

Accessibility Strategy

Our approach

Introduction

Highways England operates, maintains, and modernises the strategic road network. As part of this challenge, we're delivering an £11bn investment programme to support the government's Road Investment Strategy.

An accessible, inclusive and integrated network is a key part of delivering an effective transport system. Our ambition is to enhance accessibility to and across the network for users and communities, as set out in the Highways England Delivery Plan.

Our vision for accessibility

Our vision focuses on supporting our road users' journeys, pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians, those with disabilities (such as users with mobility or sensory impairments) and other vulnerable users – while delivering longer-term benefits for communities and users alike.

We want to address the barriers our roads can sometimes create, help expand people's travel choices, enhance and improve network facilities, and make everyday journeys as easy as possible.

This will be achieved by ensuring our network supports and contributes to accessible, inclusive and integrated journeys which are safe, secure, comfortable and attractive.

About the strategy

Our strategy is a commitment to achieving our vision by placing accessibility at the heart of what we do. This will be supported by better understanding

the needs of our road users through engagement, partnership working, research and planning. The strategy also recognises the limitations of our network in supporting safe and comfortable journeys for cyclists, pedestrians and equestrians which are prohibited from using our motorways and are incompatible with major parts of our network.

The strategy is aligned with and contributes to our separate activities which support the Equality Act 2010, as set out in our public sector equality duty objectives, and will build on a range of other strategies including our Customer Service Strategy, Traffic Information Strategy and Communications Strategy.

It also supports the government's ambition to encourage walking and cycling as an everyday mode of travel, as set out in its Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy.

The strategy has been developed through consideration of three key areas:

What journeys are we supporting?

Our focus is on helping to provide access to services and employment, across the network, to the network and via the network for different types of users. The network should support safe, accessible routes which are separated from general traffic.

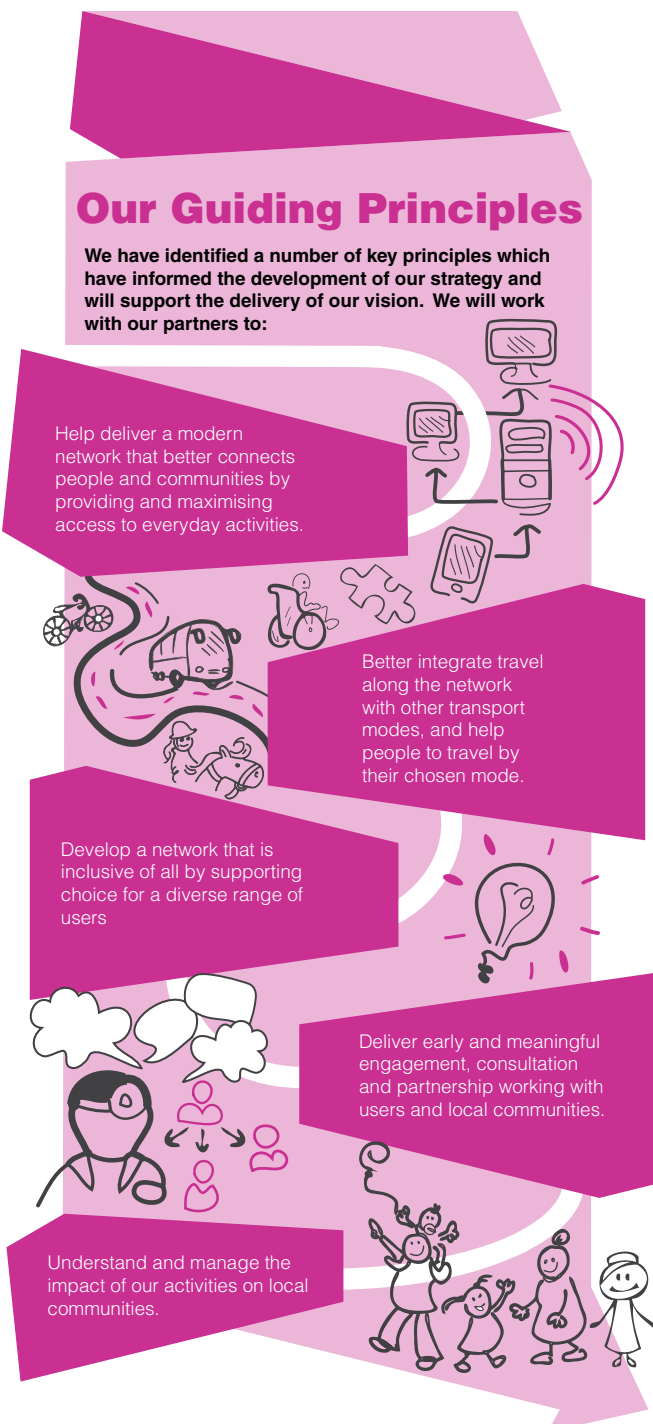
Whose journeys are we supporting?

We are supporting all users of our network, including drivers and their passengers, pedestrians, cyclists, equestrians, and other vulnerable users. Our focus is also on the communities we affect.

What are we integrating?

Not only are we connecting different destinations, we're connecting with other networks, such as local highways, public transport and routes away from our network. We're also integrating with emerging rail links and airports through interchanges and park and ride schemes.

Our Delivery Plan makes a commitment to ring-fence funding for a range of accessibility, integration and inclusion schemes between now and 2021. This investment, alongside our planned roads improvement programme and the measures outlined in this strategy will improve accessibility, inclusion and integration for users across our network.



Delivering the vision

We will work to deliver our vision for accessibility through a number of areas, building on our Delivery Plan commitments and road investment programme. This work will help us develop our capability and, in collaboration with partners, remove barriers, improve integration, better understand community impacts and allow us to effectively monitor our performance. The key activities are set out below.

Developing capability

- Embed our Accessibility Strategy within Highways England, our supply chain and service providers, ensuring that the future development and management of the network reflects our vision.
- Ensure effective internal working within Highways England by enhancing our capability and establishing an Accessibility Technical Working Group.
- Update our design standards and assessment tools to raise the level of provision for vulnerable users on our network and improve the capability of our planners, designers, supply chain and service providers through training and development. This will also support us to meet our obligations under current equality legislation.
- Improve our engagement with key stakeholders and delivery partners, pursuing a collaborative approach to the identification, development and implementation of interventions
- Develop longer-term programmes of work to ensure that we deliver improvements to facilities and develop future investment programmes. This will build on work undertaken through our route strategies and emerging investment plans for the next roads period.
- Increase awareness of vulnerable users and support their confidence and hazard awareness by working with partners to deliver positive messaging about safety for all users of the network.

Improving the accessibility of our network

- Develop and deliver programmes of work which support the development of a safer, more secure, convenient, comfortable, and attractive network. This will incrementally improve and upgrade crossings across the network, increase the provision of dedicated multi-user routes, and accommodate multiple users on existing routes.
- Ensure that wider network investments incorporate facilities for vulnerable users. For example, when we invest in road network improvements, the needs of these will be considered, both during design, construction and as part of any completed scheme. As we invest in network maintenance, we will consider opportunities to improve provision.
- Consider the needs of disabled road users, building on our other strategies to support this group, and working to deliver services and network facilities that meet their needs.



Integrating our network

- Work with local authorities to explore strengthening integration with other highway networks including local roads, long distance routes and off-road networks.
- Explore opportunities to expand our support for park and ride sites and other interchange facilities.
- Explore how public transport can play a role in improving accessibility and inclusion by better integration with transport systems along our network corridors.

- Work to integrate with strategic infrastructure including:
 - Examining the Airports Commission findings and take forward any recommendations.
 - Supporting strategic inter-modal port facilities through specific measures at strategic locations.
 - Supporting existing and emerging rail links with a particular focus on integration with HS2.

Understanding our impact on communities

- Work to better understand and manage the impact of our activity on communities, particularly in rural areas.
- Work to understand how our network can contribute positively to connectivity and a sense of place, by listening to the views of communities and working with them to improve the physical quality of places.
- Explore how activity away from and adjacent to the network, or linking other routes to the network, can impact on conditions on and around it, and help to deliver a better user experience.

Monitoring our performance

- Measure our performance against the Delivery Plan and Performance Specification indicators relevant to accessibility. These are:
 - Key performance indicator: the number of new and upgraded crossings.
 - Performance indicator: the number of vulnerable user casualties.
- Identify further performance measures as required.
- Identify areas of further research to improve our planning and delivery of accessibility measures.

Engagement with stakeholders

Our Accessibility Strategy will be responsive to input from our key stakeholders and represents a real opportunity to build effective partnerships. To do this we will seek to work with:

All users of our network, and the local communities through which it runs, to develop accessibility measures which meet the needs of people driving, walking, cycling and riding on, along or across the network.

Economic stakeholders, including Local Enterprise Partnerships and multi-regional partnerships such as Transport for the North, to understand the changing economic significance of our network.

Key **user groups** and accessibility stakeholders including Living Streets, the Ramblers, Cyclists' Touring Club, Sustrans, the British Horse Society, Age UK, and Disabled Motoring UK to inform the development of our interventions at a national and regional level.

Our **monitor**, the Office of Rail and Road (ORR), and the Department for Transport, over our performance around accessibility and the requirements of our licence.

TransportFocus, which represents the interests of all users of the strategic road network.

Other **government bodies**, such as the Office for Disability Issues, the Government Equalities Office who provide oversight on accessibility and inclusion issues, and the Department for Communities and Local Government which set wider policies that impact on communities and integration.

The Department for Transport's **Disabled Persons Transport Advisory Committee (DPTAC)** – to share accessibility best practice, and advise

on research and development, accessibility standards and policy integration.

Professional institutions, including the Landscape Institute, the Royal Town Planning Institute, the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation, Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport – to support the development of accessibility standards, training and development.

Other **infrastructure operators**, including councils and other local highway authorities, Network Rail, HS2, and the Canal and Rivers Trust – to share best practice and explore opportunities for joint working.

Our **supply chain and delivery providers** – to fully embed our commitment to accessibility.

How will we know we have made a difference?

Highways England is proud to champion the needs of all our road users and communities, as we integrate our network with other ways to travel.

To measure our progress against this strategy we will establish an Accessibility Working Group which will be responsible for producing and publishing a non-technical Annual Accessibility Report. This will set out our progress against the strategy, provide examples of best practice and list our activities for the next 12 months.

The working group will also be responsible for developing new metrics that will allow us to more accurately monitor our progress and deliver continuous improvement.

For information about our accessibility projects or wider investment activity, please contact info@highwaysengland.co.uk

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