

By email to transportinfrastructure@dft.gov.uk

Secretary of State for Transport,
33 Horseferry Road
London
SW1P 4DR

15 September 2020

Dear Secretary of State

Planning Act 2008 and Infrastructure Planning (Examination Procedure) Rules 2010

Application by Highways England (“the Applicant”) for an Order granting Development Consent for the A303 Sparkford to Ilchester Dualling

I write in response to your letter of 19 August 2020 to all interested parties, providing the opportunity for comments on the applicant’s response to the Secretary of State’s ‘minded to refuse’ letter of 21 July 2020.

The Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership is part of a long-standing corridor coalition of local authorities and local enterprise partnerships who have consistently supported the principle of upgrading to dual carriageway standard the whole A303/ A358 corridor from the M3 to the M5 at Taunton. The A303 Sparkford to Ilchester dualling is a fundamental component of the strategy for upgrading the whole corridor, and hence securing consent for the Development Consent Order is crucial.

An independent economic assessment commissioned by the Local Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnership, and validated by DfT, demonstrated that improving the whole A303/A30/A358 corridor would:

- create 21,400 jobs and deliver a £39bn boost to the economy
- deliver £21.2bn of taxation, welfare savings, disposable income and tourism benefits;
- create £1.9bn in transport benefits from reduced journey times and greater

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resilience;

- save 1807 fatal or serious casualties;
- reduce carbon emissions by 9%.

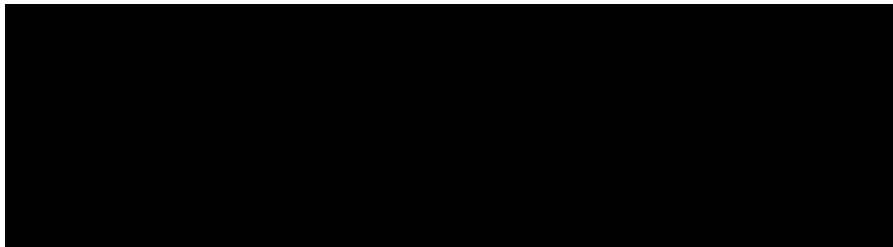
We are extremely concerned that the DCO process for this section of the route has come to a position where the Secretary of State is minded to refuse the application for a scheme that is clearly a national priority, given its place in the Roads Investment Strategy.

The route is of enormous strategic importance to the South West, and even more vital for levelling up the economy as we continue the post-lockdown recovery. Each element of the end to end corridor improvement is of critical importance.

We have noted the extensive response that has been made by Highways England in their latest submissions. As a key stakeholder it is not appropriate for us to comment on the detail of their submissions, but we are confident that Highways England will be able to find appropriate and acceptable solutions to the outstanding matters of detail by working with the statutory consultees and relevant competent bodies.

We strongly urge the Secretary of State to ensure that due weight is given to the enormous strategic benefit of the scheme. We therefore urge that the current DCO application be confirmed, and appropriate processes be put in place to enable any remaining issues to be resolved, rather than refusing the DCO at this stage.

Yours sincerely,



David Ralph
Chief Executive



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