

South of England north-south connectivity

An outline economic case for the inclusion of north-south connectivity improvements to form part of the government's road investment strategy (RIS2)

October 2017



Summary

Businesses say:

“Inadequate north-south connectivity to the South East Dorset Conurbation (adds time and mileage costs which ultimately impacts on our customers).”

“Inbound vessel arrival times are predictable – by contrast, outbound road delivery movement times are constantly unpredictable.”

“25% of deliveries are delayed – this means that excess labour costs are incurred.”



enabling larger ships to access the port. Existing and new port customers currently face major delays and detours in getting goods and passengers to and from Poole. Dorset’s economy requires urgent investment in a viable north-south road solution if it is to achieve its full potential.”

Jim Stewart, CEO of Poole Harbour Commissioners

“The absence of an effective north-south link has hindered growth in Dorset’s economy for decades. The Port of Poole is a strategically important ferry port and has recently invested heavily in new port infrastructure, opening up new markets and

The preceding quotes demonstrate that the adequacy of connections between the south coast (the port of Poole in particular) and M4 and onwards to Bristol and the Midlands has been increasingly compromised.

There are a lack of suitable north-south connections in the strategic network covering large parts of southern England; formed by a 'box' bounded by the M5 to the west, A34 to the east, M4 to the north, and the A31, A35 and Dorset coast to the south.

Within this area, north-south connections are made either by the A36/A46 through Bath, or the A350 and A338 primary routes.

These routes experience considerable congestion and road safety problems, and their increasing unreliability is significantly constraining development and business growth across the region, including plans to grow the Port of Poole and Portland Port.

If nothing is done, the region stands to lose out on £20.5 billion of economic benefits over the next 60 years.



“Dyson is investing and growing in Wiltshire. However our continued growth here depends upon investment in connectivity and capacity in the road network. A more joined up approach, designed to support business expansion, is essential.”

Robert Hill, Estates Director, Dyson

Summary continued

The local authorities in the study area, Bath & North East Somerset, Dorset County and Wiltshire Councils are supported by their respective Local Enterprise Partnerships and have collaborated to bring forward a case for investment as summarised in this document. Highways England has also supported the process. We are also working with the newly formed West of England Combined Authority to ensure this scheme is given top priority in recognition of its regional importance.

Central Government launched the first Road Investment Strategy (RIS) in 2015. The first RIS covered investment in England's

strategic road network between 2015 and 2020, including over 100 major schemes funded by £15.2 billion. Work is now underway to develop those schemes to be included in RIS2 that will deliver long term improvements to the Strategic Route Network (SRN) beyond 2020.

There is a strong economic case for improved north-south links in the south of England. We are therefore seeking a commitment from Government to commission a Strategic Study that further develops the economic case to a level of detail suitable for funding and delivery.

Within the RIS framework, the case for improved N/S links can only be formally advanced as and when the Secretary of State for Transport mandates Highways England to carry out a Strategic Study. (see time line opposite).

Having now created what we believe is a compelling argument, we seek support in encouraging the Minister to mandate Highways England to commence a Strategic Study, preferably commencing as soon as possible.

 **10,300**

new jobs in B&NES

 **30,000**

new jobs in Dorset

 **27,500**

new jobs in Wiltshire

 **13,000**

new homes in B&NES
by 2029

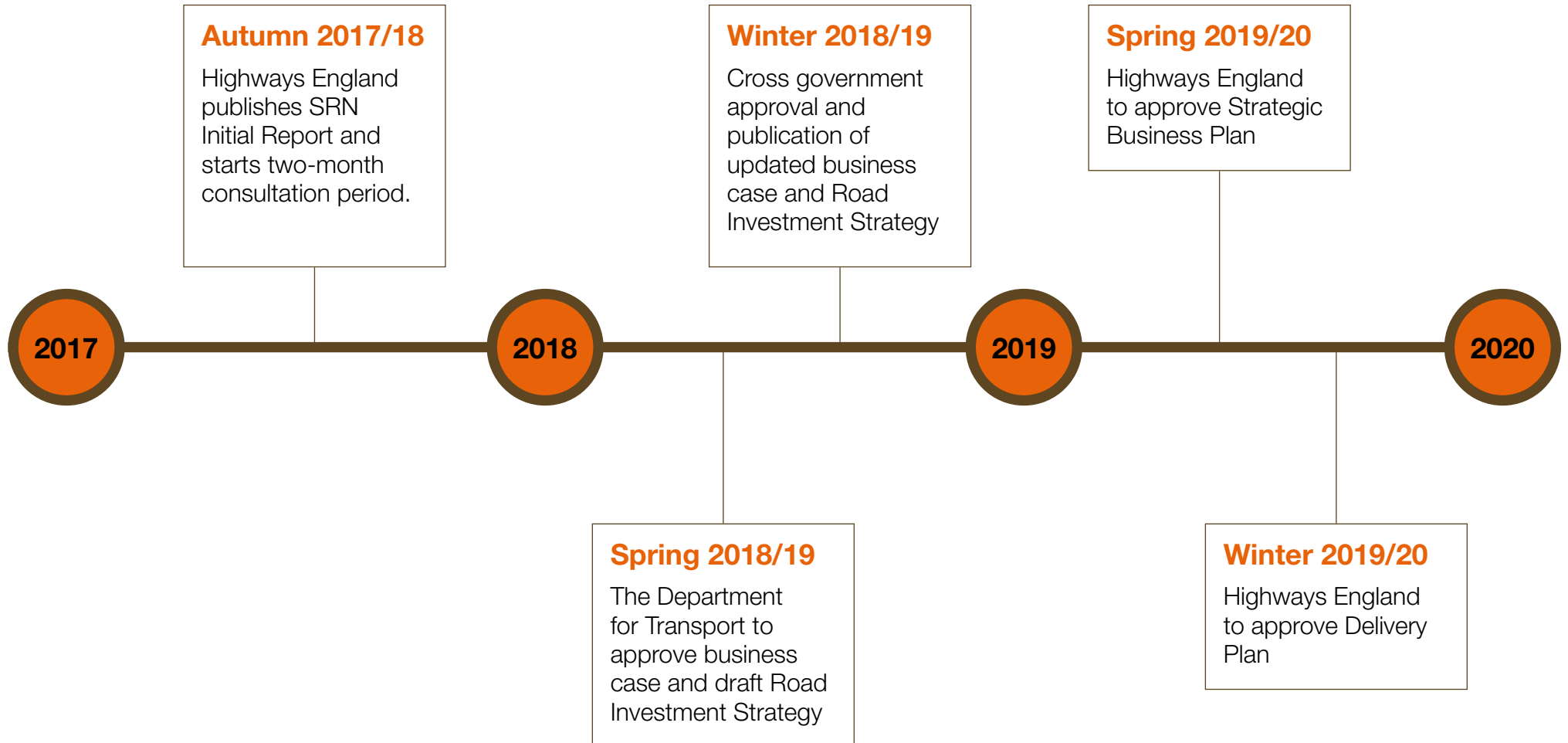
 **68,114**

new homes in Dorset including
Bournemouth and Poole
by 2032

 **42,000**

new homes in Wiltshire
between 2006 and 2026

The timeline



The problem

The study area is included in Highways England's South West Peninsula Route Strategy (March 2017) which acknowledges that there are current problems associated with a lack of north–south connectivity and the extent of wider benefits that are effectively being lost as a result of this.

The South West Peninsula Route Strategy identifies current constraints and challenges on the SRN in the south of England.

A safe and serviceable network:

- Poor safety record on A36 and A46.
- Surface repairs required on A36.
- Geological stability issues on A36 and A46.

More free-flowing network:

- Congestion is a problem – on A36, A46 A350 at peak periods and seasonal peaks.
- In Salisbury all A36 junctions along Southampton Road are currently operating at or above capacity.

Supporting economic growth:

- Lack of a strategic link to the south coast ports.
- Serves relatively high employment growth areas around A36, A303 and A35.
- Capacity problems on the links at Dorchester and at the junctions through Salisbury constrain potential for improved strategic movements, particularly for freight traffic.
- Significant new housing and employment developments are planned in the following areas:
 - on the A36 near Salisbury e.g. Porton Down, Garrison Towns
 - near the A36 and A46 at Bath
 - in the Poole–Bournemouth conurbation.

“Improved connectivity is critical to our strategy for driving up productivity and cementing Dorset’s position as a world class place to do business.”

Rob Dunford, Interim Director of Dorset LEP

An improved environment:

- Air Quality Management Areas declared along the route including in Bath, Salisbury and Poole.
- Bath and North East Somerset Council is required to undertake local action to achieve statutory air quality levels as part of Defra's 'UK Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide'. This focuses on the A4 London Road which currently forms part of the missing strategic road network between the A46 and A36.
- Congestion and air pollution remain a threat to the fabric of the World Heritage City of Bath.
- Nature Improvement Areas – A36 Bath and A35.
- Flooding – causes disruption on SRN at the A36 and near Dorchester.



A more accessible and integrated network:

- Severance from missing links – e.g. gaps in the network between A36 and A46.
- Cycling – improvements petitioned for the Alderbury to Salisbury cycle route.
- Lack of north-south connectivity from the south coast ports to the M4 and the Midlands. The A36/A46 provides a strategic route, most of which is unimproved single carriageway and without the missing link, traffic routes through Bath.

“This is an important piece of work. To address transport and congestion issues in the West of England region we need to work closely with our neighbouring authorities as roads don’t end at council boundaries.”

Tim Bowles, West of England Mayor

The economic case

Wiltshire Council, Dorset County Council, Bath and North East Somerset Council in partnership with Highways England commissioned a study to investigate how improved connectivity could unlock the wider economic benefits associated with improved access to jobs.

At present, GVA per head in Wiltshire (at £19,771) is below the national average with the 'gap' between the UK average growing over time.

There is a similar picture in Dorset where, even in the more economically active (and urbanised) areas of Bournemouth and Poole, GVA is considerably less than the national average (at £23,787 in B&P, and £20,338 in the rest of Dorset).

B&NES has different economic characteristics given the high number of small, specialist firms in Bath and the surrounding area. Although the economic importance of these businesses

is reflected in a relatively high GVA per capita (£41,600), the continuation of this is very much dependent on businesses being able to draw labour from the wider area, not least from the key A46 / A36 corridor.

Using DfT guidance on agglomeration improvements, a series of wider impacts have been calculated.

Key outcomes of enhancing connectivity

£20.5bn
generated to the economy

 **1,400**
new jobs generated annually



£342m
additional GDP annually

£16.5m
additional corporation tax revenues annually

Potential gains also include:

- Increased revenue from personal income taxation
- Increase in economic output per worker
- Commercial goods reduced unit cost as journey times improve
- Dependent Development benefits (ie unlocking land value gain)
- Tourism benefits.

What we want from Government



The information presented within this document demonstrates there are considerable economic benefits associated with improving north-south connectivity in the South of England.

Improving links will support economic and housing growth in southern England and create a safer more resilient transport

network with less congestion and greater journey time reliability.

An improved north-south link could result in the region gaining £20.5 billion of additional economic benefits over the next 60 years.

Support

The Case for Action is supported by:

- the local authorities in the study area,
 - Bath & North East Somerset
 - Dorset County Council
 - Wiltshire Council
 - Borough of Poole
- The West of England Combined Authority
- Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership
- Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership.

We ask that ministers include north-south connectivity improvements in the government's road investment strategy (RIS2).

