments being undertaken by the Office of Rail and Road⁵.

7. Whether the Government's roads investment programme aligns with other policy priorities, such as decarbonisation, levelling up, productivity and growth;

Decarbonisation

Since the preparation of RIS2, policy at a national, regional and local level has placed increased emphasis on the decarbonisation of the transport network. At a national level this has included an announcement in November 2020 on the ban of the sale of new petrol and diesel

⁴ <https://nic.org.uk/app/uploads/Anticipate-React-Recover-28-May-2020.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/government-to-pause-rollout-of-all-lane-running-motorways>

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vehicles by 2030 and the publication of the Government’s Transport Decarbonisation Plan in July 2021.

Whilst RIS2 acknowledged the need to support the decarbonisation of the transport network, this was expected to primarily occur as a result of the increase in the uptake of zero emission vehicles and wider societal changes. Whilst RIS2 did commit to improvements to existing charge point infrastructure, it did not set out a clear strategy on how the government’s road investment programme could support the decarbonisation agenda. This issue was similarly not addressed in the Transport Decarbonisation Plan.

It is important that RIS3 supports the government targets to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. This will require a clear plan on how decarbonisation of the SRN will be delivered including a strong focus on demand management and behavioural change measures that result in a reduction in vehicle use overall. This should be underpinned by strong partnership working with key stakeholders such as STBs, LHAs, the freight sector, academia and organisations investing in and driving innovation in this field. This means that the government’s future road investment programme cannot be premised on delivering large scale capacity improvement schemes as:

1. Where these schemes have the potential to generate significant amounts of embodied carbon; and
2. Where these schemes have the potential to result in induced demand – increasing user generated carbon emissions.

Levelling Up

Improved transport connectivity, and in turn improvements to the SRN, can help support levelling up by providing better access to opportunities.

RIS2 is well aligned with the principles of “levelling up”, as many schemes focus on improvements to connectivity, supporting economic growth and providing better access to jobs and opportunities. However, there currently seems to be no clear evidence that the RIS programme as a whole aligns to the priority levelling up areas as determined by Government. RIS2 schemes that focused on wider economic transformation include:

- North: Dualling the A66 between the A1(M) and the M6 at Penrith. This will create a continuous dual carriageway across the Pennines and will support faster, more reliable journeys, decreasing journey times for trips to the Lake District, the North-East and East Midlands. The scheme will also help freight drivers as they travel to and from ports, while providing safer overtaking opportunities.
- A new tunnel allowing crossing of the Lower Thames Estuary. This will create a new tunnel under the river Thames between Kent and Essex, together with new supporting roads linking to the M25, A13 and M2. These will increase capacity and provide quicker, safer and more reliable journeys locally, regionally and nationally. The scheme will provide an alternative to the Dartford Crossing and support the creation of thousands of jobs in Kent and Essex.
- A27 Arundel bypass, will replace the existing single carriageway, linking two existing dual carriageway sections to reduce congestion and support the wider economy.

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- North-facing access from junctions 10a to 11 on the M54 to M6 link road. This will support local economic growth by relieving congestion and improving facilities for customers and communities.
- Improvements to the A46 'Trans-Midlands Trade Corridor' between the M5 and the Humber Ports is expected to generate £115 billion value of output produced by businesses in the corridor, 22% of goods and services produced on the A46 corridor, 65% of businesses surveyed on the corridor say they would create new jobs if the A46 was improved. Work in RP2 is expected to create a continuous dual carriageway from Lincoln to Warwick, delivering one of Midlands Connect's key priorities. RIS2 also includes a commitment to start the improvement of the A46 Coventry junctions at Binley and Walsgrave by 2025.

RIS 3 must build on the investment delivered through RIS2 and consider ways to reduce barriers to movement and help to support levelling up of the economy by supporting/delivering the ideas set out in Highways England's (now National Highways) Strategic Economic Growth Plan. This must however be delivered while supporting the decarbonisation agenda.

Cross Working with Other Transport Bodies

There must be strong collaboration and cross working between LHAs, sub-national transport bodies and National Highways on schemes that affect or have the potential to affect the local road network. These bodies have a wealth of expertise and understanding of local and regional priorities through local scheme deliveries and can provide knowledge on scheme prioritisation to deliver the needed economic growth in a more efficient way. The current levels of engagement seen through the RIS2 period cannot be considered as "strong collaboration" and at times feels too little, too late, less real engagement and more being informed. RIS3 gives the opportunity to address this.

SRN schemes have the potential to alleviate pressures on the local road network by keeping strategic trips on the SRN (i.e., preventing 'rat running'). These schemes also have the potential to support public transport, walking and cycling journeys on the local highway network – in turn helping to support mode shift and the decarbonisation of transport.

8. How RIS3 should take account of technological developments, and evidence on ways of increasing capacity on the Strategic Road Network (such as smart motorways and potential alternatives to them).

Technological advancement has made it possible for valuable data on traffic movement and driver behaviour to be easily and regularly collected. RIS3 should continue to use this data to better understand the use and performance of the SRN, particularly the origin and destination of trips being made. This data should then be used to help inform targeted interventions potentially by both National Highways and the LHA.

Smart motorways can help provide additional capacity without the need for new physical infrastructure. However, RIS3 must build on the findings of the Smart Motorway Safety Action Plan to address the identified safety issues to make the smart motorways safer and to provide greater public confidence in their use. Actions set out within the Action Plan include faster attendance by more National Highways traffic officer patrols, committing to new standards for

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spacing of places to stop in an emergency, national programme to install more emergency areas on existing smart motorways and making emergency areas more visible etc⁶.

It is important that the use and deployment of new technologies to manage and monitor the SRN is undertaken gradually and in a phased approach so as to ensure the safety of users. National Highways should be leading on and investing in innovation, automation and technology in order to maximise the capacity of their asset, particularly if they are to meet their net zero commitments in relation to the SRN.

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https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/936811/smart-motorway-safety-evidence-stocktake-and-action-plan.pdf