national highways

Evaluation Framework

September 2026

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Foreword

In a rapidly changing and increasingly complex operating environment, we must make decisions grounded in robust, timely and trusted evidence. Evaluation is central to our ability to achieve this.

Evaluation provides the insight and learning we need to show we're delivering on our commitments, to understand what is working and what is not – and why. This helps us ensure that the choices we make deliver benefits for road users, communities and the economy.

Evaluation is more than a technical exercise: it is a key part of developing an organisational culture which values evidence and continuous improvement. It helps us learn from our successes, identify where we can do better and ensure that public investment generates real, demonstrable value.

We have already seen how insight has shaped our thinking. It has enabled us to improve how we design major enhancements, strengthen operational delivery and ensure our investments contribute meaningfully to safety, reliability and road user experience.

Now, we want to build on our success evaluating major road schemes, growing our evaluation maturity in a prioritised and proportionate way across our organisation.

Looking ahead, our ambition is clear: to put people and communities at the heart of our evidence, build a reliable, joined-up and proportionate approach, drive rigorous, credible and future-focused evaluation across our organisation and communicate our findings clearly.

By strengthening our internal expertise, aligning our work with best practice and using new technologies and analytical methods, we will continue to improve the quality, visibility and impact of evaluation evidence.

This Evaluation Framework sets out how we will achieve our ambition. Above all, it reinforces our commitment to learning, accountability and excellence, helping us deliver a free-running, safer and more reliable strategic road network (SRN) for everyone.

Elliot Shaw
Chief Customer and Strategy Officer

Executive summary

As National Highways, we are responsible for significant public investment in the strategic road network (SRN): England's motorways and major A roads. To ensure this investment delivers value for money, improves outcomes for road users and communities and supports future decision-making, we must be able to demonstrate what works, what does not and why.

Evaluation provides the evidence we need. Building on the success of our established evaluations of major enhancement schemes, this framework sets out how we will increase evaluation maturity across our organisation and extend the use of evaluation across a broader range of activities. It establishes a consistent, proportionate and future-focused approach to generating and using evidence.

Our vision

Our vision is to transform evidence and insight into influence and impact through trusted expertise, meaningful relationships and a commitment to continuous improvement.

We want evaluation to be consistently embedded, proportionate to risk and investment and routinely used to support strategic and operational decision-making. Our ambition is for evaluation evidence to be trusted, accessible and customer-focused. Consistent with the Department for Transport's (DfT) ambition to strengthen links between appraisal and evaluation, we will increasingly use evaluation evidence to challenge assumptions, improve future business cases and strengthen investment decisions.

Our four themes

Our framework is built around four long-term themes which will guide how evaluation evolves. These themes are supported by strong collaboration, investment in capability and expertise, effective governance and the use of emerging tools and technologies.

Theme	What we will do	Why it matters
Customer	Expand evaluation to better reflect road user experience, social value and active travel outcomes.	To better understand who benefits from our investments, how they benefit and where improvements can be made.
Clarity	Communicate evidence in accessible, timely and transparent ways.	To increase the influence and usefulness of evaluation findings.
Consistency	Apply proportionate standards, methods and metrics across evaluation activity.	To create a stronger, more comparable evidence base for decision-making.
Quality	Apply rigorous methods, robust assurance and continuous innovation.	To ensure evaluation evidence remains trusted, credible and future-focused.

Our roadmap

We have developed a phased roadmap, grounded in the third road period, to make progress across our four themes. This will enable us to strengthen our evaluation maturity and embed evaluation more systematically into business planning, investment and delivery.

By following this roadmap, we will move from a position where evaluation is strong in specific areas of activity to one where evaluation is embedded proportionately across our organisation and informs decisions at every level.

- **Phase 1 (years 1-2): strengthen our foundations**
  Improve consistency, identify evidence gaps, enhance communication of findings, strengthen governance arrangements and increase evaluation capability across our organisation.
- **Phase 2 (years 3-4): embed and scale**
  Expand evaluation across priority areas, strengthen customer-focused approaches, improve efficiency through innovation and embed evaluation expectations.
- **Phase 3 (years 5+): innovate and optimise**
  Maximise learning, strengthen links between evaluation and future investment decisions and continuously improve our framework based on evidence and experience.

Resourcing and governance

As set out in HM Treasury's Green Book, public spending should be supported by proportionate evaluation. Our approach is to deliver evaluations in-house, undertaken or supported by, our central evaluation function, which provides expertise, methodological guidance and quality assurance. Where more specialist expertise or additional capability is required, we commission external providers. As evaluation activity expands, we are strengthening our central evaluation function while building capability across our organisation.

We recognise the importance of appropriate governance; governance supports learning and better decision-making, not just approvals. We have set out clear roles, responsibilities and approval routes for the design, delivery, assurance and publication of evaluations. As evaluation expands into new areas, governance arrangements will be established from the outset.

Sharing our evidence

We are committed to sharing evaluation findings in a timely, transparent and accessible way, tailoring information to the needs of different audiences so that insights can be easily understood and acted upon. We have undertaken a detailed stakeholder review of how we communicate evaluation insight on our major enhancement schemes and identified several areas of improvement. We are also planning to expand our publications to include a periodic evaluation update, bringing together a concise and accessible overview of wider evaluation activity.

Introduction

As National Highways, our purpose is to connect the country. To do this, we operate, maintain, renew and enhance the SRN, a road network made up of England's motorways and major A-roads. This vital infrastructure represents the country's key economic arteries, keeping people and goods moving, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. We serve a diverse customer base, from motorists and freight operators to cyclists, pedestrians, equestrians and neighbouring communities, all of whom depend on a safe, reliable and accessible road network.

Our delivery context

In planning for the third road period (our five-year investment period, 2026-31, based on Government's Road Investment Strategy funding), we made a deliberate shift in focus from delivering large-scale enhancement schemes to delivering major renewals and maintenance, keeping our existing network safe, reliable and open.

Large renewal schemes will be used to address critical structures and the reconstruction of concrete road surfaces. Routine renewals will continue to be used to extend asset life, improve resilience and avoid costly emergency repairs or disruptive closures. We will also have a stronger focus on planned and preventative maintenance, including resurfacing worn-out sections of road before they deteriorate.

Several enhancement schemes will also continue, targeting known pinch points to increase safety, reduce congestion and improve journey time reliability. These schemes form part of a balanced portfolio which will strengthen the SRN's capacity and resilience, helping connect communities and unlocking economic potential.

Our evaluation journey

It is essential that public money is well spent. The government, public and all other stakeholders should be able to learn from, and build on, what has gone before. This includes the ability to scrutinise whether interventions were effective, the outcomes were achieved and the money was well spent.

Evaluation is one way to achieve this accountability and learning. It helps us understand what works, what could be improved and how we can deliver better in the future. We are committed to embedding a culture of robust, transparent and proportionate evaluation across our most significant areas of work. Our approach aligns with DfT's Evaluation Strategy, Evaluation Programme and Transport Analysis Guidance (TAG), as well as drawing on best practice from across government, including HM Treasury's Magenta Book, the government's central guidance on evaluation.

We have also been growing our benefits management maturity to better reflect the benefits management needs of our wider organisation, building on our already well-established major enhancements benefits capability.

We recognise the critical importance of balancing economic growth with environmental commitments and the need for greater network resilience. As these objectives increasingly shape decision making, our evaluation activity will consider how interventions contribute to these organisational and government priorities.

This framework represents the next stage in our evaluation maturity. Through robust evaluation and effective use of evidence, we will continue to improve accountability, support better decision-making and maximise the value of investment in England's SRN.

1. Vision

As National Highways, we have an established and robust evaluation practice, underpinned by our extensive experience in evaluating major investments. We now want to go even further, ensuring evaluation becomes consistently embedded, proportionate to risk and investment and routinely used to inform decision-making across our organisation.

Where we are today

We have a well-established and trusted evidence base on the impacts of our road schemes, having run Post Opening Project Evaluations (POPE) on our major enhancement schemes for over 20 years.

The POPE process is highly regarded across the transport sector, known as an independent, transparent and consistent approach to evaluating performance against expectations. These evaluations play a key role in supporting accountability and ensuring lessons learnt are fed back into future scheme design and investment decisions.

We now want to build on the success of POPE for other areas of our work, growing our evaluation maturity to reflect our transition from an emphasis on delivering large-scale enhancement projects to an increasing focus on major renewals and maintenance.

Over recent years, we have also sought to grow our evaluation expertise to challenge assumptions, guide investment choices, improve delivery and strengthen our focus on the outcomes that matter to road users, communities and stakeholders. Our systems, tools and analytical capabilities have also matured.

Overall, we have a strong track record of designing and implementing evaluations and assurance processes that support effective decision-making and continuous improvement.

Where we want to get to

Our vision is to transform evidence and insight into influence and impact through trusted expertise, meaningful relationships and a commitment to continuous improvement.

There is growing demand for evaluation across our wider business, reflecting an increasing recognition of the value of evidence-based decision-making. We want evaluation to be consistently embedded, proportionate to risk and investment and routinely used to inform strategic and operational decision-making.

We want to further strengthen our evidence base and for all our evidence to be trusted, accessible and customer-focused.

Consistent with DfT's ambition to strengthen links between evaluation and appraisal, evaluation will be planned from the outset, integrated with our pre-investment appraisal, monitoring and benefits management and routinely used to improve performance, strengthen accountability and maximise the value of public investment. By building a stronger and more connected evidence base, we will help ensure we continue to deliver better outcomes for road users, communities and the wider economy.

2. How we will get there

This Evaluation Framework is built around four long-term themes which guide how evaluation will evolve. These themes are supported by strong collaboration, investment in capability and expertise, effective governance and the use of emerging tools and technologies. To drive progress, we have developed a phased roadmap, aligned with the third road period, which will move us from having strong evaluation practice in selected areas to being an organisation where proportionate evaluation is embedded as standard.

Our four themes

1. Customer: putting people and communities at the heart of our evidence

The needs and experiences of road users, local communities and stakeholders shape how investment in the SRN is delivered. We are strengthening how these perspectives are captured throughout our evaluation work, including by:

- Expanding evaluation to reflect road user experience, social value (societal impacts) and active travel (walking, wheeling and cycling).
- Continuing to evaluate the outcomes that matter most, as set out in our annual Customer Service Plan. Working with customer insight colleagues, drawing on customer research and wider evidence to inform evaluation activities and strengthen the interpretation of evaluation outcomes.
- Developing an evaluation evidence base to build understanding of how investment contributes to wider community, place-based and societal outcomes.

2. Clarity: communicating evidence transparently and accessibly

Clear, open and timely communication is vital to building trust and enabling evidence-led decisions. Our commitment to clarity includes:

- Publishing evaluation findings in accessible, jargon-free formats, and using digital tools and channels to share insights in engaging, accessible ways.
- Being transparent about methods, assumptions and limitations so stakeholders can confidently understand and use our evidence.
- Identifying key audiences and their information needs early, working collaboratively to ensure findings are shared at the right time.

3. Consistency: building a reliable, joined-up and proportionate approach

A strong organisational and national evidence base requires consistent, comparable and proportionate evaluations. Our approach includes:

- Applying standard methods and shared metrics so findings can be aggregated across projects and time periods.
- Aligning evaluation effort to investment value, risk and strategic importance, ensuring responsible use of public funds.
- Encouraging collaboration between analysts, delivery teams and partners to keep our evidence aligned and connected.
- Building capability across our organisation so colleagues can apply, generate, interpret and use evaluation insight consistently, wherever they work.
- Strengthening links between appraisal and evaluation to support long-term learning.

4. Quality: ensuring rigorous, credible and future-focused evaluation

Our evaluations must be trusted, independent and capable of influencing decisions at the highest levels. We ensure quality by:

- Applying recognised best practice, including guidance from HM Treasury and DfT, and using established analytical assurance approaches.
- Enhancing the technical and professional capability of our central evaluation function so we can design, deliver and communicate evaluations effectively.
- Collaborating with experts across government, industry and academia to strengthen methods and encourage innovation.
- Embracing emerging technologies, such as automation and improved data capture, to improve efficiency and unlock new insights.

Further evolving our POPE programme

To further develop our POPE programme, we are moving from a transport-focused evaluation approach to a richer, more rounded picture of impact, helping us understand how our enhancement schemes support different types of journeys, as well as how they contribute to communities, the environment and the economy. This includes consideration towards road user experience, active travel and social value, alongside traditional metrics like journey time and safety.

We have worked to ensure that these evaluation changes will be practical, robust and scalable – and that they will work on live schemes, not just on paper. For example, social value evaluation developments on our A417 Missing Link and A428 Black Cat schemes have helped us build a full evaluation approach from the ground up, including logic maps, evaluation questions and a mix of data sources. We have tested new data collection approaches with project teams, running structured engagements, reviewing existing data and identifying if new evidence is needed.

We have also developed and tested new survey tools to capture road user experience and active travel outcomes. Trialled across multiple major projects and supported by quantitative surveys and in-depth interviews, these tools will help us create a standardised, robust and proportionate approach for evaluating outcomes within POPE.

Taken together, this means we now have a much stronger analytical foundation for our POPE programme for enhancement schemes as well as for our expanding evaluation areas. We are using clear theories of change to link schemes to outcomes, combining quantitative and qualitative data and applying more consistent tools across projects. In time, this will provide a more complete view of performance in terms of not just what changed, but why, and for whom.

Our roadmap

We want to further increase evaluation maturity across our organisation so that evaluation is consistently embedded into our investment, delivery and strategic decision-making. However, evaluation approaches, methods and evidence are not yet applied consistently across all areas of activity and there is an opportunity to strengthen how evaluation is planned, delivered and used across our wider organisation. We also recognise the need to better understand where evidence gaps exist and to generate insight that reflects the full breadth of our activities.

To achieve this, we have developed a three-phased roadmap, grounded in the third road period. This will move us from having strong evaluation practice in selected areas to being an organisation where proportionate evaluation is embedded as standard.

This continuous improvement will run alongside existing evaluation delivery activities, helping inform strategic decisions, improve performance and maximise the value delivered by investment.

Phase 1: Strengthening our foundations (Years 1–2)

- **Develop and maintain an evidence map,** identifying areas where evaluation evidence is strong and where further evidence would help build a comprehensive but proportionate evidence base.
- **Produce a directory of evaluation evidence,** enabling insight to be accessed more easily within our organisation.
- **Generate more useful insight via meta-evaluations,** growing consistency across evaluations through standardised approaches, methodologies, plans, data and metrics.
- **Enhance the presentation of evaluation outputs,** agreeing minimum standards for clear, concise and adaptable communication, aligned with organisational guidance and decision makers' requirements.
- **Seek regular feedback,** focusing on the usefulness of evaluation outputs, their presentation and their impact.
- **Share evaluation insight more widely to demonstrate the value of evaluation,** developing and publishing a periodic evaluation update and using conference presentations, subject matter forums and engagement with academia to extend the reach of our evidence.
- **Build a stronger governance approach**, establishing and agreeing the governance process with the Evaluation Steering Group for each new area of evaluation undertaken.
- **Strengthen evaluation capability,** including through clear and well-structured guidance documents, knowledge sharing and collaboration with delivery teams and professional networks.

Phase 2: Embed and scale (Years 3–4)

- **Grow our evidence base,** embedding proportionate evaluation and/or meta-evaluation to address our highest-priority knowledge gaps.
- **Increase efficiency and timeliness of evaluations,** using innovation to drive improvements.
- **Enhance process evaluation and technical skills within our central evaluation function,** including the automation of data collection and processing.
- **Embed impact and process evaluation expectations and dependencies into business planning and decision making,** working in collaboration with the Evaluation Steering Group.
- **Strengthen our ability to communicate uncertainty, assumptions and ranges of long-term outcomes,** using sensitivity testing and scenario analysis.

Phase 3: Innovate and optimise (Years 5+)

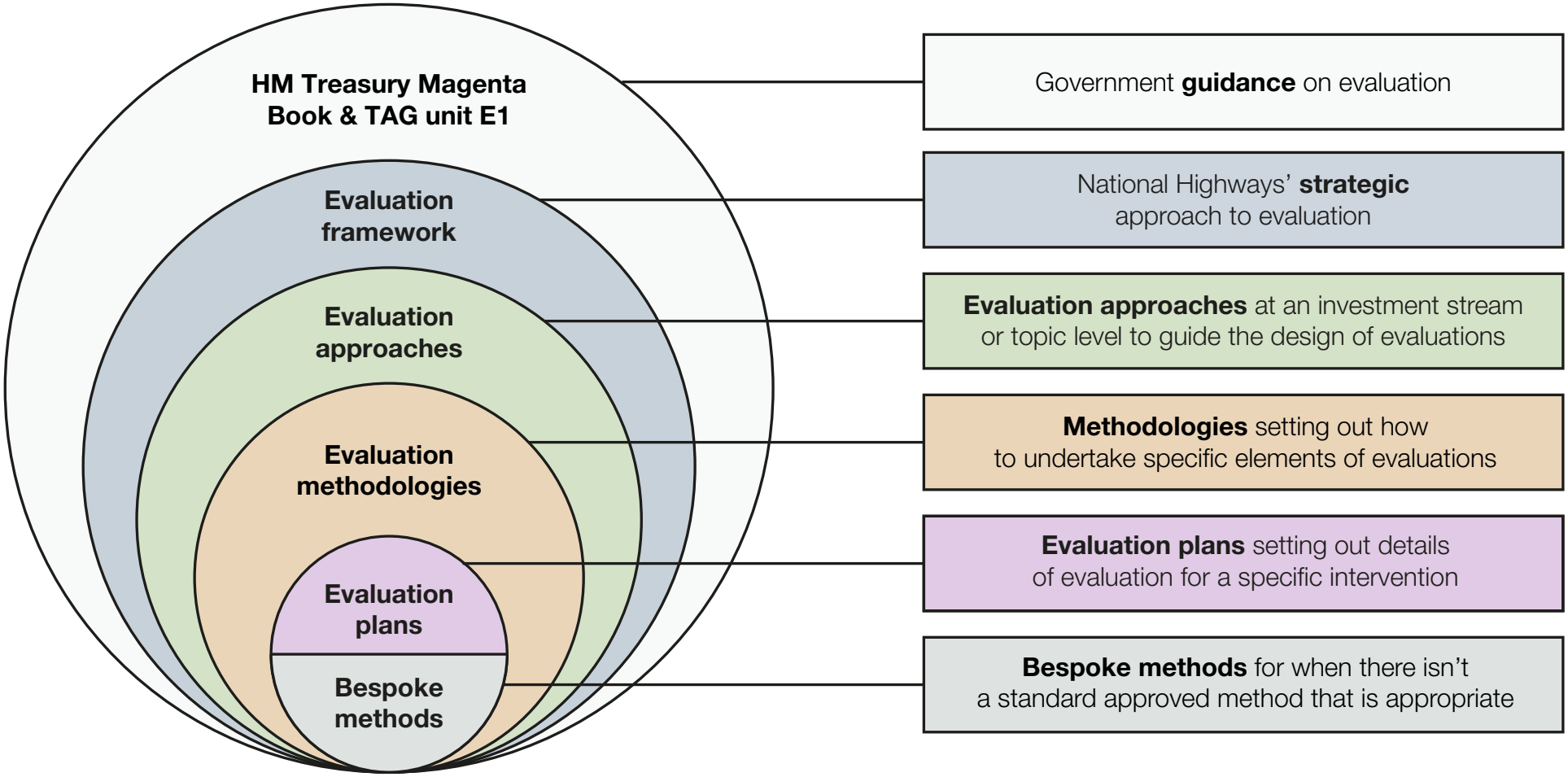
Ensure evaluation continues to address our organisation's most important evidence needs, making sure we review and respond to changing priorities.

Systematise learning loops, to help ensure lessons learnt translate into improvements in design, delivery and strategy, as well as improving appraisal, modelling and evaluation standards

Review and refresh this Evaluation Framework, based on evidence of what has worked.

3. Our evaluation methods

We take a proportionate, consistent and evidence-led approach to evaluation. We define and document the approach to each area of evaluation and use a suite of standard methodologies to structure our evaluation activities. This aligns to the established guidance of the Magenta Book and is informed by DfT's TAG.



Our evaluation proposal

We develop a proportionate evaluation proposal for each five-year road period, which is presented to our Executive for approval. The scope, focus and timescale of each evaluation we undertake depends on the nature of the intervention and its delivery milestones. We prioritise evaluation activity based on risk, strategic importance, evidence needs and stakeholder requirements, focusing effort where it can deliver the greatest value and learning. While major enhancement evaluation remains important, we will place growing emphasis on evaluating smaller and targeted enhancements, renewals and maintenance activities and developing the associated approaches and methodologies, in line with wider organisational priorities.

Over each road period, we will typically cover:

- **Enhancements:** our POPE programme for major enhancements, considering safety, journey times and value for money, and our evaluation of small-scale schemes and targeted funds, covering safety, customer and communities, environment and innovation and research.
- **Operations, maintenance and renewals:** a complex and evolving area of evaluation aligned with our organisational shift in focus to delivering major renewals and maintenance.
- **Performance plans:** primarily, those relating to our key performance indicators (KPIs).
- **Specialised evaluation:** discrete, complex or high-profile projects requiring tailored methods to assess impacts beyond our standard evaluation programme, such as wider economic impacts, community outcomes, change and innovation or other priority areas identified through our governance process.

Evaluation approaches and methodologies

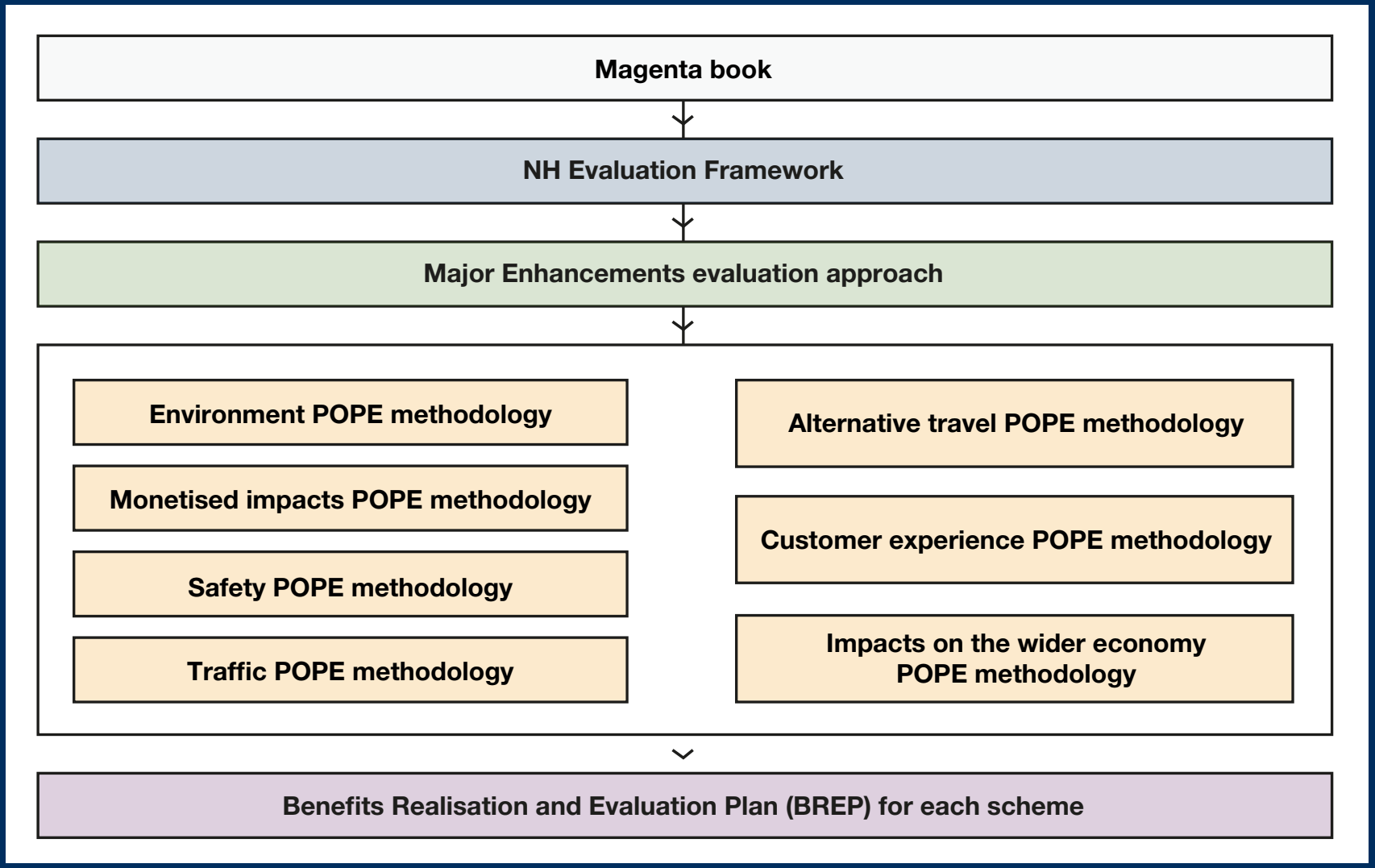
For each area of evaluation, we document the evaluation approach so that expectations, scope, timescales and responsibilities are clearly recorded. The approach document typically covers the following information:

- Topics to be covered (mandatory and optional)
- Standards or guidance that the evaluation should align to
- Map showing relationship to other evaluation approaches and methodologies
- Data requirements to promote consistency and enable meta-evaluation, for example core metrics
- Sampling approach
- Dependencies, including reliance on monitoring data
- Resourcing
- Governance arrangements
- Analytical assurance expectations
- Reporting format and communications plan

Many of our projects have common impacts, including changes in traffic flows, network speeds and safety. We are enhancing our suite of methodologies, which set out standard ways of assessing specific types of impact. These methodologies will provide consistency across evaluation areas and projects, while retaining sufficient flexibility to enable a proportionate approach. We will continue to test and apply a wider range of theory-based, experimental and quasi-experimental approaches where proportionate and technically feasible, ensuring that evaluation designs remain tailored to the intervention, available data and learning objectives.

Our major enhancements evaluation approach

Our major enhancements evaluation approach covers all the information areas listed above, while also being supported by the methodologies outlined in the diagram below.



Evaluation plans

We aim to develop evaluation plans at the outset of all projects prioritised for evaluation. An evaluation plan facilitates early discussion between the producers and users of the evaluation and can help ensure the evaluation is focused and maximises potential learning. It also enables decisions about trade-offs and prioritisation to be documented.

We encourage the use of theories of change and logic mapping to assist in shaping where evaluation evidence is required. This is also the opportunity to consider how we will meet the relevant standards, including Government Social Research (GSR) protocols.

Evaluation activities

We work to deliver learning and accountability through a combination of impact and process evaluations.

Outcome and Impact evaluations

We use impact evaluations to determine what changes can be observed and to what extent they can be attributed to the intervention. This either involves comparison against a counterfactual (what is likely to have happened in the absence of the intervention) or testing of whether the expected causal chain of events has occurred.

Types of Impact Evaluation

- **Experimental methods** (e.g. randomised control trials) observe outcomes against a true counterfactual.
- **Quasi-experimental methods** (e.g. synthetic controls) estimate a counterfactual, rather than directly observing it.
- **Theory-based approaches** (e.g. contribution analysis) test whether the expected causal chain of events has occurred, rather than establishing a counterfactual.

There are some distinct challenges for transport projects. Some experimental evaluation methods, such as randomised controlled trials, are generally not feasible for transport infrastructure because it is not practical to identify suitable control locations. We have typically used theory-based approaches to infer impact, but we have grown our maturity to use a counterfactual estimate for safety and traffic. We are broadening our approach to generate further evaluation insight into road user experience, for example developing standardised customer survey approaches.

To determine whether a project represented good value for money, we compare the benefits and costs wherever possible. At a suitable point after opening (typically 3 years after), we reforecast the expected benefits using the observed data available and review the costs. We assess how these compare to what was originally expected.

Process evaluations

Process evaluations look at what can be learned from how an intervention was delivered. These explore how an area of work is being, or has been, delivered and what is working more or less well and why. This typically involves collecting and analysing delivery team and stakeholder perceptions and reviewing project delivery data to help us better understand how the scheme was delivered and its implications on scheme outcomes.

We want to make better use of the opportunities presented through process evaluations to provide useful insights about how interventions are delivered and where improvements could be made.

Meta-evaluation

An evidence synthesis can increase the value of an individual evaluation's findings by using meta-evaluation to draw together findings from different studies and demonstrate replicability. We want to build our meta-evaluation evidence to address our highest priority knowledge gaps.

Benefits management, monitoring and appraisal

Evaluation works with, and complements, other areas of project development and delivery, in particular benefits management, monitoring and appraisal. For example:

- **At project design,** the delivery requirements, costs and forecast benefits are defined and recorded, often as part of the business case, together with findings from previous evaluations. This sets the basis for later evaluation.
- **As the project develops,** just as significant changes to forecast costs or delivery approaches are reviewed as part of governance and monitoring, so too are any significant changes to the forecast benefits. This requires alignment between the measurement or metric approaches used in business cases, benefits management and evaluation, ideally across both qualitative and quantitative measures.
- **On project completion,** the task of identifying whether the anticipated benefits and costs have been achieved then forms part of the evaluation approach. This applies for quantified benefits, which can form part of a benefit/cost measurement, and qualitative benefits, which might, for example, help us understand how road user experience has been improved. This helps us refine and build confidence in our appraisal methodologies.

We want to strengthen links between evaluation, appraisal and transport modelling to ensure we are designing evaluation approaches that will provide feedback on appraisal assumptions, including the provision of reforecast benefit-cost ratios wherever practicable. We want to better communicate uncertainty, assumptions and ranges of potential outcomes through sensitivity testing.

We will support work to improve the consistency of benefits management across our organisation. This includes introducing guidance, resources and communications to help our people identify benefits, track them more consistently and then hand them over for evaluation.

4. Resourcing

As set out in HM Treasury's Green Book, public spending should be supported by proportionate evaluation. We embed evaluation planning at the outset of priority projects, with responsible senior leaders ensuring the necessary capability, capacity and funding are in place. The level of investment in evaluation is determined by scale, complexity and evidence needs, ensuring resources are proportionate and deliver value.

Resourcing approach

Strong evaluation capability is essential to helping us become a more evidence-led organisation. Our approach is to deliver evaluations in-house, undertaken or supported by, our central evaluation function, which provides expertise, methodological guidance and quality assurance. Through this function, we drive consistent analytical standards, strengthen organisational capability and embed evaluation across our organisation.

Where specialist expertise or additional capability is required, we commission external providers. In these cases, we retain responsibility for governance, oversight and quality assurance, while external partners provide technical support and independent expertise, as appropriate.

Developing expertise

As evaluation activity expands, we will strengthen our central evaluation function while building capability across our organisation through knowledge sharing, mentoring, collaboration with delivery teams, partnership working with analysts across National Highways and wider government, professional networks and external best practice.

Our aim is to ensure that those commissioning, delivering and using evaluations have the skills, knowledge and support needed to generate robust evidence and apply it to decision-making. To achieve this, we will:

- **Build central evaluation capability and resilience,** by developing evaluation skills, sharing knowledge and maintaining sufficient capacity.
- **Build strong partnerships with project teams, decision-makers and external stakeholders,** supporting them to commission, deliver and use evaluation effectively.
- **Recognise and respond to changing priorities, expectations and feedback,** ensuring evaluations remain relevant, credible and influential.
- **Promote innovation,** by adopting new methods, technologies and data sources, where they improve evaluation quality and efficiency.
- **Maintain professional standards,** by applying relevant analytical, ethical and data governance requirements, including the GSR Code and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR).

5. Governance

Governance supports learning and better decision-making. It provides clear roles, responsibilities and approval routes for the design, delivery, assurance and publication of evaluations, ensuring findings are robust, proportionate and communicated appropriately.

Governance roles

Our central evaluation function, within our Analysis Division, provides leadership, standards, assurance and expert support across our organisation. Evaluations may be funded centrally or by individual projects, with resources allocated according to complexity, risk and value.

Our Evaluation Steering Group provides strategic oversight and approves evaluation approaches and the proportionality of resources, while analytical methods continue to be approved through established Analysis Division governance routes.

As evaluation expands into new areas, governance arrangements will be established from the outset.

Governance body	Primary responsibility
DfT	• Provides assurance and approval for evaluations of Tier 1 projects and schemes (those that exceed £500 million in value) and for evaluations that are considered novel or contentious.
National Highways	
Executive Committee (ExCo)	• Provides strategic approval of the evaluation programme and oversight of evaluation evidence to inform organisational decision making.
Evaluation Steering Group (ESG)	• Sets priorities, provides oversight, reviews findings, approves evaluation approaches and proportionality.
Evaluation Group (central evaluation function)	• Leads delivery, sets standards, provides assurance and builds evaluation capability. • Periodically reviews evaluation coverage and evidence gaps, reporting priorities to ESG to inform future evaluation programmes.
Project and programme teams	• Support evaluation delivery, benefits management and implement learning and recommendations.

Governance stages

Evaluation governance follows a process to ensure evidence informs future investment, delivery and strategy.

Stage	Purpose	Key activities
1. Prioritisation and oversight	Focus evaluation on the areas of greatest value	• ESG agrees priorities, oversees delivery, monitors risks and ensures evaluation is considered early in project development. • ExCo provides strategic approval of the evaluation programme.
2. Planning and assurance	Ensure evaluations are proportionate, robust and consistent	• Evaluation plans are approved by Evaluation Group and project teams. They define objectives, questions, methods, data requirements, timelines and communication. • ESG approves evaluation approaches and proportionality, while methodologies are approved through existing analytical governance. • All evaluations comply with the Analytical Assurance Framework.
3. Approval and publication	Ensure findings are appropriately reviewed, approved and shared	• Project teams and Evaluation Group approve findings before publication. • External publications receive senior leadership and communications approval. • DfT approve evaluations of Tier 1 projects and schemes. • Evaluation findings are shared with internal and external stakeholders, including ESG and DfT where appropriate.

6. Sharing our evidence

We are committed to sharing evaluation findings in a timely, transparent and accessible way, tailoring information to the needs of different audiences so that insights can be easily understood and acted upon.

Evaluation findings are used by our Board, Executive and senior leaders, together with external stakeholders including DfT, Office of Rail and Road (ORR) and Transport Focus, to support accountability, performance oversight, policy development and continuous improvement.

We will seek opportunities to make our evaluation evidence available to researchers and academic institutions. This will enable independent research, support methodological innovation and contribute to a broader understanding of the impacts of transport and infrastructure investment.

POPE of major enhancements

We publish all POPE of our major enhancements on our website for members of the public and other stakeholders (for example elected officials, interest groups and journalists). We have undertaken a detailed stakeholder review of how we communicate our POPE evaluation insight and identified and addressed several areas of improvement.

Our updated publication approach includes findings presented in a more concise way, accompanied by visuals for use on our website and social media. We will be capturing feedback to enable us to continue to innovate so that our communications evolve in line with changing behaviours and expectations.

Wider publication approach

We recognise our evaluation programme is broader than the major enhancement focus of the POPEs. We therefore want to expand our updated publication approach to include a periodic update, bringing together a concise and accessible overview of wider evaluation activity as well as periodic programme level overviews.

Communications planning

We want to improve our early communications planning. We will listen to decision makers to consider the desired communication outcome from the start, supporting their requirements through focused, clear and consistent outputs.

Where feasible, we aim to communicate findings early and be clear about the trade-off between producing comprehensive, technically-robust reporting versus concise and timely outputs aligned to decision timelines. We are committed to ensuring that strengths, weaknesses and uncertainties in our evaluations are communicated clearly and appropriately.

Our communications approach is structured by a series of principles, outlined below, with specifics agreed during the scoping and planning stages of each evaluation study. These principles are:

- Early communication planning
- Transparency and accessibility
- Timely reporting
- Toolbox of communication methods
- Responsible and ethical information sharing
- Feedback loops to improve learning

7. Monitoring and reviewing this framework

Our central evaluation function will conduct periodic reviews of this Evaluation Framework and assess performance against the critical success factors identified, to monitor implementation and assess overall effectiveness.

Findings and recommendations will be reported to ESG, to ensure strategic oversight and agree any required actions. Any significant changes to the Framework itself will be escalated through the appropriate governance routes previously identified.

Critical success factors

To effectively assess delivery, we will monitor the framework based on the following critical success factors:

Maturity	**Are we embedding evaluation?** Evaluation is increasingly embedded into how we plan, deliver and improve our activities.
Impact	**Is the evidence changing decisions and outcomes?** Evaluation serves as a practical decision-support tool where required. Evaluations have a clear purpose by explicitly defining both their intended objectives and the specific audiences they are designed to inform. Insights are clear and concise, relevant and capable of driving meaningful change.
Credibility	**Can the evidence be trusted?** Evaluation insight withstands scrutiny through our analytical assurance processes. Evaluations apply best practice methods, manage risk and demonstrate transparency in analytical decisions, strengthening the link between evidence and decision-making.
Efficiency	**Are we delivering proportionately?** Ensuring that evaluation remains cost-effective while still providing sufficient depth and rigour to support robust conclusions.

Further criteria

In addition to monitoring the above critical success factors, we will also:

- **Support culture, capability and skills development,** monitoring improvements in workforce capability to support the development of evaluation and analysis skills across our organisation.
- **Support the translation of lessons learnt into improvements in design, delivery and strategy,** as well as improving evaluation standards across our organisation.

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