

# *The Future of Roads Report*

## *Delivering Sustainable and Inclusive Economic Growth*

January 2025

**RHA**

# Executive Summary

This report sets out the vital role of highways investment in supporting economic growth.

The Strategic Road Network is the workplace of the road freight sector and is absolutely critical in keeping the flow of goods and people moving. This report outlines the role of road investment in boosting productivity through reduced congestion, strengthening regional economies, creating jobs and stimulating investment, connecting our communities and enhancing trade competitiveness.

This year, the UK Government will publish its Third Road Investment Strategy, outlining the future of major road investment.

The economic significance of the Strategic Road Network is immense and makes it indispensable for industries dependent on timely deliveries, including retail, manufacturing, and agriculture. 70% of all HGV kilometres are on the SRN[1] and it is essential for tourism, with nearly 1 in 10 trips made to resorts such as Alton Towers being made by coach[2]. The economic benefits of investment in the Strategic Road Network are clear. National Highways' own analysis shows that the current Road Investment Strategy delivers £26.7bn in value benefits to the UK economy. It represents high value for money – meaning that more than £2 of benefits are generated for each £1 spent on new bypasses, junction improvements and carriageway widening.

The future success of road investment is dependent on planning reform. In recent years, the speed of decision-making has slowed. This needs to change. The average timeline for gaining planning consent for major projects has increased from 2.6 years to 4.2 and the number of projects that are subject to successful legal challenge is increasing. The new Government has pledged to radically reform the planning system. This can only be achieved with significant and radical reform of the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects consenting process and we call upon the government to be ambitious in the way in which major infrastructure schemes receive consent.

The value of our industry to the economy and society has been demonstrated like never before during the pandemic. And now, as we enter a new year, the UK Government is seized with the challenge of kickstarting economic growth and creating the conditions which allow British businesses to thrive.

It is vital that, at a time where businesses across the country are looking for certainty, that the government takes action now to deal with the challenges of congestion, lack of connectivity and unreliability which are often all too present on our road network.

Our report is an invaluable reminder for key decision makers and the wider industry as to why investment in our road network is not just an investment in concrete and mortar, but investment in our businesses and wider economy.

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# Introduction

2025 is a pivotal year for highways investment. The Second Road Investment Strategy (RIS2) which runs from 2020-2025 draws to a close: an ambitious and transformative programme which seeks to deliver £26.7bn<sup>1</sup> of economic benefit across the nation. National Highways are now preparing to finalise with the government what the third Road Investment Strategy (RIS3) will look like. The financial and political decisions made over the coming months will influence the size, scope and remit of this road strategy.

RIS3 should not merely be thought about as a transport decision, but rather as an essential solution to the nation's key economic problems. In the years ahead, the UK will begin to grapple with problems around connecting its businesses, its economic competitiveness in a post-Brexit world, and striving to unlock economic growth after a time of financial instability. All too often, infrastructure is viewed as an expense or a pressure on the public purse which the nation simply cannot afford. However, when viewed in the context of the new government's Missions led approach, particularly on economic growth, opportunity and energy, then investment in highways infrastructure must be seen as nothing else other than a critical enabler.

It should also not be overlooked as to how challenging a time 2025 will be for British business. In the road haulage industry alone, 494 hauliers went into administration in 2023<sup>2</sup>, with provisional figures suggesting 2024 has been a similarly challenging year. In the construction industry, 4208 firms entered insolvency<sup>3</sup>. The opportunity to support British business begins with investment in the highways network that connects businesses with new opportunities and communities.

<sup>1</sup> National Highways - 'Economic Analysis of the second road investment period', 2020 Pg 6

<sup>2</sup> <https://motortransport.co.uk/scale-of-new-company-closures-revealed-in-data-analysis/22711.article>

<sup>3</sup> <https://bcis.co.uk/news/construction-insolvencies-latest-news, December 2024>

# Road Building in Numbers

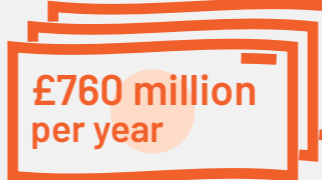
For the road haulage industry, improved road designs reduce stop-and-start traffic, leading to fuel savings of up to

**10%**  
per journey

which annually, equates to

 **7.6bn**  
liters of diesel annually

Costing the industry over

 **£760 million**  
per year



Strategic Road Network carries

**33%**  
of all road traffic

**66%**  
of all freight traffic



For every

**1 job**

directly created by road building, an additional



**2.5 jobs**

are supported indirectly in related industries



Every £1 billion spent on road building supports an estimated

**16,000 jobs**



RIS2 commits over

**£27bn**

to road improvements



Congestion costs the UK economy over **£30.8bn annually**

reducing travel delays saves the industry approximately

**£1 per minute per vehicle**



Lower Thames Crossing is expected to cut journey times by up to

**60%**

# Our Recommendations to Government

Ahead of the Spending Review, ensure that the forthcoming RIS3 contains the funding it needs to resolve the issues of congestion currently seen on the SRN, in order to unlock economic growth and support British business.

RIS3 should contain the 9 schemes in mentioned in Chapter 7, with a particular priority on the Lower Thames Crossing and the A66.

Designated funds are included within RIS3 to support delivery of key freight and logistics infrastructure, such as lorry parking, driver facilities and green refuelling stations.

To articulate a clear strategy for the future of roads through the establishment of a National Freight Network and the creation of a National Infrastructure Strategy which has a key emphasis on the delivery of highways infrastructure and is shaped by the needs of freight and logistics.

Reform the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects consenting process, with a focus on accelerating the time taken to award consent to be no more than 2.5 years.

Streamlining the objections and appeals portion of the NSIP consenting process in order to avoid lengthy delays in the post decision-making period.

Provide funding and support to local authorities who must process and provide input into Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects in order to safeguard other funds which are vital for local highways and transport projects.

Stronger client capability is needed through reform of National Highways' and other public bodies project management processes in order to manage risks more effectively, keep costs down and ensure that schemes are delivered on time and on budget.

The new National Infrastructure Service and Transformation Authority to play a greater role in securing cost-effective delivery for the taxpayer, by providing regulatory frameworks, including in the planning / consenting system.

<sup>1</sup> *Economic Role of National Highways, Pg 3*

<sup>2</sup> *Economic Role of National Highways, Pg 6*

# The Importance of Road Building

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## The Importance of Road Building to the Economy

The Strategic Road Network (SRN), managed by National Highways, covers 4,500 miles of motorway and major A-roads in England. The SRN carries 33% of all road traffic, but a staggering 66% of all freight traffic<sup>4</sup>. The SRN is absolutely essential for tourism, with nearly 1 in 10 trips made to resorts such as Alton Towers being made by coach<sup>5</sup>. And yet, the SRN covers approximately only 2% of the UK's total network<sup>6</sup>.

Studies by Cambridge Econometrics show that around 25% of the economy falls within four SRN-reliant sectors – freight and logistics, primary materials, manufacturing, and construction. These sectors contribute an estimated £410 billion to the UK economy (2.5 times the value of the SRN itself), creating 7.6 million jobs. By 2050 this is forecasted to grow by 41% to £578 billion Gross Value Added (GVA) and 8 million jobs. The freight and logistics sector alone contributes an estimated £127 billion of GVA. Elsewhere the coach sector alone brings in an additional £14 billion of GVA<sup>7</sup>.

The economic significance of the SRN is therefore immense and makes it indispensable for industries dependent on timely deliveries, including retail, manufacturing, and agriculture.

### Boosting Productivity Through Reduced Congestion

Today, the UK's Strategic Road network faces significant challenges in terms of its capacity and efficiency. Congestion is a significant challenge, particularly on arterial routes such as the M25 around London, the M6 through the Midlands, the M62 in Northern England and the M1 connecting London to Leeds.

For hauliers, time is money. The Road Haulage Association estimates that reducing travel delays saves the industry approximately £1 per minute per vehicle, highlighting the cost-saving potential of enhanced road networks. Conversely, it costs a haulier £130 per hour per vehicle that is stationary in traffic. Congestion accounts for 16% of the current cost of running a HGV due to lost productivity and missed opportunity. It is estimated that 35% of HGVs trips will be delayed in 2050 without mitigation<sup>8</sup>.

However the broader economic impact to the nation is even more severe, with some estimates predicting congestion costs the UK economy £30.8 billion a year, or at an average cost per driver of £968 a year<sup>9</sup>. By 2030 the cumulative cost of congestion will exceed £300 billion<sup>10</sup>.

The Department for Transport is forecasting up to a 55 per cent increase in traffic by 2040 and up to 85 per cent in congestion levels<sup>11</sup>. Do nothing is therefore not an option, and investment is needed now not merely to deal with the problems of today but to futureproof the economy for increasing travel demand. By alleviating bottlenecks on the network, road building directly improves productivity, saving time for commuters and hauliers alike. Projects like the Lower Thames Crossing, expected to cut journey times by up to 60%, demonstrate the measurable gains of infrastructure investment. In the words of National Highways:

"The main economic benefit is travel time savings to business users, especially from our schemes that increase capacity and reliability on routes with high freight movements for SRN dependent businesses."<sup>12</sup>

### Strengthening Regional Economies

Investment in roads has a disproportionately positive effect on regional economies, particularly in areas dependent on manufacturing and logistics. Nine out of ten businesses are located within ten miles of the SRN. For example, the Midlands—a key logistics hub—relies heavily on the A50/A500 corridor, which is a lifeline for businesses moving goods domestically and to ports for export. Upgrading this corridor is projected to deliver £12 billion in regional economic benefits.<sup>13</sup> With the new government's commitment to devolution, offering regions an even greater say in the evolution of their transport networks, the opportunities are immense.

### Creating Jobs and Stimulating Investment

It is estimated that the spend on RIS2 schemes supports 64,000 jobs on average per year<sup>14</sup>. Beyond direct employment, better roads encourage business investment, thereby enabling firms to expand their operations and reach new markets. The Lower Thames Crossing, projected to be the UK's largest road infrastructure project, is expected to create **22,000 construction and operational jobs**, with 80% of these targeted at local and regional workers.

Beyond direct employment, road building generates substantial indirect and induced economic activity. The supply chain for road projects—covering materials such as asphalt, steel, and concrete—stimulates job creation in manufacturing, logistics, and professional services. Research shows that for every 1 job directly created by road building, an additional **2.5 jobs** are supported indirectly in related industries<sup>15</sup>.

Resolving congestion has a significant tangible impact on British business. Enhanced journey times accelerate getting workers into more productive and focused clusters of activity. As businesses cluster, productivity improves. The net benefit of this from RIS2 alone is estimated to deliver £1.5 billion of benefits to the wider economy, in addition to the £4.6 billion productivity boost from faster and cheaper business trips discussed above<sup>16</sup>.

### **Connecting Our Communities**

The social benefits of improved and faster connectivity are significant. A strong and reliable SRN provides families with different opportunities around where they can live, and where they can access employment and services. It provides businesses with opportunities to access new clients and employees, and at a time where even greater focus is being placed on grey belt land, provides decision-makers with the ability to deliver new homes and workplaces.

Roads are a cornerstone of community and social inclusion in the UK, connecting people to essential services, education, employment, and leisure activities. Around 87% of passenger travel in the UK is made by road, playing a critical role in daily life for the vast majority of people in the country<sup>17</sup>. For rural and remote areas, where public transport options are limited, roads provide a lifeline, enabling residents to access healthcare, shops, and social opportunities. Well-maintained roads help vulnerable groups, such as the elderly—who make up 19% of the population—or people with disabilities, stay connected to their communities, reducing isolation and fostering inclusion<sup>18</sup>.

### **Better design**

Improved road designs reduce stop-and-start traffic, leading to fuel savings of up to **10% per journey**, according to National Highways data. For the road haulage industry, which still relies heavily on diesel,

this translates to potential savings of over **£760 million per year** in fuel costs, while also reducing CO2 emissions.

One of the key success stories of RIS2 has been the designated funds programme, which has delivered significant improvements to truck stops and lorry parking areas across the SRN. As the road haulage and coach industries look to the future and begin to grapple with the challenges of the transition to Net Zero, there is a significant opportunity here for designated funds in RIS3 to not only improve existing lorry parking sites, but also equip them for the future by delivering the green infrastructure that the industry needs to decarbonise.

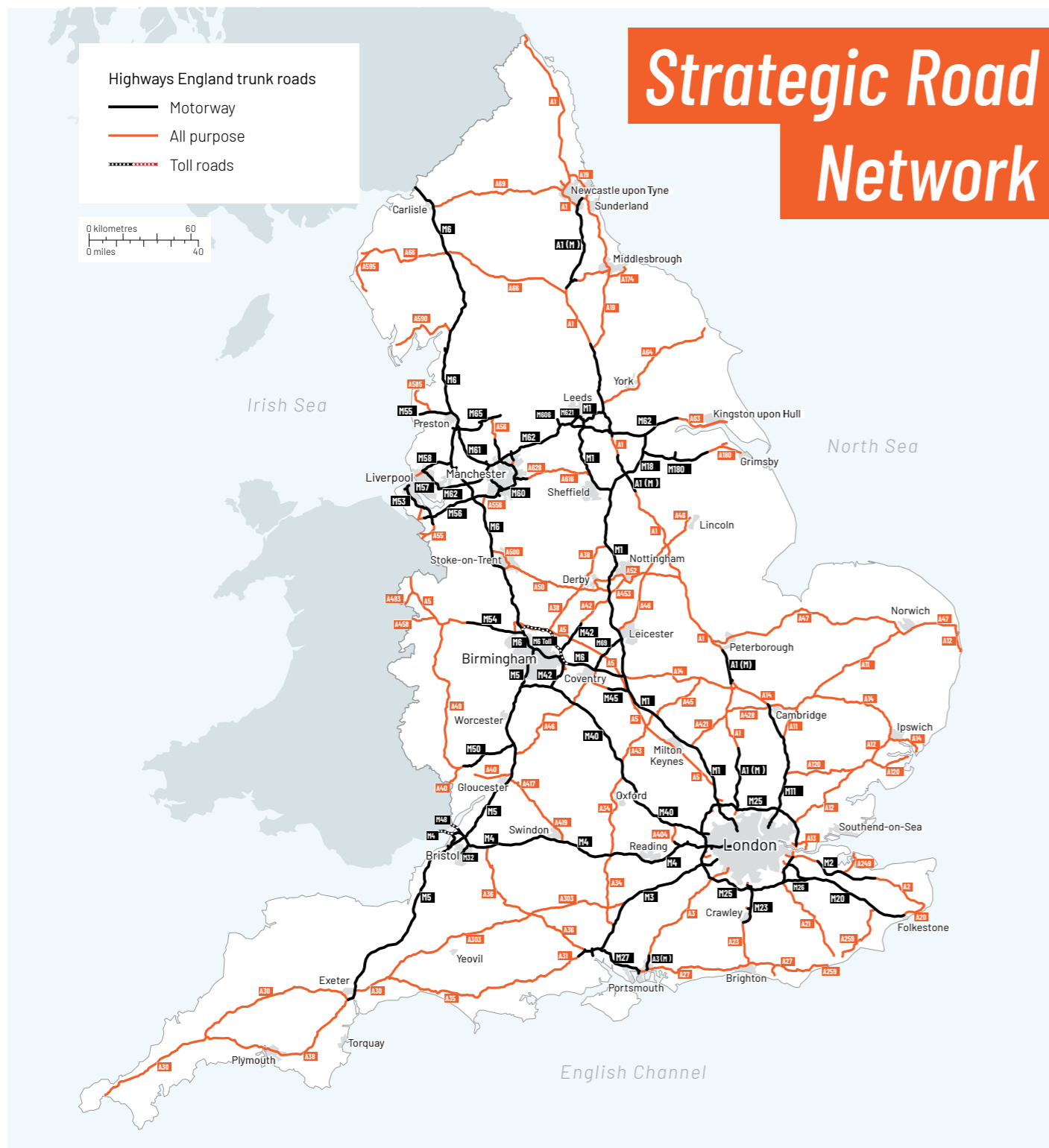
### **Enhancing Trade Competitiveness**

More than three quarters of imports and exports leave and arrive at international gateways by road and 99% of all GB freight uses the UK's road network at some point<sup>19</sup>. The UK's reliance on trade, particularly post-Brexit, underscores the importance of efficient freight routes. Ports such as Dover and Felixstowe depend on fast, reliable connections to inland logistics hubs.

In international terms, the difficulty with which goods can be moved throughout the UK has increased. Looking back over the last 10 years, we can see how this lack of investment has affected the competitiveness of the UK economy. In 2014, the UK was ranked 4th globally in the Logistics Performance Index, however in the 2023 rankings has now fallen to joint-19th position<sup>20</sup>. While challenges at customs accounts for some of the factors at play, the lack of significant investment in highways infrastructure over the last 10 years is fundamentally key. For example, between 2016 and 2019, the UK's annual growth rate in transport infrastructure investment was just 0.7%. In contrast, Germany, one of the UK's main competitors in the logistics sector, saw its transport infrastructure investment grow by nearly 9% per year over the same period. A return to Britain's role on the world stage, leading the way as an economic superpower can only begin with significant investment in the highways infrastructure that supports not only the UK's freight and logistics sector, but broader SRN-reliant businesses too.



# Strategic Road Network



<sup>4</sup> <https://nationalhighways.co.uk/our-roads/roads-we-manage/>

<sup>5</sup> Economic Role of National Highways, Pg 6

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/road-lengths-in-great-britain-2021/road-lengths-in-great-britain-2021>

<sup>7</sup> Economic Role of National Highways, an Overview, Pg 7

<sup>8</sup> vivideconomics, 'The Value of Freight' Page 7

<sup>9</sup> <https://inrix.com/press-releases/traffic-congestion-cost-uk-motorists-more-than-30-billion-in-2016/>

<sup>10</sup> LGA, A country in a jam: tackling congestion in our towns and cities, Pg6

<sup>11</sup> LGA, A country in a jam: tackling congestion in our towns and cities, Pg6

<sup>12</sup> National Highways, Economic analysis of the second road period, Pg 16

<sup>13</sup> Midlands Connect - Major improvement plan published for A50/500 corridor

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/27billion-roads-investment-to-support-64000-jobs>

<sup>15</sup> What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth, 'Multiplier Toolkit', Pg.2 [https://whatworksgrowth.org/wp-content/uploads/Multipliers\\_Toolkit.pdf](https://whatworksgrowth.org/wp-content/uploads/Multipliers_Toolkit.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> What Works Centre for Local Economic Growth, Multiplier Effects, Pg 2

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/transport-statistics-great-britain-2023/transport-statistics-great-britain-2022-domestic-travel>

<sup>18</sup> House of Commons Library, The UK's Changing Population, July 2024

<sup>19</sup> Economic Role of National Highways: Strategic Connectivity, Page 2

<sup>20</sup> Logistics UK, UK Logistics Network, Pg 6

# The role of Planning Reform

Infrastructure that allows the seamless flow of goods and coach passengers across the country is essential. It creates reliable journeys and reduces costs for hauliers, resolves congestion and unlocks economic growth through better connectivity between UK towns and cities.

Currently, the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIP) consenting process under the Planning Act 2008 is the route for many of the UK's large infrastructure projects.

Many of these projects are vital to the road haulage industry. Recent schemes which have gained consent include improvements to the A66 in Cumbria and North Yorkshire, for which HGVs make up 25% of traffic, the A1 in Northumberland, which is the sole strategic route for freight in the country, and the A428 in Cambridgeshire, which forms a key section of the Oxford-Cambridge corridor. There are many major schemes currently awaiting consent which can be transformative for freight and logistics, including Lower Thames Crossing, the A303 at Stonehenge, and improvements to the M5.

However, in recent years, the speed of decision-making has slowed and the volume and complexity of cases in the pipeline is increasing. This needs to change. The average timeline for gaining consent has increased from 2.6 years to 4.2. In addition, **there has been an increase in the volume of documentation created during the NSIP process** with some applications having generated in excess of 90,000 pages of documentation. This requires a significant level of resource and cost from local authorities, which often involves spending significant resource on specialist consultancies; money which could otherwise be spent on local highways improvements.



Furthermore, the number of projects that are subject to successful legal challenge is increasing. Since 2021 there have been 4 successful challenges out of a total 15 legal challenges to date. There have been 4 Development Consent Orders (DCO) quashed in the system overall, all of which occurred in 2021. A clear example of this is the A428 Caxton Gibbet – Black Cat improvement scheme, which was given consent in August 2022, but construction was only able to commence in December 2023 due to lengthy appeals and challenges. The delay resulted in National Highways having to pay an additional £24m to contractor Skanska in compensation.

In December 2024, the government published its Plan For Change, outlining how it intends to deliver on its 5 Key Missions. A key pledge in this document is “fast-track planning decisions on at least 150 major infrastructure projects”. This can only be achieved with significant and radical reform of the Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project consenting process and we call upon the government to be ambitious in the way in which major infrastructure schemes receive consent by:

- Establishing targets to reduce the delay in awarding consent to two and a half years, achieved in the 2010s and streamline strategic environmental mitigation to deliver more infrastructure more quickly.
- Streamlining the objections and appeals process to avoid lengthy delays in the post decision-making period.
- Making funding and support available to local authorities who must process and provide input into DCO Projects; local government involvement within the DCO process is incredibly cost and resource intensive, which takes funds away from other vital highways and transport projects.

<sup>21</sup> gov.uk - Nationally Significant Infrastructure: action plan for reforms to the planning process, February 2023

<sup>22</sup> gov.uk - Nationally Significant Infrastructure: action plan for reforms to the planning process, February 2023

<sup>23</sup> gov.uk - Nationally Significant Infrastructure: action plan for reforms to the planning process, February 2023

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/ministers-set-to-unleash-biggest-building-boom-in-half-a-century#:~:text=Pledge%20to%20make%20planning%20decisions,triple%20decisions%20of%20previous%20Parliament.>





# The Economic Benefits of the Second Road Investment Strategy (RIS2)

The Second Road Investment Strategy (RIS2) sets out the government’s plans for developing and improving the Strategic Road Network between 2020/21 and 2024/25, so that its long-term vision for a network that is safe, reliable and efficient for everyone is met. £27.4bn has been made available to fund the operation, maintenance, renewal and enhancement of the network through a detailed Investment Plan and a robust and tested Performance Framework.

The Department for Transport’s own analysis shows that for the Investment Plan, RIS2 overall represents High Value for Money (VfM) – meaning that more than £2 of benefits are generated for each £1 spent<sup>25</sup>:

Major RIS2 Spending Line	VfM assessment
Operations, Maintenance and Renewals	Very High
Enhancements	High
Designed Funds	High/Very High

National Highways’ economic analysis has demonstrated that that all elements of its highways enhancements plan in the RIS2 period generate benefits worth more than their costs, delivering “High Value for Money” with £2 of benefit for every £1 spent on the SRN during RIS2, representing £26.7bn in benefits<sup>26</sup>.

The analysis demonstrated that different schemes offer different levels of value for money. Significant investment in new bypasses, unsurprisingly offers a lower BCR because of the large capital cost involved. However when packaged together with lower cost schemes, such as junction improvements and carriageway widening, the RIS2 programme was able to still offer a BCR of 2.0, offering high value to the taxpayer.

This analysis challenges a few preconceptions. The first is the assumption that bypasses are expensive, difficult to construct and offer low value to money for the tax-payer. It was on this basis that the A27 Bypass at Arundel has been temporarily shelved. While this may be true in isolation, in concert with other types of schemes, such as road widening, duelling and junction improvements, the value can still be considerable and offer significant economic benefits for all road users.

Therefore when looking ahead to RIS3 and analysing to what extent highways investment can offer value for money to the taxpayer, it is important to bear in mind the benefits delivered by the current RIS2 period. Below is a breakdown of some of the success stories of the RIS2 programme, looking at some of the key wins for some of the schemes that have been delivered. The schemes chosen are not exhaustive and show the many ways in which highways investment has led to economic growth, journey savings for commuters and improved access to trading ports.

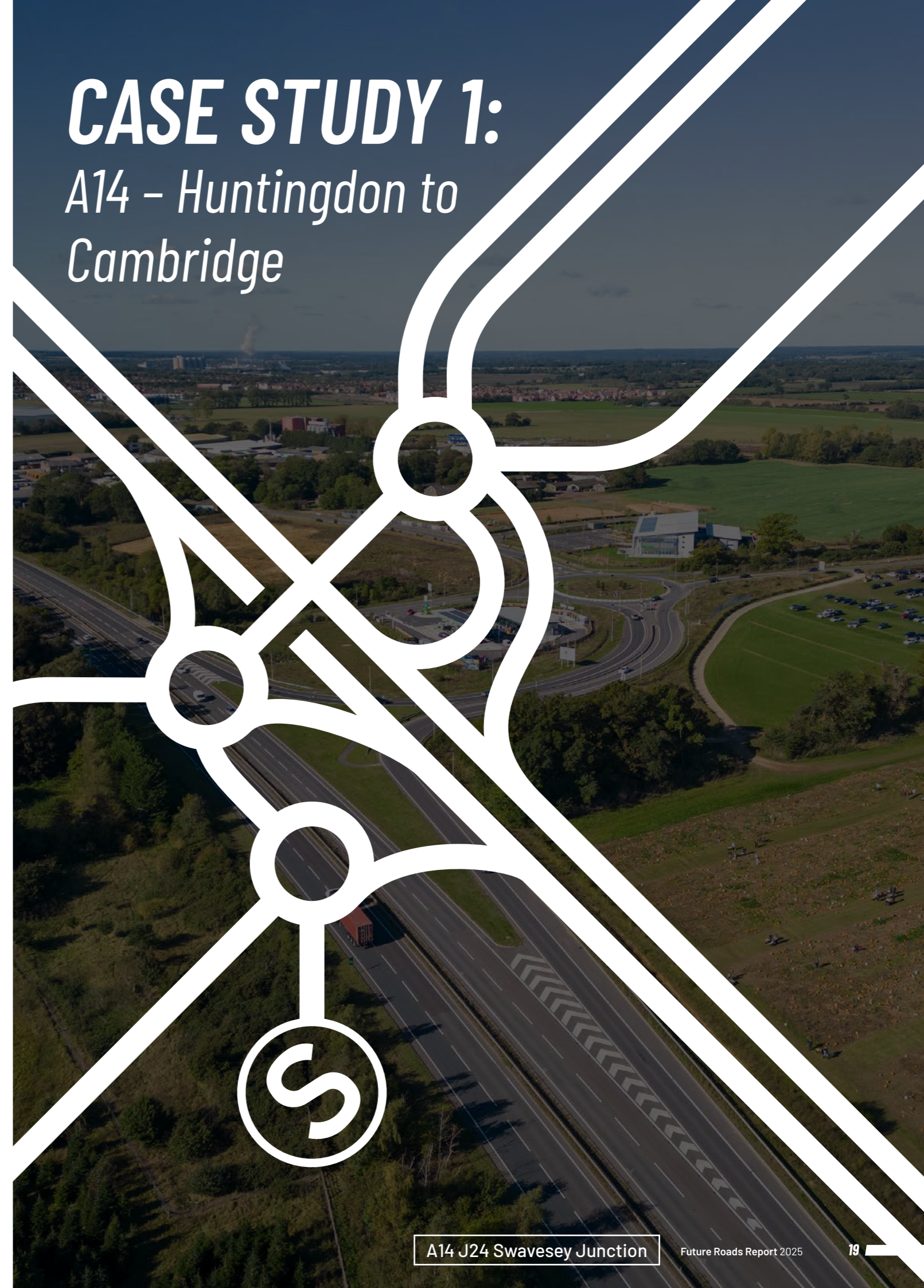
Scheme Type	Number of Schemes in RIS2	Total Present Value Benefits	Total Present Value costs	Net present Value	BCR
Junction Improvements	25	£4.1bn	£1.8bn	£2.3bn	2.3
Widening	20	£6.7bn	£3.0bn	£3.7bn	2.2
Smart Motorway	17	£6.3bn	£2.6bn	£3.7bn	2.4
Bypass	7	£9.6bn	£5.8bn	£3.8bn	1.6
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>£26.7bn</b>	<b>£13.2bn</b>	<b>£13.5bn</b>	<b>2.0</b>

<sup>25</sup> National Highways, Economic analysis of the second road period, Pg 2

<sup>26</sup> National Highways, Economic analysis of the second road period, Pg 9

Scheme	Economic Benefit
M25 Junction 30 A13 Corridor Enhancement	On course to deliver £251 million value for money benefits over the 60-year appraisal period
A160/A180 Port of Immingham improvement	Overall positive impact on journey reliability to the port of Immingham: vital for the freight sector
A14 Kettering Bypass junctions 7 to 9 widening	On track to deliver £5 million of journey time benefits and £36 million of safety benefits over the 60-year period
A1 Coal House to Metrocentre - 5-year post-opening project evaluation	On track to deliver £15 million of safety benefits over the 60-year period
A43 Abthorpe roundabout improvements	Journey times are now improved on the A43 during the busiest periods
A45/A46 Tollbar End improvement	Significant improvement for access to local businesses at Coventry Airport and Middlemarch Industrial Estate
A23 Handcross to Warninglid	On track to deliver £286 million of journey time benefits over the 60-year period
A11 Fiveways to Thetford dualling	On track to deliver £206 million of safety and £168 million of journey time benefits over the 60-year period
A30 Temple to Higher Carblake	Designed to enhance regional economic growth, the project has improved customer journeys and reduced delay and congestion
A556 Knutsford to Bowdon improvement	Opening up new economic opportunities by improving journey time reliability along a key corridor linking Birmingham and the South of England with Manchester, Manchester Airport and the North of England
A1 Dishforth to Leeming	Congestion and journey time reliability has significantly improved on a route vital for freight and HGVs
A5-M1 Dunstable Northern Bypass	The scheme delivered journey time improvements in all time periods and in both directions, to the benefit of both strategic and local traffic.
A21 Tonbridge to Pembury dualling	The scheme has supported a 20% increase in the number of road users whilst simultaneously reducing congestion
M1 junctions 28 to 31 and junctions 32 to 35a all lane running and M1 junctions 31 to 32 controlled motorway	Journey time has improved in all directions, including for HGVs which make up 22% of total traffic flow
M3 junctions 2 to 4a all lane running	Journey time savings have already exceeded the first-year benefits forecast within the business case
M25 junction 30/A13 corridor congestion relieving project	The project has improved access to the ports of Tilbury and London Gateway, improved journey times and enabled more reliable journeys

# CASE STUDY 1: A14 - Huntingdon to Cambridge



## Status: Completed and opened to traffic

The A14 is a critical link between the eastern ports and the north and west of England, particularly for businesses and freight. It is of local, regional, national, and international significance. The section of the route between Huntingdon and Cambridge carries a high level of commuter as well as long-distance traffic and provides a strategic link between the A1 and the M11 motorway. It carries around 85,000 vehicles per day, 26% of which is HGV traffic (against a national average of 10%). The old route was frequently congested and traffic was often disrupted by breakdowns, accidents and roadworks. From its opening in May 2020, the scheme has been transformative and brought significant benefits to the area.

## Economic Appraisal

- The BCR for the scheme is 2.3, which according to the Planning Inspectorate “falls within the high value for money category”. The reason for the high BCR is because of the scheme’s role in journey time reliability and tackling business growth constraints due to congestion
- RIS1 identified the A14 as “the biggest single choke point for British business” on the entire UK network.
- The Planning Inspectorate determined that the quality of life improvements provided by the scheme would make the well-connected A14 corridor a better place to live and attract people and businesses to contribute to the greater Cambridge economy

## Freight on the A14

- Freight Proportion: Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) account for approximately 20-25% of total traffic on the A14.
- Daily Traffic: The total daily vehicle count is typically between 70,000 and 90,000 vehicles, meaning HGVs constitute around 14,000 to 22,500 vehicles per day.
- The A14 supports the movement of goods worth over £100 billion annually to and from the Port of Felixstowe, much of which transits through the Huntingdon-Cambridge section.
- It facilitates over 40% of the UK’s containerized freight movements, with a significant portion passing through the A14 corridor.

## Resilience of the SRN

- Delays on the A14 could add 30-60 minutes to journeys, particularly at junctions near Cambridge and Huntingdon.
- If every HGV passing through the A14 between Huntingdon and Cambridge were delayed by this amount, the cost would be £1.3m a day.
- The road’s layout and traffic levels made it prone to accidents, further compounding congestion issues.

## Benefits

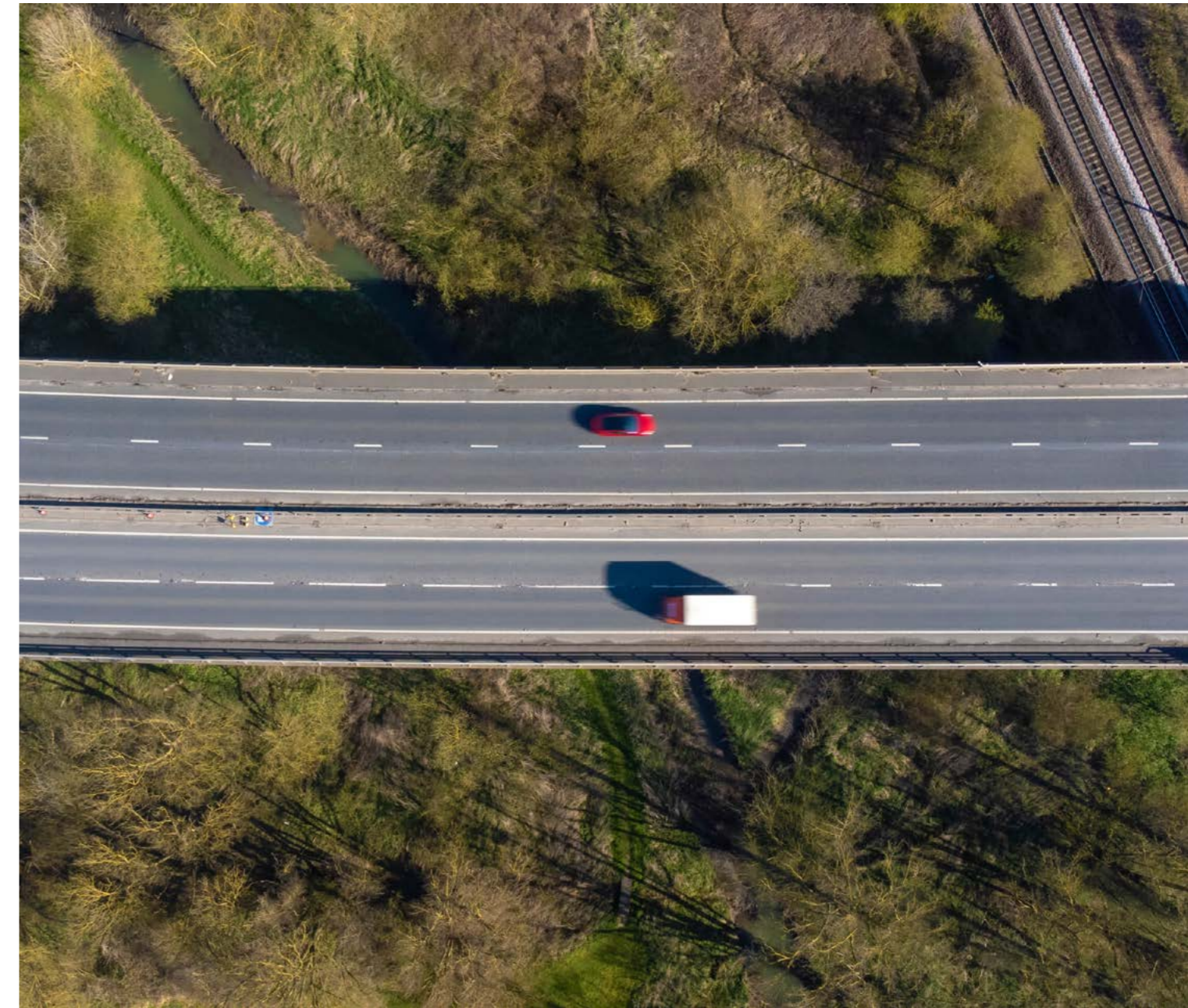
- The A14 Huntingdon to Cambridge scheme cost £1.5 billion and is projected to bring nearly £2.5 billion of benefits to the UK economy.
- The new road has been designed to cut peak time journeys by up to 20 minutes and reduce incidents by 3,000 over the next 60 years.
- A new local road, the A1307, was built alongside the new A14 to allow local people to make local journeys, ensuring that the right traffic uses the right roads

## Economic Growth

- The opening of the new A14 Cambridge to Huntingdon scheme supports the growth of the national economy by enabling the efficient movement of people and freight from our largest ports to other parts of the country
- The population of Cambridgeshire is expected to rise by 18% between 2022 and 2041<sup>27</sup>, and employment growth is expected to rise by 16% in the same period.
- The wider Cambridgeshire economy, which was frustrated by a lack of housing and constraints on movement caused by road traffic congestion, now has a road that will help unlock the development of 23,000 new homes and improve access to labour markets.
- Goods will now be transported much more efficiently across the country, saving on average £70 million per year to the UK economy.
- Enhanced road capacity has made the region more attractive for investment, supporting growth in manufacturing, logistics, and technology.
- By improving access to Felixstowe, the scheme supports international trade, reinforcing the UK’s position as a global trading hub.

## Skills and Employment

- Over 14,000 people were employed throughout the project’s duration, with a peak workforce of up to 2,500 on-site workers at any given time
- The scheme also included a focus on skills development, creating 500 apprenticeships and offering training opportunities to help workers develop long-term careers in the construction and engineering sectors
- The project sourced over £120 million in goods and services from more than 50 local businesses, further supporting regional employment.

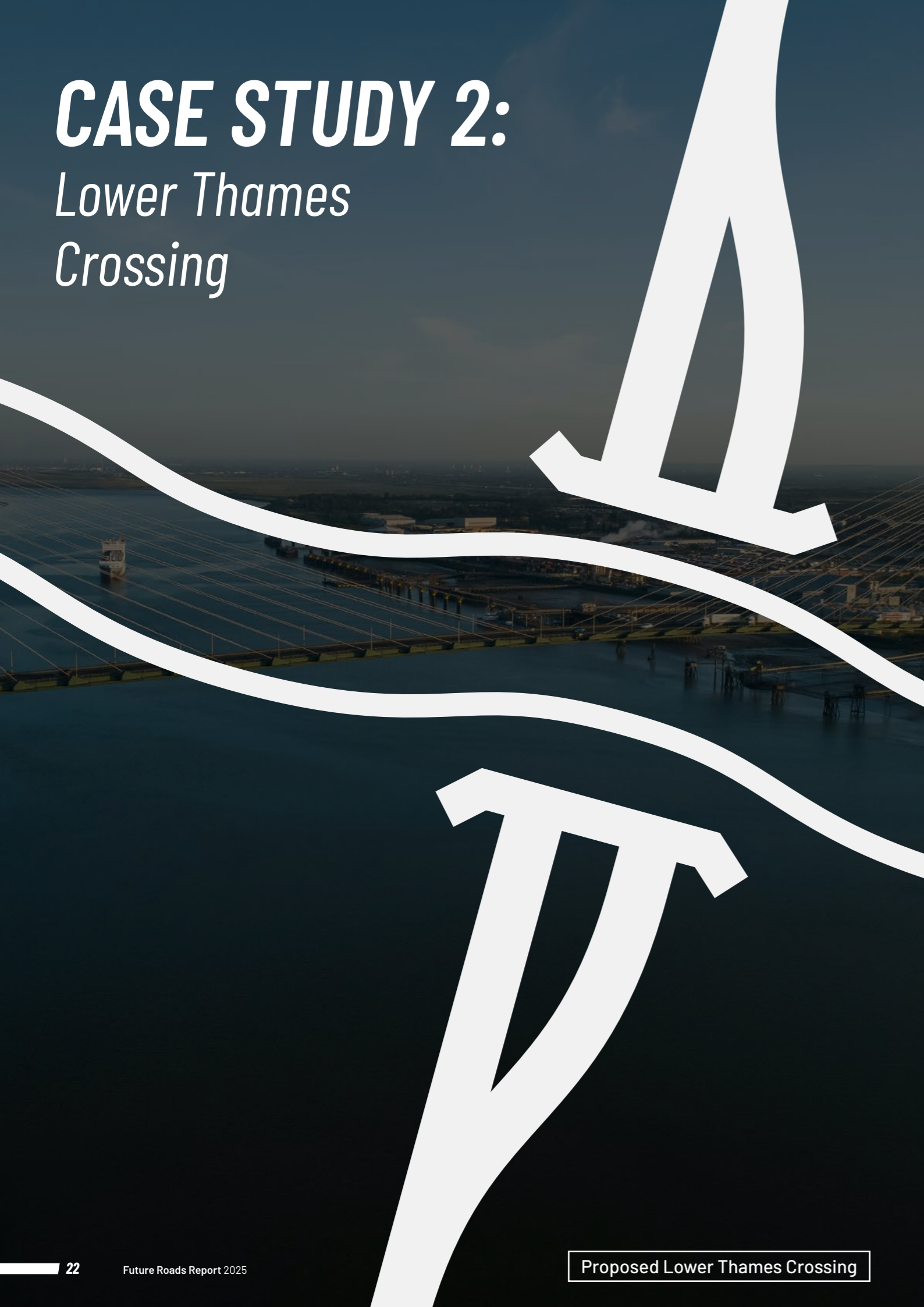


<sup>27</sup> All information on the A14 case study kindly provided by National Highways

<sup>28</sup> <https://cambridgeshireinsight.org.uk/population/population-forecasts/>

# CASE STUDY 2:

## Lower Thames Crossing



### Status: Awaiting DCO Decision

The Lower Thames Crossing is a proposed new road that would connect Kent and Essex through a tunnel beneath the River Thames.

The reliable new route will almost double road capacity over the river east of London to reduce congestion and give millions of people more choice on where they live, work and spend their valuable time.

The Dartford Crossing is one of our most vital roads, but also one of our most unreliable – the first tunnel opened more than 60 years ago but despite a second tunnel and a bridge being added, it still cannot keep up with unprecedented demand. Designed to handle 135,000 vehicles a day, it now averages 150,000 a day and requires a dedicated team to manage it around the clock. The huge numbers of vehicles that use it each day make it one of the country's most unreliable roads, causing misery for millions of motorists and acting as a handbrake on economic growth in the south-east of England and beyond.

Congestion at the Dartford Crossing costs the UK more than £200 million every year in time lost sitting in traffic.

The proposed Lower Thames Crossing will almost double road capacity across the Thames east of London – easing congestion on the Dartford Crossing, improving journeys across the south east, and creating a reliable new route across the river.

### Economic Appraisal

The LTC would add £billions to the UK economy

- **22** out of **24** economic model scenarios result in the return on investment exceeding the cost of building the LTC – it is a sound investment.
- Once the LTC opens for traffic, an additional **£80m** of revenue will be generated from the user charge per year (on top of Dartford's existing £200m per year).
- Over a third of benefits will go to our local communities and there will be an injection of billions of pounds into the UK over the next decade during construction.

### Freight and the Lower Thames Crossing

- The country's freight relies on the Dartford Crossing. Almost 40% of journeys are goods vehicles (double the national average) – a lifeline for stocking our supermarkets, providing us medicine and medical equipment and bringing us our online shopping parcels...
- The Dartford Crossing averages 3hrs of closed lane per day due to incidents – this equates to an average of **£350,000 per day / £130m each year in HGV delays alone**
- The LTC will provide a new connection between major manufacturing centres, distribution hubs and key ports – lift the barrier/shackles with quicker and more reliable door-to-door service.
- We predict almost all freight traffic from Dover will travel over the Lower Thames Crossing – creating at least a 15% increase in HGV traffic.
- By 2030, an additional 10% of HGV traffic is predicted to be using the Dartford Crossing without the LTC; with the LTC, we predict a 34% reduction in the number of HGVs using the DC.

## Resilience of the SRN

- The Dartford Crossing averages 3hrs of closed lanes per day.
- As the only road crossing east of London, when Dartford fails there is no alternative, traffic goes on hundred-mile-long diversions and impacts the whole stretch of the M25 and centres to London – up to 180,000 vehicles needing to find somewhere else to go.
- On a regular basis an incident can cause major closures on the north or southbound of the Dartford Crossing – **upwards of £80,000 per hour / £87m per year**.
- If a major incident was to close the tunnels and high winds closed the bridge, it would lead to hundreds of thousands of vehicles to diverting around the M25 and London – at least **£3m per day**.
- The Dartford Crossing is already well over capacity and it's getting busier. High traffic periods are frequent (not just morning and evening peak), with typical Fridays seeing the evening peak starting as early as 10 am and continuing into the evening.
- For an average car to divert from the Dartford Crossing:
  - Blackwall Tunnel can add **1-2hrs to journeys**
  - Around the M25 can an upwards of **3hrs**

## Economic Growth

- The LTC will create a new economy by bringing people and businesses together. It will open up new markets and create a new demographic for the South East, whilst tackling the river's north-south divide and levelling up communities with better job opportunities and higher skills leading to higher wages.
- It will give millions of people more flexibility and choice where they work, live and get their education (30% more jobs within a 30-minute commute).
- It will make businesses more productive and help them reach more customers and suppliers they couldn't access before, between Kent, Essex and beyond.
- Vital goods moving across the bridge will arrive on time and lead to more journeys being made with confidence.

## Skills and Employment

- The LTC will provide work for thousands of people and businesses during construction
- It will recruit almost half of its workforce locally (45% - 20 miles) and develop a supply chain with local businesses and SMEs at its core.
- For the Thames Estuary region, the LTC will raise the skills levels of thousands of local people and businesses during construction and help match local education and wage levels with other parts of the country.
- Almost 70% (67%) of the productivity benefits from the new road are predicted to fall to people with either low income, employment or education, including access to more than jobs.
- The LTC is estimated to bring an additional 400,000 jobs within an hour's commute of our local communities.

## Benefits

- Most of the money to build the LTC will be spent in the UK – an injection of billions of pounds over the next decade.
- During construction, billions will be invested across the UK – supporting the future of businesses, sustaining jobs, creating new roles, and developing new green skills and innovation that will be used on other projects.
- A third of LTC construction spend will be with local firms and the rest largely with UK organisations. This includes sourcing raw materials from all corners of the UK – the very beginning of our journey at mapping our delivery partners supply chains.
- There will be a significant increase in productivity for businesses locally and nationally by creating reliable journeys that open them up to new markets - more than half of transport benefits (56%) are predicted to be for businesses, such as goods vehicles (commuters not included at 20%).

# CASE STUDY 3: A66 Northern Trans- Pennine Scheme

## Status: DCO Granted: Awaiting outcome of Legal Appeal

The A66 is a key local, regional, national route for east/west journeys in the north of England providing vital connections for freight, tourism and businesses across the UK. It serves as the main east-west route connecting the M6 in Cumbria with the A1 in North Yorkshire.

The route carries high levels of freight, with 25% of the traffic being heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) compared to the national average figure of 12%. The A66 is also an important route for tourism, providing access to the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, the Yorkshire Dales and the Lake District National Park. Drivers face congestion, delays at key junctions and substandard access to jobs and leisure locations. Investment in the A66 is essential to the continued development of the economy in the north of the country. National Highways have identified the scheme as being pivotal, and “one of the largest and most important highways investments in the north of England”

## Economic Appraisal

- The scheme is forecast to achieve total transport economic efficiency benefits of £521.1m
- £477.6m (Travel Time, Vehicle Operation and User Charges)
- £124.7m Reliability Benefits
- £61.5m Wider Economic Impacts
- National Highways own assessment is that “if the existing A66 route is not improved, it will continue to constrain national and regional connectivity and may threaten transformational growth”

## Freight on the A66

- As previously outlined, the A66 is an important route for freight traffic, with HGVs comprising on average 25% of total vehicles on most lengths of the route between Scotch Corner and Penrith, significantly higher than on comparable roads of this nature.
- The A66 is a key route between the ports of Teesport, Grimsby and Immingham to northwest England, and Scotland. Teesport alone, the nearest port to the A66, accounts for 28.4 million tonnes of cargo per annum with Grimsby and Immingham accounting for 54 million tonnes of cargo annually.
- Given the limited routes through the North Pennines, in the event of a closure on the A66, there are limited diversion routes for HGV operators, and this leads to delays, longer journey distances and longer journey times.

## Resilience of the SRN

- Between 2013 and 2019, there were 266 accidents which occurred along the route, equating to an average of 40 accidents per year
- The scheme is expected to save 15 fatalities and 124 serious casualties across a 60 year period, a saving of £29.6m.
- Journey time savings between M6 J40 and A1(M) Scotch Corner will save between 10 and 13 minutes (19- 22%) when travelling along the A66 corridor in future years

## Economic Growth

The congestion, unreliable journey times, lack of resilience during adverse weather conditions and poor road safety currently experienced on the A66 have a significant effect on both the local and regional economy, stifling growth and preventing the region – and its population – from fulfilling its economic and strategic growth potential. It is therefore considered that there are compelling reasons to enhance and improve the A66 to address these problems. Furthermore, it is considered that the alternative, to do nothing, would be unacceptable due to the ‘costs’ associated with the continuation or worsening of these issues with the existing non dualled lengths of the road.



# Reforming how to deliver key infrastructure

M275 Princess Royal Way Junction

In spite of the significant economic benefits that investment in our highways provides, many of which are outlined in this document, there is still a perception that highways investment provides poor value for money given the spiralling cost of schemes. However, many of the reasons for the rising costs of schemes can be addressed with clear reform and guidance from the government.

The National Infrastructure Commission's 2024 report on Cost drivers of major infrastructure projects in the UK provides one such way forward and contains three clear recommendations which we are calling upon the government to deliver<sup>30</sup>.

1. Clearer Direction. Government should set much clearer strategic direction in infrastructure sectors, including by providing longer term funding settlements and a pipeline of projects in sectors where appropriate. For RIS3 therefore, this needs to be a long-term settlement, with the schemes chosen deliberately being picked to outline the government's strategic aims around economic growth. This provides the confidence to National Highways and the supply chain that the government is serious about delivery, and that project timescales are unlikely to waver.

2. Stronger client capability – there needs to be a clearer focus on what the public sector wants from projects, including better outcome specification. Clients should provide contractors with a fixed budget and ensure that these are not routinely exceeded, and that risk sharing is more effectively managed.
3. Clear Regulation – the impact on cost effective delivery needs to be more actively considered by public bodies in the evolution and future design of regulatory frameworks, including in the planning / consenting system.

In these three areas alone, there is significant areas for reform and efficiencies which can bring down the costs of project delivery. Highways investment should be first and foremost considered an area of economic opportunity: an economic multiplier which unlocks further growth. However all too often is it seen as poor value for money in spite of the evidence to the contrary. However, careful reform in the areas offers significant potential to bring down the costs of major infrastructure schemes.



<sup>29</sup> [nic.org.uk/app/uploads/Annex-B-Roundtable-summary-costs-report-Oct-2024.pdf](https://www.nic.org.uk/app/uploads/Annex-B-Roundtable-summary-costs-report-Oct-2024.pdf) Pg 3

# Key RIS2 Schemes for Delivery

M25 J15

In 2024 the incoming government announced that it would scrap the A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down scheme, along with other schemes such as the A1 Morpeth to Ellington. Elsewhere a decision on Lower Thames Crossing has been pushed back to May, while schemes such as the A66 which have already gained consent have their delivery hang in the balance.

It is vital that the short term approach to managing infrastructure projects that was seen in 2024 does not continue into RIS3. To secure Britain's economic recovery, there are many schemes which still remain undelivered, and are vital not just to the road haulage and coach industry, but to businesses across the UK. To that end, the Road Haulage Association is advocating for the following schemes as a means of supporting British businesses.

- **A66 Northern Trans-Pennine:** Enhancing the A66 will provide a reliable east-west corridor across the Pennines, reducing delays and improving connectivity between key northern freight hubs.
- **A1 Morpeth to Ellington dualling:** Upgrading the A1 in Northumberland is vital for the smoother and safer movement of goods between Scotland and England.
- **Lower Thames Crossing:** The Lower Thames Crossing is critical for easing congestion at the Dartford Crossing, enabling more efficient freight movement and boosting capacity for south-east trade routes.
- **M60 Junction 18 Simister Island Interchange:** Improving this interchange is critical for freight in Greater Manchester, and will reduce delays for hauliers accessing the M60, M62, and M66 networks.
- **A5036 Princess Way:** Upgrades to the A5036 will enhance access to the Port of Liverpool, facilitating smoother freight operations and by extension support the UK's import/export activities.

- **A46 Newark Bypass:** Improving the A46 at Newark will enhance a key link between the Midlands and the Humber ports
- **A5 Dodwells to Longshoot:** Upgrading this stretch of the A5 will improve safety and reliability on a critical route for hauliers connecting the Midlands with the south-east.
- **M27 Southampton Junction 8:** Enhancing this junction is critical for the efficient movement of goods to and from one of the UK's most important shipping hubs.
- **A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down:** The A303 upgrade, including the Stonehenge tunnel, will provide a more reliable strategic route to the south-west, reducing congestion and supporting regional freight flows.



# RHA

The RHA is the leading trade association representing over 8,500 road haulage, coach and van companies across the UK, 85% of whom are small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Our members are operators of vehicles who, between them, operate around 250,000 HGVs (half of the UK fleet) out of 10,000 operating centres and range from a single-truck company to those with thousands of vehicles.

For more information,  
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