

## National Highways (NH) update for South West Sub-National Transport Body board meetings

March 2024

### RIS3 Update

DfT anticipates publishing the draft Road Investment Strategy (RIS3) shortly. As trailed previously, this document will be high-level and set out Government's direction of travel towards the final RIS3 document. It will reconfirm the objectives for RIS3 and announce the total level of funding available for its delivery.

DfT anticipates publishing RIS3 late in 2024, followed by National Highways' Strategic Business Plan and Delivery Plan setting out how we will deliver RIS3. The final Route Strategy reports will also be published with those documents.

We are thankful to all the STBs for their continued engagement and support in a lot of this work and will continue to work with you over the next 6-9 months as we work towards the final Road Investment Strategy.

### New Chair for National Highways

Sir Gareth Rhys Williams, formerly Government Chief Commercial Officer at the Cabinet Office and CEO of PHS Group, has been confirmed as the new Chair for National Highways.

### Corporate campaigns

#### **Lend a paw:**

National Highways and partners have teamed together in an effort to educate motorists about the dangers of littering. The campaign, which is supported by the RSPCA and Keep Britain Tidy, kicked off on 12 February with a simple plea: 'Lend a paw – bin your litter'. It includes national radio adverts, roadside billboards, posters at motorway service areas and petrol stations, as well as on national and regional social media channels and on variable message signage (VMS) on the network.

#### **Considerate driving:**

In March we'll be pushing out messaging around considerate driving to raise awareness of bad driving behaviours. The aim is to encourage people to make changes to driving style to create better driving experiences for everyone. This will include the themes of middle lane hogging/keep left unless overtaking/close following and will feature on TV, radio, on billboards and posters, and on VMS. We'll also be supporting on national and regional social media channels.

## Scheme updates

### **A30 Chiverton to Carland Cross**

On Friday 23 February we delivered our announcement around the delay to open for traffic (OfT) Originally planned for March 2024, it's now expected the scheme will open in June, ahead of the school summer holidays. Overall the announcement was well received by local MPs, councillors and other key stakeholders. Public sentiment was also positive across social media.

The team are now concentrating on work at the Carland Cross junction and alignment of the new A30 and once the new road is open, finishing works – including local authority road refinements, landscaping, planting, Cornish hedging and other environmental and ecological work – will continue.

Plans are now being developed for events to celebrate the OfT with the wider project team.

### **A303 Sparkford to Ilchester**

Following a change in traffic management at the end of January, work is continuing on the scheme with traffic now using new sections of the road. Another traffic management switch is planned for April and the team are working to deliver a communications campaign ahead of this.

Scheme newsletters are now being sent directly to customers. We're working on widening the audience to increase the number of subscribers.

### **A417 Missing Link**

The team have reached the next major milestone on the scheme and will soon be starting earthworks to excavate sections of the new road offline.

We've published our monthly newsletter which has been well received and feedback is being used to constantly improve the content to our customers.

A comprehensive, targeted communications campaign is being delivered to support upcoming public information events that are being held in the area throughout March and April, as well as supporting forthcoming roadworks this month.

Coming up soon we have an "Open Doors Week" and on Tuesday 19 March, we'll be opening our doors to visitors for a "behind the scenes" look at the A417 Missing Link scheme. Soon after we'll holding events to celebrate archaeology on the scheme.

### **A303 Stonehenge**

A positive decision has been issued by the High Court following the legal challenge raised by the Save Stonehenge World Heritage Site last Autumn.

This legal challenge proposed eight proposed grounds for appeal against the Secretary of State's DCO redetermination decision, with broad themes including that the Secretary of State had not considered the views of UNESCO, and that the Secretary of State failed to consider alternatives, stating a perceived failure to meet legal and policy requirements in relation to climate change and carbon. The challenge called for a re-examination by the High Court.

National Highways' response to the challenge was submitted to the High Court on 19 September 2023.

The High Court held a hearing between 12-14 December 2023.

A positive outcome on the majority of the case was received on 19 February, as the High Court's reject the grounds presented to it. (The remaining ground, which was determined by separate case presented to the Court of Appeal under a challenge to a separate scheme, was also quashed on 22 February.)

We now await formal conclusion of the legal proceedings before taking the next steps.

National Highways remains confident this scheme is the best solution for tackling a long-standing traffic bottleneck, improving journeys, bringing much needed relief to local communities and boosting the economy in the South-West, while conserving and enhancing the World Heritage Site.

We are continuing to plan and make preparations for starting preliminary work and archaeology fieldwork on site in 2024.