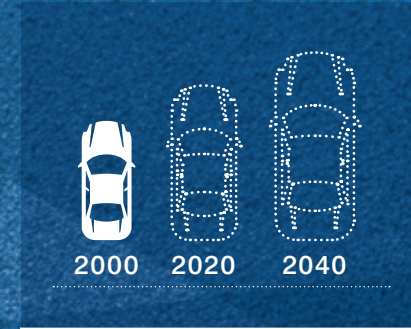
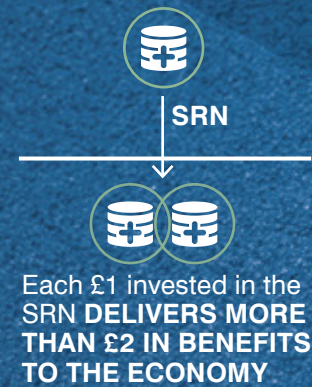




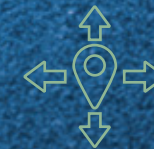
Protecting the environment

Our story so far



21% forecast increase in usage of the SRN over the next 20 years

more than **4** MILLION journeys are made on the SRN every day



THE SRN COMPRISES

- 10,000** miles of carriageways
- 20,000** bridges and other structures
- 100,000** street lights
- 150,000** signs
- 3,500** electronic messaging signs
- 70,000** sensors, including traffic sensors
- 4,300** miles of motorway and major A-road

HIGHWAYS ENGLAND CONNECTS THE COUNTRY

We are the publicly funded, government-owned company that plans, designs, builds, operates and maintains the more than 4,300 miles of motorway and major A-road that form England's strategic road network (SRN). As well as managing one of the world's most advanced road networks, we provide information and assistance for four million road users who use our network every day.

The SRN carries **3X** MORE PEOPLE THAN THE RAIL NETWORK

The SRN carries

34% OF ALL TRAFFIC

68% OF FREIGHT

OUR ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITMENT

As a society we rely on motorways and major A-roads every day – for work journeys and home deliveries, visits to friends and family, holidays, and the movement of the goods and services that we all depend on.

But that reliance comes at a cost to the environment – from the work needed to design, build and maintain our roads, to the effects of the millions of vehicles that use them each day.

We know that there’s a need to balance people’s need to travel on our roads with doing all we can to protect and improve the environment.

It’s something we’re passionate about at Highways England – not just operating our business in an environmentally responsible way, but making sure sustainability shapes our thinking and decision-making right from the outset, when we’re planning our work.

A NEW APPROACH

We’re still a relatively young organisation. Highways England was formed in April 2015, at a time when our approach to the environment had largely been about minimising our impact, so we could gain planning consent.

That’s all changed. The move to a five-year funding period means we now have more certainty and can plan effectively for the long term. And that’s made an enormous difference to the way we consider the environment.

Longer-term planning means we can now take a far more strategic approach to our work – an approach that includes developing plans with partners and stakeholders who are just as passionate about the environment as we are.

We’re thinking differently too. We now place far greater emphasis on what we can do to enhance the environment for people living and working close to our network. And that’s helping us find a better way to do business – saving money, reducing our environmental impact, and building strong relationships with our local communities and stakeholders.

It’s not just about the 4,300 miles of our roads either. We’re also one of the biggest landowners in England. Our ‘soft estate’ – the land surrounding the road network – stretches to 30,000 hectares. That’s equal to about 40,000 football pitches. We’re finding new and better ways to manage this estate, for example through projects to enhance biodiversity. We’ve made good progress with our environmental priorities, but there’s more work to do.

MIKE WILSON
Executive Director Safety, Engineering and Standards,
Highways England



£225 million
RING-FENCED IN AN ENVIRONMENT FUND

To deliver **environmental improvements** over Road Period 1 (2015 – 2020)

To **achieve cleaner air** and address the most polluted parts of our network.

£75 million
SET ASIDE IN OUR AIR QUALITY FUND

A FRESH PERSPECTIVE

We've worked hard in the past four years on changing the culture in our business, to create a fresh and positive perspective on the environment.

In the past, environmental considerations were sometimes viewed as a barrier to overcome before a scheme could be approved. Today, we have a completely different outlook. It's all about investing in a positive way to enhance the environment and provide real value for society.

We have a clear set of principles guiding our environmental work that we developed together with stakeholders.

| | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|----|
| LEADERSHIP AND CULTURE | Instilling a culture of environmental improvement across our business. Being a trusted environmental organisation in everything we do. | ⊕ |
| HEALTH, SAFETY AND WELLBEING | Recognising how environmental improvement can make a difference in areas as diverse as noise reduction, flood resilience and better air quality. | Ⓐ |
| ENGAGING STAKEHOLDERS | Working with partners to do more for the environment than we could achieve alone. | 🔗 |
| DESIGN QUALITY | Making environmental considerations a central part of how we design our schemes. | 🌿 |
| ASSET KNOWLEDGE | Having accurate information on our assets and their surroundings so we can make informed decisions about environmental performance. | ⚙️ |
| APPRAISAL, EVALUATION AND PERFORMANCE | Putting in place the right measures to track our activities and to understand how effective they are in improving the environment. | 🏆 |

OUR GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

BETTER BY DESIGN

The way we design our road schemes matters. It can have a big influence on local communities and the surroundings of the network.

That's why we've established the Strategic Design Panel – a body that brings together experts from a range of disciplines representing our stakeholders. All of them are passionate about the design of our network and making it better. We believe that good design can be a powerful way of improving the quality of people's lives.

As recommended by the panel, we've published *The Road to Good Design*. This document sets out the principles we'll follow to make sure that the roads we design are fit for purpose and work harmoniously with their surroundings.

GOOD DESIGN IN ACTION

On the A590 in Cumbria, traditional dry stone walls reinforce the road's connection to the landscape. We've used locally-sourced stone – the same type that's been used for hundreds of years – so the walls blend with their surroundings.

BUILDING CAPABILITY

Bringing some elements of work in-house through our asset delivery contracts has improved how we manage the environmental aspects of the network in our day-to-day operations and in scheme development.

Seasonal factors dictate how we manage the green spaces next to our roads. For example we time hedge cutting to avoid bird nesting seasons in the spring. And we can support biodiversity by waiting until seeds have set before we cut grass.

We can also closely manage our drainage systems to make sure pollutants don't enter water courses.

We run research projects to understand and then mitigate the impact of roads on the environment. One of these projects is looking at the microplastics generated by vehicle tyre and brake wear, to understand if there's a risk that they are entering streams and rivers and eventually the sea. Other projects have included trialling bio-mass harvesting – this converts timber removed from our estate into wood chip to provide sustainable, low carbon fuel for heat production.

We're currently conducting a trial of asphalt that is made up of recycled car tyres, with the aim of further reducing our carbon footprint.

“The Environment Agency and Highways England have many shared interests. For example, how we can protect communities that are vulnerable to flooding, what can be done to improve water quality and finding better ways to plan infrastructure works jointly.”

The memorandum of understanding we signed is a huge step forward in our shared commitment to protect the environment because it provides a focal point for these efforts. To date, the Environment Designated Fund has committed more than £20 million to support schemes such as the flood alleviation work at Catterick on the A1(M) and there are more schemes in the pipeline.”

RICHARD BOWEN
National Partnership Funding Manager, Environment Agency

“We are advising on Highways England’s Biodiversity Action Plan, and the metrics used to gauge performance against targets of no net loss in biodiversity by 2020, and a biodiversity net gain by 2040 across its estate. This is particularly relevant given the government’s move, confirmed in the Chancellor’s 2019 spring statement, to mandate biodiversity net gain in future infrastructure development.”

DEBORAH HALL
Principal Adviser, Major Infrastructure Development,
Natural England



STRENGTH IN NUMBERS

We’re ambitious about how our work can protect and enhance the environment. Equally we know that we can achieve more by working together with organisations who also care about environmental issues.

So, over the past four years we’ve developed strong partnerships with a wide range of bodies, ranging from the Environment Agency to Natural England and the Canal & River Trust. Working together is helping us to prioritise where investment will bring the most benefits.

In the north-west of England, for example, we’re working with Cumbria Wildlife Trust on a project to increase biodiversity on verges. Volunteers worked alongside our main contractors on the scheme to plant bee-friendly species on roadside verges.

How we measure environmental performance is important too. So, we’ve teamed up with Natural England to develop a new way of measuring biodiversity performance. It’ll track how we’re doing throughout Road Period 2 from April 2020.

THINKING BEYOND ROADS

It’s not just about roads either. We’re helping partners to make improvements away from our network where it’s affecting communities. For example, we’re helping the Canal & River Trust to find ways of giving the public easier access to waterways.

In April 2018 we signed a memorandum of understanding with the Environment Agency. It sets out how we will work together, finding ways to minimise risks to people, infrastructure and the environment from pollution and flooding.

INVESTING WHERE IT MATTERS

Having the right partnerships and ethos are important, but so too is a practical way to deliver schemes to enhance the environment. The Environment Designated Fund helps us do just that. For the first time, we have a ring-fenced pot of £225m from government to improve the surroundings of our network over the period from 2015 to 2020.

This investment is helping us to tackle a wide range of issues, from improving flood resilience to enhancing biodiversity. It's also an approach that goes beyond traditional road investment, and is making sure we can make a long-term positive contribution to the environment.

The work we're doing can involve bringing previous schemes up to latest environmental standards. We're also looking at new projects and finding ways to make them as 'green' as possible.

We've invested in many different types of projects over the past three years. These include road surfacing to reduce noise, noise barriers, flood mitigation schemes and work to introduce species-rich grassland.

| | | |
|--|--|--|
| WHAT WE'VE ACHIEVED SO FAR | 76 LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENTS | 42 BIODIVERSITY IMPROVEMENTS |
| 33 WATER PROJECTS INCLUDING FLOOD MITIGATION AND WATER QUALITY | 31 CARBON PROJECTS INCLUDING LED SCHEMES | 951 NOISE IMPORTANT AREAS (NIAs) ADDRESSED |

PRESERVING A PIECE OF MILITARY HISTORY

We've played a role in helping preserve one of the last military bridges built in the First World War (pictured right).

The Inglis Bridge, which is believed to be the only surviving Mark 1 version, had been built to give access to the airfield at RAF Sandtoft. It's been unused since the war, and we've now removed it from its position spanning a seven-metre-wide watercourse near the M180 in South Yorkshire.

We were responsible for the structure, which is now being renovated by the Royal Engineers Association. Once complete, a section will be transported to the Royal Engineers Museum at Gillingham in Kent, allowing an important piece of First World War history to go on display for future generations.



SEVEN WAYS WE'RE INVESTING IN THE ENVIRONMENT

1.

BOOSTING BIODIVERSITY ON OUR ESTATE SO WE CAN HELP WILDLIFE THRIVE

2.

REDUCING THE NETWORK'S CARBON FOOTPRINT

3.

CONSERVING AND ENHANCING SITES OF CULTURAL HERITAGE AND HISTORIC FEATURES

4.

REDUCING THE IMPACT OF NOISE AT HOTSPOTS ON THE NETWORK

5.

STRENGTHENING RESILIENCE TO FLOODING AND REDUCING FLOOD RISK; IMPROVING WATER QUALITY THROUGH BETTER ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

6.

INTEGRATING THE NETWORK INTO ITS SURROUNDINGS AND REDUCING ITS VISUAL IMPACT ON OUR NEIGHBOURS

7.

INVESTING IN ACTIVITIES THAT SUPPORT BETTER ROAD DESIGN, THAT DO MORE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT AND THAT CONTRIBUTE TO AN IMPROVED QUALITY OF LIFE FOR THOSE LIVING NEAR OUR NETWORK



10,000
NATIVE TREES
PLANTED

105 *miles*
OF ROADSIDE
HABITAT
CONNECTED

Leonardo Gubert, Senior Ecologist
carrying out species survey

TACKLING THE LOSS OF **BIODIVERSITY**

Biodiversity loss – the decline in plant and animal species – is recognised as an international issue. According to WWF's *Living Planet Report 2018*, there's been on average a 60% decline in populations of mammals, birds, fish, reptiles and amphibians between 1970 and 2014 – the most recent year with available data. But biodiversity also matters on a national and local level, which is why it's one of our priority areas for environmental investment.

We own large stretches of land – our soft estate covers 30,000 hectares. It represents a real opportunity for us to have a positive impact on enhancing biodiversity. But slowing and then reversing species loss can take many years. So, we've divided our biodiversity efforts into three stages: slowing decline, stabilising and then ultimately increasing biodiversity. Our work since 2015 has mainly focused on slowing the decline in biodiversity.

WHAT WE'RE DOING

We're committed to managing our estate in a 'wildlife-friendly' way. To do this we've drawn up a multi-million pound programme of investment over five years. We're investing this money in practical projects like underpasses and overbridges for wildlife, tree planting and creating more pollinator-friendly grassland.

Working with Natural England, since the start of Road Period 1 we've produced a total of 41 management plans for sites of special scientific interest to help preserve these protected habitats.

BOOSTING HABITATS IN THE SOUTH WEST

21 sites in Devon and Cornwall are benefiting from a project to enhance the habitat for wildlife on the verge and areas close to the A30 and A38, two of south-west England's major routes.

We've planted over 10,000 native trees and shrubs to fill or reduce gaps in hedgerow and woodland. This planting provides around three extra miles of vegetation. It also connects more than 105 miles of habitat along the roadside.

This investment aims to encourage species including butterflies, bees and dormice to thrive providing suitable places for them to feed, shelter and breed.

Species planted include oak, field maple, holly, willow, honeysuckle and dog roses at locations between Pocombe Bridge and Pulsack on the A30, and between Wrangaton and Bellamarsh on the A38.

CHARTING THE WATERS

The UK has seen an increase of extreme weather in recent years, with seven of the 10 wettest years on record occurring since 1998. Climate experts expect the trend to continue.

We want to do everything we can to protect communities living close to our network and keep our network running smoothly. So, we're investing in schemes designed to improve flood resilience and boost water quality.

STRENGTHENING FLOOD DEFENCES AT CATTERICK

We completed a £6.2m scheme to protect the A1(M) and 149 nearby homes from the risk of flooding in 2018. This work ensures that one of the main north-south routes in England will remain open during severe weather, and provides better flood protection for residents who were badly affected by flooding in 2012.

This is the first time we've worked jointly with the Environment Agency to fund a flood scheme, with additional investment coming from local levy and North Yorkshire County Council.

WHAT WE'VE DONE

We've built a new flood storage reservoir between the A1(M) and Brough Park. It can hold 91 million gallons of water – the same as 130 Olympic-size pools. It aims to slow water flowing through Brough Beck, which previously overflowed in severe weather.

The scheme benefits the local environment in other ways too. We carried out ecological surveys so we could minimise the effect on wildlife of the construction. And we've created five hectares of new habitat, providing a haven for wildlife. This includes wetlands, bat habitats, nesting sites for owls and meadowland. The improvements also benefit the local community who use local bridleways and paths.



THE CAPACITY OF THE
NEW FLOOD STORAGE
RESERVOIR

91 million
gallons



INVESTMENT FROM HIGHWAYS
ENGLAND IN THE CATTERICK
SCHEME

£4.5 million

Andrew Barron, Senior Advisor,
Flood and Coastal Risk Management,
Environment Agency (left) and Michael
Whitehead, Principal Environment
Advisor, Highways England (right) at the
Catterick flood defences

“The Catterick scheme is a great example of partnership between the Environment Agency and Highways England. Neither party would have been able to make it happen working alone.

Through one project we are keeping the A1(M) moving and providing better flood protection for local homes, so there are practical benefits both for motorists and the local community.

And Catterick is paving the way for similar schemes too, like the Oxford flood alleviation scheme that will protect the A34 and 1,200 homes, and the Keadby pumping station renewal on the River Trent, which better protects the M18, M180 and 2,943 homes.”

RICHARD BOWEN

National Partnership Funding Manager,
Environment Agency

6,000 miles

OF **QUIETER SURFACING LAID ON MOTORWAYS** AND A ROADS SINCE 2015. THAT EQUATES TO RESURFACING THE ENTIRE M6 THREE TIMES OVER.

600+ homes

WHERE WE'VE INSTALLED **FREE DOUBLE GLAZING**.

40,000+ residents

HAVE BENEFITED FROM **REDUCED ROAD NOISE LEVELS** SINCE 2015.

WHAT ARE NIAs?

Noise Important Areas (NIAs) are defined by assessing the top 1% of the population affected by the highest noise levels from major roads. There are about 1,130 NIAs close to roads outside urban areas, and some 2,700 next to roads within urban areas.

REDUCING THE IMPACT OF ROAD NOISE ON COMMUNITIES

We know that high levels of road noise are an issue for people living and working close to our roads. To tackle noise hotspots the government has identified some 2,500 priority locations close to our network, known as Noise Important Areas (NIAs). We're aiming to reduce noise levels for 1,150 NIAs by spring 2020.

We do this in three main ways – by installing low-noise surfacing, introducing noise barriers and through a scheme offering free noise insulation to homes that are the worst affected by noise from our network.

The noise insulation scheme is funded by our Environment Designated Fund, and is aimed at properties where other measures like noise barriers aren't viable options.

We use quieter surfacing as standard wherever practical in noise-sensitive areas on the roads we manage. The smoother and thinner top layer can help make roads significantly quieter than traditional techniques.

RECOGNITION FOR KEEPING THE NOISE DOWN

In 2018 the Noise Abatement Society recognised the progress made in tackling noise by awarding Highways England the 'Silent Approach Award'. The award is given to organisations that have made outstanding efforts to reduce noise, while developing proven and innovative solutions.

RELIEF FROM ROAD NOISE FOR NEWARK RESIDENTS

Residents in the village of North Muskham near Newark in Nottinghamshire are among those to benefit from our noise reduction efforts. The busy A1 runs close to the village, and we have completed a project to install a 600-metre-long noise barrier to reduce the effect of road noise on day-to-day life. The barrier has now been adopted by the community and villagers have planted 150 shrubs in front of it.

1,150

THE NUMBER OF NIAs WE AIM TO ADDRESS BY SPRING 2020

951

THE NUMBER OF NIAs ADDRESSED SO FAR

IMPROVING AIR QUALITY ON THE NETWORK

Poor air quality is the single largest environmental risk to public health in the UK, according to Public Health England. Air pollution cuts short an estimated 40,000 lives annually and costs the UK £20 billion a year. Pollution from road vehicles in the form of nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) and other pollutants is a major contributor to the problem.

The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs has set out objectives for the UK to cut NO₂ levels, alongside other pollutants. We're determined to help meet these air quality thresholds in the UK as soon as possible.

HOW WE'RE INVESTING

Air quality is a challenging subject to address. There are some aspects that are outside our control, such as how quickly drivers are switching from diesel and petrol vehicles to ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEVs). However, we're using our Air Quality Fund – a ring-fenced pot of £75m between 2015 and March 2020 – to investigate a wide range of measures to improve air quality on our network.


POWERING THE WAY TO CLEAN AIR

We're working with Leeds City Council to create an Electric Van Centre of Excellence, so we can encourage more businesses to switch to ULEVs. It's an example of how we're looking for practical ways to improve air quality.

Through the Air Quality Fund, we're investing more than £1.9m in the centre, which will complement action the Council is taking to create a clean air zone. The work will help to improve air quality on the M621 near Leeds and the surrounding area.


In the Midlands and on the A14, we're trialling electric traffic management vehicles. We need to understand the real-world performance of these vehicles and the opportunities they offer to improve air quality.






THE PERCENTAGE OF OUR NETWORK THAT WILL HAVE A CHARGING POINT WITHIN 20 MILES FOR ULEVS BY 2020

95%



CURRENT INVESTMENT IN SUPPORT OF A NATIONAL AIR QUALITY MONITORING NETWORK

£1.1 million



THE NUMBER OF AIR QUALITY-RELATED SCHEMES THAT HAVE RECEIVED INVESTMENT

38

“The funding from Highways England is important. It is allowing us to push ahead with the Electric Van Centre of Excellence on a more ambitious scale than would have been possible otherwise.”

The majority of the investment from the Designated Funds programme is being used to purchase vehicles, and we are currently awaiting first deliveries. We will be able to loan out electric vans to businesses of all shapes and sizes. We will start in Leeds but also hope to extend the work regionally.”

POLLY COOK
Executive Programme Manager, Sustainable Energy and Air Quality Team, Leeds City Council

Carol Hardingham, environment lead for the A14 project, releasing a water vole into one of their newly-built habitats after a winter spent in a water vole 'hotel.'


HABITAT CREATION

PLANTING
We are planting approximately **900,000 trees and shrubs** from a total of **44 different native species** of trees and shrubs. The planting includes **40km hedgerow** and **220 hectares of native woodland and shrub planting**.

| | | |
|------------------|--------------|---|
| SPECIES INCLUDE: | | |
| Dogwood | Dog rose |  Grey poplar Aspen Scots pine Bramble Wild cherry |
| Hawthorn | Honeysuckle | |
| Hazel | Crab apple | |
| Oak | Silver birch | |
| Elder | White willow | |
| Holly | Goat willow | |

SPECIES WE'RE PROTECTING

SOME OF THE SPECIES WE'RE PROTECTING:

| | |
|---------------------|--|
| Barn owl |  Other birds including Cetti's and grasshopper warblers, yellow-hammers, skylarks, corn buntings and yellow wagtails |
| Kestrel | |
| Otters | |
| Swifts | |
| Great crested newts | |
| Water voles | |
| Bats | |

Dr. Steve Sherlock, archaeology lead for A14 project, displays a woolly rhino skull uncovered as part of the work

BOOSTING BIODIVERSITY ALONG THE A14

Our work on the A14 is an exciting opportunity to increase biodiversity, as the route goes through largely intensively farmed agricultural land. As part of the development we are introducing a variety of habitats, including wet woodland, meadows, hedgerows and habitat for water voles.

Most materials we're using are sourced locally, for example sand. We're also reusing materials wherever we can. So, when we're taking out old bridges and structures we crush the materials and use them as foundations for new roads. We're also using a solar generator to provide power on site.

HIDDEN HISTORY

There's been a series of remarkable archaeological finds during our A14 project. These have included Iron Age settlements, Anglo Saxon villages and the partial remains of a woolly mammoth and woolly rhino, both believed to date back more than 100,000 years. The finds are adding to our body of knowledge about how our ancestors lived.

PROJECT A14 CAMBRIDGE TO HUNTINGDON IMPROVEMENT SCHEME

INVESTMENT
£1.5 billion

STATUS
EXPECTED TO OPEN TO TRAFFIC BY THE END OF **2020**

THE PROJECT AT A GLANCE

The A14 is a strategic link between the West Midlands and East Anglia. It carries around 85,000 vehicles a day and more than quarter of the traffic on the route is HGVs. This compares to around 10% nationally. It also suffers from regular congestion, and traffic is disrupted by accidents, roadworks and breakdowns.

The scheme includes a 12-mile bypass to the south of Huntingdon, widening of the A1 and A14, junction improvements and new access roads, as well as improvements to Huntingdon town centre.

PROTECTING A UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE

For thousands of people who use the A303, it can be a daily struggle. Congestion is a regular problem. The single carriageway section between Amesbury and Berwick Down, for example, carries twice the amount of traffic it was designed for.

Through this scheme we aim to boost economic growth in the south-west by transforming journey reliability, making the road safer for all users, while protecting and enhancing the Stonehenge landscape.

We know that this is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to find the right solution for the A303. So, we've engaged with as many different stakeholders as possible in recent years during extensive public consultations, to seek their views.

We've also sought the expertise of bodies such as Historic England and the National Trust to help to shape the design of the scheme. And in 2017 we established the A303 Scientific Committee, which brings together a team of leading independent experts on scientific aspects of the Stonehenge World Heritage Site. The Committee is advising us on how we develop the project to make sure the historic environment is considered and protected at every stage.

PROJECT A303 STONEHENGE

INVESTMENT
£1.6 billion

STATUS
WORK PLANNED TO START
ON SITE IN
2021

THE PROJECT AT A GLANCE

The A303 is a vital route connecting the south-west and south-east of England. The road also runs just 165 metres away from the most famous stone circle in the world as it bisects the Stonehenge UNESCO World Heritage Site. We're proposing a dual carriageway that will improve connectivity to the region, and restore the natural setting of Stonehenge. It'll create a two-mile tunnel that will remove traffic from a large part of the world-renowned landscape.

"This is clearly a vitally important scheme, both in terms of protecting and enhancing an internationally recognised World Heritage Site and the economic aspect of improving this main route to and from the south-west of England."

We welcome the approach that Highways England has taken, particularly in involving stakeholders such as ourselves and the National Trust in a timely way. Highways England has listened to viewpoints and taken expert advice at each step. The creation of the A303 Scientific Committee to offer independent expert advice is also an exceptionally positive step, and one that we are not aware of having been taken before."

AMANDA CHADBURN

Senior Policy Advisor, National Infrastructure, Historic England





“The A556 is a good example of how we’re working with Highways England. The green bridge re-connects wooded areas fragmented by the new road, known to be important commuting and foraging routes for bats. The bridge is also expected to provide connectivity for species such as badger and amphibians present in the scheme footprint, as well as pollinators and other invertebrates.

There are also 46 hectares of new habitats including species-rich grassland, native woodland and woodland edge. Bat hop-overs and new badger setts have been introduced, as well as extensive habitat for great crested newts, with 21 new ponds.

Bat roosts were replaced on a two-to-one basis, with pipistrelles known to be in residence in at least three boxes. There are also five mammal tunnels beneath the new road.”

DEBORAH HALL
Principal Adviser, Major Infrastructure Development,
Natural England

A GREEN BRIDGE FOR WILDLIFE

For any driver travelling on the new A556 link road, there’s a very visible symbol of the environmental aspects of the scheme – the green bridge that spans the bypass, providing a safe route across the road for local wildlife.

Construction of the wildlife corridor was just one of the features built into the scheme’s design that made sure it would leave a positive environmental legacy.

We carried out an extensive landscaping programme too. This involved introducing species-rich grassland and 280 semi-mature trees including alder, birch, cherry, crab apple, elm, oak and rowan.

The A556 scheme was awarded a prestigious ‘Green Apple Award’ in 2017, recognising its achievements in sustainability and enhancing the environment.

PROJECT A556 KNUTSFORD TO BOWDON LINK ROAD, CHESHIRE

INVESTMENT
£192 million

STATUS
COMPLETED MARCH
2017

THE PROJECT AT A GLANCE

The four-mile dual carriageway provides a quicker and more reliable link between junction 19 of the M6 and junction 7 of the M56. The route carries 50,000 vehicles, including 7,000 HGVs each day. It bypasses the old A556, which was often heavily congested, and the villages of Mere, Bucklow Hill and Over Tabley.

21
PONDS
CREATED
TO PROVIDE
HABITATS

60,000
WHIPS AND
SAPLINGS
PLANTED

7,000
METRES OF
HEDGEROW
INTRODUCED

THE ROAD AHEAD

The public mood has never been clearer – it is essential to do the right thing for the environment. From climate change to habitat loss, and the impact of road noise through to polluted air, society expects decisive action.

As we look to the future, we're committed to playing our part in meeting these challenges. When we build and maintain future road schemes our aim must always be to give people the freedom to travel, but not at the expense of the environment.

We can't tackle these myriad environmental issues alone. Which is why the partnerships we have with a wide range of organisations will continue to be vital.

TACKLING THE CHALLENGES OF TOMORROW

There are some big changes ahead too for the roads sector. Like the transition to low and zero emission vehicles. This isn't just about electric vehicles, but also low emission freight. We'll be supporting the wider government effort to make this transition as smooth as possible.

We know innovation has a major role in the future of the road network. Earlier in 2019 we launched a competition, inviting bids from the UK's most creative minds to develop the 'digital roads' of tomorrow. This calls for a fresh approach to designing, building and maintaining roads. The aim is to improve safety and air quality, make journey times more predictable and reduce construction cost.

The government is also committed to the principle of environmental net gain – making sure that investment in infrastructure brings with it a positive impact on the environment. We're already hard at work developing our future biodiversity metrics to support this.

OUR DIRECTION OF TRAVEL

During Road Period 1, we've made a good start in tackling environmental challenges, from launching schemes to reduce road noise to funding air quality research and more.

But as we enter Road Period 2, we know there's still much work to do. The Designated Funds programme will continue to play a vital role in directing funding towards environmental projects.

And as we build new roads and maintain the existing network, we must have the right levels of funding to be able to invest in high-quality environmental improvements that benefit both road users and communities.

The future will bring many environmental challenges for Highways England, as we balance the need to connect people and places with being environmentally responsible. Our commitment to both is absolute.



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