

Opportunity for Investment in new Major Road Improvement Schemes – for the Minehead Area Panel Meeting, 26 June 2019

Major Road Network Investment

- The Government has set aside £3.5bn for a new programme of major improvements to local roads using vehicle excise duty for construction between 2021 and 2025.
- Scheme priorities need to be identified and submitted by sub-national transport bodies (regional groupings of highway authorities).
- Somerset is part of the 'Peninsula Transport' body with Cornwall, Plymouth, Torbay, and Devon Councils.
- The body has to identify and prioritise its top ten deliverable Major Road Network schemes across the region by summer 2019, and any likely Large Local Major Schemes (see below); and the promoting local authorities need to provide business case information to enable the Government to choose which schemes it wants to progress.
- There are two types of schemes – 'Major Road Network' (MRN) schemes which must be on a specific network identified by Government (see map below) and cost between £20m and £50m; and 'Large Local Major' (LLM) schemes which do not need to be on the MRN network but must be over £50m. All schemes require at least a 15% local contribution and must be able to be fully constructed by March 2025. This severely limits the potential schemes since schemes of this size would already need to have been through some initial development to be able to submit a costed business case in Summer 2019 for construction between 2021 and 2025.
- The MRN network does not include the A39 in West Somerset so that road is therefore not eligible for MRN schemes. In responding to the consultation on which roads to include in the MRN network in 2018 Somerset County Council and Peninsula Transport did strongly request that the A39 in West Somerset be included on the network, but DfT did not include it as there was not enough traffic using the road to meet their criteria.
- The A39 in West Somerset is eligible for Large Local Major Schemes funding but these are considered by Government to be exceptional schemes and there are no schemes for the A39 that have been developed to a suitable state for submission this year. Initial options, feasibility design, costing and quantification of economic benefits would need to be undertaken to support a submission this summer. Such schemes would also need to demonstrate considerable economic benefits requiring large traffic volumes and unlocking new development areas.
- Somerset County Council does not have sufficient funds to develop the business cases required for these schemes so any development work needs to be funded by District Councils.
- Mendip District Council has funded initial development of potential schemes for Walton/ Ashcott and Glastonbury which are on the MRN network; and these will be the schemes that are put forward for prioritisation alongside other schemes in the Peninsula Transport area.



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