

Vision for route strategies

Planning for the future of our roads





Introduction

The roads managed by Highways England play a critical role in enabling businesses to transport products and services, providing access to jobs and suppliers, and facilitating trade and investment across the country. In combination with local roads they also support leisure journeys connecting people and places. The strategic road network of motorways and trunk 'A' roads has evolved over time, shaped by the need to provide safe, high-speed connections to move people and goods to where they need to go.

Looking to the future, Highways England will embrace the potential for change by taking a long-term view of our network, including influences that could revolutionise transport, road travel, and personal and commercial mobility. We will consider factors including adapting to climate change and supporting low carbon transport, increasing automation and digital technologies, and changing travel preferences that are captured in the government's 10-point Green Industrial Revolution plan.

Route strategies will be at the centre of this dynamic future planning of the road network. We will work with our interested parties and road users and build on the learning from previous route strategies. As a Highways England Licence requirement, route strategies are one of the key steps of research required by the Department for Transport in developing future Road Investment Strategies (RIS).

Highways England has produced route strategies since 2015 and these have guided the vision, performance expectations and investment plans for the network. These strategies informed the Department for Transport's Road Investment Strategy 1 (RIS1) covering the period 2015 to 2020. RIS1 was the first roads programme based upon the assessment of the whole of England's strategic road network, its evidence base providing a comprehensive description and review of the performance of our roads. RIS2, covering the period 2020 to 2025, was built upon an evidence base embedded in route strategies published in 2017. These strategies have guided the vision, performance expectations and investment plans for the network to improve the service for road users and to support the economy.

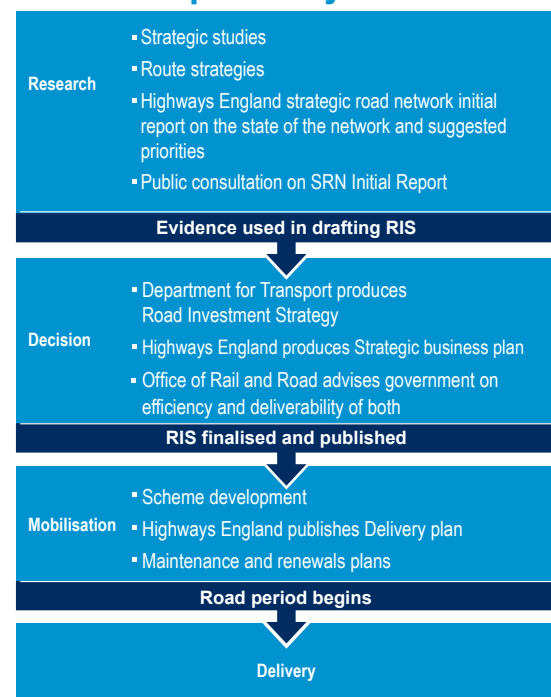
Our aspiration for our next round of route strategies is to build upon the work we have done previously, to set out:

- A planned set of future requirements for the network that is responsive to environmental needs; that accounts for the performance of today as well as the challenges and opportunities of the future;
- Actions and investment that improve the performance of our roads for future road periods that are grounded in evidence and informed by interested parties and road user input;
- Opportunities for investment and integrated interventions that benefit the performance of our roads and meet wider connectivity needs of communities and economies.

The evidence identified through this process will be vital to inform the development of future RIS periods and allow informed decisions to be made on recommendations about future investment priorities, including an overview of maintenance and enhancement choices. Ministers will use this to identify where problems are most severe, where significant new opportunities can be enabled and where the need for action is greatest.

This document sets out our desired ambition for route strategies and is dependent on collaboration with interested parties and road users to prioritise interventions and make a case to DfT to inform future decision making, recognising that not all aspirations can be funded or delivered.

RIS development cycle



What will be different

The approach for the next cycle of route strategies will be able to respond to significant changes in the needs of those using or living by the strategic road network. This approach has been informed by the views of interested parties and road users and the desire to improve the evidence provided for future Road Investment Strategies.

The benefits of our enhanced approach will ensure that route strategies are:

- Forward looking
- Widely supported
- Integrated and collaborative
- Broad
- Dynamic
- Easy to maintain

This will ensure that interested parties and road users feel they will have a greater influence in defining the forward looking priorities for all parts of the strategic road network for multiple RIS cycles.



Scope of route strategies

Our route strategies will clearly set out the strategic purpose and role of the strategic road network across the country. They will cover strategic routes, providing an overview of the centres of population and industry. They will show international gateways served by the route, the type of road and its pattern of use. The current performance, constraints and future anticipated performance of the route will be described. We will also identify the requirements for its future use based on local and strategic needs. We will align work for maintaining, operating and enhancing our roads. The measures considered will include rapidly changing technology and carbon and air quality commitments. Where appropriate our approach should influence driver behaviour, or look further at other modes of travel.

The route strategies will be delivered through three phases:

- **Phase 1 – Complete:** Baseline review of all interventions identified through previous route strategies and subsequent network changes consolidating into an easily accessible format.
- **Phase 2 – 2021/2022:** Engaging with interested parties and road users on their future aspirations and data collection to understand and create our future requirements for the network.
- **Phase 3 – 2021/2023:** In parallel, undertake a gap analysis between the current state and future requirements for the network. Using the analysis to identify a prioritised list of interventions to inform RIS pipelines, wider investment plans and strategies, building on the baseline review and operational priorities.

- **Route based strategy:** Bringing all the phases together, outlining the current performance, function, constraints and opportunities for each route, driving the strategic planning of the strategic road network, to be utilised for future road periods and operational priorities.



Forward looking

To ensure route strategies are building on previous work, Phases 1 and 2 of our approach will bring together priorities previously identified. We will build on data we hold on our network with supplementary data collection by engaging with interested parties and road users.

For Phase 1, we have reflected on our current priorities and undertaken a review of our potential schemes, comparing with the conclusions and priorities from previous route strategies, strategic studies and aspirations of Sub-National Transport Bodies. This will form our baseline for this round of route strategies.

For Phase 2, we will identify future requirements for each route through collaboration with our interested parties and road users, balancing the strategic need of our roads with the local needs of those using or living alongside them through:

- relevant local plans and priorities concerning local roads and other transport networks, wider socio-economic developments, and government policy;
- the need for effective integration with the rest of the transport system, including carrying out joint studies with other organisations where it benefits the strategic road network;
- the needs of each place contributing to connecting communities and supporting their growth aspirations;
- the views of relevant national and local interested parties and road users, including the views of Transport Focus, the Office of Rail and Road and elected representatives.





Widely supported by interested parties and road users representing the needs of local communities, construction partners and environmental groups

Engagement with interested parties and road users is vital to developing route strategies, recognising the need for effective integration of our network with the rest of the transport system and wider communities where it benefits the strategic road network.

We have already gathered a wealth of evidence from the previous rounds of route strategies and through our ongoing monitoring of the condition and performance of our roads.

We will strengthen our existing relationships with interested parties developed through the engagement undertaken during the first road period. We will ensure their priorities are reflected and taken into consideration in the development of the requirements for the network and potential interventions, all of which will inform our priorities for future Road Investment Strategies.

We will engage with and take account of the views of relevant national and local interested parties and road users. Sub-National Transport Bodies (STBs) will be key to the consultation and engagement process, along with Network Rail, environmental bodies, and other key interested parties. Transport Focus, the Office of Rail and Road and elected representatives will also be important interested parties when considering the needs of all network users.

A collaborative approach will enable common goals to be identified and considered throughout. We will ensure that we collaborate with local interested parties and road users representing local communities, and environmental groups, building on the knowledge within Highways England.

We will continue to engage with interested parties and road users throughout the route strategy process ensuring:

- their priorities are reflected in the review of our current route priorities
- consideration is given to their needs for our roads at a local and strategic level when developing the requirements for each route
- their data and intelligence is incorporated into our evidence base supporting the development of the requirements and a programme of potential interventions
- opportunities are identified for collaboration on interventions and investment strategies to deliver the route requirements, progressing joint studies where this benefits the strategic road network.

The engagement process will be developed with our interested parties to find the most efficient and productive approach to delivering route strategies. A range of approaches will be employed including workshops and one-to-one sessions to ensure all interested parties are engaged comprehensively. Road users will also be able to provide their views through a digital platform.

The evidence we gather, that will consider the needs of our road users and interested parties, will help determine the locations which are priorities for further intervention and potential action. We want all our recommendations to be based on the evidence that informs the development of the RIS and operational priorities.



Integrated, collaborative and broad

For Phase 3, we will develop a programme of potential investment and other priorities. This programme will be built on our knowledge of current priorities for our roads and informed by the requirements for each route. We will consider, as per our Licence, opportunities for integrated and collaborative solutions such as jointly promoted schemes, where this can be shown to improve the performance of the network and deliver value for money. The benefit of this approach is that the strategic routes reflect the interaction across the network and with other interested parties' networks, including the Major Road Network and local roads, particularly at interfaces and "last mile" connections.

We will assess a broad range of proposals for investment on a consistent basis. This will ensure ideas coming forward from our interested parties and road users, representing motorists, local communities, construction partners, environmental groups and from our own regional teams on the ground are properly understood before decisions are made about potential investment priorities. This will ensure interested parties feedback on important issues are taken into consideration in developing the priorities.

Preliminary assessments of deliverability and value for money will be significant factors in any decision making.



Dynamic and easy to maintain

Central to this approach will be the dynamic use of data and intelligence collected in relation to our roads and the wider transport network. The ability to adapt and update the route strategies when significant changes occur through horizon scanning and intelligence gathering will mean they are more dynamic rather than fixed at a particular point in time. It will support a more flexible approach, responding to external factors when necessary.

This will be achieved through the establishment of digital platforms that will be capable of visually representing future opportunities and incorporating timely updates to the data that supports them.

The map overleaf shows the proposed routes covering the strategic road network (17 routes). It is an evolution of the 18 routes that were used in the previous rounds of route strategies to reflect the role of the overall route and the requirements of interested parties and road users. They balance strategic and more localised needs including a wider consideration of multiple connections between sub-national geographies as well as a focus on the single strategic corridor. The routes now reflect the strategic needs of the country such as east-west connections and union connectivity, for example London to Scotland.



Route Strategies

The division of routes for the programme of route strategies on the strategic road network.

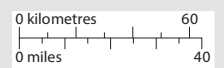
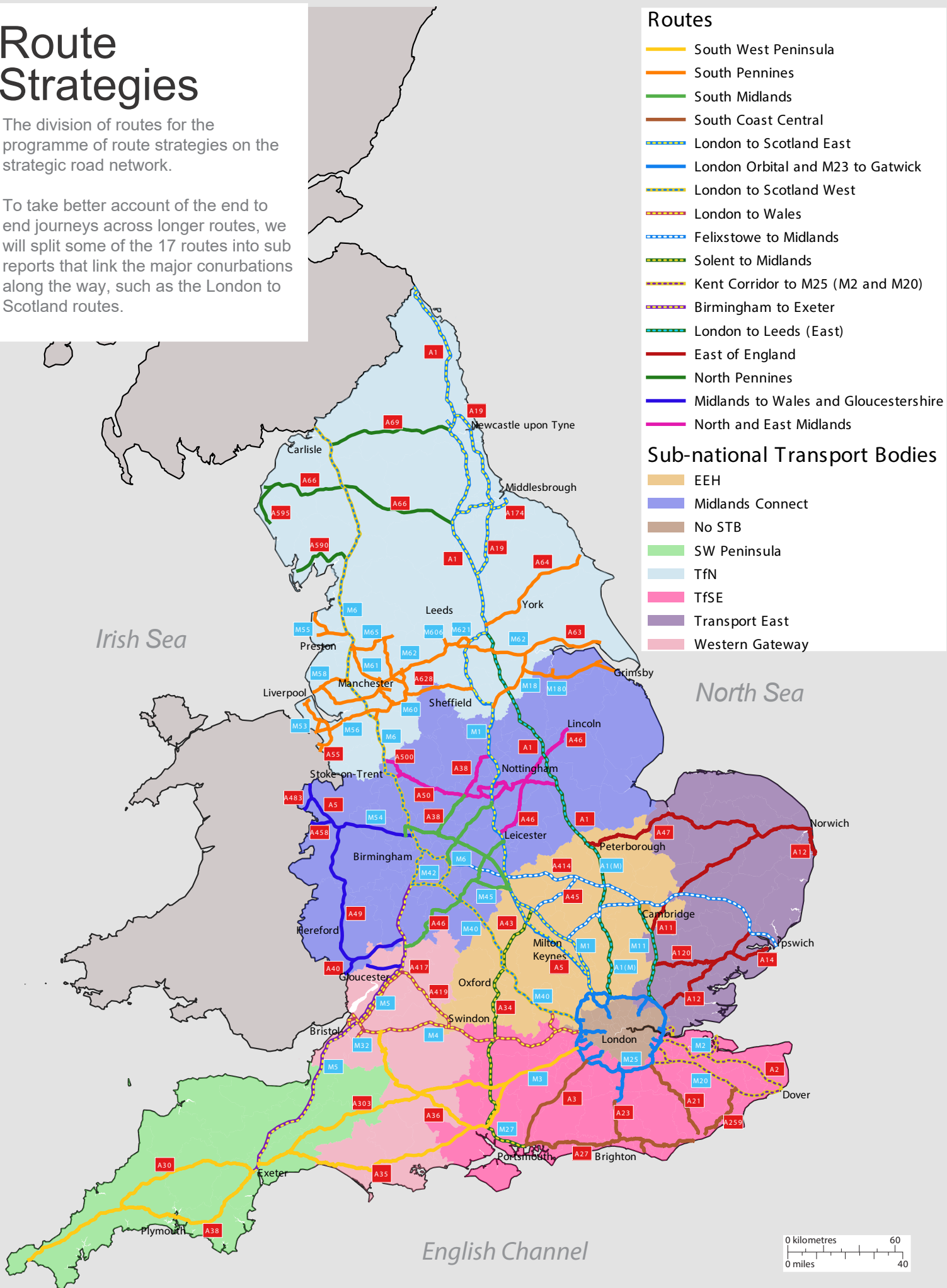
To take better account of the end to end journeys across longer routes, we will split some of the 17 routes into sub reports that link the major conurbations along the way, such as the London to Scotland routes.

Routes

- South West Peninsula
- South Pennines
- South Midlands
- South Coast Central
- London to Scotland East
- London Orbital and M23 to Gatwick
- London to Scotland West
- London to Wales
- Felixstowe to Midlands
- Solent to Midlands
- Kent Corridor to M25 (M2 and M20)
- Birmingham to Exeter
- London to Leeds (East)
- East of England
- North Pennines
- Midlands to Wales and Gloucestershire
- North and East Midlands

Sub-national Transport Bodies

- EEH
- Midlands Connect
- No STB
- SW Peninsula
- TfN
- TfSE
- Transport East
- Western Gateway





Utilising route strategies

Route strategies and the evidence supporting them will be central to the department's development of future Road Investment Strategies, specifically RIS3 for 2025-2030, but also looking beyond.

The RIS3 investment programme will use the route strategies as its foundation.

In preparing RIS2, the Department for Transport looked both to consider specific network needs as well as to make longer-term plans to tackle longstanding issues or to create new economic opportunities.

The Department's preparations for RIS3 and subsequent RISs will follow a similar path. They will comprise a combination of prioritised scheme development, strategic studies that address network wide issues, and route strategies analysing the performance, future pressures and opportunities facing key routes.

Getting started

Engagement has already started and we will be contacting road users and a wide range of interested parties to collate the evidence base.

If you would like to know more about our progress or be involved in route strategies please refer to our website at www.highwaysengland.co.uk or you can email us directly with any questions at: routestrategies@highwaysengland.co.uk



If you need help accessing this or any other Highways England information, please call 0300 123 5000 and we will help you.

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