



FINAL Project report:

**Review of Highways England's engagement approach  
with local and regional partners  
June 2020**

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# Executive summary

Elliott Asset Management (EAM) has been appointed by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) to undertake a review into Highways England’s engagement approach with local and regional partners.

EAM has worked jointly with Highways England, its local and regional partners and with ORR to gather evidence to assess the following questions:

- How is Highways England demonstrating compliance with its licence and wider statutory duties?
- Are the engagement requirements in the licence fit for purpose?
- How does Highways England’s engagement compare with that of similar organisations?
- How can Highways England’s engagement requirements be monitored?

Evidence of Highways England’s engagement with stakeholders has been collected from several sources. This has included interviews with Highways England strategy, planning, scheme and operational teams as well as interviews and a survey with a sample of stakeholders. **Figure (i)** shows the stakeholders, from national to local, and key interfaces that influence Highways England’s engagement landscape and which have been considered within this study.

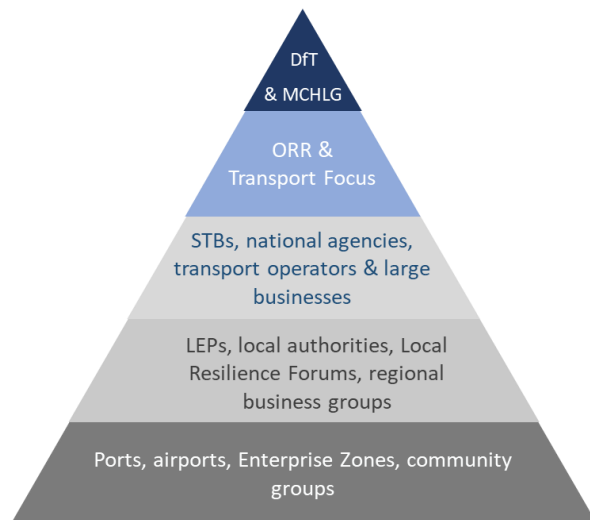
## Key findings

Highways England operates within a complex and continually changing landscape of national, regional and local stakeholders. Its engagement duties are defined in its 2015 licence and other legislation.

The licence includes defined engagement duties such as developing and implementing a Stakeholder Engagement Plan and less-specified duties such as engaging, cooperating and consulting with stakeholders to enable Highways England to carry out its functions and for Highways England to take account of stakeholder views. The licence also includes requirements to be open and transparent, positive and responsive, and collaborative. The foreword to the licence provides further emphasis and expects Highways England to ‘go the extra mile’ in the way it engages with road users to develop shared solutions.

Appropriate, consistent and proactive engagement with stakeholders is increasingly important to Highways England, not only for it to comply with its licence duties but to be able to play an active and responsible role as a partner within regional and local planning and in shaping operational transport priorities. Highways England also recognises that effective engagement, and strong relationships, with its regional and local stakeholders are key to the smooth and effective delivery of its own priorities and programmes.

From the proactive and positive contributions that Highways England has made in supporting and providing information for this study it is evident that it has invested significant effort and resource in



**Figure (i) - Highways England’s stakeholders**

its licence, statutory and discretionary stakeholder engagement activities during the course of RIS1. It is also evident that, as it continues to mature as an organisation, Highways England is planning to learn from and build upon the experience of RIS1 to develop and improve its approach to working with key transport infrastructure stakeholders through RIS2 and beyond.

Due in part to the wording of the licence and in part to the way Highways England organises how it engages with stakeholders, its current relationships and engagement within the national, regional and local landscape don't consistently meet stakeholder expectations. Additionally, engagement performance in these areas is not formally measured. With increased devolution the landscape is likely to get more complex and hence pose a greater challenge to stakeholder engagement.

This study shows that Highways England is complying with the prescribed elements of its licence engagement duties but there is scope for further development of its duties to support regional and local stakeholders and manage their expectations. This provides Highways England with an opportunity to establish and communicate clearer and more consistent engagement strategies, plans and processes with stakeholders towards becoming a leading partnering organisation. Study evidence also shows that the broader, less specific and softer licence duties such as collaboration and cooperation are difficult to monitor as there is no performance framework for these important engagement areas. This is something that ORR and DfT should review as part of Highways England's RIS2 and RIS3 plans.

The stakeholders that we consulted think that Highways England's engagement is on the whole positive but can be inconsistent. They said that they mainly have good relationships with Highways England's account/project managers and that the best working relationships are often based on the responsiveness of individuals rather than the proactiveness of Highways England as a whole.

Stakeholders gave us differing views on the sharing of sensitive information by Highways England. They said that the consultation process for major schemes generally works well but can appear complex, transactional or one-way at times. They also found the initial consultation process for RIS2 very open and collaborative but engagement during 2018 and 2019 was less positive.

Stakeholders also told us that although Highways England has evolved into a very different organisation to ten years ago it is still not yet seen as a partner. By this we understand that stakeholders want Highways England to engage further in areas with reciprocal benefits such as joined up thinking between the SRN and MRN/LRN and a common carbon reduction approach. Stakeholders recognise that these areas require agreement with both Highways England and DfT in order to define the needs and priorities for the whole road network and how all organisations should work together.

For Highways England to become a consistent engagement partner requires further development of its national and regional stakeholder engagement structure. For DfT and ORR to monitor the ongoing effectiveness of Highways England's engagement may require a further review of compliance against the licence requirements and the development of an appropriate measurement framework. Highways England can learn from other infrastructure organisations who are on a similar journey and this study provides a framework and outline approach for how Highways England can develop its partnering approach.

A number of the responses from stakeholders and report conclusions are not in the control of Highways England and require input from DfT. These include defining the scope of some stakeholders' roles and responsibilities (such as STBs). Highways England will then be able to tailor its engagement approach leading to greater efficiencies as priorities and duplications are refined.

In order for Highways England to become a more effective partnering organisation and 'go the extra mile' it should continue to comply with the specific and defined requirements of its licence and adopt

a more consistent and tailored approach to the broader and less-defined areas of engagement in the licence.

## Recommendations

Several recommendations and observations have been made within eight inter-related improvement themes. These provide the opportunity for Highways England to improve how it fulfils the implied as well as defined engagement duties of its licence.

Our overarching recommendation, which links the eight themes in this section, reflects the need for Highways England to take the opportunity during the early years in RIS2 to continue to develop its engagement approach with stakeholders towards partnering:

**Highways England recognises the need to engage and partner with an increasing range of statutory and non-statutory stakeholders as it delivers RIS2 and develops its plans for RIS3 within a changing planning and operational landscape. To become a leading partnering organisation and 'go the extra mile', it should continue to develop a consistent and tailored engagement approach across its business in line with its licence and wider requirements, in particular to cooperate openly and transparently, positively, responsively and collaboratively.**

The following near-term (NT) recommendations, to be considered within 12 months, and medium-term (MT) recommendations, to be considered within 1 to 2 years, are suggested against each improvement theme.

### Theme 1 - Identification of Highways England key stakeholders and engagement forums

**[1a] NT** - Highways England should review and identify those organisations it views as key stakeholders. This will provide clarity and visibility to those stakeholders, and others, and will be of value to ORR in monitoring the efficacy of Highways England's engagement. It should also be of benefit to Highways England in structuring, coordinating and delivering effective stakeholder engagement.

**[1b] NT** - Highways England should provide central and regional lists of internal contacts (roles rather than individuals) representing its principal functions and activities to key stakeholders. In particular for major schemes, local authority (LA) stakeholders would like a single point of contact nominated as the Highways England representative.

### Theme 2 - Development and implementation of a Highways England stakeholder engagement strategy

**[2a] MT** - Highways England should develop an overarching strategy to provide a visible and consistent framework for engaging with key stakeholder groups.

**[2b] MT** - Building on the engagement approach already adopted for Sub-National Transport Bodies (STBs), the framework should encompass standardised engagement processes with, where appropriate, specific protocols for each of the identified key stakeholder groups, e.g. STBs, LAs, Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Local Resilience Forums (LRFs).

### Theme 3 - Review of internal Highways England structure and resources to deliver and support effective stakeholder engagement

**[3a] MT** - Building upon the scheme engagement communications approach adopted by its Major Projects (MP) directorate, Highways England should consider development/deployment of a cross-directorate customer relationship management (CRM) platform to hold stakeholder data and use this to plan, record and share engagement information.

#### Theme 4 – Contribution of Highways England to joined up national transport strategy and planning

**[4a] MT** - Recognising that the development of a framework for the roles of national, regional and local stakeholders in delivering regional transport strategy, in the context of overarching national strategy, must ultimately be led and endorsed by DfT, Highways England should continue to contribute to work with STBs and LAs to establish appropriate protocols for engagement. Greater clarity of these stakeholders' roles and functions by DfT/Government would be of significant benefit for Highways England in developing its own engagement approach and may yield efficiencies where lines of communication can be streamlined and/or duplication of effort removed.

**[4b] NT** - Highways England, with DfT, should review the Road Investment Strategy (RIS) process and consultation timescales for RIS3 & RIS4 planning and delivery with more emphasis on collaboration and transparency with LAs and STBs.

#### Theme 5 – Highways England partnering and local intelligence

**[5a] NT** - In its engagement with regional and local stakeholders, as stated in the 'Strategic Economic Growth Plan' (SEGP), Highways England should seek to develop – and retain and disseminate internally – sound intelligence of the regional network and communities and recognition of the impact of development and operation of the Strategic Road Network (SRN) on those networks and communities. This should include recognition of the obligations and priorities of local stakeholders, for example in areas such as decarbonisation and air quality.

**[5b] MT** - Highways England should work with LAs to better understand the impact of SRN road closures and traffic diversions onto the local road network and through communities. It should consider taking more responsibility for diverted traffic and jointly coordinating and developing local community stakeholder engagement and communications plans, including community mitigation. This could mitigate the impact on local networks and communities of disruption, congestion, environmental impact and asset deterioration.

#### Theme 6 - Guidance on how Highways England engages with stakeholders

**[6b] NT** - Highways England should review its 'Offer of Engagement' to STBs based on the latest understanding of their emerging roles and responsibilities.

**[6c] NT** - Highways England should continue to monitor stakeholder awareness and take up of Designated Funds under the revised structure and processes for RIS2, including the communication and transparency of the Designated Funds' process and how interested stakeholders can contribute on the deployment of those funds.

#### Theme 7 – Highways England operational improvements

**[7c] MT** - Highways England should continue to review how it differentiates and handles priority calls received from LRFs/emergency services into the Regional Operations Centre (ROC) from general calls before these are automatically transferred to the Customer Call Centre in order to act expeditiously in crisis situations.

#### Theme 8 – Monitoring of stakeholder engagement

**[8a] NT** - ORR and Highways England should establish a proportionate approach for sharing analysis of existing quantitative and qualitative stakeholder engagement data that would allow ORR to be satisfied that Highways England's licence compliance statement is supported by sound evidence.

# 1 Introduction

This chapter provides the study context including the scope and methodology. It also acknowledges those organisations which have supported this review and includes a legal notice.

## 1.1 Purpose of this report

### 1.1.1 Scope

Elliott Asset Management (EAM) has been appointed by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) to undertake this review into Highways England's engagement with local and regional stakeholders. The review provides a series of findings, recommendations and observations for the consideration of Highways England and ORR. The objectives of the review have been to provide evidence and advice to ORR on:

- how Highways England engages with key local and regional partners on their activities, namely STBs, LHAs, LRFs and LEPs against its licence requirements;
- the experiences of these stakeholders with Highways England's engagement;
- how stakeholder engagement could be improved for future Road Periods; and
- what potential stakeholder feedback ORR could use to monitor Highways England's engagement.

The review is a snapshot of Highways England's engagement practice based on a sample of interviews with Highways England and stakeholders carried out between March and May 2020.

Although the study includes engagement with national associations representing local and regional stakeholders, it does not include a review of Highways England's engagement with national level Government organisations such as HM Treasury, Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA), The Environment Agency, Homes England or Members of Parliament.

## 1.2 Methodology

Evidence of Highways England's engagement with stakeholders has been collected from several sources. This has included interviews with Highways England strategy, planning and operational teams as well as interviews and a survey with stakeholders.

### 1.2.1 Highways England interviews

Our discussions with Highways England and our view of its engagement landscape have been built around several lines of enquiry including:

- licence, statutory and discretionary engagement activities and those carried out at a national, regional and local level;
- engagement activities that focus on strategy, tactical network management and network operations;
- short, medium and long-term engagement activities; and
- internal cross-directorate engagement support.

Interviews have been held with several Highways England directorates that have a role in stakeholder engagement. These include, alphabetically, Corporate Affairs & Communications (Comms), Major Projects (MP), Operations (OD), Safety, Engineering and Standards (SES) and Strategy & Planning



(S&P). Through these interviews we have captured Highways England's engagement roles and responsibilities, evidence to support licence compliance and the current and future challenges and opportunities as RIS2 commences and planning starts for RIS3.

### 1.2.2 Stakeholder interviews and survey

Through discussions with ORR and Highways England we identified several groups of stakeholders that Highways England is engaged with either through its licence and statutory duties or through its discretionary activities, and with whom it would be important to interface as part of this study. These groups were:

- **Sub-national transport bodies (STBs)** – it was agreed to engage with a sample of mature and emerging STBs in order to gain a broad understanding of how Highways England is seen to engage and how this is expected to change in RIS2.
- **Local authorities (LAs)** – as well as liaising with individual authorities, it was agreed to approach umbrella organisations such as ADEPT and the Local Government Association (LGA) to provide an overview of engagement with Highways England and use these organisations to widen the call for engagement experiences through a wider survey.
- **Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)** – these were recognised as important stakeholders during Highways England's development of its strategic economic growth plan during RIS1 and therefore it was agreed that a sample of LEPs should be approached for formal interviews with the remainder sent a survey.
- **Local Resilience Forums (LRFs)** – Highways England's level of engagement with LRFs is largely driven by business need and is carried out by each region. The geography of LRFs is based on Police regions and therefore does not map completely with Highways England's regions which means that some regions engage with more than one LRF. Highways England therefore has to vary its engagement depending on local factors such as emergency planning and flood response. It was agreed to contact a sample of LRFs directly with others being contacted via a survey.
- **Other national and regional partners** – it was recognised that Highways England engages with a number of national agencies and associations as well as devolved administrations and other transport operators such as ports and airports. It was agreed to include these organisations in the sample survey.

A total of 15 interviews comprising five STBs, five LAs, two LEPs and three national agencies and associations were carried out based on the following lines of enquiry:

- organisation summary and interfaces with Highways England's functions;
- the overall experience of Highways England's engagement;
- the experience of Highways England's RIS2 and MRN engagement;
- current organisational developments relating to future engagement needs;
- future direction of the organisation and relevance for Highways England engagement;
- engagement challenges, gaps, opportunities and risks;
- likely changes in future engagement requirements; and
- comparison of Highways England with other agencies.



To expand the evidence base we carried out an online stakeholder engagement survey with a sample of the above organisations as well as a sample of devolved administrations, national agencies and industry associations. We received a total of 27 responses. The survey was constructed on the above lines of enquiry. Note that it was not possible to interview LRFs due to their management of the Covid 19 crisis, however a number of them responded to our survey.

### 1.2.3 Literature review

To supplement our evidence, we carried out a review of over 50 published and internal Highways England documents relating to stakeholder engagement. Summary comments are included in **Annex C** at the end of this report. The following document categories were reviewed:

- strategic policies and plans, e.g. 'The Road to Growth' strategic economic growth plan;
- study and analysis reports, e.g. 'Shaping the Future of England's Strategic Roads Consultation';
- advice and guidance, e.g. 'Planning for the future. A guide to working with Highways England on planning matters';
- evidence of process, e.g. 'Strategic Planning Advisory Panel terms of reference'; and
- status reports, e.g. 'SRN Initial Report'.

### 1.2.4 Acknowledgements

EAM would like to thank Highways England and its local and regional stakeholders and devolved administrations for taking part in this review and providing evidence openly and collaboratively. We would also like to thank the Office of Rail and Road and Highways England Project Managers for their valuable support in facilitating this review.

### 1.2.5 Notice

This report has been prepared by Elliott Asset Management Ltd (EAM) on the basis of the Form of Agreement with the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) dated 6<sup>th</sup> March 2020, in relation to contract CT/19-88. This report is for the benefit and information of ORR. All surveys, observations, analysis and forecasts contained in the report have been made on the basis of the information available at the time of the study and have been prepared as at 11<sup>th</sup> June 2020. EAM cannot be liable for any subsequent changes.

In preparing the report, EAM has relied upon, and assumed the accuracy of, information obtained from a variety of sources, including but not limited to: data provided by Highways England, interviews with members of Highways England and its stakeholders and representatives of industry associations and published academic and technical information. EAM accepts no responsibility and will not be liable in the event that information provided to EAM during the course of the assignment from such sources and relied upon by EAM is subsequently found to be inaccurate.

### 1.2.6 Report chapters

**Chapter 2** describes the evidence that we have collected from interviews with Highways England.

**Chapter 3** describes the feedback we have received from a sample of stakeholders.

**Chapter 4** describes our review of Highways England's engagement performance and compares this with other organisations.

**Chapter 5** sets out key findings, opportunities for improvement and recommendations.

## 2 Highways England's engagement with local and regional stakeholders

This chapter describes the evidence that we have collected from interviews with Highways England and published documents including the licence and other statutory duties and discretionary activities that form the stakeholder engagement landscape.

### 2.1 Stakeholder licence engagement requirements

Under the Infrastructure Act 2015 and in its licence, Highways England has a general duty to cooperate with relevant stakeholders in carrying out its functions, for example when coordinating day-to-day operations and long-term planning of the network. There are also specific duties to cooperate effectively such as the requirement for Highways England to develop route strategies for the network that help to align the SRN with local road networks and other transport modes. All licence requirements require Highways England to engage with stakeholders to some degree, however the principal requirements can be defined as:

- periodically prepare and publish Route Strategies (5.13 and 5.14);
- engage, cooperate and consult with stakeholders to enable Highways England to carry out its functions and for Highways England to take account of stakeholder views. This includes cooperating and assisting Transport Focus and ORR (5.17 to 5.20);
- develop and implement a Stakeholder Engagement Plan (5.21);
- establish and advise its Board on issues directly affecting local authorities and communities from a Stakeholder Advisory Panel (5.22); and
- produce an SRN Initial Report (5.22).

#### 2.1.1 Going the extra mile with collaboration

In the foreword to the licence it states:

"The licence emphasises that the role of Highways England is about more than just complying with the letter of the law. We expect the company to go the extra mile in the way it engages with road users and collaborates with other organisations to develop shared solutions. And they must take a lead in promoting and improving the role and performance of roads in respect of broader communal responsibilities, such as the aesthetics of design, safety and the environment, as well as driving forward wider progress on technology and innovation."

This emphasises the wider role that Highways England should play as a partner when engaging with stakeholders in order to manage and mitigate on and off-SRN network transport and environmental issues.

#### 2.1.2 Licence compliance evidence

**Figure 2.1** shows the relevant Highways England licence engagement functions, specific clauses and the compliance evidence reviewed as part of this study. Key evidence to support compliance includes: 'Communications Strategy', 'Road to Growth SEGP', 'Route Corridor and Strategic studies', 'SRN Initial Report', 'Strategic Planning Advisory Panel (SPAP)', and the 'Transparency Policy'.

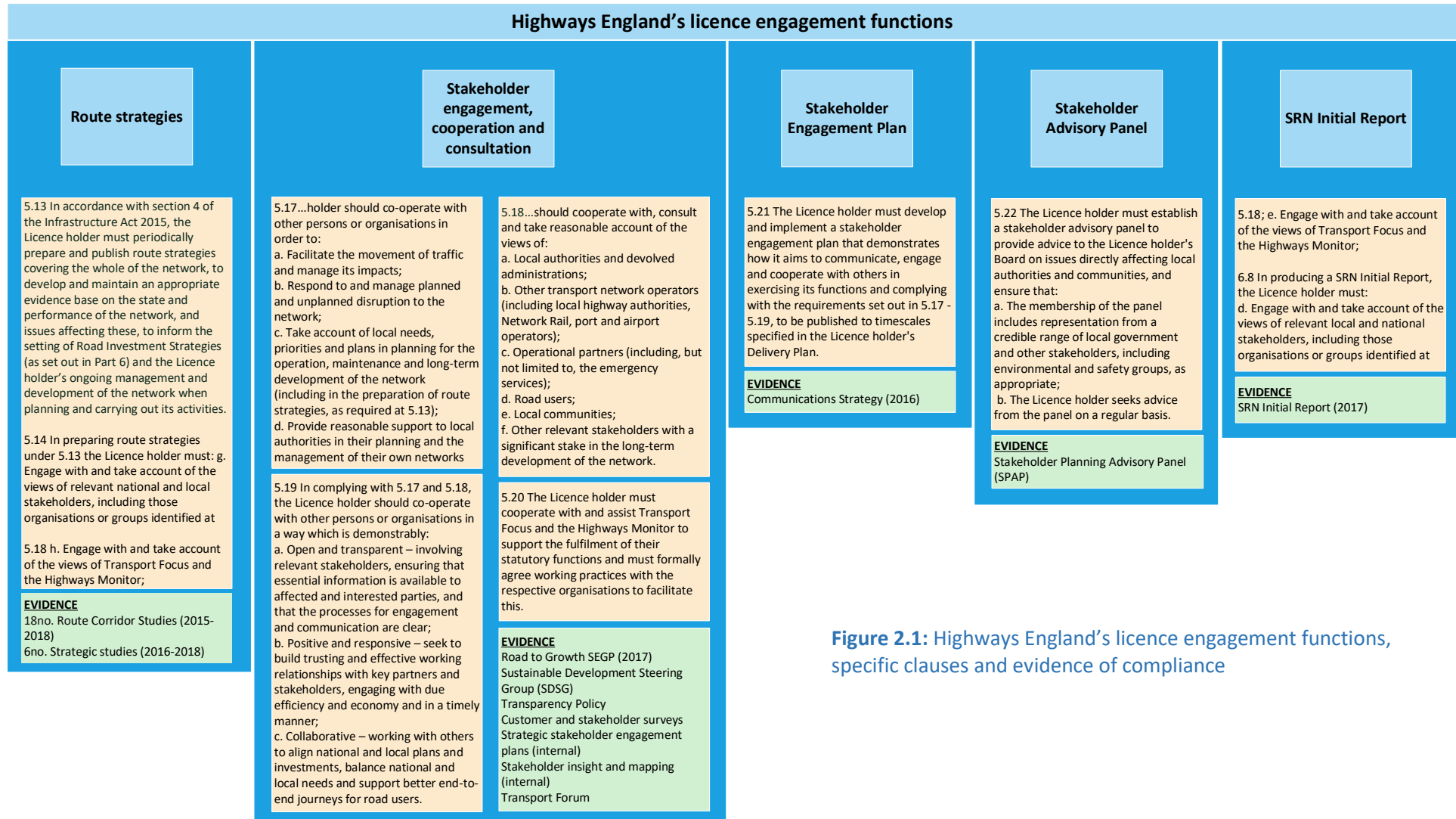


Figure 2.1: Highways England’s licence engagement functions, specific clauses and evidence of compliance

## 2.2 Stakeholder engagement landscape

The landscape within which Highways England engages with national, regional and local stakeholders is complex and is continually changing. Historic and current engagement is based on a framework developed by Highways England that recognises its licence as well as its other statutory and discretionary duties. The picture that this study has developed of who and how Highways England engages with has been brought together under its key functions, mapped onto its Directorate structure. These directorates are: Corporate Affairs & Communications (Comms), Strategy and Planning (S&P), Operations (OD), Major Projects (MP) and Safety, Engineering and Standards (SES).

Figure 2.2 shows the various stakeholder groups and where these interface at a national, regional and local level with each Highways England directorate.

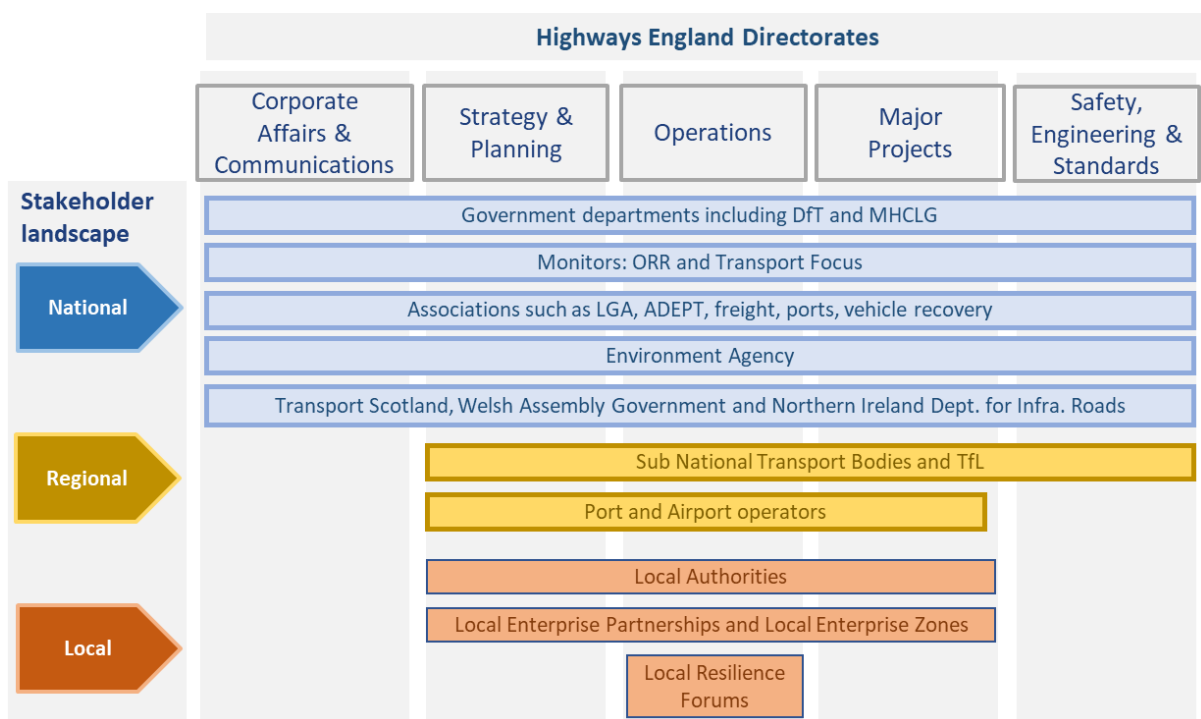


Figure 2.2 – Highways England’s directorate structure and national, regional and local engagement

## 2.3 Highways England’s maturity journey

During our discussions with Highways England we have been provided with examples of its engagement evolution journey during RIS1. These include Highways England’s developing engagement with STBs, which started with initiating a national STB liaison forum which is now run by the STBs, and the development of individual STB engagement plans. Through this process Highways England recognised the different maturity levels in individual STBs, for example the higher maturity with TfN and Midlands Connect. This led Highways England to publish a national engagement framework also known as the ‘Offer of Engagement’ to provide a consistent and transparent approach.

At a regional level, Highways England is transitioning to a new target operating structure. This will provide greater flexibility to engage with varying regional and local authority organisations, including a Planning & Development team who will liaise with national planning colleagues to agree spatial planning priorities and coordinate its response with STBs, LAs and LEPs.

The relationships with Transport Focus and with other key stakeholders through the Strategic Planning Advisory Panel (SPAP) have developed significantly during RIS1, as evidenced by the wide breadth of themes discussed in meetings.

The relationship between Highways England and all 38 LEPs has also matured during RIS1 as part of developing its strategic economic growth plan 'Road to Growth' published in 2017 and the emergence of STBs. This makes the engagement landscape within which Highways England operates a matrix of geographical regions and tiered relationships with differing needs and responsibilities.

## 2.4 National and regional engagement overview

### 2.4.1 Strategy and Planning (S&P) directorate

National level engagement is carried out by several directorates within Highways England. The national teams within S&P deal with setting and responding to policy, statutory planning and economic growth. S&P's Network Planning team engages with STBs, ADEPT (on behalf of local authorities), the Strategic Planning Advisory Panel and Network Rail for strategic planning discussions. S&P also holds strategic relationships with national agencies such as Transport Scotland, the Welsh Assembly Government and Transport for London (TfL) as well as regional engagement through its cross-border regions ie the Midlands with Wales, the North West/North East with Scotland, and the South East/East with TfL.

S&P's leadership of the relationship with STBs is supported by other directorates including MP who provide quarterly updates on scheme delivery programmes and the OD Operational Planning Team who engage with key national and regional businesses, for example with distribution operators.

### 2.4.2 Communications (Comms) directorate

Highways England has defined its approach for communicating and engaging with customers, stakeholders and its supply chain in its 2016 'Communications Strategy' and 'Customer Service Strategy'. This includes its engagement responsibilities and activities including regular measuring and evaluation of its communication activities and undertaking research to ensure the effectiveness and understanding of its messages and communications.

Highways England's Comms engages with key stakeholders such as freight associations and large road operators at a national and regional level. Stakeholder mapping is used to identify key engagement influences. Although there are no formal national and regional engagement processes in place across the business there is an opportunity to develop an integrated stakeholder engagement strategy and formal framework.

Comms uses account managers in the strategic stakeholder team to manage relationships with large road user organisations and other industry bodies and those organisations who have an opinion on roads. These include transport operators such as freight and port operators, transport charities such as Sustrans, Natural England and the National Trust.

As part of its SRNIR consultation and RIS2 planning, Highways England held a Stakeholder conference in 2016 to develop its understanding of the needs of national stakeholders and partners. This led to focussed engagement on key stakeholder groups such as freight and vehicle recovery and the formation of the Freight Steering Group which is led at a Highways England executive level. A similar group for vehicle recovery is being set up.

### 2.4.3 Stakeholder engagement insight

In order to provide insight to the business, Highways England's Safety, Engineering & Standards (SES) directorate routinely collects quantitative and qualitative data on the opinions of its customers and stakeholders by using various tools such as the 'Customer Panel' (approximately 2000 respondees) and 'Stakeholder Survey' (approximately 3000 respondees). The SES team use this data to provide the Highways England national and regional business teams with insights into its reputation, levels of trust and effectiveness of engagement. Insight has been used for a variety of uses such as responding to stakeholders including Members of Parliament about route-based concerns and marketing campaigns and programme feedback (such as from the Housing & Growth Fund). Insight data is not published.

Although Highways England's customer contact centre and some business units have a customer relationship management (CRM) tool, there is no central CRM to manage and share its national and regional stakeholder lists and to communicate its engagement priorities. As the information around stakeholders needs constant updating, a central CRM would provide the business with consistent knowledge and a degree of self-service for national and regional engagement. Highways England told us that work is ongoing to combine the stakeholder data sets from all directorates to create 'one version of the truth'.

Highways England also told us it is using its regional pan-directorate insight to develop its engagement approach and its contribution to national transport strategy. It aims to embed a consistent regional approach using insight from the national stakeholder leads for its top 20 groups and coordinate this through its regional Comms teams. This will enable Highways England to implement a nationally consistent stakeholder engagement strategy and align its internal structure and resources to deliver and support more effective engagement.

### 2.4.4 Scheme engagement with STBs

Major schemes are developed and delivered by Highways England's Major Projects (MP) directorate. Smaller renewals and maintenance are delivered by Highways England's operational teams. Although Highways England recognises that it still has more to do, it told us that its engagement approach and customer ethos and maturity has come a long way since Highways Agency days and is now a more credible offering to stakeholders.

MP has developed good working relations with mature STBs such as TfN and meets regularly to update them on scheme development and delivery progress as well as through formal reporting. MP also updates other STBs on their delivery programmes and schemes. There is an open and transparent sharing of scheme information and all schemes have a Stakeholder Engagement Plan.

During the RIS2 process Highways England was constrained from publishing scheme information during the period before RIS2 was announced in 2020. This was outside its control, however where it could, it worked with STBs and LAs to develop their MRN schemes during this time. This proactive approach is something it wants to build on as partners with STBs during RIS2.

### 2.4.5 Scheme engagement with local authorities (LAs)

Engagement with LAs on schemes is well established and the prime relationships are held with the Operations (OD) regions who have the day-to-day relationship. For major schemes, the OD directorate's route managers support Major Projects (MP) with local contacts and help to share scheme information provided by the MP Project Managers with LAs and other stakeholders such as Parish Councils. MP follow up with specific scheme information and attend meetings with local groups. This provides a 'one stop shop' with customers and stakeholders.



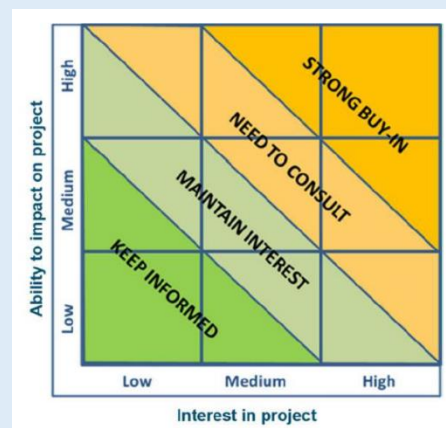
In line with its 'Transparency Policy', Highways England operates a collaborative approach to sharing scheme information where it can, but is sometimes constrained about what it can share with stakeholders such as LAs at certain times in the scheme process. As stated in the policy these constraints can include commercial sensitivity, potential detriment to the public interest or impact on SRN neighbours (e.g. blight). Highways England told us that where it cannot provide information it will try to provide a valid reason in line with its policy.

There can be a lack of understanding from STBs and LAs as to Highways England's obligations with the scheme Development Consent Order (DCO) process. This includes what scheme data and information Highways England is able to share. Highways England told us that if scheme data is released prior to it going through governance it could put the DCO application at risk and Highways England at risk of legal challenge or reputational risk.

**Box 2.1 - Focus on Highways England's major scheme engagement with stakeholders**

MP told us that it carries out extensive stakeholder engagement and communication for all its schemes in accordance with its Project Control Framework (PCF) guidance. This can include statutory engagement such as submitting Development Consent Orders (DCO) to the Planning Inspectorate or producing draft orders under the Highways Act 1980.

Engagement also includes stakeholder mapping which identifies each stakeholder group and their interest in or impacts from the scheme as well as the key drivers and channels for engagement. This determines the level of engagement and types of engagement activities based on a matrix (see inset); from keeping stakeholders informed through to enhanced engagement with those stakeholders with a strong buy-in. Engagement activities with stakeholders and communities are also identified as well as their timeline aligned to the scheme programme.



Each scheme communications plan identifies the risks to engagement and communication and outlines mitigation measures based on feedback and lessons learned from previous schemes. This defines the scheme RACI matrix, i.e. who is responsible, accountable, consulted with and informed. The plan also outlines how communications and engagement will be evaluated, drawing on feedback and lessons learned from previous schemes. Methods of evaluation include: feedback to published information and consultation exercises, input from stakeholder groups including LAs, feedback from press and web coverage and text updates to customers, liaison between the MP project team with the OD Regional Communications Manager, and feedback from the Highways England customer insight team.



OD teams have regular engagement with LAs through monthly meetings. MP uses the OD relationship with LAs to develop its scheme stakeholder engagement and invests a lot of effort in particular with LAs in the early scheme stages. The quality of this interaction does however depend on two-way communication and sharing of scheme information within stakeholder organisations.

During RIS1, MP has seen a reduction in LA resource levels which can impact MP's ability to engage and can lead to programme constraints. Where there is a justified benefits case, MP will fund additional resources for LAs from their scheme budget to help with Highways England's scheme development and the adoption process.

LAs have statutory duties to engage and provide information to organisations such as MP during their scheme development process as well as a mandate to charge for statutory services. LAs can also be charged for aspects of Highways England's work where it interfaces with the SRN. MP recognises that fee charging between Highways England and LAs is effectively with public funds and tries to work fairly with LAs.

Highways England recognises that contact information in its own organisation and in LAs needs continually updating and sharing. In addition, a substantial amount of engagement is carried out on behalf of Highways England by its supply chain and this contact information can also change. The keeping and sharing of up to date information needs to be two-way and requires a mature process to better manage access and communication.

To further the customer culture in Highways England, OD and MP hold quarterly regional customer sub-group meetings with Transport Focus (TF) and internal representatives from Comms to review its business plan objectives and how it can work together to deliver its regional requirements from a customer perspective. This supports its Customer imperative. Highways England's relationship with TF is mature and well established. MP also holds quarterly regional meetings with TF and they attend joint site visits to understand scheme progress and customer issues.

#### 2.4.6 Other statutory engagement duties

Highways England's statutory duties overseen by S&P include Local Planning Authority (LPA) liaison, dealing with planning applications and discussions on policy direction. The legislation in these areas dictates the direction of Highways England's engagement. Highways England reports its progress on these duties through reporting metrics overseen by the Government's Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MCHLG). These metrics benchmark Highways England with other organisations with statutory planning obligations. Highways England also responds to Freedom of Information (FOI) requests for its statutory and other activities.

Duties in the scheme development and delivery process are defined in the MP 'Project Control Framework' (PCF) and include DCO duties to comply with the 2008 Planning Act as well as compliance with the 1980 Highways Act.

In complying with its duties under the Infrastructure Act 2015, Highways England is responsible for engaging with stakeholders and developing approaches for a low carbon future on the SRN. It is also responsible for calculating and considering the carbon impact of road projects and factoring carbon into its design decisions, in order to minimise carbon emissions and other greenhouse gases from its operations. For its consideration of the carbon footprint in scheme development and delivery Highways England follows DfT guidance and the 'HM Treasury Green Book'. These obligations are not necessarily aligned with regional and local stakeholder objectives on carbon and supporting them with the achievement of their net zero targets such as those declared by LAs adjacent to the SRN.

### 2.4.7 Strategic Planning Advisory Panel (SPAP)

Highways England has established the SPAP as one of its licence requirements in order to provide expert advice on issues relevant to the operation of the network, in particular strategic planning and its role in supporting economic growth and housing development as well as providing technical advice and commercial intelligence. The terms of reference for the SPAP state that it will meet six-monthly and that Highways England will publish an annual progress report 12 months after the inaugural meeting and every 12 months thereafter.

Evidence provided by Highways England shows that the SPAP comprises both Government organisations such as Homes England and the Infrastructure Commission as well as professional bodies such as the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and the Chartered Institution of Highways and Transportation as well as organisations from the business sector such as the Confederation of British Industry. The Panel has a broad remit to discuss topics of interest to Highways England and attendees and has outlined its approach for RIS2 including possible themes: growth and the environment, technology and the future, transport integration, and strategic planning for the future.

### 2.4.8 Other discretionary engagement activities

As part of its discretionary national engagement, Highways England chairs a Sustainable Development Steering Group which reaches out to the development community e.g. Sainsburys, British Land, RTPI, and the private sector. It meets three to four times a year and provides Highways England with a temperature check on current issues in planning development. It also helps to guide Highways England's discussions and evaluation of ring-fenced Growth & Housing Fund projects.

Highways England's discretionary activity also includes engagement with other national infrastructure providers such as ADEPT, LGA and Network Rail's Systems Operations Planning Division (equivalent to Highways England's S&P). This provides effective high-level governance for engagement. Highways England does not receive many FOIs on its discretionary engagement activities.

### 2.4.9 Technical standards

Highways England's SES directorate is responsible for developing and managing technical standards such as the 'Design Manual for Roads and Bridges' (DMRB). To this end it has established engagement mechanisms within England, Scotland and Wales with its equivalent agencies including Transport Scotland, Welsh Assembly Government and English local authorities. These organisations participate in the Technical Project Board (TPB) which oversees the development of technical standards.

### 2.4.10 Organisational engagement function development

At a national level, Highways England operates several planning, strategic stakeholder engagement and insight teams, including specific focus groups. At a regional level, Highways England's OD is transitioning to a new target operating structure which will provide flexibility to engage with varying regional and local authority organisations. This new model includes a Planning & Development team who will liaise with S&P colleagues to agree spatial planning priorities and coordinate Highways England's response with STBs, LAs and LEPS. This is work in progress and will provide greater regional coordination and consistency. MP is also transitioning its Road Investment Programme consultation team established in 2017 into Highways England's Comms stakeholder team, bringing it under a single directorate.

Highways England's regional Route Managers are responsible for stakeholder engagement with LAs, emergency services, key businesses and national operators in their patch. In addition, Highways

England’s regions advise their MP colleagues on scheme communications and coordination with LA highways and streetworks teams.

Although Highways England is building its in-house design skills base it relies significantly on external consultants to design and engage with stakeholders. Highways England recognises that it needs to provide training in effective engagement to these organisations so that they reflect its customer ethos. For scheme engagement MP uses customer workshops which are operated within a customer assurance framework, which enables it to review how effective schemes have been delivered in a customer focussed way.

Figure 2.3 shows the various focus areas within Highways England’s directorate teams responsible for national, regional and local stakeholder engagement.

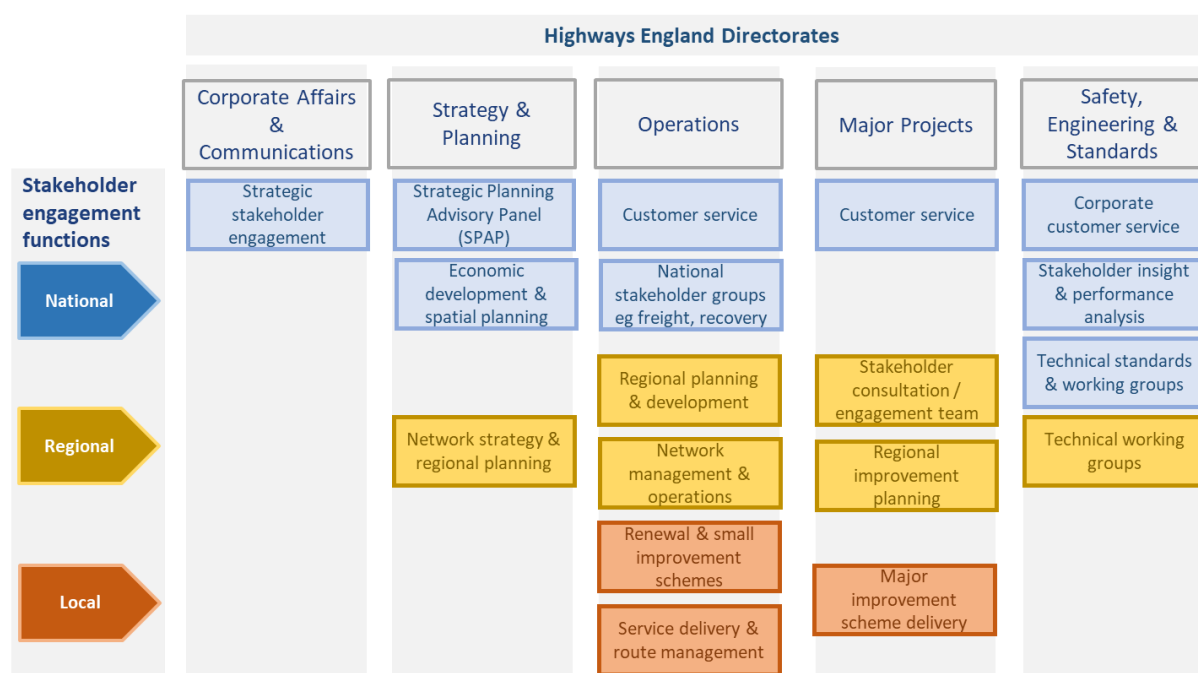


Figure 2.3 – Highways England’s focused national, regional and local engagement functions

## 2.5 Engagement with STBs

STBs are not explicitly listed as a stakeholder in Highways England’s licence, although depending on their maturity they either are or are becoming an important stakeholder and engagement group to Highways England. Note that STBs feature in DFT’s RIS2 strategy document published in 2020. STBs comprise multiple local authorities within a region and exist to coalesce strategic thinking about transport investment with the aim of improving regional productivity and sustainable economic growth. The idea for STBs is not new: Transport for London (TfL) was set up in 2000 as a multi-modal agency to manage and optimise transport needs.

Government aims to involve STBs in national investment and strategic decision-making, and on advising on the allocation of monies for example from the National Roads Fund (established from 2020/21) to contribute to the Major Road Network. This is becoming an increasingly important planning and cooperation interface with Highways England at the national and regional level.

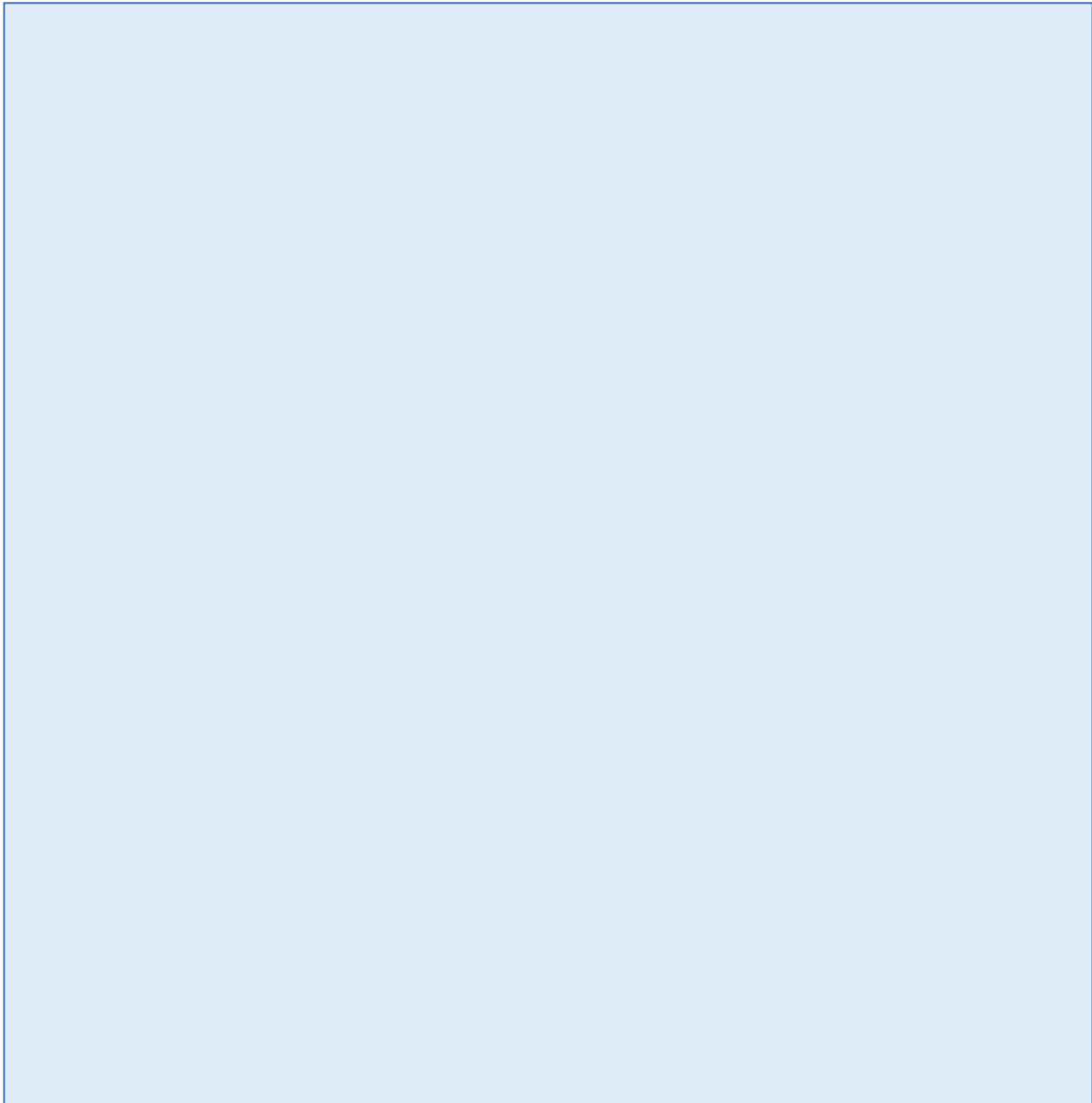
The maturity of STBs ranges between those established with statutory status or mature transport strategies e.g. TfN, to those seeking statutory status and those that have emerged to fill in the remaining England regions. Multiple LEPs are included within each STB region and some LEPs span two STB regions.

For the purposes of this study, and based on discussions with Highways England and STBs, we have classified STBs into three groups:

- **Mature STBs** those with statutory status or mature strategy and scheme proposals i.e. Transport for the North (TfN) and Midlands Connect;
- **Maturing STBs** those with transport strategies and aspiring to or developing their statutory status i.e. Transport for the South East (TfSE) and England's Economic Heartland (EEH); and
- **Evolving STBs** those that have recently formed and are still LA member led i.e. Western Gateway, Transport East and Peninsula Transport.

Highways England's engagement with STBs is carried out at three levels and varies depending on the level of need and in accordance with its 'Framework for Engagement with Sub-National Transport Bodies' (2018). The framework was developed to recognise the important and evolving role of STBs and sets out fairness and consistency principles and minimum standards. The framework also establishes:

- executive governance which includes Highways England engagement in all STB meetings where attendance is requested. The more mature STBs hold regular meetings whereas the emerging STBs hold fewer regular meetings;
- contribution to Officer based strategic engagement programmes which discuss thematic areas such as decarbonisation; and
- transactional and technical level engagement including sharing of traffic models and advice on STB capital programmes.



Highways England's work with STBs focuses on building strategic partnerships, providing input to STB governance boards and developing opportunities for partnership working at a regional level with broad directorate interests. These include S&P who lead engagement with STBs and brings in OD, MP and occasionally the chief analyst division where required. To date the demands on engagement with STBs has varied depending on what individual STBs are working on, and as well as attending Board meetings, Highways England has attended joint workshops to discuss mutually advantageous topics e.g. decarbonisation.

Information sharing between Highways England and STBs varies depending on the level of relationship. As STBs do not operate within the same operational rules or have the same statutory duties as, for example LAs, there is an increasing expectation by Highways England that sensitive information provided to STBs needs to be managed so that it does not enter the public domain inappropriately.

Highways England has openly and transparently provided traffic models and traffic data to STBs for their use in SRN and MRN scheme modelling. There have been occasions where Highways England has been unable to share third party mobile phone data with STBs due to existing contractual arrangements with phone companies however it is considering including STBs in future data agreements.

## 2.6 Engagement with local authorities (LAs)

Better engagement with LAs in all functional areas has been a consistent driver for Highways England (and before that, the Highways Agency). As well as the statutory responsibilities in planning and development, the Highways Act places specific duties on LAs that require continuous engagement, cooperation and agreement with Highways England.

Highways England also has specific licence obligations to provide reasonable support to local authorities in their planning and management of their own networks, and to work together to balance national and local needs and support better end-to-end journeys for road users. An important interface identified in this study is road diversion planning and operation. Highways England told us that they have customer service standards for planned and unplanned diversion routes which were developed in conjunction with LA's. There is also £39m in the RIS2 budget to improve diversion routes.

Highways England's engagement with LAs includes the most mature relationships of any stakeholder group reviewed in this study. These relationships are typically managed through Highways England's regional operations businesses.

LAs are governed by elected members and have a range of statutory duties. As well as the Highways Act the principal legislation includes: the 'Transport Act', 'Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act' and the 'Town and Country Planning Regulations'. Also of interest to Highways England, where it engages with LAs for schemes that impinge on the local road network, these include: the 'Wildlife and Countryside Act', 'Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations', 'Road Traffic Regulation Act', 'New Roads and Street Works Act' and the 'Traffic Management Act'.

The functional interfaces between Highways England and LAs include:

- spatial planning consultation and advice;
- Local Plan consultation;
- consulting on individual developments and coordinating works;
- highway scheme development, orders process, diversion route planning;
- scheme delivery and adoption; and
- operational planning and maintenance activities.

Both Highways England's planning and scheme delivery teams have noticed a reduction in LA resource levels over several years. This can constrain a LA's ability to engage proactively in the early stages of scheme planning and development.

## 2.7 Engagement with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)

LEPs are business led partnerships between local authorities and local private sector businesses and aim to increase economic growth and create jobs as well as improving infrastructure in their locality. They come under the remit of MCHLG. The functions of LEPs of interest to this study include planned improvements in transport infrastructure and housing development to support local industrial strategies and the 'National Infrastructure Delivery Plan' (NIDP) and emerging 'Road Sector Deal'.

During RIS1 Highways England has noticed that some LEPs have relinquished or cut their input to transport development in light of the emerging and growing role of the STBs and Highways England points to the diminishing relationship with LEPs as a result. In addition, the extent to which STBs, LEPs and LAs are organised geographically and politically means that there are inconsistent stakeholder engagement requirements for Highways England.

In its 2018/19 'Annual Report and Accounts', Highways England stated its intent to engage more proactively and collaboratively with LEPs through the LEP Network in order to better understand the challenges and opportunities related to the SRN and to support the development of evidence-based long-term plans to bring about local economic growth and development.

The way that LEPs are funded and the uncertainty of their future funding as they try to combine Government local growth deal funding with private sector investment may impact infrastructure programmes and the level and timing of support and engagement from Highways England. Note that the European Structural and Investment Funds (ESI) Funds Growth Programme is due to end in 2020. Also, of relevance to this study are Enterprise Zones which exist in most LEP areas.

## 2.8 Engagement with Local Resilience Forums (LRFs)

LRFs aim to bring together all the Category 1 and 2 responders within a police force area for the purpose of cooperating and delivering their duties under the 'Civil Contingencies Act 2004'. As a Category 2 responder, Highways England has a responsibility to co-operate with Category 1 organisations and to share relevant information with the LRF. Engagement with LRFs is a well-documented and practiced process.

LRFs operate within Police boundaries and therefore one of the key issues for Highways England is maintaining a consistency of engagement approach which can be difficult because of the varying regional practices of Police forces and other LRF stakeholders.

In ORR's 2019 'Highways England and Incident Management Study' (carried out by EAM), the obligations and relationship between Highways England and LRF partners was studied, including examination of the provision of welfare during a major incident. The relevant findings from the published ORR report are shown below.

- As a Category 2 responder and through the LRFs, Highways England supports Category 1 responders, including emergency services and local authorities, in developing multi-agency plans for provision of welfare to customers in trapped traffic. This relationship is not universally understood by road users which can result in differing expectations of Highways England's role;
- The application of welfare can vary between regions depending on availability of resources, nature of the incident and the incident timeline. However, Highways England has identified examples of best practice in its regions for coordinating welfare provision through LRFs; and
- Highways England is also developing its own customer service standard for welfare, which is intended to set out the requirements and guidance for providing welfare to customers stranded on the SRN during major incidents through LRFs.

The ORR study recommended that Highways England should continue to support LRFs in seeking ways to distribute welfare effectively, in particular to vulnerable road users.

Highways England's 2017 SEGP 'Road to Growth' also included a case study to describe how it engaged with stakeholders during the 2015 Cumbria floods:



- “Following the flooding in Cumbria in December 2015 Highways England worked with Cumbria County Council to repair two sections of the A591, between Grasmere and Keswick...Because of the successful results achieved, we have reviewed how we could offer similar support in future emergencies, using our rapid response approach. Providing mutual aid to other organisations will become part of our wider crisis management response, rather than being established as a standalone project.”

Highways England's 'Crisis Management Manual' sets out the response framework, national and regional responsibilities, and escalation processes necessary to respond to events including those coordinated by LRFs. Highways England's level of engagement with LRFs is largely driven by business need, for example Brexit highlighted the importance of engaging with Kent and south-east ports through Operation Brock. Some LRFs will have lots of engagement with HE such as planning and responding to floods, some less so. LRFs are expected to be run according to 'The role of Local Resilience Forums, produced by the Cabinet Office in 2013'.

As well as a central Incident Management Requirements Team (IMRT), Highways England has regional Emergency Planners and the Traffic Officer Service (TOS) that engage with LRFs and coordinate its response.

## 2.9 Emerging RIS2 engagement improvements

### 2.9.1 National planning engagement

At a national strategic level, Highways England told us that in terms of the RIS3 planning it will undertake during RIS2, it is in a much better place than it was during in RIS1. This is due to having a clear 5-year planning horizon with a larger and more capable team including specific capabilities in economics and strategic planning. These enhancements will allow HE to approach RIS3 in a more mature way and consider 'what does good strategic planning look like' at a national level. It will also allow Highways England to not only focus on implementing large improvement schemes but also develop its contribution to climate change, carbon reduction and ways to influence journey types. However, Highways England recognises that it still needs to establish its place in the strategic planning jigsaw in order to develop its national contribution.

In order to define its planning activities during RIS2, Highways England needs to have its RIS3 and beyond requirements agreed with Government (signed off by the Secretary of State). These will determine the future network landscape and how Highways England will interface with its regions. This will dictate strategic and tactical activities such as route and strategic studies. Early RIS2 activities are likely to include more collaboration and joint working with key partners such as Network Rail and port authorities to assess route corridors and the network implications of future capacity plans.

### 2.9.2 Regional engagement improvements

Within the regions Highways England told us that they are currently looking at how they can improve their spatial planning, scheme and operational functions, for example:

- **planning improvements** – S&P is embedding its regional relationships with STBs and the regional OD teams are developing their national thinking on better partnership working e.g. with LEPs in order to give greater regional collaboration and consistency. This will improve the utilisation of Highways England resources who engage with developer funded schemes and improve consistency. A further aim, to meet the regional target operating structure, is for teams to become more specialised with recruitment of

experts in spatial planning. This will help to inform the regions of their engagement priorities and needs through to the end of RIS2 and into RIS3;

- **scheme improvements** - MP aims to build on its regional scheme relationships with STBs including how it can better engage and keep them more informed, both at a strategic and tactical level, as well as on individual projects. This will include sharing details of public consultation events with STBs and hosting site visits;
- **operational improvements** – these include: providing stakeholders with better information and longer advance planning horizons for roadworks, setting up 5-year renewal programmes, sharing more detail of its annual operational programming, and improving asset knowledge and data; and
- **resilience improvements** - Highways England's 'Crisis Management Manual' has recently been reviewed to align with the new TOS so the early years of RIS2 will see this being embedded across the regions to create better consistency.

Through these improvements Highways England aims to become more forward thinking through better coordination (such as with local authorities) in order to reduce the impact on customers and improve Highways England's planning and operational efficiency as it plans for RIS3.

Although engagement with all LEPs was a priority during the development of its economic strategy 'Road for Growth' in 2017, an approach for engaging with LEPs for RIS2 has not yet been confirmed. Due to the increase in combined authorities and the changing influence of LEPs Highways England will need to be flexible in its approach. The degree to which it engages with LEPs will therefore depend on the LEP relationship with their STB and LAs and their proactiveness to engage on network issues.

The new regional target operating structure will allow Highways England to mature its engagement approach during RIS2 and although this has only recently been implemented in some regions (Midland from 1st July 2019, some other regions such as the South-West are 2-years old) it will give greater consistency. Each region will be responsible for shaping its specific engagement needs and programmes.

### 2.9.3 Emerging opportunities, gaps, challenges and risks

Through our discussions with Highways England, some opportunities, gaps, challenges and risks to developing more coordinated and consistent engagement have been identified. These are shown in **Table 2.1**.

**Table 2.1 – Opportunities, challenges and risks to effective stakeholder engagement**

| Opportunities to enhance engagement  |
|--|
| <p><b>Stakeholder engagement strategy</b> - at the start of RIS2 Highways England has an opportunity to review its stakeholder engagement strategy to sit alongside its 'Strategic Customer Plan'. This could follow on from the offer of engagement developed for STBs.</p> <p><b>Emerging STB engagement</b> - now that RIS2 has been published, there is an opportunity for Highways England's S&amp;P teams to strengthen the engagement with less mature STBs as they build on their evidence bases and develop their transport strategies. Those evolving STBs have stated that they would value Highways England's support in developing their corridor and area strategies.</p> <p><b>Engagement process development</b> - it is recognised that S&amp;P is a relatively new directorate and has improved its centrally coordinated consistency in stakeholder planning and engagement across regions. There is an opportunity to further develop a suite of consistent national and regional stakeholder engagement processes as part of its strategy for consistency and fairness.</p> <p><b>National resilience principles</b> - through this study and the previous ORR 'Incident Management study' it is recognised that some LRF members can be difficult to engage with and are less proactive. This leads to inconsistent relationships and planning for responses across Highways England's regions. In order to improve the coordination between Highways England and the LRF leads and other stakeholders there is an opportunity to establish national principles and practices with the LRFs and their Category 1 responder national bodies and associations such as with LGA, ADEPT, and the Association of Police and Crime Commissioners (APCC).</p> |

| Challenges and risks to effective engagement  |
|---|
| <p><b>Highways England engagement resourcing</b> - at a national level as STBs mature further this is likely to place greater pressure on Highways England to resource its engagement teams. This is recognised by S&amp;P and through the early years of RIS2 and building on its stakeholder events it aims to better understand and evaluate where the greatest value lies in the engagement process with the STB collective. More tailored resourcing and engagement with STBs will help Highways England to continue to deliver its consistency and fairness principles in its engagement framework;</p> <p><b>LA resourcing capability</b> - within the regions, OD has noticed a reduction in local authority resources over several years which has resulted in less effective two-way engagement. This has caused issues where authorities do not get involved early enough in specific scheme planning activities such as traffic diversions which can lead to more disruptive and urgent discussions at later stage. Indications are that this resource shortage in local authorities is likely to continue;</p> <p><b>LEP engagement</b> - Engagement with all LEPs is seen as a future priority and although the LEP Network has been established to share information, it largely acts as a secretariat, and therefore cannot substitute for active engagement on an individual basis with each LEP. LEP engagement is likely to require increased regular contact being established through Highways England's regional teams;</p> |

### Challenges and risks to effective engagement

**Transport devolution** - Further devolution of local transport policy and planning, e.g. to Mayoral Authorities which themselves are likely to have limited resources, will add further complexity to the range and interaction of stakeholders with whom HE will need to engage.

**Stakeholder and customer definitions** – these appear to be interchangeable within Highways England and it may help for these terms to be consistently applied. For example, customer can be used to describe those who have specific network needs or physically use the Highways England network (e.g. small business users) whereas stakeholders can be used to describe regional and local authorities, transport groups or larger businesses that rely on the SRN to transport goods and people. Additionally, some types of customers can be defined as a stakeholder group.

Note that the Highways England 2017 'SRNIR Main Report' defines customers as follows:

“by ‘customers’ we mean all those who use or are affected by our roads, including motorists, pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, neighbouring communities, businesses, and the various stakeholder groups that represent them.”

## 3 Stakeholder views on Highways England's engagement

This chapter describes the evidence that we have collected from a sample of Highways England's stakeholders. The chapter has been organised by the influence that various stakeholder groups have with Highways England as evidenced through this study. Stakeholders have been ordered as follows: Local Authorities (LAs), national agencies, associations and devolved administrations, sub-national transport bodies (STBs), local enterprise partnerships (LEPs), local resilience forums (LRFs) and ports and airports.

### 3.1 Local Authorities (LAs)

Highways England's engagement with LAs is probably the most extensive of all key stakeholders and is mainly carried out through the regional OD teams. Engagement with LAs covers all aspects of Highways England's functions and these are well established due to the cross-boundary collaboration necessary between two statutory bodies with wide ranging and common legislative duties. Principal duties for both organisations are defined through the Highways Act and various planning legislation. These include: spatial and transport planning, scheme programming and delivery, streetworks and operations and development control. It also includes joint operational management during major incidents.

Consultation with a small sample of county, unitary and combined authorities has been through interviews and an online survey with. Evidence has been collected on each authority's experience of Highways England's engagement and is summarised below.

LAs gave a mixed but *"on the whole positive view"* of their engagement experience with Highways England. LAs said however that *"the best working relationships are often based on the responsiveness of individuals within Highways England rather than the proactiveness of the organisation as a whole"*. They also reported examples of both good and poor engagement on Highways England's major projects for a variety of reasons which generally come down to, respectively, *"the proactiveness of the scheme customer and delivery teams"* and what are seen as 'complex processes'. Other engagement experiences included:

- *"Information sharing is transparent. Most engagement works well but can be transactional and frustrating if HE is not present to make decisions"*
- *"Fruitful engagement is often dependent on the response and performance of individuals within HE... There are some very good individuals with HE locally/regionally, with valued relationships with LAs... However, HE's culture and systems don't always support good, consistent engagement"*
- *"This works well when there are good personal relationships... Where HE implements smart motorway schemes, day-to-day engagement is also generally good... However these schemes can require significant effort from the LA teams"*
- *"A frustration can be with technical information presented at meetings which we would like to share with our teams and members which HE restricts through the consultation process"*

- *“We can experience one-way engagement from HE teams such as when they need LA help with gap funding, but this is more difficult when LAs need HE information for scheme economic appraisal and business case information to report to their council members. HE needs to be more understanding of our responsibilities and accountabilities”*

Most of the LAs that were consulted gave their experience of Highways England's engagement during the RIS2 process. Again, their views were mixed and reflected other stakeholder views that the process was too long and lacked information between the initial consultation and announcement. There were some specific suggestions for Highways England to consider to improve the process including *“there could have been more advanced notice from HE to allow adequate time to canvass local stakeholders as part of preparing a response”*. Highways England engagement with LAs during the MRN process was seen as positive with one LA pointing to *“good challenge and support for schemes on routes of interest to us but not so much with the wider initiative or strategy which together with the SRN and LRN needs a joined-up approach for the customer”*.

A more general point raised by LAs was the need for better clarity on who is or should be engaging with central Government at a strategic level; DfT, Highways England, STBs and/or LAs?

Where LAs face challenges in engaging with Highways England these have common themes which in part relate to the resourcing structures and limitations of small teams within LAs to deal with what is seen as a much larger organisation in particular for major schemes. These challenges include:

- **Contact information** - several LAs pointed to challenges with identifying and accessing the appropriate key personnel within Highways England and an up to date contact list in order to advise/challenge their strategy and gain technical approvals;
- **Resourcing appreciation** - LAs have experienced periods of 'heavy engagement commitment' from multiple Highways England design teams during major schemes and would like a better understanding of these peak commitments at project commencement and requests for LA information channelled through a single contact;
- **Local understanding** – Highways England project teams do not always have the local knowledge to engage with stakeholders and this is an area LAs can help more with based on their knowledge and guidance on project coordination and communication;
- **Local traffic impacts** – LAs experience severe impacts to their networks, businesses and communities due to Highways England traffic avoiding the SRN. LAs would like Highways England to 'retain ownership' for these customers and engage more with local communities, local politicians and transport operators such as bus companies to mitigate these impacts;
- **Traffic diversion routes and agreements** – LAs told us that they are starting to change the language they use with Highways England when asked to accept traffic diversions due to the consequences of local traffic impacts. They feel that Highways England needs to work more to engage with local stakeholders and plan works during appropriate periods. For example, works during school holiday periods, which Highways England has traditionally seen as embargo periods, can be a better solution for local communities. Note that this study refers earlier to Highways England's customer service standards for planned and unplanned diversion routes which were developed in conjunction with LA's and the planned £39m in the RIS2 budget to improve diversion routes;



- **Customer delivery focus** – some LAs feel that Highways England can “*sometimes not be sensitive to political influences when dealing with local scheme issues*”. In contrast LAs, through their ‘day job’, have significant experience of local stakeholder consultation which they are willing to share with Highways England to improve their understanding of local engagement;
- **Network coordination** – some LAs cited examples where Highways England’s major projects and regional operations teams “*do not have a complete knowledge of when each other’s works and traffic diversions are planned*”. This results in additional LA coordination in order to mitigate the potential disruptions of traffic diverted onto the local network;
- **Fee charging** - there is an increasing awareness from LAs, due in part to their reduction in funding, where it is charged for altering the SRN or local network as a result of Highways England’s major scheme expansion programme: LAs are charged where they propose SRN alterations whereas Highways England is not charged by LAs for local network changes. One LA is taking this issue to Government to resolve. LAs also effectively ‘price in’ charges and counter charges when working with Highways England and its delivery partners, for example on scheme development, however feel that there could/should be a more efficient way of using what is ultimately public funding; and
- **Operational engagement** – LAs sometimes have a lack of legal clarity over jurisdictional boundaries for operations such as winter gritting, litter picking and grass cutting, which in practice rely on local relationships and ‘informal agreements’ and could be more formalised to ensure joined up customer service.

### 3.1.1 Growth and Housing Fund (GHF)

LAs have welcomed Highways England’s GHF and its wider strategic objectives to support growth and the economy through this funding. LA’s reported a positive engagement experience when identifying growth opportunities and when schemes are delivered, but less positive when developing and assessing bids. In some situations, Highways England can be seen to revert to highways principles when preparing business cases and use immediate/near term benefits which are not always appropriate when considering opportunities to promote growth. The process of gaining technical approvals for GHF schemes has been raised by several LAs as sometimes being protracted.

### 3.1.2 Opportunities for better engagement with LAs

LAs would welcome the opportunity to strengthen their relationship with Highways England. They said:

- “*We would like to have more joined up thinking with the SRN and MRN/LRN and not just at the network interfaces*”
- “*We would value more participation on Highways England regional stakeholder groups such as corridor groups and customer groups*”
- “*We can offer Highways England our experience and advice on local consultation and communication to enhance its ‘Customer Delivery toolkit’*”



- *“Highways England is a large complex organisation in which it can be difficult to identify an appropriate engagement route...we would like to work with Highways England to better understand their structure and establish joint contact lists which are kept current”*

We had further views from Local Authorities on Highways England's engagement from our online stakeholder survey. These are detailed in [Annex A](#) at the end of this report.

## 3.2 National agencies, associations and devolved administrations

In order to achieve its licence objectives Highways England engages with key strategic stakeholders and customer groups at a national level including devolved administrations such as Transport Scotland, national agencies such as the Environment Agency and those organisations representing stakeholder group interests such as LGA, ADEPT and freight and port associations. Engagement is through several forums including the SPAP, SDSG and Freight Group.

### 3.2.1 Strategic Planning Advisory Panel (SPAP) effectiveness

A national association that attends the SPAP and asked to remain anonymous described it as largely one-way and stated: *“sometimes useful and not the most dynamic forum, more a platform for HE to speak to the attendees on their agenda”*. They did point to the good discussions on issues such as decarbonisation, air quality and the MRN; and feel there is an opportunity to reshape the panel so that it covers all highway sector interests. This national association has welcomed the opportunity to engage more with Highways England with what it sees are high level challenges and specific risks to Highways England's network management duties and RIS2 scheme building programme. Top of these is carbon net zero and the opportunities for Highways England, STBs and LAs to work together to review the competing priorities between Highways England's £27/28bn RIS2 programme including SRN enhancements and LAs net zero targets. Note that recent SPAP minutes suggest the view that DfT should have an overarching strategic transport plan to facilitate coordination of planning & strategy.

A further area for discussion raised by this national association, with implications for future stakeholder engagement, is the more complex transport governance landscape as a result of further regional devolution and the impact that this could have on have on Highways England's licence obligations. The third area is an opportunity for Highways England to work more with regional and local partners to co-produce schemes that take into account of the end to end customer journey.

A national agency that also sits on the SPAP described this forum as *“helpful and a good idea”* as it gives them an overview of Highways England's focus and future planning, plus insight into the priorities and activities of other relevant organisations. They stated the SPAP also provides an opportunity to highlight their activity, both corporate and focused planning activities. *“It enables agencies to remind a wider audience of key interactions and opportunities between cross-sector interests within a wider infrastructure planning context”*.

To improve the outcomes of the SPAP the national agency would ideally like the meetings to be face to face to make them as effective as possible. In terms of suggested improvements these include:

- *“The attendee list should be regularly reviewed to balance full coverage of HE's interfaces and to avoid overlap and the panel should be used as a forum to test HE thinking on specific future focus. For example, there was a useful discussion at the last meeting relating to their thoughts around electrical vehicles and zero carbon ambitions”*
- *“HE should ask for agenda items from attendees which could be beneficial and worth considering”*

### 3.2.2 Engagement with technical standards and research

One of the devolved administrations consulted gave a detailed summary of the various interfaces with Highways England including engagement on policy and standards, operational and planning functions as well as specific areas such as asset management, air quality and road safety. The overall view was positive with well established relationships and a desire by Highway England to engage collaboratively.

Specifically, with cross-border operational liaison there is open sharing of scheme information, policy and procurement initiatives and technical developments including shared research. There are also joint bi-annual road maintenance forums to share ideas and solutions such as drone use policy and litter management.

This administration described the engagement of its technical teams with Highways England during the recent DMRB update process. They described extensive engagement by Highways England during this process and the successful achievement of the project's outcomes including National Application Annexes (NAAs), although some of these teams reported that:

- *"The timescales were rushed and the experience stressful....it also felt that devolved administrations were an afterthought in the whole process and there were examples of HE being quite resistant to change in order to suit each of the devolved administrations, despite there being different legislative contexts"*

Formal and informal collaboration on road safety issues such as casualty reduction planning and delivery mechanisms are well established and there are frequent national and European panels to which both devolved administrations and Highways England contribute. Going forward, devolved administrations would like to retain effective links with Highways England in order to jointly understand how development of post 2020 activities are impacted by best practice and external processes, such as the exit from the EU, and how this will impact road safety policy and standards.

For other areas of common interest such as air quality, devolved administrations would like more engagement and active participation in Highways England's research projects.

Another devolved administration who engages with Highways England across the full range of Highways England's functions, including cross-border operational planning and coordination and incident response, was positive about Highway England's engagement in comparison to other organisations. They said: *"It is evident that both regular and ad hoc engagement takes place at a number of levels and in a professional manner"*.

While one respondent rated the engagement with Highways England as very effective another noted that it could be inconsistent. They stated that:

- *"It depends on the issue. For some areas like the recent update of DMRB standards the communication has been very effective. Similarly, day to day liaison and the sharing of traffic information is good. In areas of communication this can be patchy because of the large number of HE teams taking schemes and issues forward"*

The principal suggested improvement from this organisation was essentially a consistency of approach from Highways England. One respondent had also been involved in the RIS2 consultation and was neutral to positive about the various aspects of the process.

## 3.3 Sub-national transport bodies (STBs)

### 3.3.1 STB engagement context

Engagement with STBs for this study was wide-ranging, including with established and statutory organisations to those evolving organisations seeking statutory status. We gathered significant evidence of STB's engagement experiences with Highways England including during the RIS2 and MRN processes and identified areas for joint working opportunities, as well as challenges and risks to current and future engagement. As regional transport bodies, STBs also gave us their views on how Highways England compares to other similar agencies.

The study has found that each STB is not only at a different maturity level but that some of the regional transport powers and solutions that they discussed and reported through our survey, and for which they are likely to seek statutory status for, vary. There are common features such as the governance boards and officer-led led transport and capital programme groups, both of which currently have or are seeking active participation from Highways England. All STBs have an appointed single point of contact from Highways England's S&P directorate and these relationships are either well established or are becoming more established as STBs mature. Some STBs have or are aspiring to memorandums of understanding with Highways England. Most STBs recognise Highways England's 'Offer of Engagement' which sets out their engagement principles but say that *"this needs reviewing to reflect how STBs have moved on"*.

Through their role in transport strategy, independent of whether they are statutory or not, STBs are seeking permanence, equivalence and influence with other funded bodies, including certainty and security of funding and a status equivalent to Highways England and Network Rail. STBs openly see rail as their preferred solution over road to manage future freight and passenger journeys (in particular for commuting) and to mitigate key risks such as congestion, air quality and decarbonisation. As such, the transport policy and strategies that have been published or are under development highlight the importance of joined up thinking between road and rail ie between LAs, Highways England and Network Rail.

LEPs and the interests of LAs are fully embedded in STBs and are involved in all key policy and strategy decisions. These include improving connectivity and access to key hubs such as urban centres, ports and airports, as well as improving links between towns and cities and reinventing coastal and other communities. STBs meet each other regularly, both at a national forum and for cross-boundary discussions, Highways England is also involved in these discussions. STBs value Highways England's contribution to its national forum describing it as *"helpful"*.

In summary, with the increasing influence of STBs, and their future role and responsibilities currently under review by DfT (Operating Principles review) it is likely that Highways England will need to change and rationalise its engagement approach with these stakeholders during RIS2.

### 3.3.2 Highways England engagement with STBs

STBs highlight the *"good working relationships with their Highways England account managers"* and the support and traffic model data that has been shared with them by Highways England's national teams. They do point to the increased scrutiny and challenge of their transport proposals through the Government business case process and the need for more joint working at a technical level to avoid duplication of effort and to agree the monitoring and agreement of scheme outcomes. There can be frustrations: *"HE does not always readily share information"*, though it is recognised by STBs that Highways England is constrained by its arrangement with DfT: *"this is not a trust issue, rather a lack of transparency"*.

All STBs see the importance of continued and further engagement with Highways England and point to “overall positive and proactive interaction, with pockets of less effective engagement”. The word “transactional” comes across from most STBs in describing their experience on scheme development with Highways England which “can feel like a ‘tick-box’ exercise, something HE has to do but doesn’t know why or what for”. STBs pointed to the varying levels of their engagement experience:

- “There are very good relationships with the HE teams looking at network integration, strategy and the future of mobility but a different more transactional relationship with delivery teams”
- “The top executive director level within HE, involved in setting the RIS1 and RIS2 agenda, understand the wider role that HE needs to play...those middle management and engineering layers are focused on preserving the asset”
- “There is good and proactive engagement with HE at the initial level but the experience is more variable when the STB needs to engage with the wider HE technical teams, some who have ‘moved into the new world’ and understand the role and aspirations of STBs and others who ‘still live in the old world’ and adopt a ‘preserve our network at all costs’ attitude”
- “Although HE has evolved into a very different organisation to ten years ago it is still not yet seen as a partner”

Evolving STBs in particular said they value the potential insight and ‘critical friend’ advice that Highways England can give as they develop their transport strategies. They see RIS2 as an opportunity to further develop this engagement and to move from local authority relationships to more formal discussions about aligning their regional economic growth and transport corridor connectivity improvements with Highways England’s route-based interests.

### 3.3.3 STB Engagement challenges

The STBs we spoke to highlighted their future challenges and the opportunities for Highways England to engage and help them with their accountability and transparency to their Members. This includes helping to mitigate the reputational risk that STBs face if Highways England does not communicate clearly, in particular with progress of its major schemes. These include:

- **Air quality** - agreeing policy on how to improve air quality where roads including the SRN are seen as the primary problem;
- **Decarbonisation** - how to jointly tackle decarbonisation with regional and local stakeholders including LAs in order for them to achieve their net zero carbon emissions targets;
- **Modal shift** – engaging with Highways England and DfT to improve modal shift from road onto rail and improving freight corridors, agreeing capacity limits on road networks and managing commuter traffic; and
- **Traffic data** - providing Highways England’s open source traffic data to STBs to influence regional travel behaviours and more inclusivity in Highways England’s data collection contracts. Note that Highways England’s response to this point is that it has openly and transparently provided traffic data to STBs for their use in SRN and MRN scheme modelling however there have been occasions where it has been unable to share third party mobile phone data due to existing contractual arrangements.

Some STBs noted that in order to engage more with Highways England they would require their own internal structure to be of an appropriate size and to acquire the required skills. The mature STBs have already put these structures in place and supplement their skills where required with third party support, whereas the evolving STBs still rely on LA officer support which they recognise is not sustainable as they develop their transport strategies with input from Highways England.

### 3.3.4 Co-funding opportunities

STBs refer to Highways England's designated Growth and Housing fund, and the emerging consideration by Highways England of community-based improvements, as positive developments. At a practical level STBs would like Highways England to publish guidance to supplement its publications such as 'Road to Growth' and 'Connecting the Country' in order to articulate how it will work with STBs in its wider areas of interest such as supporting economic growth and connectivity as stated in RIS2. They would also like to develop joint measures to monitor successful engagement in these areas.

### 3.3.5 RIS2 planning process

Although not all STBs were involved in the RIS2 process they all expressed a view on Highways England's engagement during this process and where it could be improved. Those STBs that were involved at the start of the process in 2017 found the experience 'very open and collaborative'. Those that are evolving said that feedback from their LAs was that engagement was detailed and effective. After the initial consultation period during 2018 and 2019, engagement was seen to be 'less positive' and there was a general lack of information to inform their governance and transparency commitments and internal scheme planning process. The RIS2 process was also seen as political at times with lack of visibility between HE and STBs on its proposals. STBs said:

- *"Whilst the engagement to receive our views was good, we never knew what was actually being done with those views. We never received any feedback to tell us how our views impacted on their thinking"*
- *"We would like to see a more transparent and continuous process with open sharing of information to allow us to understand what is and isn't in the RIS"*

These responses to the consultation process are acknowledged by both Highways England and ORR as largely attributable to DfT. Highways England has raised this with DfT, including the perception issues that have been raised by stakeholders and supply chain. As a result, the consultation process will be reviewed during RIS2.

### 3.3.6 RIS3 engagement planning

Since the RIS2 announcement STBs have welcomed the re-engagement by Highways England on transport strategy and planning. They have also welcomed Highways England's commitment to improve their relationship with STBs and aim to work together on route strategies and regional connectivity. There is a note of caution though which is based on STB's initial discussions with Highways England:

- *"There is incompatibility with Highways England's objectives which are based on identifying schemes to solve network issues rather than stepping back to consider what a good network looks like in 2025 and developing mutual network integration objectives"*
- *"There also needs to be a joint agreement between STBs/DfT/HE to define what the network needs to be and how these organisations should work together"*



Similar to the above feedback for the RIS2 process, STBs do recognise that the lack of clarity in network planning is not the sole responsibility of Highways England and also causes Highways England difficulty in terms of how it plans its future SRN strategy. This view is also referenced in the recent SPAP minutes and refers to the need for DfT to implement an overarching strategic transport plan to facilitate coordination of planning & strategy.

### 3.3.7 MRN engagement

STB's experience of Highways England's engagement during DfT's consultation on 'Proposals for the creation of a Major Road Network (MRN)' were seen as *"very supportive"*:

- *"HE's engagement on the regional evidence base for our MRN proposals worked well and HE provided good challenging feedback"*
- *"HE provided good challenge and support for schemes on routes of interest to them but not so much with the wider initiative or strategy which together with the SRN and LRN needs a joined-up approach for the customer"*
- *"HE's assessment of our MRN proposals was helpful and supportive and not seen as a blocker and there was open sharing of information"*

### 3.3.8 SPAP engagement

There was one STB view of the Highways England SPAP from the online survey: *"I don't feel this is effective...In its current format I don't see the value in it"*.

## 3.4 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)

The study has consulted directly with several LEPs and others have responded through the online survey. LEPs are 50/50 LA/business partnerships and receive Local Growth Fund (LGF) deals. Their objectives vary but follow similar themes including: improving skills and talent; improving connectivity through transport infrastructure improvements; reliable and resilient transport system to support economic and development growth; improved digital capability; place shaping and business development.

The current LGF deals are due to end in March 2021 and further funding is expected to be allocated from the Shared Prosperity Fund. The landscape that LEPs find themselves in is changing as STBs become more mature and take on some of their interests. The evidence from this study shows that there is clearly a need for Highways England to monitor and review how this changing landscape impacts their engagement strategy with LEPs during RIS2. In addition, LEP geographic boundaries do not always align with STB boundaries which adds a further factor for consideration.

LEP engagement with Highways England varies depending on the type of relationship between the LEP and its regional STB and LA partners. Generally, LEPs engage with Highways England at the strategic level where they respond to consultations, and at a scheme level where they may be asked to supplement the views of the relevant geographical LA partner. LEPs recognise the *"extensive and positive engagement from Highways England during their 'Road to Growth' consultation"* but have seen a *"diminishing and more transactional level of engagement related to specific schemes"*. The LEPs that were consulted said that their experience of Highways England's engagement is *"very positive"*. This includes Highways England presentations to LEP forums.

LEPs that responded to our survey said that Highways England actively participate in a range of LEP or LA transport groups and scheme meetings. The timing of these varies from bi-monthly to quarterly and the effectiveness of this engagement varies:

- *“This seems to work well...at a strategic level it used to be good, now poor, other than on certain schemes where it remains good...we have detailed updates when appropriate in my opinion”*

Two LEPs who participated in the RIS2 planning process recorded their experience:

- *“I believe that the right questions were asked but feel that decisions were already made without clear explanation”*
- *“Engagement at the STB is reasonable, though no more than that, however they have failed to engage directly with the LEP, despite being asked to do so”*
- *“Engagement in RIS 1 was several magnitudes better, we felt engaged and our views were taken on board”*

These comments complement one of the views of this study which is that the engagement landscape has shifted and therefore future engagement with LEPs needs reviewing by Highways England.

As LEPs develop their local industrial strategies and connectivity proposals and adapt to future funding arrangements they acknowledge that their influence over transport and highway decisions will change. LEPs said they still see the need for engagement with Highways England through STBs and their LA partners. In particular LEPs are interested to see how Highways England adapts its strategic planning focus from a network manager to working in partnership for wider economic growth. LEPs also point to an opportunity for Highways England to work more closely with them at a strategic level, for example supporting major schemes through their influence with improving local skills and resources.

LEPs experience of Highways England's Growth & Housing Fund is mixed with some pointing to 'positive experiences' while others say:

- *“There can be a challenge around the timing of funding...the process and communications can sometimes be seen as not inclusive and not in the spirit of partnering”*

In terms of where Highways England could improve its engagement LEPs suggest:

- *“A more partnering spirit similar to the open and transparent approach taken by LAs...more sharing of information in scheme business cases...better understanding of the openness and transparency requirements of LEPs and LAs when seeking project contributions from LEPs”*

### 3.5 Local Resilience Forums

LEPs are generally led by either the fire or police service and operate within police boundaries. Although interviews with LRFs were requested no interviews were carried out due to their ongoing management of the COVID response. However, online survey responses were received from three LRFs and two from one police force. These responses cover Highways England's operations in the South East and Midlands regions.



One LRF did express a view of their experience in participating with Highways England. They said:

- *“Our experience of HE when responding to incidents and emergencies managed by the LRFs is seamless and very good. HE has good incident management processes and staff behaviours are viewed positively by LRFs”*

The LRFs in our survey also said that they engage with Highways England in meetings, forums, and by email, phone, and letter. One police force attends as many Highways England meetings as possible. The LRFs cite time/resource pressures for not always being able to attend Highways England meetings. All LRFs responded that they view Highways England's approach as professional.

Highways England's format of engagement from three responses was rated as *“excellent, good, adequate”*:

- *“I have enjoyed an excellent working relationship with both Tactical and Strategic partner colleagues from HE”*

Three respondents said their contact with Highways England is through a Highways England team; two have a single contact/key account manager. Comments indicate established and functioning lines of communication. All rated the communication with HE as *“very effective”*:

- *“I regularly liaise with xxxx from HE and we have developed an excellent working relationship”*

Suggested improvements from LRFs include:

- developing a dual working procedure for EU Exit schemes;
- the Regional Operations Centre could help by answering phone calls quicker before it defaults to a call centre in the Midlands;
- more EPOs (Emergency Planning Officers).

We asked how effectively do Highways England regions work with you to identify areas of joint or collaborative working? – the responses varied but were broadly positive: *“somewhat, neutral, very, very”*.

Only one respondent was involved in the RIS2 consultation; their feedback was *“positive”*. The others either were not aware or did not participate. None were involved in the RIS1 consultation process and none participate in the SPAP.

The above responses indicate that Highways England has well-functioning participation and engagement with LRFs. The move to a new target operating model in Highways England's regions should also strengthen the role of the Emergency Planning team and ability of Highways England to play an active role in all LRFs.

### 3.6 Ports and airports

Of the ports and airport that responded to the survey, the role and value of individual relationships and the performance of individuals within Highways England is emphasised, with all respondents reporting that Highways England are professional in their approach. The views of the effectiveness of Highways England's communication varied between 'very' and 'somewhat'. One respondent is involved in the SDSG which is seen as a useful forum to share sector views. Respondees said:

- *“Individuals within HE are very professional and generally helpful and engaged. As an organisation, HE remains fairly impenetrable and could be perceived as closed-off from*

*stakeholders. Network Rail have made major improvements in their stakeholder management with regular email updates and newsletters, making it appear more open and engaged"*

- *"Some elements of HE's engagement are very strong, but there is a lack of consistency in the quality of engagement. Much engagement is left to HE's contractors, many of which do an excellent job, however there are times when greater ownership might help HE improve its relationships with partners"*

Only one of the respondents has been invited to participate in Highways England's quarterly stakeholder engagement survey; this respondent rated the survey 'not at all' useful:

- *"The surveys can be time consuming. I haven't really seen any changes as a result of the surveys"*

In terms of improvements there were two suggestions:

- *"Involving a wider range of partners within the planning process would be beneficial"*
- *"Regular meetings and a list of HE's stakeholder groups that are available for participation"*

These comments are significant given Highways England's focus on 'international gateways' for connectivity and consequent economic growth. It is evident that engagement takes place but there is scope for improvement/added value which would be welcomed by these stakeholders.

# 4 Measurement of Highways England's engagement performance

This chapter includes stakeholder feedback on how Highways England's engagement compares to other organisations with its engagement. It also reviews existing engagement performance metrics and suggests a potential performance framework.

## 4.1 Engagement performance review

### 4.1.1 Licence and operational performance overview

The study scope has included a review of existing and potential performance metrics that could be considered by ORR for monitoring Highways England's engagement performance. As well as a literature review of published information relating to stakeholder engagement (see [Annex C](#)), stakeholders, including ORR, have been consulted on their experience and views of measuring engagement performance and potential metrics.

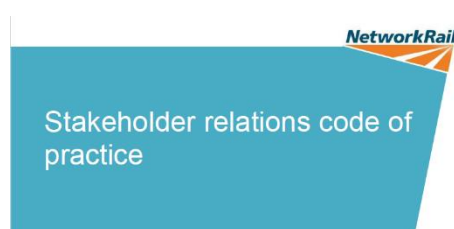
Evidence from a review of Highways England's engagement operations shows that the strategic stakeholder team carries out a regular stakeholder survey that includes a number of questions relating to engagement experience and performance. The results of this survey are used to provide internal insight to Highways England's teams and are not published externally. Until recently the survey was carried out quarterly but this was seen by stakeholders as too frequent and is currently under review. The results and insight from this survey could provide ORR with stakeholder views of Highways England's engagement performance.

### 4.1.2 Engagement forums

Highways England operates a number of forums with key stakeholder and customer groups which could provide insight to ORR on engagement performance. These include the SPAP, SDSG, Strategic Design Panel and Freight group. Highways England also attends the quarterly STB forum along with Network Rail. The outputs from these could offer ORR the opportunity to qualitatively assess some aspects of Highways England's engagement performance.

ORR has a Road Expert Panel with LA representation as well as a Consumer Panel and Freight Panel (this is currently mainly rail focused). These engage with some of the target groups in this study and could provide further insight into Highways England's engagement.

### 4.1.3 Comparison of Highways England's engagement



Study research into comparator organisations has not revealed a significant quantity of published information. One organisation which has been researched for its published material but not consulted with is Network Rail which has a published 'Stakeholder relations code of practice' (see [inset](#)) which sets out how it will comply with its Stakeholder Engagement duty.

Network Rail has also published its 'Stakeholder Engagement Strategies' as appendices to its 'Route Strategic Plans' for each of its routes for the CP6 control period. These include an assessment of key stakeholder interfaces under the following headings:

- 'Purpose and vision';
- 'Where are we now', including an assessment of how Network Rail is addressing stakeholder priorities and how they have used the results of self-assessment to identify improvements. These included workshops with Train Operating Companies, Freight Operating Companies, LAs and other groups;
- 'The future – where we want to be', tied back to the vision;
- 'The future – how will we get there', including governance, actions and roles and responsibilities; and
- 'Stakeholder engagement framework'.

In 2019 ORR published its 'Network Rail CP6 Stakeholder Engagement Consultation' conclusions which set out how it will hold Network Rail to account and review/assess its engagement performance. This will be through a series of ongoing monitoring of Network Rail's published information and liaison meetings and supplemented with in-depth annual assessments. The annual assessments are intended:

“to provide a reputational incentive for Network Rail's routes and central functions to maintain and improve the quality of their engagement, as well as highlighting and promoting the adoption of good practice across Network Rail.”

In order to identify opportunities for improving Highways England's engagement, stakeholders were asked for their views on how it compares with similar infrastructure organisations. Most stakeholders provided a direct comparison with Network Rail. A summary of the feedback is presented in [Table 4.1](#) with specific feedback shown in [Annex C](#) at the end of the report. Highways England (HE) and Network Rail (NR).

**Table 4.1 – Comparison of Highways England with other infrastructure organisations**

| Theme                          | Positive comparison  | Neutral comparison   | Negative comparison   |
|--------------------------------|--|--|---|
| <b>Engagement organisation</b> | HE Exec/Director level is well regarded and provides constructive advice and challenge; HE Account Manager well regarded and provides conduit to wider business; NR local/regional Officer can be more elusive than HE | NR local/regional Officer provides day to day liaison  | HE middle management/officer level is less effective and this is often where engagement challenges can reside; NR contact provides more collaboration with wider business |
| <b>Organisational culture</b>  | HE's approach feels like you are being listened to   | HE and NR are of similar size and complexity and hence have challenges with a consistent culture at technical levels | Sometimes unclear how HE engages internally between teams/functions; HE significantly worse than other infrastructure organisations                                       |

| Theme                            | Positive comparison  | Neutral comparison                        | Negative comparison  |
|----------------------------------|--|---|--|
| <b>Organisational processes</b>  | NR's GRIP process is more complex; NR has more complex procedures; HE's process is a bit more flexible   | Both HE and NR have process challenges    | Statutory undertakers have better local engagement processes   |
| <b>Engagement proactiveness</b>  | HE is not as difficult to deal with as NR; HE is generally good at engaging at the local level   |   | NR see 'win-win' from joint studies/funding with stakeholders; NR more engaged/engaging proactive and responsive and acts as a partner; HE seen as more remote/distant and not easy to do business with; HE's decline in proactiveness over last 2 years as NR has become more proactive |
| <b>Contact and Communication</b> | HE's engagement and communication is appropriate; pleased with HE's major project engagement with local politicians; HE's scheme messaging more consistent | HE engagement comes down to personalities | NR have more Director and central function meetings; NR has regular contact and communication  |
| <b>Stakeholder understanding</b> |  | NR promote network over place             | NR has better understanding of STB structure and governance; NR and SGN have developed better local engagement strategies; NR more engaged in transport strategy; HE engagement is transactional on SRN; NR sees benefits from regional model  |
| <b>Information provision</b>     | HE scheme level information is better  | HE could share more information           | NR is more transparent with information  |

#### 4.1.4 RIS2 performance principles

In DfT's March 2020 'Road Investment Strategy 2: 2020–2025', the performance specification includes DfT's expectations and a set of guiding principles (**Box 4.1**) which Highways England is expected to take on board when updating its Operational Metrics Manual (OMM), later in 2020. The performance specification includes key performance indicators (KPIs), performance indicators (PIs) and commitments.

#### Box 4.1 – RIS2 performance specification guiding principles

| Principle   | Definition  |
|---|---|
| <b>Realistic, yet challenging</b>                     | Targets are challenging but achievable, and are based on evidence (see next point).   |
| <b>Evidence based</b>                                 | There is evidence that we're focusing on the right things and that both government and customers value what we are prioritising. There is evidence to determine the value of the outcomes being measured.   |
| <b>Control and influence</b>                          | Outcomes and associated measures can be influenced by Highways England. Highways England are unlikely to have complete influence over all outcomes and measures, but this should not preclude their inclusion in the performance specification. Measures incentivise the right behaviours by Highways England.  |
| <b>Measurable</b>                                     | The outcome can be measured either directly or indirectly by the indicator. Measures follow good practice: they are SMART, <sup>22</sup> meaningful and directly relevant to the outcome area they need to measure. The data source is reliable and robust and has been analytically assured.   |
| <b>Forward looking (future-proof)</b>                 | Outcomes and measures should largely stand the test of time and be relevant throughout a RIS period. A clear plan should be in place to replace measures which could be improved, or to be removed where there is evidence that there is little value in them continuing in the specification.  |
| <b>Aligns with what customers and government want</b> | Customers recognise the outcomes as their priorities: they are written in a way that can be understood by them and which they have confidence in. Priorities will differ between user groups. For example, drivers prioritise journey time; vulnerable users, safety; and logistics, businesses reliability. Outcomes align with the Government's vision for the network and wider objectives, for example reducing carbon dioxide emissions and achieving value for money. |
| <b>Accessibility</b>                                  | It is important that stakeholders are able to understand and engage with the metrics that are published. This can include the process used to reach them.   |

Although there are wider aims stated by DfT for Highways England's engagement with stakeholders on economic growth and environmental issues, there is only one reference in RIS2 to working with LAs; this relates to agreement on unplanned diversion routes.

During the development of the performance specification, the discussions on how to measure engagement concluded that this area was too qualitative to form part of the stated RIS2 metrics. However, the specification does not have to cover all licence requirements and there could be an opportunity for Highways England to work with ORR and agree some engagement commitments. These could include sharing internally reported engagement measures with ORR, in a similar way to its shared maintenance & renewals performance information.

One of the sources of information used by DfT in the RIS2 document is Transport Focus' 'Logistics and Coach Manager Survey'<sup>1</sup>. Insight from surveys such as this could also provide ORR with a view of its engagement with key stakeholder groups.

Our conclusion is that the current licence does not measure qualitative engagement performance, however this is something that stakeholders and ORR would value. Extracts from the results of this study to support this include:

- Highways England is complying with the specific and defined engagement elements of its licence duties. However the licence requirements relating to stakeholder engagement are not particularly onerous;

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.transportfocus.org.uk/research-publications/publications/logistics-coach-manager-survey-englands-strategic-roads/>



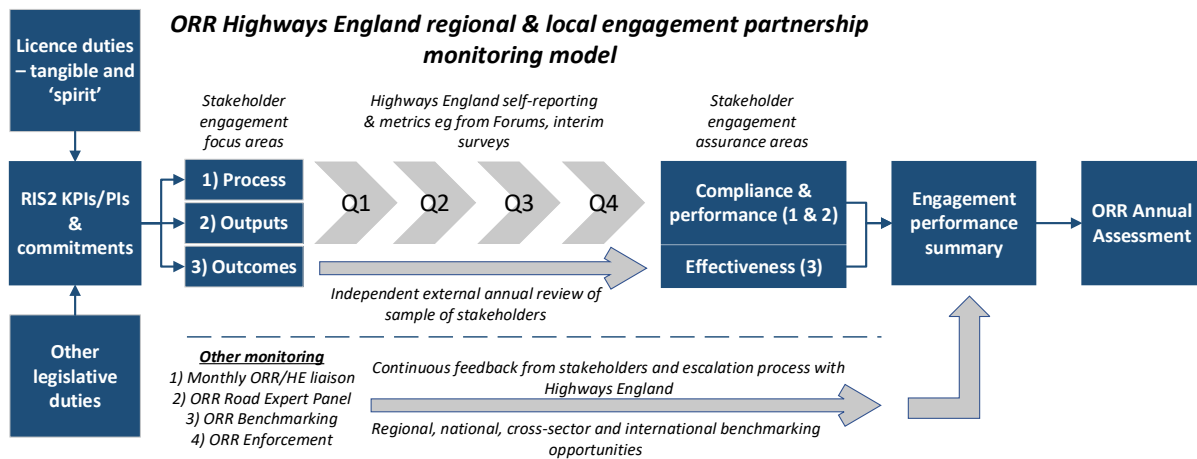
- Although Highways England sees ongoing and improved stakeholder engagement and the analysis of engagement data as vital to its business, there are currently no specific metrics to assess this service; and
- What is less clear is the degree to which Highways England has cooperated within its engagement duties and the expectations of stakeholders with what is a reasonable level of support in order for them to discharge their statutory and non-statutory duties.

In summary, it is our view that this study has not identified a significant body of evidence and so is unable to define specific measures for monitoring stakeholder engagement, however there are some relevant qualitative performance areas which could be used by ORR with support from Highways England to provide a performance framework. This is outlined in the following section.

## 4.2 Proposed engagement performance framework

Given the above evidence, a basket of quantitative and qualitative measures that monitor a combination of engagement process, outputs and outcomes is likely to provide value to ORR. Combined measures will also provide the confidence that Highways England is complying with the specific and defined areas of its licence as well as meeting the ‘spirit’ of the qualitative requirements such as cooperate openly and transparently, positively, responsively and collaboratively.

The basket of measures could include a report on appropriate metrics (tick-box style), sharing of Highways England’s exiting stakeholder survey and sharing/publishing of meta-analysis. **Figure 4.1** shows a possible performance framework.



**Figure 4.1 – Outline engagement performance framework for highways monitoring**

The suggested performance framework measures three engagement areas - process, outputs and outcomes - through three assurance areas:

- **Compliance & performance** – this could be through what Highways England does currently to monitor its statutory and discretionary activities, such as its stakeholder surveys and review of forum feedback, but doesn’t currently share with ORR or publish externally; and

- **Effectiveness** - of engagement could be through a Highways England led assessment of its stakeholder survey or ORR led, for example sampling stakeholder views through studies such as this which validate a wider set of views, or a combination both approaches.

This study also notes that in order for a performance framework to be effective it needs to be proportionate and add value to both ORR and Highways England, as well as having an element of independence and scrutiny. Therefore, instead of creating a further layer of research and assessment, it may be more appropriate to use current stakeholder engagement assessment information as long as it has a sufficient level of validation. This approach is similar to Highways England's publication of its Post Operational Performance Evaluation (POPE) reports for schemes and the periodic external reporting of meta-analysis and performance insight.

# 5 Key findings and recommendations

This chapter sets out the key findings, study recommendations and observations against eight cross-cutting themes. It also describes the recommendation prioritisation process.

## 5.1 Key findings

**Highways England's engagement journey** - From the proactive and positive contributions that Highways England has made in supporting and providing information for this review it is evident that it has invested significant effort and resource in both its licence, statutory and discretionary stakeholder engagement activities during the course of RIS1. It is also evident that, as it continues to mature as an organisation, Highways England is planning to learn from and build upon the experience of RIS1 to develop and improve its approach to working with key transport infrastructure stakeholders through RIS2 and beyond.

**Licence compliance** - The evidence reviewed in this study shows that Highways England has complied with the tangible requirements of its RIS1 licence duties relating to stakeholder engagement and has published a Stakeholder Engagement Plan (2016 Communications Strategy), Route Corridor and Strategic studies and an SRN Initial Report (SRNIR). It has also set up a Strategic Planning Advisory Panel (SPAP) and has a published Transparency Policy.

**Engagement performance** - Although the study evidence shows that Highways England is complying with the specific and defined engagement elements of its licence duties there are currently no specific metrics to assess the performance of more general stakeholder engagement in the licence – these are described as duties in qualitative terms such as 'to cooperate openly and transparently, positively, responsively and collaboratively'.

**Developing as an engagement partner** - Appropriate, consistent and proactive engagement with stakeholders is increasingly important to Highways England, not only to comply with its licence duties but to be able to play an active and responsible role as a partner within the changing landscape of regional and local planning and operational transport priorities. Highways England recognises that effective engagement, and strong relationships, with its regional and local stakeholders are key to the smooth and effective delivery of its own priorities and programmes.

**Stakeholder engagement expectations** - Due in part to Highways England's licence requirements and in part to the way Highways England organises how it engages with stakeholders, its current relationships and engagement within the national, regional and local landscape don't consistently meet stakeholder expectations. Additionally, engagement performance in these areas is not formally measured. This situation is likely to get more complex, and hence pose a greater challenge with increased devolution. For Highways England this requires a review of its engagement strategy, plans, processes and resources. For DfT and ORR this may require a further review of compliance against the licence requirements for how Highways England engages with stakeholders and how it measures and monitors engagement performance.

### 5.1.1 Opportunities for improvement

The evidence from this study shows that Highways England is complying with the prescribed elements of its engagement duties but that there can be inconsistency and lack of understanding of its duties to support regional and local stakeholders, and an imbalance between needs, expectations and engagement with these organisations. This provides an opportunity for Highways England as it

commences RIS2 and develops its plans for RIS3 to establish clearer and more consistent engagement strategies, plans and processes towards becoming a leading partnering organisation.

Study evidence also shows that the broader, less specific and softer licence duties such as collaboration and cooperation are difficult to monitor as there is no performance framework for these important engagement areas. This is something that ORR and DfT should review as part of Highways England's RIS2 and RIS3 plans.

Highways England can learn from other infrastructure organisations who are on a similar journey and this study provides a framework and outline approach for how Highways England can develop its approach.

A number of the evidence statements and report conclusions require DfT support and are for DfT to address. These include defining the scope of some stakeholder's roles and responsibilities (such as STBs) which will influence the degree and prioritisation of Highways England's engagement. Once there is more clarity on these, Highways England will be able to develop its engagement approach including prioritising value and avoiding duplication in order to create efficiencies.

This study concludes that Highways England is broadly complying with its licence but there is an opportunity to address the areas of engagement that require a tailored approach across its business. Several recommendations and observations have been made which provide the opportunity for Highways England to close this gap and fulfil the implied engagement duties of its licence.

### 5.1.2 Engagement landscape

The evidence from this study shows that the landscape within which Highways England engages with local and regional partners is complex and is changing. The recommendations arising from this study have been designed to be both realistic and sustainable and to provide further input to Highways England in planning the continued development of its approach to stakeholder engagement.

**National engagement** - there is an expectation of mature engagement between Highways England and a range of stakeholders including DfT, ORR, devolved administrations, national agencies such as Environment Agency and associations such as ADEPT, in order to consult, cooperate, collaborate and communicate national and regional policy and strategy to support economic growth, improve connectivity and benefit all transport users.

**Regional and local engagement** - there is an expectation from sub-national transport bodies (STBs), local authorities (LAs) and Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) that Highways England will 'go the extra mile' and partner with them to jointly tackle transport issues including congestion, mobility and decarbonisation to achieve Net Zero 2050. Where Highways England delivers schemes on the Strategic Road Network (SRN) there is also an expectation that it will engage collaboratively to manage local impacts and provide information openly and transparently as part of the statutory/non-statutory and elected/unelected public sector accountability framework.

**Local resilience engagement** - The third key level of engagement expectation based on evidence from this study is the role and responsibility that Highways England contributes to highway operations including its role in LRFs.

### 5.1.3 Licence compliance and constraints

This study shows that Highways England is complying with the specific and defined engagement elements of its licence duties such as the Stakeholder Panel and Engagement Plan. The licence requirements relating to more general stakeholder engagement are not particularly onerous.

What has emerged from this study is a variance between the degree to which Highways England has cooperated within its engagement duties and the expectations of stakeholders with what is a reasonable level of support and coordination in order for them to discharge their statutory and non-statutory duties. As stated above, in part this is due to the way the licence is written but there is also evidence from this study that provides an opportunity for Highways England to improve its level and consistency of engagement with all stakeholder groups.

**Going the extra mile** - It is also evident from this study that the form of engagement that strategic stakeholders such as STBs and LAs would really value from Highways England, such as collaborative partnerships and cooperation towards mutual customer benefits, are not mandated within the licence however are implied in the foreword to the licence which states

“The licence emphasises that the role of Highways England is about more than just complying with the letter of the law. We expect the company to go the extra mile in the way it engages with road users and collaborates with other organisations to develop shared solutions. And they must take a lead in promoting and improving the role and performance of roads in respect of broader communal responsibilities, such as the aesthetics of design, safety and the environment, as well as driving forward wider progress on technology and innovation”

The above would imply for example that Highways England should take account of regional transport integration between the SRN and Major Road Network (MRN) and rail networks, and with the wider objectives of regional growth and the climate emergency. However, in this statement is also implied an element of proportionality, and there are practical limits on how Highways England can act and which in turn influence where it can add value to broader communal issues.

**Highways England's wider goals** - Key Highways England documents such as the Strategic Economic Growth Plan (SEGP) 'Road to Growth' and 'Connecting the Country', both published in 2017, do recognise the importance of wider goals such as growth and development and indicate that Highways England will support these. Although stakeholders including STBs and LAs are aware of these intentions they cannot point to specific commitments or smart objectives and the evidence from this study suggests that Highways England is not always 'going the extra mile' to deliver these.

#### 5.1.4 Enhancing engagement value

This study has shown that Highways England is clearly on a journey of improvement and continues to put in significant levels of national and regional effort to assess the needs of network users - its customers - and to provide operational information on its schemes such as roadworks. What is less clear and a risk is how Highways England is perceived as an engagement partner and what value its engagement provides to stakeholders: if it continues on its current journey, ie without more coordination of its engagement strategy, plans and processes and a clear line of sight 'top down' and 'bottom up'.

At the commencement of RIS2 Highways England has the scope and opportunity to continue to develop its engagement approach on its journey to becoming a leading partnering organisation who not only collaboratively formulates its SRN policies, strategies and investment decisions with regional and local bodies, but also supports off-network highways communities through mitigating impacts on the MRN and Local Road Network (LRN).

Recognising Highways England's business priorities in terms of complying with its licence and delivering the RIS, and its level of resourcing geared to those objectives, achieving a higher valued

engagement is likely to require increased effort and input from its national and regional teams. This poses questions for Highways England, DfT and ORR:

- Who Highways England should engage with in the future and why?
- What level and range of engagement is required by Highways England to face the current and future national, regional and local planning and operational landscape?
- How can engagement value be measured, now and in the future?
- What are the costs and benefits of improving the value of Highways England’s engagement?
- If aspects of improved engagement are of particular value, should these be mandated?
- Should Highways England be further resourced to address this?

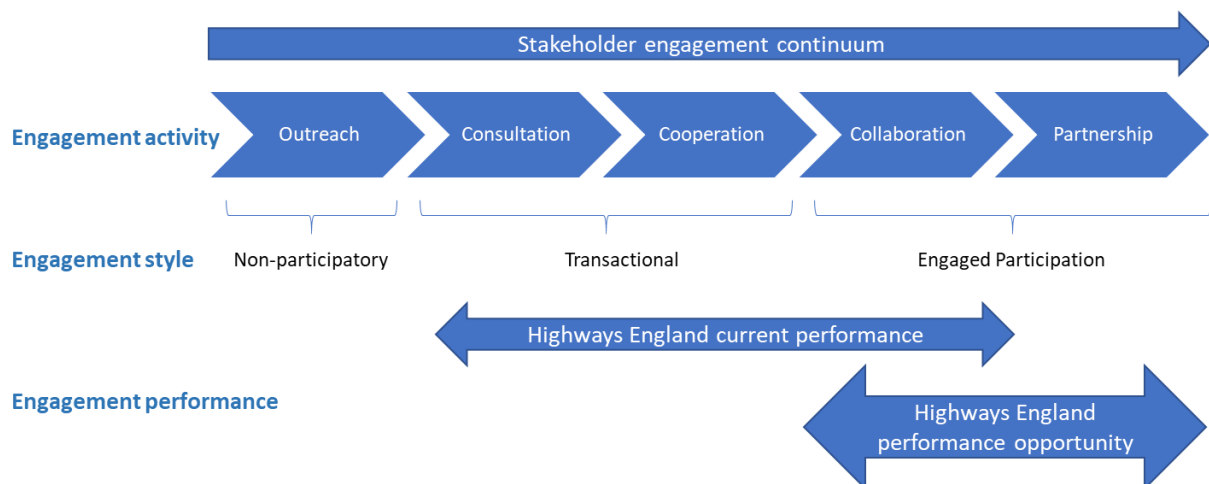
## 5.2 Opportunities for improving engagement

Based on the evidence we have collected from our interviews, survey and literature review we have identified several recurring themes which form the basis for our observations and recommendations.

It is clear that Highways England has invested and continues to invest a significant amount of effort in customer and stakeholder engagement. It also values its role and reputation as a customer delivery partner with a remit to contribute to the wider highways sector.

Highways England not only complies with the tangible elements of its licence but displays all of the qualitative engagement requirements which come under the spirit of the licence most of the time but sometimes inconsistently. It is also seen by stakeholders as sometimes inconsistent and less proactive than some of its comparators.

In order for Highways England to enhance its engagement with local and regional stakeholders and for them to become partners as referred to in the licence as ‘going the extra mile’ does require a shift in its engagement approach. **Figure 5.1** shows the engagement continuum journey for Highways England to becoming a partnering organisation and is based on the evidence from this study. This is not intended to be critical but reflective of where this study sees Highways England’s engagement at the moment and where it could be with small enhancements.



**Figure 5.1 – Potential for Highways England to mature its partnership approach**



The themes that have been taken forward from the study results where opportunities for improvement are suggested include:

- identification of key stakeholders and engagement forums;
- development and implementation of a stakeholder engagement strategy;
- review of internal structure and resources to deliver and support effective stakeholder engagement;
- contributing to a joined up national transport strategy and planning;
- partnering and local intelligence;
- guidance on how to engage with stakeholders; and
- operational improvements.

### 5.3 Prioritisation of recommendations

The study recommendations have been prioritised according to the timescale which would result in the maximum impact and value. Several observations have also been identified for consideration. The following four project review categories have been used:

- **Near-term (NT) recommendations**, to be implemented within 12 months;
- **Medium-term (MT) recommendations**, to be implemented within 1 to 2 years;
- **Watching brief (WB) recommendations**, no timescale specified; and
- **Observations to consider**, no timescale specified.

The near and medium-term recommendations are set out in section 5.4. First the recommendations are set out then **Tables 5.1 to 5.4** show the collated recommendations and observations across all themes in priority order along with any cross-cutting themes and associated stakeholder groups/partner organisations.

### 5.4 Themed recommendations

#### 5.4.1 Theme 1 - Identification of Highways England key stakeholders and engagement forums

##### 5.4.1.1 Recommendations

**[1a] NT** - Highways England should review and identify those organisations it views as key stakeholders. This will provide clarity and visibility to those stakeholders, and others, and will be of value to ORR in monitoring the efficacy of Highways England's engagement. It should also be of benefit to Highways England in structuring, coordinating and delivering effective stakeholder engagement.

**[1b] NT** - Highways England should provide central and regional lists of internal contacts (roles rather than individuals) representing its principal functions and activities to key stakeholders. In particular for major schemes, local authority (LA) stakeholders would like a single point of contact nominated as the Highways England representative.

##### 5.4.1.2 Observations

**[1c]** Highways England could review the ToR and representation for the SPAP to ensure this reflects all Highways England interfaces and has more two-way agenda items.

## 5.4.2 Theme 2 - Development and implementation of a Highways England stakeholder engagement strategy

### 5.4.2.1 Recommendations

**[2a] MT** - Highways England should develop an overarching strategy to provide a visible and consistent framework for engaging with key stakeholder groups.

**[2b] MT** - Building on the engagement approach already adopted for sub-national transport bodies (STBs), the framework should encompass standardised engagement processes with, where appropriate, specific protocols for each of the identified key stakeholder groups, eg: STBs, LAs, local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) and local resilience forums (LRFs).

**[2c] WB** - In developing the engagement strategy Highways England should review, in consultation with DfT as appropriate, its policies on information transparency and provision of its scheme business cases, programmes and plans to key stakeholder groups (STBs and LAs in particular).

### 5.4.2.2 Observations

**[2d]** Highways England noted in the 2017 SEGP that the plan would be refreshed in the first half of RIS2 to inform early planning for RIS3. In revising the SEGP Highways England could consider revisiting the SEGP in recognition of the emerging stakeholder landscape, eg the change in relative influence of LEPs and STBs with regard to regional transport strategy and initiatives. It could also consider introducing more SMART objectives and commitments with regard to stakeholder engagement.

## 5.4.3 Theme 3 - Review of internal Highways England structure and resources to deliver and support effective stakeholder engagement

### 5.4.3.1 Recommendations

**[3a] MT** - Building upon the scheme engagement communications approach adopted by its Major Projects (MP) directorate, Highways England should consider development/deployment of a cross-directorate customer relationship management (CRM) platform to hold stakeholder data and use this to plan, record and share engagement information.

**[3b] WB** - Given that the stakeholder landscape is already complex and likely to become more so with increased devolution, eg to mayoral authorities, Highways England should review its internal engagement structures and resource levels to ensure effective stakeholder engagement throughout RIS2 and looking ahead to RIS3 and beyond.

### 5.4.3.2 Observations

**[3c]** - Highways England should consider continuing to develop and roll out stakeholder engagement training to teams, including third party suppliers, in line with the processes and structures of its overarching stakeholder engagement strategy. This should include briefing on the roles and responsibilities of individual stakeholders within the key stakeholder groups.

**[3d]** - In addition, Highways England could also consider reviewing the Customer Delivery toolkit and feedback with LAs to improve the understanding and advice on local consultation and communication.

## 5.4.4 Theme 4 – Contribution of Highways England to joined up national transport strategy and planning

#### 5.4.4.1 Recommendations

**[4a] MT** - Recognising that the development of a framework for the roles of national, regional and local stakeholders in delivering regional transport strategy, in the context of overarching national strategy, must ultimately be led and endorsed by DfT, Highways England should continue to contribute to work with STBs and LAs to establish appropriate protocols for engagement. Greater clarity of these stakeholders' roles and functions by DfT/Government would be of significant benefit for Highways England in developing its own engagement approach and may yield efficiencies where lines of communication can be streamlined and/or duplication of effort removed.

**[4b] NT** - Highways England, with DfT, should review the Road Investment Strategy (RIS) process and consultation timescales for RIS3 & RIS4 planning and delivery with more emphasis on collaboration and transparency with LAs and STBs.

**[4c] WB** - Highways England should coordinate its RIS2 Route Strategies with emerging STB regional strategies and develop a common evidence base and transport model.

### 5.4.5 Theme 5 – Highways England partnering and local intelligence

#### 5.4.5.1 Recommendations

**[5a] NT** - In its engagement with regional and local stakeholders, as stated in the 'Strategic Economic Growth Plan' (SEGP), Highways England should seek to develop – and retain and disseminate internally – sound intelligence of the regional network and communities and recognition of the impact of development and operation of the Strategic Road Network (SRN) on those networks and communities. This should include recognition of the obligations and priorities of local stakeholders, for example in areas such as decarbonisation and air quality.

**[5b] MT** - Highways England should work with LAs to better understand the impact of SRN road closures and traffic diversions onto the local road network and through communities. It should consider taking more responsibility for diverted traffic and jointly coordinating and developing local community stakeholder engagement and communications plans, including community mitigation. This could mitigate the impact on local networks and communities of disruption, congestion, environmental impact and asset deterioration.

**[5d] WB** - Highways England should develop stronger links with the LGA and use their access to LA elected members and officers in order to identify innovative opportunities to co-produce schemes.

**[5e] WB** - Highways England should review its strategy with LEPs to take account of their role within STBs, their continued partnership with local businesses and the transition of LEP funding from LGFs to the Shared Prosperity Fund.

#### 5.4.5.2 Observations

**[5c]** - Highways England could consider, in conjunction with DfT and LAs, reviewing the arrangements for charging and counter charging for provision of services in the development of schemes on the SRN or impacting the SRN with a view to establishing a more efficient use of public funding.

**[5f]** - Highways England could consider working with Network Rail to assess their regional engagement approach, including their published stakeholder engagement strategies and planned activities, to determine whether there are any aspects that Highways England could adopt or adapt to improve its own engagement with stakeholders.

### 5.4.6 Theme 6 - Guidance on how Highways England engages with stakeholders

#### 5.4.6.1 Recommendations

**[6b] NT** - Highways England should review its Offer of Engagement to STBs based on the latest understanding of their emerging roles and responsibilities.

**[6c] NT** - Highways England should continue to monitor stakeholder awareness and take up of Designated Funds under the revised structure and processes for RIS2, including the communication and transparency of the Designated Funds' process and how interested stakeholders can contribute on the deployment of those funds.

#### 5.4.6.2 Observations

**[6a]** - Highways England should recognise that the scale and structure of its own organisation is often not apparent or accessible to external stakeholders seeking to engage positively and constructively with Highways England. It should, therefore, consider developing guidance for those stakeholders on how to engage with Highways England (in similar fashion to the guidance on working with Highways England with regard to planning). This should, for example, set out how Highways England will work with stakeholders such as STBs to implement its RIS2 objectives for supporting economic growth, connectivity and the environment.

**[6d]** - Highways England could consider developing more formal engagement protocols with devolved administrations to develop air quality management and mitigation solutions and collaborating and sharing research.

### 5.4.7 Theme 7 – Highways England operational improvements

#### 5.4.7.1 Recommendations

**[7b] WB** - Highways England should review its network management and works communications procedures, in particular those that require traffic diversions off the SRN and onto the local network, to ensure that it identifies and communicates all planned and emergency works that could impact the local network to stakeholders.

**[7c] MT** - Highways England should continue to review how it differentiates and handles priority calls received from LRFs/emergency services into the Regional Operations Centre (ROC) from general calls before these are automatically transferred to the Customer Call Centre in order to act expeditiously in crisis situations.

#### 5.4.7.2 Observations

**[7a]** - Highways England could consider reviewing and where necessary legally formalising jurisdictional boundaries between Highways England and LAs, where these don't exist, in order to provide clarity on the geographical extent of highway operations such as winter gritting, litter picking and grass cutting.

### 5.4.8 Theme 8 – Monitoring of stakeholder engagement

#### 5.4.8.1 Recommendations

**[8a] NT** - ORR and Highways England should establish a proportionate approach for sharing analysis of existing quantitative and qualitative stakeholder engagement data that would allow ORR to be satisfied that Highways England's licence compliance statement is supported by sound evidence.

| Ref. | Theme  | Sub Ref. | Scope   | Cross-theme | Priority              |                 |                |             |     | Partner group |      |     |      |      |        |   |
|------|--|----------|---|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------|-----|---------------|------|-----|------|------|--------|---|
|      |  |          |   |             | Near term 0-12 months | Medium term 1-2 | Watching brief | To consider | DfT | ORR           | STBs | LAs | LEPs | LRFs | Others |   |
| 1    | Identification of key stakeholders and engagement forums   | a        | Highways England should review and identify those organisations it views as key stakeholders. This will provide clarity and visibility to those stakeholders, and others, and will be of value to ORR in monitoring the efficacy of Highways England's engagement. It should also be of benefit to Highways England in structuring, coordinating and delivering effective stakeholder engagement.   |             | ✓                     |                 |                |             |     |               |      | ✓   | ✓    | ✓    | ✓      | ✓ |
|      |  | b        | Highways England should provide central and regional lists of internal contacts (roles rather than individuals) representing its principal functions and activities to key stakeholders. In particular for major schemes, LA stakeholders would like a single point of contact nominated as the Highways England representative.  | 5           | ✓                     |                 |                |             |     |               |      | ✓   | ✓    | ✓    | ✓      | ✓ |
| 2    | Development and implementation of a stakeholder engagement strategy                                | a        | Highways England should develop an overarching strategy to provide a visible and consistent framework for engaging with key stakeholder groups.   |             |                       | ✓               |                |             |     |               |      |     |      |      |        |   |
|      |  | b        | Building on the engagement approach already adopted for sub-national transport bodies (STBs), the framework should encompass standardised engagement processes with, where appropriate, specific protocols for each of the identified key stakeholder groups, eg: STBs, local authorities (LAs), local enterprise partnerships (LEPs) and local resilience forums (LRFs).   |             |                       | ✓               |                |             |     |               |      | ✓   | ✓    | ✓    | ✓      |   |
| 3    | Review of internal structure and resources to deliver and support effective stakeholder engagement | a        | Building upon the scheme engagement communications approach adopted by its Major Projects (MP) directorate, Highways England should consider development/deployment of a cross-directorate customer relationship management (CRM) platform to hold stakeholder data and use this to plan, record and share engagement information.  |             |                       | ✓               |                |             |     |               |      |     |      |      |        |   |
| 4    | Contributing to joined up national transport strategy and planning                                 | a        | Recognising that the development of a framework for the roles of national, regional and local stakeholders in delivering regional transport strategy, in the context of overarching national strategy, must ultimately be led and endorsed by DfT, Highways England should continue to contribute to work with STBs and LAs to establish appropriate protocols for engagement. Greater clarity of these stakeholders’ roles and functions by DfT/Government would be of significant benefit for Highways England in developing its own engagement approach and may yield efficiencies where lines of communication can be streamlined and/or duplication of effort removed. |             |                       | ✓               |                |             |     | ✓             | ✓    | ✓   | ✓    |      |        |   |
|      |  | b        | Highways England, with DfT, should review the Road Investment Strategy (RIS) process and consultation timescales for RIS3 & RIS4 planning and delivery with more emphasis on collaboration and transparency with LAs and STBs.  |             | ✓                     |                 |                |             |     | ✓             | ✓    | ✓   | ✓    |      |        |   |

Table 5.1 – Themes 1 to 4: Near and Medium-term priority recommendations

| Ref. | Theme                                       | Sub Ref. | Scope   | Cross-theme | Priority              |                 |                |             |     | Partner group |      |     |      |      |        |   |
|------|---|----------|---|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------|-----|---------------|------|-----|------|------|--------|---|
|      |   |          |   |             | Near term 0-12 months | Medium term 1-2 | Watching brief | To consider | DfT | ORR           | STBs | LAs | LEPs | LRFs | Others |   |
| 5    | Partnering and local intelligence           | a        | In its engagement with regional and local stakeholders, as stated in the ‘Strategic Economic Growth Plan’ (SEGP), Highways England should seek to develop – and retain and disseminate internally – sound intelligence of the regional network and communities and recognition of the impact of development and operation of the Strategic Road Network (SRN) on those networks and communities. This should include recognition of the obligations and priorities of local stakeholders, for example in areas such as decarbonisation and air quality. |             | ✓                     |                 |                |             |     |               |      | ✓   | ✓    | ✓    |        |   |
|      |   | b        | Highways England should work with LAs to better understand the impact of SRN road closures and traffic diversions onto the local road network and through communities. It should consider taking more responsibility for diverted traffic and jointly coordinating and developing local community stakeholder engagement and communications plans, including community mitigation. This could mitigate the impact on local networks and communities; disruption, congestion, environmental impact and asset deterioration.                              |             |                       | ✓               |                |             |     |               |      |     |      | ✓    |        |   |
| 6    | Guidance on how to engage with stakeholders | b        | Highways England should review its Offer of Engagement to STBs based on the latest understanding of their emerging roles and responsibilities.  | 2           |                       | ✓               |                |             |     |               |      | ✓   |      |      |        |   |
|      |   | c        | Highways England should continue to monitor stakeholder awareness and take up of Designated Funds under the revised structure and processes for RIS2, including the communication and transparency of the Designated Funds’ process and how interested stakeholders can contribute on the deployment of those funds.  |             |                       | ✓               |                |             |     |               |      | ✓   | ✓    | ✓    |        |   |
| 7    | Operational improvements                    | c        | Highways England should continue to review how it differentiates and handles priority calls received from LRFs / emergency services into the Regional Operations Centre (ROC) from general calls before these are automatically transferred to the Customer Call Centre in order to act expeditiously in crisis situations.   |             |                       | ✓               |                |             |     |               |      |     |      |      |        | ✓ |
| 8    | Monitoring of stakeholder engagement        | a        | ORR and Highways England should establish a proportionate approach for sharing analysis of existing quantitative and qualitative stakeholder engagement data that would allow ORR to be satisfied that Highways England’s licence compliance statement is supported by sound evidence.  |             | ✓                     |                 |                |             |     |               | ✓    |     |      |      |        |   |

Table 5.2 – Themes 5 to 8: Near and Medium-term priority recommendations



| Ref. | Theme  | Sub Ref. | Scope   | Cross-theme | Priority                 |                          |                   |             |     | Partner group |      |     |      |      |        |
|------|--|----------|---|-------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|-------------|-----|---------------|------|-----|------|------|--------|
|      |  |          |   |             | Near term<br>0-12 months | Medium term<br>1-2 years | Watching<br>brief | To consider | DfT | ORR           | STBs | LAs | LEPs | LRFs | Others |
| 1    | Identification of key stakeholders and engagement forums   | c        | Highways England could review the ToR and representation for the SPAP to ensure this reflects all Highways England interfaces and has more two-way agenda items.  |             |                          |                          |                   | ✓           |     |               | ✓    |     |      |      | ✓      |
| 2    | Development and implementation of a stakeholder engagement strategy                                | c        | In developing the engagement strategy Highways England should review, in consultation with DfT as appropriate, its policies on information transparency and provision of its scheme business cases, programmes and plans to key stakeholder groups (STBs and LAs in particular).  |             |                          |                          | ✓                 |             | ✓   | ✓             | ✓    | ✓   |      |      |        |
|      |  | d        | Highways England noted in the 2017 SEGP that the plan would be refreshed in the first half of RIS2 to inform early planning for RIS3. In revising the SEGP Highways England could consider revisiting the SEGP in recognition of the emerging stakeholder landscape, eg the change in relative influence of LEPs and STBs with regard to regional transport strategy and initiatives. It could also consider introducing more SMART objectives and commitments with regard to stakeholder engagement. |             |                          |                          |                   | ✓           |     |               | ✓    | ✓   | ✓    |      |        |
| 3    | Review of internal structure and resources to deliver and support effective stakeholder engagement | b        | Given that the stakeholder landscape is already complex and likely to become more so with increased devolution, eg to mayoral authorities, Highways England should review its internal engagement structures and resource levels to ensure effective stakeholder engagement throughout RIS2 and looking ahead to RIS3 and beyond.   |             |                          |                          | ✓                 |             |     |               |      |     |      |      |        |
|      |  | c        | Highways England should consider continuing to develop and roll out stakeholder engagement training to teams, including third party suppliers, in line with the processes and structures of its overarching stakeholder engagement strategy. This should include briefing on the roles and responsibilities of individual stakeholders within the key stakeholder groups.   | 2           |                          |                          |                   | ✓           |     |               |      |     |      |      |        |
|      |  | d        | In addition, Highways England could also consider reviewing the Customer Delivery toolkit and feedback with LAs to improve the understanding and advice on local consultation and communication.  |             |                          |                          |                   | ✓           |     |               |      | ✓   |      |      |        |
| 4    | Contributing to joined up national transport strategy and planning                                 | c        | Highways England should coordinate its RIS2 Route Strategies with emerging STB regional strategies and develop a common evidence base and transport model.  | 5           |                          |                          | ✓                 |             |     |               | ✓    |     |      |      |        |

Table 5.3 – Themes 1 to 4: Watching Brief and Consideration recommendations

| Ref. | Theme                                       | Sub Ref. | Scope   | Cross-theme | Priority              |                 |                |             |     | Partner group |      |     |      |      |        |   |
|------|---|----------|---|-------------|-----------------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------|-----|---------------|------|-----|------|------|--------|---|
|      |   |          |   |             | Near term 0-12 months | Medium term 1-2 | Watching brief | To consider | DfT | ORR           | STBs | LAs | LEPs | LRFs | Others |   |
| 5    | Partnering and local intelligence           | c        | Highways England could consider, in conjunction with DfT and LAs, reviewing the arrangements for charging and counter charging for provision of services in the development of schemes on the SRN or impacting the SRN with a view to establishing a more efficient use of public funding.  |             |                       |                 |                | ✓           | ✓   | ✓             |      | ✓   |      |      |        |   |
|      |   | d        | Highways England should develop stronger links with the LGA and use their access to LA elected members and officers in order to identify innovative opportunities to co-produce schemes.  |             |                       | ✓               |                |             |     |               |      | ✓   |      |      | ✓      |   |
|      |   | e        | Highways England should review its strategy with LEPs to take account of their role within STBs, their continued partnership with local businesses and the transition of LEP funding from LGFs to the Shared Prosperity Fund.   | 2           |                       | ✓               |                |             |     |               |      |     |      | ✓    |        |   |
|      |   | f        | Highways England could consider working with Network Rail to assess their regional engagement approach, including their published stakeholder engagement strategies and planned activities, to determine whether there are any aspects that Highways England could adopt or adapt to improve its own engagement with stakeholders.  | 2           |                       |                 |                | ✓           |     |               |      |     |      |      |        | ✓ |
| 6    | Guidance on how to engage with stakeholders | a        | Highways England should recognise that the scale and structure of its own organisation is often not apparent or accessible to external stakeholders seeking to engage positively and constructively with Highways England. It should, therefore, consider developing guidance for those stakeholders on how to engage with Highways England (in similar fashion to the guidance on working with Highways England with regard to planning). This should, for example, set out how Highways England will work with stakeholders such as STBs to implement its RIS2 objectives for supporting economic growth, connectivity and the environment. |             |                       |                 |                | ✓           |     |               | ✓    | ✓   | ✓    |      | ✓      |   |
|      |   | d        | Highways England could consider developing more formal engagement protocols with devolved administrations to develop air quality management and mitigation solutions and collaborating and sharing research.  |             |                       |                 |                | ✓           |     |               |      |     |      |      |        | ✓ |
| 7    | Operational improvements                    | a        | Highways England could consider reviewing and where necessary legally formalising jurisdictional boundaries between Highways England and LAs, where these don't exist, in order to provide clarity on the geographical extent of highway operations such as winter gritting, litter picking and grass cutting.  | 5           |                       |                 |                | ✓           |     |               |      |     | ✓    |      |        |   |
|      |   | b        | Highways England should review its network management and works communications procedures, in particular those that require traffic diversions off the SRN and onto the local network, to ensure that it identifies and communicates all planned and emergency works that could impact the local network to stakeholders.   |             |                       |                 | ✓              |             |     |               |      | ✓   | ✓    | ✓    |        |   |

Table 5.4 – Themes 5 to 8: Watching Brief and Consideration recommendations

## Annex A – Glossary of Terms

| Acronym | Description  |
|---------|--|
| ABP     | Association of British Ports   |
| ADEPT   | Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning & Transport |
| AQMA    | Air Quality Management Area  |
| BEIS    | UK Gov Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy         |
| BPA     | British Ports Association  |
| CEDR    | Conference of European Directors of Roads                              |
| COVID   | Coronavirus – 19   |
| CP6     | Network Rail Control Period 6 (2019 to 2024)                           |
| CRM     | Customer Relationship Management                                       |
| DCLG    | Department for Communities and Local Government (now MCHLG)            |
| DCO     | Development Consent Order  |
| DfT     | Department for Transport   |
| DMRB    | Design Manual for Roads and Bridges                                    |
| EAM     | Elliott Asset Management   |
| EEH     | England's Economic Heartland (STB)                                     |
| EPO     | Emergency Planning Officer   |
| FOI     | Freedom of Information   |
| HE      | Highways England   |
| GHF     | Growth & Housing Fund (HE fund up to March 2021)                       |
| IMRT    | HE Incident Management Requirements Team                               |
| JESIP   | Joint Emergency Services Interoperability Principles                   |
| LA      | Local Authority  |
| LEP     | Local Enterprise Partnership   |
| LEZ     | Low Emission Zone  |
| LGA     | Local Government Association   |
| LGF     | Local Growth Fund (LEP deals Round 1,2&3)                              |
| LPA     | Local Planning Authority   |
| LRF     | Local Resilience Forum   |
| LRN     | Local Road Network   |
| MC      | Midlands Connect   |
| MP      | Major Projects directorate   |
| MCHLG   | UK Gov Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government             |
| MOU     | Memorandum of Understanding  |
| MP      | HE Major Projects directorate  |
| MRN     | Major Road Network   |
| NR      | Network Rail   |
| OD      | HE Operations directorate  |
| ORR     | Office of Rail and Road (Highways Monitor)                             |
| PACTS   | UK Gov Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety             |
| PCF     | Project Control Framework  |
| RIS     | Road Investment Strategy   |
| S&P     | HE Strategy & Planning Directorate                                     |
| SDSG    | HE Sustainable Development Steering Group                              |
| SEGP    | HE Strategic Economic Growth Plan (Road to Growth 2017)                |
| SES     | HE Safety, Engineering and Standards directorate                       |

| Acronym | Description  |
|---------|--|
| SMART   | Specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound    |
| SPAP    | HE Strategic Planning Advisory Panel                         |
| SRN     | Strategic Road Network                                       |
| SRNIR   | SRN Initial Report (published 2017)                          |
| STB     | Sub-National Transport Body                                  |
| SWTRA   | South Wales Trunk Road Agency                                |
| TF      | Transport Focus  |
| TfL     | Transport for London   |
| TfN     | Transport for the North (STB)                                |
| TfSE    | Transport for the South East (STB)                           |
| ToR     | Terms of Reference   |
| TOS     | HE Traffic Officer Service                                   |
| TPB     | HE Technical Projects Board                                  |
| TRSGD   | Traffic Signs Regulations and General Directions (2016-2018) |
| WGA     | UK Gov Whole of Government Accounts                          |

## Annex B – Stakeholder Survey Results

The following is a summary view of the study stakeholder survey results for local authorities (LAs). All LA names and contract/project details have been anonymised.

Views on Highways England's (HEs) stakeholder engagement were mixed:

- *“Very good and informative”*
- *“Feels more as though they just pass on information or update on what they are doing rather than engaging to obtain views and input to develop strategy/programmes in partnership”*
- *“None existent at a local level”*

Q: ‘Does Highways England engage with you professionally and take account of the information/research you present to them?’

- Yes: 4No.
- No: 5No.

Q: ‘Is your contact with Highways England through?’

- A single contact/key account manager: 2No.
- A team: 3No.
- No regular or identified point of contact 4No.

Views on the effectiveness of communication with Highways England were mixed:

- ‘Not at all’ 2No.
- ‘Neutral’ 2No.
- ‘Somewhat’ 2No.
- ‘Very’ 3No.

Specific comments on the effectiveness of communication

- *“Regular meetings were conducted and always followed up by email exchanges, the meetings took place in different Local Highway Authorities Offices”*
- *“As a general rule, communication with HE is difficult and with varied quality. HE contacts do not always check that they have contacted the right team and we have to keep reminding them to share with all our contacts but this continues to be an issue”*

Suggested improvements included:

- earlier engagement;
- better understanding/recognition of the impact of works/schemes on the local network (disruption, congestion and road condition);
- provision of a more structured interface with local authorities;
- established contacts in appropriate teams on both sides;

- consistency of information from Highways England & its delivery partners; and
- a more collaborative approach.

Specific comments on suggested improvements:

- *“Lack of understanding of the local road network and the impact on residents. Not taking responsibility for diverted traffic once its off the motorway/trunk road network for schemes”*
- *“A more structured approach, key contacts at the different levels. A desire to want to work with rather than impose”*

None of the LAs surveyed had been invited to participate in Highways England's quarterly stakeholder engagement survey.

Q: 'How effectively do Highways England regions work with you to identify areas of joint or collaborative working?'

- 'Not at all' 2No.
- 'Neutral' 2No.
- 'Somewhat' 3No.
- 'Very' 1No.

LAs provided responses to their engagement with Highways England across strategic planning, programme development, scheme development and planning, operational planning and coordination and incident response. In terms of how Highways England ensures it is engaging with the appropriate contacts within authorities, responses were varied:

*“specific members of staff lead on 'briefs', major roads being one...there are established links between key individuals within HE and our teams...regular meetings and contact between specific officers at Highways England...we have a specific MOU with HE to develop how we work together and build relationships...regular forum meetings...they leave it all to their appointed designers/consultants we rarely have any contact from HE directly...direct contact between HE and our lead Operational Officer, Traffic Manager and streetworks teams...it doesn't”*

In terms of what types of engagement LAs have with Highways England there is a wide range including alliance groups, road safety partnerships, HAUC attendance, weekly road works emails, scheme specific emails/circulars/meetings/workshops, project boards, network manager group meetings, road closure liaison, corridor groups, twitter network updates.

LAs gave their views on the format of Highways England regional stakeholder engagement. Again, the responses were varied:

*“feels more as though they just pass on information or update on what they are doing rather than engaging to obtain views and input to develop strategy/programmes in partnership...positive engagement on information and advice - but little local funding scope to help contribute to more local schemes off SRN, but would have a positive impact on the SRN...they have the best intentions...in the North West urban centres stakeholder engagement is*



*very good, this is less so in the wider North West area where HE do not attend regular catch up events...very good and informative...none existent at a local level"*

We asked LAs how effective they thought Highways England engagement is. There was a range of answers:

*"it took a while for the communication around the project to become effective which was following a lot of pushing from us as the Highway Authority rather than the HE...communication/agreement over the impact of road closures on the xx in particular has often proved difficult - there are limited alternative routes for HGVs when sections of this road are closed...It is good to understand what is happening in the region and we know at xx we can make contact and receive information on developments on the network on a regular basis...Regular meetings were conducted and always followed up by email exchanges, the meetings took place in different Local Highway Authorities Offices...As a general rule, communication with HE is difficult and with varied quality...HE contact do not always check that they have contacted the right team and we have to keep reminding them to share with all xx contacts but this continues to be an issue...In a year we may end up with 1-5 communications regarding very big schemes - one recent scheme in xx particularly damaged public transport operations and was a regional headline news story in the xx"*

LAs listed several improvements that could be made to make the engagement/communication with Highways England better. These included:

*"a more structured approach, key contacts at the different levels...a desire to want to work with rather than impose...HE could be more pro-active - experience to date says they are very good at providing information locally when at forums/meetings etc but could be a bit more pro-active in between times...greater recognition of the impact of xx closures on the local road network (in terms of road condition before and after diversions take effect)...ensure Highways has the generic e mail address of all divisions to send out cart blanche e mails...it is very good...we know who to contact and are reassured that action will be taken when we ask...I think they have done very well in terms of communicating with us and keeping us involved...earlier engagement with the correct team where changes to LA network are required...we often get conflicting information about the same scheme from all parties...we often have to advise a HE project team that there are other HE works on their proposed diversion routes...lack of understanding of the local road network and the impact on residents...not taking responsibility for diverted traffic once its off the motorway/trunk road network for schemes...key decisions constantly change on schemes and this increases the amount of work we need to carry out to constantly review available road space for diversions...not all available information is always shared and we often need this...HE project teams are so large and there seems to be an expectation that our projects teams are also large - this places a huge demand on often a very few staff...let us know when works will affect adjacent roads...advise us regarding lane closures"*

We also asked LAs for their views on how Highways England's engagement approach compares to other transport and non-transport infrastructure organisations. Responses varied and included:

*"no direct comparison...I think it could improve a lot, and using the xx as an example, it has improved on this specific project...More could be done to establish effective longer term working and working in partnership rather than just being "told"...from my limited experience of dealing with the rail industry, HE are more engaged...its different insofar as HE roads tend not to have residential frontages - so those involved from the HE do not appreciate the challenges faced by local highway authorities in dealing with the public at anything other than a strategic level...I was fortunate to work very closely with Highways dept in a previous council and feedback from national was filtered through successfully...it is a relationship that we ensure works well. We have similar engagement relationships with other organisations and these also work well...they have done very well in comparison with other organisations...dedicated customer team needs improving - we often have to lead HE to carry out correct key stakeholder engagement. We often have to double check that they have done what they should...HE works very differently from us and project managers are not local and change with each scheme. We have to keep updating information for each scheme...there used to be a customer care group which seems to have disappeared...the quality of engagement is very much dependent on who you get in HE...district authorities have planned meetings and updates on schemes. This does not occur when dealing with Highways England as we rarely find out about schemes"*

We also asked LAs for any other comments on Highways England's approach to engagement with local and regional partners. There were a few responses including:

*"engagement on local HE projects (including ability to fund small research projects) is positive, but feels like there is a gap in the direct engagement for larger programmes...for RIS2, felt like we had to focus on influencing national politicians rather than HE...although it can be gleaned from the above answers that my contact with the HE is limited, I would suggest that HE is more engaged with local highway authorities than the former Highways Agency used to be"*

## Annex C – Engagement comparison feedback

The following feedback on how Highways England (HE) compares in its engagement to other similar organisations was collected from a combination of interviews and surveys and is presented by stakeholder group.

- **Local Authority (LA)** – HE engagement is a mixed picture, which comes down to personalities within customer teams rather than established processes. Organisations such as NR and SGN have developed better local engagement strategies. HE is sometimes seen as a military style operation which can be daunting to LA teams.
- **LA** - HE is seen to be on a par with NR, and not as difficult to deal with. NR has a more complex set of procedures; HE is a bit more flexible. Statutory undertakers have better local engagement processes with LAs, probably as LAs need to endorse their plans.
- **LA** – some LAs have seen a decline in the proactiveness of HE over the last two years compared for example to NR. In part this is because NR has recently become more proactive with its engagement processes and communications. HE generally has good engagement at the local level, but it often isn't clear what relationship LAs have with HE's strategic planning functions. It is also sometimes unclear how/whether the teams/functions within HE engage with each other.
- **LA** – some LAs have been very pleased with HE's major project teams and their engagement with local politicians; these build good relationships for scheme communication by LAs to its customers and local media based on HE information such as planned events/closures.
- **LA** – NR has a local/regional Officer to provide day to day liaison and with NR projects but in many ways can be more elusive than HE and harder to understand. HE's messaging has been more consistent in particular with major schemes.
- **Local Government Association (LGA)** – LGA sees HE's engagement favourably over NR's complex organisational and procedural issues and over-engineering of solutions. NR is also seen to promote network over place. Engagement in NR's CP6 proposals was seen as more difficult than with RIS2.
- **Mature Sub-National Transport Body (STB)** – mature STBs continue to experience a varied level of engagement service from HE compared with similar organisations such as Network Rail. Engagement at the executive and director tiers is well regarded and provides constructive advice and challenge. The HE Account Managers are well regarded as they provide a conduit to the wider HE business. Engagement at the middle management or officer level within HE is seen as less effective and is often where the above challenges reside.

- **Maturing STB** – STBs have regular meetings with NR regional Directors and central functions and would like equivalent HE engagement. NR tend to see the opportunity to engage with STBs and develop their relationship as a 'win-win' through joint studies which NR funds. The HE single point of contact doesn't provide the same level of collaboration as NR. STBs do recognise the similar size, complexity and hence challenges that both HE and NR have with engagement culture at technical levels and the variability between strategy and operational engagement.
- **Maturing STB** – unlike NR which STBs see as more engaged with their transport strategy and recognising the opportunities that STBs can bring to support their projects, HE engages transactionally and focussed only on the SRN. Additionally, HE doesn't get the benefits that a regionalised model could bring whereas NR does. On a day to day basis, NR is more proactive with responding to STBs and sharing their information. Specifically, STBs cite making their transport mapping open and transparent to stakeholders, whereas HE doesn't provide their route study maps. This risks non-alignment of STB study areas with HE's corridors.
- **Evolving STB** – NR is seen as more engaging than HE and they take the time to understand the STB structure and governance. Examples include during the RIS2 process, as soon as HE had made their recommendations then it would have been good for the STBs to have seen these in order to progress what wasn't going to be in RIS2. This is how NR worked with STBs for CP6.
- **Evolving STB** – for evolving STBs where established relationships are between HE and local authorities, NR is seen as a more proactive and involved partner than HE who is seen as more remote.
- **Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP)** – LEPs point to differences between HE's engagement which is seen as distant and not easy to do business with and NR who acts like a partner and who has regular contact and communication with LEPs.
- **LEP** - both HE and NR have their challenges and in terms of project processes NR's GRIP process is more complex. Both organisations have process stages and deadlines that do not necessarily align with LEP/LA process timescales.
- **LEP** – LEPs gave a range of survey responses to how HE compares: *"HE's approach feels like you are being listened to...at a LEP level it is significantly worse than other infrastructure organisations we deal with... At certain scheme levels it is better and the receipt of email bulletins on specific schemes is reasonable...I think due to the nature of the projects and the organisations involved the engagement and communication is appropriate as it is"*.
- **Local Resilience Forum (LRF)** - In comparison with other organisations; HE is assessed as similar or good with no negative comparison: *"HE Appreciate the difficulty in working on the strategic road network and the issues associated within the uncertainty ahead"*.

# Annex D – Literature review

The following documents were reviewed as part of the study. Key points have been made where relevant. Note that document references refer to the full document list which is not published.

| Doc Ref.  | Title   | Key Points   |
|---|---|--|
| <b>1 Highways England 2017 The Road to Growth SEGP</b>  |   |  |
| <p><b>Metric related to planning:</b> HE is a statutory consultee in the spatial planning system:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>consulted on more than 3,500 strategic housing land availability assessments, employment land availability assessments, Local Plans and planning applications annually</li> <li>In 2015-16 HE responded to 99.9% of planning applications within 21 days and recommended indefinite non-approval to just 3 planning applications.</li> </ul> <p><i>"we have established a cross-modal partnership with Network Rail, the High Speed 2 Growth Partnership and the Department for Transport. We have also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with HS2 Ltd, and are working with them to deliver alterations to the SRN to allow the HS2 rail line to cross over or under the road along the length of the Phase 1 route."</i></p> <p><b>This document contains numerous non-SMART general statements of intent</b></p> <p><b>Stated next steps align with the proposed recommendations in this study:</b></p> <p><i>Working with our partners to establish and refine identified EOAs will provide us with:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A solid understanding of how different subnational, regional and local economies operate within the national context, and which economic sectors are more likely to be responsive to activity and investment in and around the SRN.</li> <li>Greater knowledge of whether productivity or employment growth is a key priority for local economies.</li> <li>An approach that enables us to respond to wider economic policy objectives; for example, the extent to which the methodology might shape investment decisions that rebalance focus away from highly congested parts of the network to locations where capacity exists.</li> <li>A platform for an agreed, seamless and integrated pathway to economic growth jointly committed to by us and our partners in the transport and local authority sectors.</li> </ul> |   |  |
| 2   | Highways England 2017 SEGP Underpinning report Analysis of stakeholder discussion | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extensive LEP consultation undertaken</li> <li>Consultation influenced development of SEGP</li> <li>Environmental impact of SRN outside scope but recognised</li> </ul> |
| 3   | Highways England 2017 SEGP LEP Sessions Report                                    |  |
| <b>4 DfT Road Investment Strategy 2 2020-2025</b>   |   |  |
| <p>Recognition of importance of STBs and recognition of need for SRN to integrate with other roads &amp; other modes.</p> <p>Performance specification: <b>Outcome 5: Meeting the needs of all road users</b></p> <p><b>Measuring success</b></p> <p><i>A supporting set of PIs will capture performance in relation to:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Timeliness of information provided to road users through electronic signage</li> <li>Ride quality</li> <li>Working with local highways authorities</li> </ul>   |   |  |

| Doc Ref.   | Title   | Key Points  |
|--|---|---|
| <p><i>Highways England already has a duty within its Licence to cooperate with local highways authorities, and highway authorities in Scotland and Wales to facilitate the movement of traffic and manage its impacts, and to respond to and manage planned and unplanned disruption to the network. Transport Focus's research has highlighted better integration with other roads as a road user priority not covered explicitly in other metrics. The RIS2 performance specification reinforces the existing Licence duty and Highways England will report on its <u>work with local highways authorities to review diversion routes for unplanned events.</u></i></p> <p>Designated funds; most likely now the "Users &amp; communities" fund, £169m in RIS2. Says HE will <u>continue</u> to consult with stakeholders on use of DFs.</p> |   |   |
| 11   | 2013 Cabinet Office Good Practice for Cat1&2Responders                | Framework on sharing of information and coordination. From HE perspective this principally relates to LRF role.   |
| 13   | ORR 2019 Annual Assessment of Highways England's Performance          | <p><b>Responding to formal planning applications:</b> In 2018-19, Highways England responded to 99.9% of planning applications within 21 days. This is above the company's internal target of 99%.</p> <p><b>Designated funds:</b> Only the air quality fund (13%) is showing a lower level of spend than the GHF (38%)</p> |
| 14   | ORR 2018 Highways England and Incident Management Study               |   |
| 15   | DfT 2018 Shaping the Future of England's Strategic Roads Consultation | <p>Responses to consultation on HE's SRN Interim report, which looks ahead to RP2, highlight:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need to engage with local bodies in developing RIS</li> <li>• Interest in designated funds, desire for more clarity</li> </ul>   |
| <p><b>16 Highways England 2019 Annual Report</b></p> <p>Statement/recognition of 'wider' objectives of HE. This refers to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the Customer Service Strategy, Customer Service Plan (ie in addition to the strategy) and communications plan</li> <li>• <i>community satisfaction survey</i></li> <li>• Stakeholder survey undertaken on a quarterly basis, alternating between a full survey and a sample pulse survey.</li> <li>• Stakeholder mapping tool</li> <li>• Designated Funds Advisory Group</li> <li>• A new collaborative forum on mobility and disability</li> </ul>  |   |   |
| 17   | Highways England 2019 Annual Strategic Report                         |   |
| 25   | ORR 2019 Highways England's Provision of Information to Road Users    | <i>"There are some regular relationships between Highways England and LHAs such as Quarterly Liaison Meetings and stakeholders suggested that the North East region provides an exemplar for such relationships"</i>  |
| 26   | Highways England 2015 Planning for the Future                         | The document refers to HE's wider goals of promoting growth, and suggests HE will collaborate in planning and delivering its works – no SMART objectives? Also specifically identifies LEPS. Updated to reflect role of STBs  |



| Doc Ref. | Title   | Key Points  |
|----------|---|---|
| 27       | Highways England Sustainable Development Steering Group             | Sustainable Development Steering Group (SDSG)   |
| 28       | SPAP Terms of reference FINAL                                       | Strategic Planning Advisory Panel   |
| 29       | Final_SPAP_Minutes 20.11.19.  | Relevant re coordination of planning & strategy – DfT should have overarching strategic transport plan  |
| 30       | Highways England 2017 SRNIR Overview                                | Refers to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SEGP consultation &amp; Stakeholder conference &amp; regional events</li> <li>• Working with STBs &amp; advisory bodies</li> </ul>  |
| 31       | Highways England 2017 SRNIR Main report                             | Defines customers: <i>“by ‘customers’ we mean all those who use or are affected by our roads, including motorists, pedestrians, cyclists, horse riders, neighbouring communities, businesses, and the various stakeholder groups that represent them.”</i><br><br>Refers to the Strategic Design Panel and Customer Panel |
| 32       | Highways England 2017 Connecting the Country                        |   |
| 33       | ORR 2018 Highways England's DF Scheme Delivery Study                | Refers to the Designated Funds Stakeholder Advisory Group   |
| 34       | Highways England 2018 Engagement Offer to STBs - FINAL              |   |
| 35       | Highways England 2020 TfN Engagement Chart                          |   |
| 36       | Highways England 2016 Customer Service Strategy                     | This is a high-level strategy paper aimed at end-users of the SRN – ‘customers’.  |
| 37       | Highways England 2016 Response to TF Incidents & Roadworks Research |   |
| 48       | Highways England. Connecting our customers 2019-20                  | This document is focused on ‘customers’ as users of the network,<br><br>It refers to the Customer Service Strategy and the review of diversion routes & associated customer service standards   |
| 49       | HE organograms  | Includes ‘Strategic Partnerships & Stakeholders’  |
| 52       | Highways England Good Road Design Jan18                             | Refers to the Strategic Design Panel and its work   |
| 53       | Highways England 2019 Strategic Design Panel progress report_3      | Strategic Design Panel 3 <sup>rd</sup> report   |

| Doc Ref. | Title   | Key Points   |
|----------|---|--|
| 54       | Transport Focus Logistics-and-Coach-Manager-Survey-England's-SRN          | Sector satisfaction survey that may become a reported metric. Potential application of approach to stakeholder engagement?   |
| 55       | Network Rail Stakeholder Relations Code of Practice                       | NR has a licence duty re stakeholder engagement. It has published a CoP to state its principles & minimum requirements to deliver this. HE could consider something similar? |
| 56       | ORR 2019 Network Rail CP6 Stakeholder Engagement Consultation conclusions | ORR's approach and framework for assessing NR's engagement including qualitative and quantitative. Some elements may be of interest for HE                                   |
| 57       | Extract from Network Rail Anglia Route CP6 Delivery Plan                  | NR Anglia region – extracts re engagement including a Stakeholder Engagement Framework and action planning.  |