



Department  
for Transport

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From the Parliamentary  
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*Rory Stewart*

Thank you for your e-mail of 27 June enclosing correspondence from your constituent Mr Tony Metcalfe regarding his proposals for a tolled bypass of Kirkby Stephen.

As I am sure you are aware, the A685 through Kirkby Stephen is a local road and therefore falls under the responsibility of Cumbria County Council. Having said that, improvements to the A685 were considered as part of the North Transpennine Strategic Study, which was commissioned by the Department for Transport and concluded in November last year.

The study considered what benefits a bypass of Kirby Stephen would provide for strategic traffic moving between the M6 and A1(M) via the A66. The conclusions were that a bypass would:

- provide a slight improvement in journey times for traffic travelling between the M6 junctions and the A66; and
- reduce severance and noise in Kirby Stephen as well as improving air quality.

The cost of a bypass was estimated at £88m excluding inflation, which is some way above the £20m quoted by your constituent. The report is publically available and can be found at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/northern-trans-pennine-strategic-study-stage-3-report>

The Government responded to the study in the 2016 Autumn Statement by committing to complete the dualling of the A66 between the M6 and A1(M) in the next Roads Period (2020 to 2025). This will include grade separation of the A6/A66 Kemplay roundabout.

A bypass of Kirby Stephen has not been prioritised for future investment but as this is a local road, Cumbria County Council could decide to bring a scheme forward if they are so minded. However, the Council would first have to be confident the scheme is deliverable, offers value for money and has an identified source of funding.

If a bypass was to be tolled and financed by the private sector, the public acceptability of tolling on this road would have to be a key consideration. As we know from several recent campaigns to reduce tolls on river crossings, this is not popular, and any investor would inevitably take into account the willingness of the motorist to pay.

Your constituent also questions the amount of Vehicle Excise Duty (VED) paid in relation the amount of money spent on road improvements. In 2015, the then Chancellor, George Osborne, announced that from 2020 every penny raised from VED would go into a National Roads Fund to improve the nations highway infrastructure. The Government intends to use a significant part of this Fund to pay for the next Roads Investment Strategy in England, which will run from 2020 to 2025 and will include the dualling of the A66. You may have seen in the Transport Investment Strategy that the Secretary of State announced on 6 July plans to consult on the creation of a new 'Major Road Network' (MRN) which would see a share of the annual National Road Fund, funded by VED, available to local authorities to improve or replace the most important A-roads under their management. We will be consulting on our MRN proposals later this year.

In terms of protecting land for future infrastructure developments, including roads, this is a matter for local planning authorities working with the relevant highway authorities, including Highways England. Local plans, which set out the land to be safeguarded for future infrastructure requirements, are subject to consultation and examination in public, which gives the public an opportunity to make their views known on what they feel should or should not be included in the plan.

