

Sustainable development strategy

Our approach

Introduction

“The network of the future will be smoother, smarter and more sustainable.”

(Road Investment Strategy: 2015 to 2020)

Highways England’s role is to operate, maintain and modernise the strategic road network in the interests of customers. We have an ambitious programme to deliver the Government’s Road Investment Strategy. This investment is designed to maximise our road network’s support to the UK economy, and to support the quality of life of communities up and down the country. Our Strategic Business Plan, Delivery Plan, as well as the Road Investment Strategy, all include our visions for sustainable development that build on Highways England’s licence to operate.

Through this strategy we intend to communicate our approach and priorities for sustainable development to our key stakeholders. We are keen to ensure our action in the future will further reduce the impact of our activities to ensure a long-term and sustainable benefit to the environment and the communities we serve.

This is our first Sustainable Development Strategy as Highways England and with it we intend to adhere to the principles of sustainable development in everything we do.

What is sustainable development and why is it important to Highways England?

Sustainable development is defined in our licence to operate, as “encouraging economic growth while protecting the environment and improving safety and quality of life for current and future generations”.

Importantly our licence requires us to put sustainable development into practice in particular with regard to:

- **Financial**
supporting national and local economic growth and regeneration.
- **Human**
protecting and improving the safety of road users and road workers.
- **Natural**
protecting, managing and enhancing the environment.
- **Social**
seeking to improve the well-being of road users and communities affected by the network.
- **Manufactured**
ensuring efficiency and value for money.
(Highways England: Licence, April 2015)

These factors align with the established five capitals of sustainability.

Our other strategies and plans will contribute to the sustainability of the company and the strategic road network.

Financial

- Asset management strategy
- Strategic economic growth plan
- Lean deployment strategy

Human

- Health and safety plan
- Accessibility strategy
- Skills/capability plan
- Workplace strategy

Natural

- Environment strategy
- Air quality strategy
- Biodiversity plan

Social

- Customer service strategy
- Operational Strategy
- Traffic Information Strategy
- Cycling Strategy

Manufactured

- Innovation, Technology and Research Strategy
- Supply Chain Strategy

This strategy describes the unique priorities and our visions and ambitions for sustainable development not covered by other strategies and plans.

Financial capital - Climate change adaptation

Vision

In order to become more resilient to future changes in climate, which may result in more frequent and severe weather events, it is important that we adapt our network and make effective investment decisions. Climate adaptation today is tomorrow's resilience.

Ambition

- Invest for the long-term: our road network contains components that have a very long design life, such as bridges and tunnels; they will require timely and cost effective investments to reduce the risk of increased future costs, whilst improving resilience to climate change.
- Embedding adaptation into the organisation: will make materials and procedures more sustainable in the future. This reduces the risk of a worst case scenario where we compromise safety, experience asset loss, incur increased repair costs, and provide a reduced service to our customers. Investment in sustainability has a direct bearing on the success and safety of the future operation, maintenance and improvement of the strategic road network.
- Manage and maintain our network with increasing efficiency: we create the opportunity to reinvest savings into improving the asset and service we provide, which in turn allows us to better support economic growth both nationally and locally.
- Maximising the benefits of stakeholder engagement: whether it is with fellow infrastructure owners, technical institutions or our European partners.

Human capital - Sustainability leadership

Vision

Our imperative is to protect and improve the safety of road users and road workers using sustainable methods and practices; our leadership ambitions also expect us to serve all our customers and deliver a network of the future required by the Road Investment Strategy . We want to be recognised as a leading organisation that employs a sustainable approach in everything that we do.

Ambition

- Effective evaluation and communication: road investment articulates a strong, evidence-based case for how it adds value in economic terms; it needs to argue with the same level of strength how it also delivers greater sustainability. We will more robustly demonstrate how sustainable development has been delivered (to include quantified metrics, reporting across sustainable development goals and plans for closing gaps).
- Network custodian: acting in the long-term national interest, with integrity and pride. Future operating models will weigh up long-term costs and benefits in environmental, economic and social terms. Having an understanding of the economic value of a sustainable approach in the short and long-term is vital, and will underpin our management of the strategic road network.
- Building the capacity and capability of ourselves and our suppliers: we will become more effective at attracting and recruiting skilled people into the sector, as well as creating working cultures that allow everyone to perform to their potential. In order to become an industry leader in sustainable development, we will support our own workforce to increase their understanding of sustainability, and enable them to put this knowledge into full and effective practice within our business.

Natural capital - Carbon management

Vision

The UK has a legally-binding commitment to achieve an 80 per cent reduction in its greenhouse gas emissions by 2050. The infrastructure sector is responsible for almost one-sixth of total emissions and therefore has a key role to play in contributing to the national reduction.

Ambition

- We will play our part in reducing UK carbon emissions: carbon emissions play a significant role in increasing the rate of climate change, with associated health and well-being impacts. Road transport is one of the main sources of carbon emissions.
- We aim to reduce our carbon footprint: and will work closely with our suppliers to reduce emissions from network related activity. We will effectively measure our carbon footprint.
- We will more actively manage our carbon emissions: we will examine and focus on business areas where efficiencies can be achieved through reducing fuel, energy and raw material consumption, and all waste generation.

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Social capital - Responsible sourcing

Vision

The construction materials industry is a global operation and is subject to growing stakeholder expectations about the accountability and transparency of its operations. We will play our part to support the UK construction industry to responsibly source its materials; enabling production processes that support workers, communities and the environment.

Ambition

- We will increase our knowledge of where our goods and materials are sourced from: over 90% of our capital funding is spent with our supply chain. Ensuring we responsibly source resources is essential, as their production and handling can have local, national and global impacts – on human and social health and also on the environment and climate change.
- We will seek the increased well-being of those who supply us with our materials and resources, as well as road users and communities affected by the network: to demonstrate consideration of environmental, safety and social criteria within the production, processing, manufacturing and delivery of goods and services we demand as a client. We will better define good practice for responsible sourcing and sustainable supply chains.

Manufactured capital - Circular economy

Vision

Road investment will require an increase in resources at a time when investment in other major infrastructure is also increasing. Collectively, this will put pressure on the availability of, and increase competition for, the materials needed in construction. Our challenge is to be increasingly efficient in our resource use and ensure recycled materials are reused for the highest value purpose.

Ambition

- We will push towards a ‘circular’ approach to our management of resources: minimising our demand for primary resources extracted from the ground, and maximise the reuse of the resources already in use on the network. Reutilising them in as high a value function as possible.
- We will be innovative: working with our suppliers to find new ways to deliver a more resilient and adaptable network - seeking efficiency and value for money.
- We will work to achieve security of supply: working with others to improve the stability and predictability of demand for high-sustainability-performance products and services. Enabling suppliers to invest in innovative approaches and secure long-term partnerships with wider supply networks, their staff and wider communities.

To find out more or talk to someone contact

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