

Highways Agency Update for Wessex Cross Border Working Group Meeting Wednesday 26th February

Route Based Strategies

The Agency is currently developing Route Based Strategies (RBS) for the entire Strategic Road Network. Stage 1 of the RBS included evidence gathering and involved stakeholder workshops which were held in September and October last year. We are currently inviting comments on the draft evidence reports from stakeholders, this includes representatives from both Dorset and Wiltshire Councils who attended the stakeholder workshops, with the deadline for which is 5 March. After this we will make any necessary amendments before we publish the final Stage 1 Evidence Reports later in Spring 2014.

After publication of the evidence reports we will move into Stage 2 of the RBS which will identify the priority challenges and opportunities for each route and where appropriate explore potential solutions. Stage 2 is due to start around May 2014 and we expect to publish the final Stage 2 reports in Spring 2015.

A303 Feasibility Study

On 27 June 2013, the Government announced the biggest ever upgrade of the strategic national roads network, tripling annual investment on major roads enhancements from today's level to over £3bn by 2020/21. As part of this, the Government announced that it will tackle some of the most notorious and long-standing road hot spots in the country by undertaking a small set of feasibility studies targeted at key locations and problems. One of these studies is currently being undertaken on the A303 corridor.

Our general approach to the studies very much recognises that some issues have been considered in detail in the past. We therefore intend to build on previous and more recent work, including the A303 Corridor Improvement Programme work, rather than starting from scratch.

We will obviously look to understand the history of previous proposals but also ensure we have the latest evidence and analysis available. Where appropriate we would want to consider updating the evidence and cost base for previous proposals, if there is a view that that the solution remains appropriate.

We have engaged with stakeholders, including Dorset and Wiltshire Councils, to discuss and agree the scope of the study. We understand that the scope of the A303/A30/A358 feasibility study would be road based but it would also need to consider potential local transport improvements and the interaction between the A303 and the local road network.

We are currently in the first stage of this feasibility study which consists of a data collection exercise through liaison with local stakeholders and the use of various transport models which will help to provide a view on where the issues and problems are on the A303.

We are progressing the feasibility study alongside the Highways Agency's RBS process (outlined above) which will consider the current and future performance of the network, to inform future investment decisions.

The evidence that is being gathered as part of stage 1 of the wider South West Peninsula RBS will be a key input into the evidence base for this study. This should help to focus latter parts of the feasibility study work.

Completion of the feasibility studies and the route based strategy process will allow Government to take a view on the prioritisation of future investment proposals.