

National Highways (NH) update for SW STB board meetings December 2022

RIS3 Update

NH and DfT officials currently remain in a holding pattern awaiting Ministerial clearance for NH to publish a suite of key documents informing the Government's Road Investment Strategy (RIS3). These documents are:

- **Connecting the Country: our long-term strategic plan to 2050.** This document sets out our understanding of the long-term trends that will affect our network over the next 30 years. It also expresses our vision for the SRN network we want to work towards in that time - how we want our network to look and feel, and the benefits for our customers, the environment, and society. It will provide a long-term backdrop to the development of successive Road Investment Strategies, ensuring we focus not just on the here and now but that we build solid foundations for the future. Following publication, there will be opportunities to feedback on the plan which will be updated for publication alongside the RIS3 Strategic Business Plan and Delivery Plan by the end of the Road Period in 2025.
- **SRN Initial Report.** This is our headline recommendation to Government for the shape of RIS3. The initial report is strategic and thematic, setting out a high-level assessment of the current state of the network and user needs from it, potential maintenance and enhancement priorities, and future development needs and opportunities. It is informed by our long-term strategic plan and Route Strategies, and it recommends the next steps to be pursued during RIS3 towards our long-term vision for the SRN.
- **Route Strategies.** Between them, the 17 Route Strategies (20 reports) take a route-based detailed look at the whole of the SRN network, one section at a time. They are underpinned by a comprehensive evidence-base including extensive stakeholder engagement. Each Route Strategy looks at the current and future role and function of the route to identify a set of route objectives. The current state and performance of each route is explored and future demands and opportunities are explored e.g. growth. They also look at the role of the SRN in the wider transport network and the opportunities for greater integration with other modes and for collaboration with other transport providers. The Route Strategies identify opportunities along the route where, once current planned interventions are delivered, future intervention would be likely to bring benefits and help achieve the route objectives. The Route Strategies will be published in draft form alongside the SRN Initial Report, and their final publication will follow later in the RIS period.

Once National Highways has published these documents, DfT will launch a RIS3 consultation to inform their development of the RIS. There will also be an opportunity for stakeholders to provide feedback to NH on our draft long-term plan and the draft Route Strategies.

DfT anticipates publishing RIS3 late in 2024, followed by National Highways' Strategic Business Plan and Delivery Plan setting out how we will deliver RIS3.

We are thankful to all the STBs for their continued engagement and support in a lot of this work, and look forward to your feedback on the documents we publish.

Scheme updates

A417 Missing Link approved

On 16th November, Transport Minister Huw Merriman approved NH's DCO application for the A417 Missing Link improvement scheme.

The A417/A419 provides an important route between Gloucester and Swindon, as an alternative to the M5/M4 route via Bristol. The scheme will dual the so-called 'missing link' – a 3-mile single-carriageway section between dual carriageways which currently end at Brockworth bypass and Cowley roundabout. This will improve links between the M4 and M5 and strengthen connections between the Midlands/North and the South of England.

On an average day, the A417 road currently carries approximately 40,000 vehicles and congestion can be frequent and unpredictable, so some motorists divert onto local roads to avoid tailbacks. This causes difficulties for neighbouring communities and local roads. Poor visibility and other factors currently also mean that accidents occur frequently along this section of road.

This landscape-led highways scheme will deliver a safe and resilient free-flowing road while conserving and enhancing the special character of the Cotswolds area. We are designing the scheme to fit sympathetically within the landscape, link habitats and support environmental sustainability.



An artist's impression of the scheme shows plans for the Gloucestershire Way crossing

Upgrading this section of the A417 to dual carriageway, in a way that is sensitive to the surrounding Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, will help unlock Gloucestershire’s potential for growth, support regional plans for more homes and jobs and improve life in local communities.

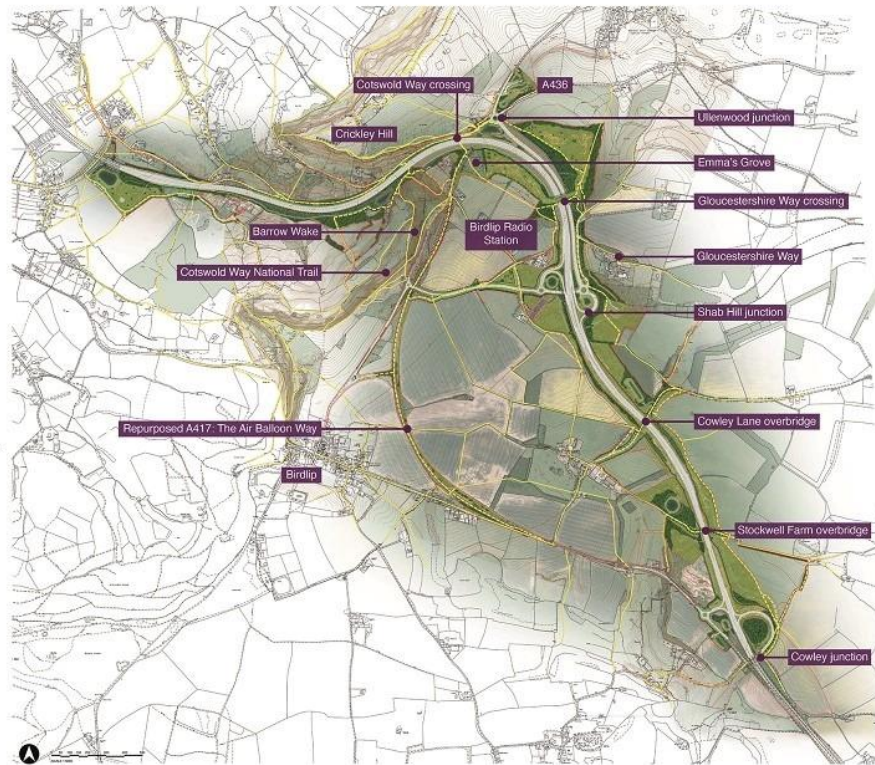
We would like to thank everyone who has worked with us to help shape this vital scheme and provided valuable feedback. We will continue to work closely with local communities as we move towards the start of construction in 2023, making sure everyone is kept informed and disruption is kept to a minimum.

The granting of the DCO means preparatory work on the project can begin early next year with construction due to begin later in 2023. Scheme completion is anticipated in 2025.



A417 Missing Link Masterplan

- KEY**
- Scheme boundary
 - Proposed walking, cycling and horseriding (WCH) paths
 - Existing WCH paths
 - Proposed native woodland
 - Proposed native scrub
 - Proposed tree avenue
 - Proposed hedgerow
 - Proposed limestone grassland
 - Proposed dry stone wall
 - Rock face with planting
 - Watercourse diversion
 - Attenuation basin for drainage
 - Drainage ditch
 - Contours
 - Proposed embankment
 - Proposed cutting
 - Replacement Common Land
 - Timber post and rail fence
 - Timber post and rail fence (badger proof)



A31 Ringwood scheme completed

Our work to widen the A31 and replace the bridges over the River Avon and Bickerley Millstream has now finished and we’ve reopened the A31 and slip roads at Ringwood and Verwood.

The scheme has demolished and rebuilt the two bridges and widened this section of the A31, creating a new third lane between the Ringwood and Verwood junctions.



A38 Trerulefoot to Carkeel safety package

Public consultation earlier this year on this RIS Pipeline scheme showed strong public support. Work towards a Preferred Route Announcement continues and this is anticipated for Spring 2023. As this is currently a pipeline scheme, continuation beyond that point will be subject to the Ministerial decisions on RIS3 in 2024.

A358 Taunton to Southfields

The Development Consent Order (DCO) for this scheme is on track for submission around the end of this year.

Map of the Strategic Road Network (SRN)

Following a request from one of the STB members, please find below a map of the Strategic Road Network in the South West.

