

Strategic Roads Update

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Cabinet Member: Cllr John Woodman – Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport Division and Local Member: All

1. Summary/link to the County Plan

- 1.1. Supports the Council's vision for Somerset to be a thriving local economy, which attracts jobs and investment: by Improving key road, rail and broadband communication links.

2. Issues for consideration

- 2.1 Members are asked to consider and comment on the update on strategic roads investment in the County following previous consideration of the issues in May 2016.
- 2.2 Funding for strategic road improvements comes from a number of sources and this report sets out current progress in securing improvements to strategic roads through the available mechanisms. Several new funds have been announced since the Committee previously considered the issue.

The report considers opportunities to secure strategic road improvements through the following sources:

- Department for Transport Roads Investment Strategy (RIS)
- Highways England Designated Funds.
- Department for Transport 'Pre-Growth Deal' Major Scheme funding.
- Local Enterprise Partnership Local Growth Fund and Growth Deal Process
- Department for Transport Large Local Major Schemes.
- (New) Department for Transport National Productivity Investment Fund
- (New) Housing Infrastructure Fund
- (New) Emerging policy on a new Major Road Network (MRN) for England.
- Developer Funds.

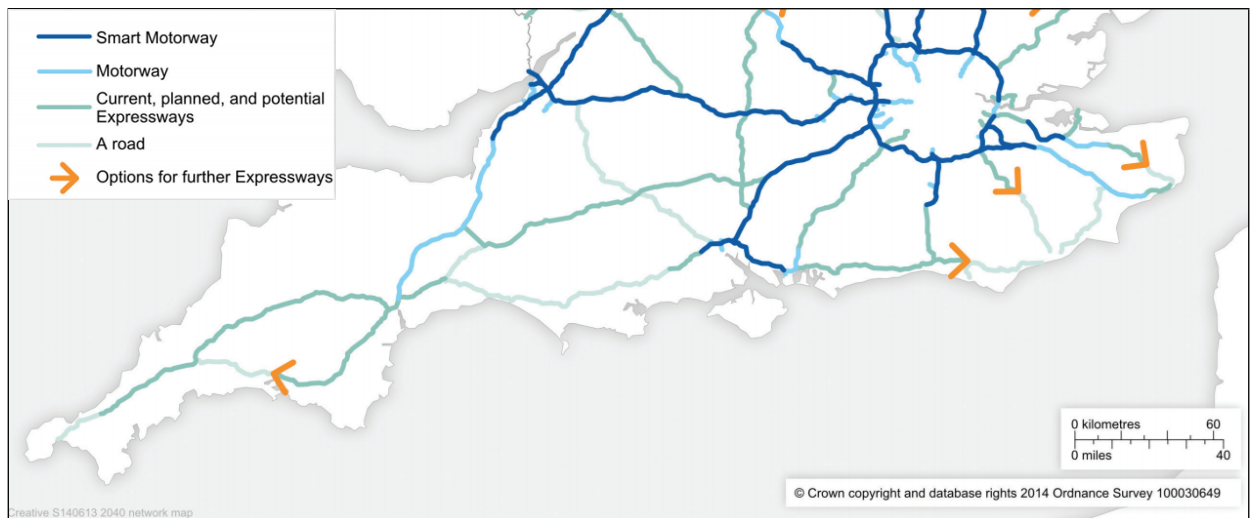
3. Background

3.1. Department for Transport Roads Investment Strategy (RIS)

The Government's 'Roads Investment Strategy' is a roads programme that started in 2015/16. Strategic roads investment (in motorways and 'trunk' roads) will be made over 'Road Periods' lasting 5 years, to transform the busiest sections of the network to enable improved safety levels, smoother traffic flow, and increased capacity.

- 3.2. Smart Motorways, which use technology to expand capacity and regulate the flow of traffic, will form the core of the Strategic Road Network (SRN), while the most strategically important A-roads will be upgraded to Expressways.

- 3.3. Expressways will generally be dual carriageway – safe, well-built and more resilient to delay. Junctions will be largely grade-separated, so traffic can move freely from the start of the Expressway to its end.



- 3.4. Specific RIS schemes relevant to Somerset announced for the first five year period (2015/16 to 2019/20) include:
- *A303/A358 Improvements*: Improving the A358 to dual carriageway between Southfields roundabout and the M5; and the dualling of the Sparkford to Ilchester section of the A303. (Outside Somerset the RIS also includes another A303 scheme - construction of a 1.8mile twin bored tunnel past Stonehenge with a dual carriageway bypass for Winterborne Stoke).
 - *Enhancements at M5 J23*: Improvement of Junction 23 through enhanced slip roads and more capacity on the junction itself will unlock further development sites near Hinkley Point.
- 3.5. These schemes are currently being progressed by Highways England. The A303 Sparkford to Ilchester and A358 route options have been the subject of an initial ‘non-statutory’ round of public consultation and the Council’s responses can be accessed from <http://www.somerset.gov.uk/policies-and-plans/schemes-and-initiatives/a30-a303-a358-improvement-project/>. The A358 consultation response was considered by the Scrutiny Committee in June 2017 prior to the response being finalised.
- 3.6. Following the consultation on the A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Highways England has confirmed that they expect to make a preferred route announcement later in this year, potentially towards the end of October but there is more work to do to get to this point.
- 3.7. The Council expressed concerns about the ‘single option’ approach to consultation on the A358 scheme and Highways England has now announced there will be a further ‘supplementary’ consultation on options for the proposed ‘off-line’ section of the route connecting the A358 near West Hatch Lane with the M5. A preferred option will be announced for the ‘on-line’ section of the improvement between West Hatch Lane and Southfields junction later this year, towards the end of the year.

- 3.8.** The RIS notes that the Government will also set aside funding for smaller scale improvements to the A303/A30 between Southfields and Honiton to improve safety and journey quality for road users recognising that large scale improvements would be challenging given the protected landscape and topography surrounding the route. This includes some small-scale work in the Blackdown Hills AONB which will take account of the environmental sensitivity of the area. Devon County Council has now submitted proposals to DfT for the improvements that they would like to see along that route.
- 3.9.** Full implementation of the proposals to upgrade the whole A303/ A358 will run beyond the first Road Period, and the Government intends that subsequent Road Investment Strategies will fund the remaining improvements. It will therefore be important to retain an ongoing campaign for the improvements particularly in the run up to decisions on future 5 year investment programmes which will start shortly.
- 3.10.** The 'RIS 2' process to a develop road investment programme for 2020-2025 has commenced with the publication of a series of 'Route Strategies' published in March 2017 (Somerset features in 'Birmingham-Exeter' and 'SW Peninsula' Route Strategies) which Highways England will use to prepare a 'Strategic Road Network Initial Report' on the state of the network and suggested priorities. DfT will then use this report to produce a new Road Investment Strategy in 2019 to inform HE's business plans and delivery plans.

3.11. Highways England Designated Funds.

As well as the Roads Investment Strategy funds Government has provided Highways England with a number of specific funding streams to tackle wider issues in relation to the Strategic road Network. These national funding streams are as follows:

- £250m Cycling, Safety, and Integration Fund;
- £300m Environment Fund (inc. £75m on noise barriers);
- £150m Innovation Fund;
- £100m Air Quality Fund; and
- £100m Growth and Housing Fund to match-fund schemes that enable new development.
- £6bn to resurface 80% of the network with lower noise surfaces.
- £100m water improvement package.
- £100m landscape, heritage and biodiversity works.

- 3.12.** The Council has successfully bid for a £4m contribution from the Growth and Housing Fund towards the M5 Junction 25 Improvement (discussed below), and Highways England has also set aside £50k development funding to develop and assess proposals for a pedestrian/ cycle bridge over the M5 linking with the proposed 'Nexus25' employment site; with a view to making a case for allocating 'Cycling, Safety and Integration' funding towards the scheme. The Council has also bid for National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF) contributions towards the bridge scheme.

3.13. Department for Transport ‘Pre-Growth Deal’ Major Scheme funding.

There are two significant road schemes recently completed utilising DfT Grants awarded to Somerset prior to the current Growth Deal process. The Taunton Northern Inner Distributor Road was opened in July 2017 and the Yeovil Eastern Corridor Improvements were completed with the construction of the Horsey and Hospital Junction Improvements and a second exit from Tesco. A small amount of residual funding remains from the DfT grant for further improvements on the Yeovil Eastern Corridor and the remaining improvements will be agreed in consultation with South Somerset District Council.

3.14. Local Enterprise Partnership Local Growth Fund and Growth Deal Process.

The Government has established a local growth fund which provides funding for specific projects identified as economic growth priorities by the Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP). Funds are allocated to the LEP to manage the projects as a local growth programme. Funds are allocated to projects based on a robust business case which includes the extent of local contributions available.

3.15. There have now been three growth deals, each involving prioritisation across the LEP area and negotiation with Government, linked to unlocking growth.

3.16. Transport schemes are prioritised and managed on behalf of the LEP by a Local Transport Board (LTB) made up of local highway authorities, LEP representatives and Highways England. A variety of schemes have been submitted by The Council within the various growth deals and these are summarised in Appendix A. Road schemes that have been allocated growth deal funding to date are as follows:

3.17.

Scheme	Latest cost estimate.	Growth Deal Contribution	Status
Growth Deal 1			
Huntworth Junction Improvement	£2.9m	£1.9m	Completed.
Yeovil Western Corridor	£14.47m (final cost post-tender)	£6.49m	Decision to award contract taken 16 August 2017. Due to start Sept/ Oct 2017.
Growth Deal 2			
M5 Junction 25 Improvement	£18.02m (detailed pre-tender estimate)	Up to £12.9m	LEP business case approved. Additional HE Growth and Housing Fund contribution £4m approved. Planning application submitted. Land acquisition underway. Preparation of tender information underway.
Growth Deal 3			
Toneway Corridor Phase 1 – Creech Castle junction	£9.8m (initial estimate)	£6.4m	Full Toneway Corridor Scheme considered too expensive by the LEP for a GD3 bid given funding limitation. Outline design being finalised. Business case preparation underway.
Huntspill Energy Park Access Road	£8.250m (initial estimate)	£4m.	Outline design finalised. Business case preparation underway by SDC in conjunction with enterprise zone project.

3.18. Department for Transport Large Local Schemes.

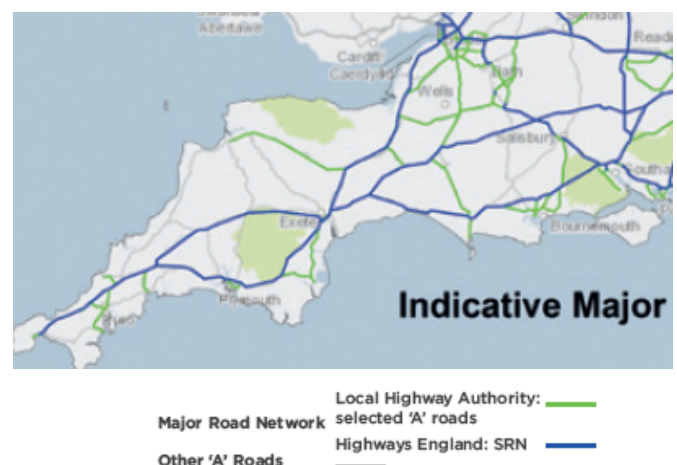
The Government has set aside £475m in the current spending period to 2021 to provide funding for “those exceptionally large, potentially transformative, local schemes that are too big to be taken forward within regular Growth Deal allocations and could not otherwise be funded”. The scheme costs needed to be over £75m, needed a local funding contribution, and could not be a ‘package’ scheme that could be broken down into smaller elements. Somerset County Council did not have any schemes of the required scale that could be developed into a business case and progressed to construction within the required timescale.

3.19. Department for Transport proposals for a Major Road Network (MRN).

The Government announced a new Transport Investment Strategy in July 2017 which includes a proposal to consult on a new ‘Major Road Network’ (MRN). The MRN would cover the busiest and most economically important local authority ‘A Roads’; forming a middle tier of roads sitting between the national Strategic Road Network (SRN) and the rest of the local road network. The Government had previously announced that from 2020/21 all revenue raised from Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) in England will be allocated to a new National Roads Fund and invested directly back into the Strategic Road Network. As part of this new MRN consultation the Government will make proposals to allocate a proportion of the National Roads Fund to the MRN.

3.20. The Government will consult on management arrangements for the MRN at the regional level, including providing a key role for ‘sub-national transport bodies’ such as Transport for the North in tandem with local authorities; and arrangements for those areas where sub-national transport bodies are not formed. The Government does not plan for sub-national transport bodies to become network operators or highway authorities, and in all cases, highway authority responsibility for MRN roads would remain with the existing local authorities.

3.21. The consultation has not yet launched, but the MRN proposals were originally created by the Rees Jeffreys Road Fund in October 2016 following a detailed analysis which suggested that a further 3800 miles of local authority ‘A Roads’ could be combined with the SRN to form an 8000 mile network carrying 43% of England’s traffic on just 4% of its roads, with appropriate planning, funding and management.



Recent correspondence from the DfT indicates that the consultation will consider funding for improvements to such a network as well as an enhanced maintenance regime.

3.22. Department for Transport National Productivity Investment Fund (NPIF).

On 13 January 2017 the Government announced a new package of capital funds including a £185m national 'Productivity Investment Fund' for 2017/18, to be spent on improving local road networks, such as highways and public transport networks; to reduce congestion at key locations; upgrade or improve the maintenance of local highway assets; improve access to employment and housing; and develop economic and job creation opportunities.

- 3.23. The funding was distributed across local authorities using a funding formula, and Somerset's allocation was **£3.859m**. A Cabinet Member key decision was taken in March 2017 to allocate the funding to the following projects following an options assessment. Indicative funding allocations for the projects are as follows:

Project/ Programme	Indicative allocation from the productivity investment fund 17/18
Highway resurfacing programme	£0.500m
Major schemes programme	£3.000m
Public transport smart ticketing project	£0.359m
Reserve Programme	
Traffic signals replacement programme	£0m
TOTAL	£3.859m

- 3.24. A further tranche of NPIF funding was subsequently announced for 2018/19 and 2019/20 to be allocated by competitive funding bids submitted by 30 June 2017. The fund aims to ease congestion and provide upgrades on important national, regional or local routes; to unlock economic and job creation opportunities; or to enable the delivery of new housing developments. Preference will be given to projects that primarily increase the efficiency of the existing space allocated for transport use rather than add to it and have local contributions of at least 30%.

- 3.25. Following an options assessment The Council submitted the following bids and has not yet heard if they were successful:

Project	Total Cost	NPIF Bid (up to £5m) 2018/19 & 19/20
Traffic signals replacement & modernisation	£3.226m	£2.226m
Cycle and pedestrian connectivity over the M5 – Nexus 25 Pedestrian and Cycle Bridge.	£7.405m (initial estimate)	£4.813m. Assumes Highways England designated funds also contribute circa £1.6m yet to be secured along with TDBC and developer contributions.

3.26. Housing Infrastructure Fund.

The Government recently announced details of this new fund (HIF) comprising two funding streams which must be spent/ committed by the end of 2020/21 both of which will fund a wide range of infrastructure to unlock or accelerate new housing delivery.

- 3.27. HIF enables bids of up to £10m per project to overcome marginal viability issues for development infrastructure (essentially a top-up fund to plug funding gaps where viability issues can be proven); and bids of up to £250m for 'forward funding' infrastructure. Bids cannot simply be 'bundles' of schemes; there must be a coherence and strategy behind any scheme packaging and it will be judged on the number of planned or additional houses that the infrastructure delivers.

3.28. Lower-tier councils submit the marginal viability bids (up to £10m) and upper-tier Councils submit the forward funding bids (up to £250m). Marginal viability full business cases are due by 28 September 2017, with expressions of interest for forward funding bids due by the same date. Forward funding bids will then be further developed with authorities once down-selected by Government, with authorities to submit business cases six months later.

3.29. In Somerset both Sedgemoor District Council and Taunton Deane Borough Council have been working with the County Council to develop a bid to cover the Hinckley Housing Area. The details of the bids are still emerging but both Sedgemoor and Taunton Deane are interested in pursuing both Marginal Viability and Forward Funding bids. The bids are likely to cover development spine roads as well as strategic infrastructure.

3.30. Developer Funds.

A number of strategic road improvements are being progressed by Somerset County Council, funded by developers as a requirement of planning permissions. The most significant schemes are as follows:

Scheme	Funding source	Status
Bridgwater Colley Lane Southern Access Road	South Bridgwater Developers EDF Energy National Productivity Investment Fund	Site clearance undertaken. Issued notice to enter land following CPO. Invitation to Tender Issued. Initial tender submissions due 18 Sept 2017. SCC Capital Bid prepared for contingency funds pending final tender price.
Bridgwater Canon/ Cross Rifles Roundabout Improvement	North East Bridgwater Developers EDF Energy	Outline design finalised. Preparing consultation and land discussions.
Monkton Heathfield western relief road	Monkton Heathfield Developers	Detailed design work completed Tender Specification in preparation initial documents issued to developer. Ecological survey updated, some issues with proximity to Badger Sett which is requiring further investigation / action Legal Agreements relating to the construction of the Western Relief Road being progressed with Developers

3.31. Note that there are also road schemes that have recently been delivered by developers as part of planning permissions such as Cannington Bypass and Monkton Heathfield Eastern Bypass. There are also proposals for new road schemes as part of current applications such as Monkton Heathfield Phase 2, the Comeytrove and Staplegrove developments in Taunton.

4. Consultations undertaken

4.1. There have been no specific consultations undertaken in preparing this report.

5. Implications

5.1. Equalities Implications

Strategic road improvements typically improve facilities for people with disabilities by providing facilities such as improved road crossings.

5.2. Community Safety Implications

Strategic road improvements typically improve community safety by providing improved road layouts and facilities such as improved road crossings.

5.3. Sustainability Implications

Strategic road improvements typically seek to provide improved facilities for sustainable forms of travel such as walking and cycling as well as providing increased capacity for car traffic.

5.4. Health and Safety Implications

Health and Safety implications are carefully considered in scheme design and construction and stringent requirements are placed on contractors.

5.5. Privacy Implications

Privacy implications have been considered and none have been identified.

5.6. Health and Wellbeing Implications

Strategic road improvements typically seek to provide improved facilities for sustainable forms of travel such as walking and cycling (which lead to improved health and wellbeing through encouraging physical activity) as well as providing increased capacity for car traffic.

6. Background papers

6.1. Appendix A – Scheme Priorities within each Growth Deal

APPENDIX A: Scheme Priorities Within Each Growth Deal.

Local Transport Board: Initial Schemes Sifting and Prioritisation.

Pre- Growth Deal 1 - Agreed Local Transport Board Major Schemes Programme (subject to funding).

Proposed Tranche	Scheme
1	Yeovil Western Corridor
2	M5 Junction 25
2	Toneway Corridor
2	Chard Millfield Link
3	Walton & Ashcott Bypasses
3	Transport For Growth Bridgwater (Placeholder)

Major schemes explicitly rejected by the Local Transport Board.

Scheme	Initial Cost Estimate
Taunton Bus Scheme North East Taunton	£16.900m
Taunton Town Centre Pedestrianisation	£6.200m
A39 West Somerset Bypass Improvements	£40.000m

Potential major schemes with early assessments submitted but not yet considered.

Scheme	Initial Cost Estimate
A358 Henlade Bypass (Now not needed)	£30.000m
A358 Taunton to Williton (height restrictions and alignments)	£17.000m

Pinch-Point Proposals

Proposed Tranche	Scheme	Initial Cost Estimate
1	Bridgwater Huntworth Junction	£2.910m
2	Yeovil Market Street Junction	£2.160m
2	Taunton Cross Keys Junction	£2.160m
3	Bridgwater The Leggar	£2.160m

Interchange Proposals

Scheme
Taunton Station
Castle Cary Station
Bridgwater Station

Growth Deal 1 Schemes.

GD1 Rank	Scheme	Initial Cost Estimate	GD1 Contribution
Funded			
2	Yeovil Western Corridor	£12.190m	£6.490m
9	Bridgwater Huntworth Junction	£2.900m	£1.900m
18	Taunton Rail Station	£18.300m	£4.600m
Unfunded			
29	Smart Rural Transport	£1.490m	£0.300m
35	Bridgwater Parrett Walk & Cycle Route	£0.600m	£0.380m
36	Bridgwater Celebration Mile	£7.000m	£3.000m
38	Sherford Cycle Link Taunton	£0.730m	£0.600m

Growth Deal 2 Schemes.

GD2 Rank	Scheme	Initial Cost Estimate	GD2 Contribution
Funded			
8	M5 J25	£15.900m	£12.900m
Unfunded			
17	Taunton Toneyway Corridor	£12.930m	£8.890m
27	Bridgwater Celebration Mile	£6.200m	£2.200m
28	Chard Millfield Link	£4.420m	£3.020m
30	Yeovil Market Street	£1.092m	£0.840m
41	Taunton A358 Cross Keys	£2.900m	£1.900m
42	Bridgwater Leggar Link	£2.160m	£1.512m
47	Yeovil Cycle & Walk Package Phase 1	£2.250m	£1.575m
49	Bridgwater Parrett Walk & Cycle Route	£0.600m	£0.380m
50	Frome Cycle Package Phase 1	£2.160m	£0.950m
52	Sherford Cycle Link Taunton	£0.730m	£0.600m
53	Somerset Public Transport Enhancements	£2.500m	£1.752m

Hinkley Deal Schemes

Scheme	Grant
Funded	
Taunton Station Access	£150k
Bridgwater Rail Station Enhancement	£1.2m (£800k DfT; £400k SDC).
C182 Maintenance Scheme	£1.6m
C182 Cycle Scheme	£295k (+ EDF S106 funds)

Growth Deal 3 Schemes

GD3	Initial Cost Estimate	GD3 Contribution
Funded		
Taunton Toneyway Corridor Capacity Improvements - Phase1 Creech Castle	£9.800m	£6.400m
Huntspill Energy Park	£8.250m	£4.000m
Unfunded		
Chard Millfield Link Road	£4.420m	£3.020m
Yeovil Walking and Cycling Network	£1.500m	£0.350m
Crewkerne Key Site Link Road	£7.500m	£2.000m
Bridgwater Celebration Mile Phase 2	£1.470m	£1.030m
Castle Cary Parkway	£0.770m	£0.300m
Market Street Junction / A30 Yeovil Eastern Corridor	£1.200m	£0.600m
Taunton Cross Keys & Silk Mills Junctions	£3.110m	£2.040m
Royal Bath & West Showground Food Enterprise Park – Gateway & Access	£3.500m	£1.750m

March 2014: Approved Schemes to go into the LEP Strategic Economic Plan preparation process.

Major Schemes:

Yeovil Western Corridor
M5 Junction 25
Toneway Corridor Improvements
Chard Millfield Link
Walton / Ashcott Bypass
Bridgwater Major

Pinch Point Programme:

A38 Huntworth Roundabout, Bridgwater
Leggar Link, Bridgwater
A358 Cross Keys
A30 Market Street

Walking, Cycling and Public Transport

Taunton Town Centre Enhancements
Taunton Pedestrian / Cycle Network Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3.
A3259 Bus Priority
A38 Bus Priority
Monkton Heathfield Park & Bus Site
Taunton Railway Station Enhancements
Wellington Pedestrian / Cycle Enhancements
Wells Pedestrian / Cycle Network Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3.
Bridgwater Railway Station Enhancements
East Bridgwater Package (Phase 1)
Redgate Street Cycle Bridge
Bridgwater Cycle Network Phase 2
LSTF Smart Rural Travel Project
Bridgwater Celebration Mile
Taunton Sherford Link
East of Yeovil Cycle Network
Marston & Keyford and Berkley Down Cycle Routes
River Parrett Walk / Cycle Link
Yeovil Bus Station Improvements
Haybridge Cycle & Walking Improvements
Yeovil Cycle and Walk Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3.
Cycle Network Phase 1, Phase 2 and Phase 3.
Cycle Walking and Public Transport Improvements
Steam Coast Trail
Public Transport Enhancements