

## **Appendix 4-A Decision Letters Relating to Hastings Bypasses and Bexhill-Hastings Link Road**

Letter from Government Office for the South East (GOSE) on behalf of Secretary of State for Environment, Transport and Regions on the A259 Bexhill and Hastings Western Bypass and A259 Hastings Eastern Bypass, 1998.

Letter from Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and Regions on Access to Hastings Multi-Modal Study, 2001

Secretary of State's response to South Coast Multi-Modal Study, 2003

Local Transport Capital Settlement 2005-06, Decision on Bexhill-Hastings Link Road, GOSE, 2004





GOVERNMENT OFFICE  
FOR THE SOUTH EAST

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24 July 1998

Dear Sir/Madam,

**THE HIGHWAYS ACT 1980**  
**ACQUISITION OF LAND ACT 1981**

**A259 PEVENSEY TO BEXHILL IMPROVEMENT**  
**A259 BEXHILL AND HASTINGS WESTERN BYPASS**  
**A259 HASTINGS EASTERN BYPASS**

1. I am directed by the Secretary of State for the Environment, Transport and the Regions ("the Secretary of State") to refer to the concurrent public Inquiries ("the Inquiries") held at St Leonards-on-Sea, East Sussex between 31 October 1995 and 18 July 1996 before Mr A S Jeapes CB, OBE, MC, an independent Inspector nominated by the Lord Chancellor and appointed by the Secretary of State to hear objections to and representations about the published draft orders and certificate application listed in Annex A to this letter. The Inspector was assisted by Dr C P McDonald BSc, DipTP, PhD, MRTPI.
2. The orders relating to the Pevensey to Bexhill Improvement scheme numbered 1 to 3 in Annex A would, if made, enable the Secretary of State to construct a dual-carriageway approximately 4 kilometres long (2.5 miles), between the Haven Roundabout and the Lamb Inn, by the addition of a new carriageway to the north of the existing A259. These orders would also authorise the Secretary of State to construct new slip roads connecting the A259 to the B2095 and Old Marsh Road near the Lamb Inn and related alterations to existing public highways, footpaths and private means of access. The Compulsory Purchase Order ("CPO") would authorise the acquisition of all the land and rights necessary for the construction of these works.
3. The orders relating to the Bexhill and Hastings Western Bypass ("the Western Bypass") numbered 4 to 10 in Annex A would, if made, enable the Secretary of State to construct a new dual-carriageway trunk road approximately 14.7 kilometres long (9.1 miles), between the proposed end of the Pevensey to Bexhill Improvement scheme near the Lamb Inn and a new junction at the Hastings Borough boundary north of the A21 and A2100 at Baldslow. These orders would also authorise the inclusion within this route of the existing B2092 Queensway and the provision of accompanying slip roads to connect to local roads and for these to become trunk roads; the detrunking of part of the existing A259 that would be superseded by this new bypass; the provision of a link from the new bypass to the A21 trunk road; and to make related alterations to existing public highways, footpaths and private means of access. The CPO would authorise the acquisition of all the land and rights necessary for the construction of these works.



## GOVERNMENT OFFICE FOR THE SOUTH EAST

4. The orders relating to the Hastings Eastern Bypass ("the Eastern Bypass") numbered 11 to 14 in Annex A would, if made, enable the Secretary of State to construct a new section of trunk road approximately 6.2 kilometres long (3.9 miles), from a point in Baldslow, where the proposed Western Bypass terminates, to a point on the existing A259 south of Butcher's Lane, Guestling Thorn. These orders would also authorise the Secretary of State to construct a new junction at the eastern end of the bypass connecting it to the existing A259 together with accompanying slip roads to local roads; the provision of related alterations to existing highways, footpaths and private means of access; and the detrunking of the superseded section of the A259 from Bachelor's Bump to south of Butcher's Lane. The CPO would authorise the acquisition of all the land and rights necessary for the construction of these works.
5. The Exchange Land Certificate referred to in Annex A would enable land to be given in exchange for public open space included in the Western Bypass CPO at St Mary's Recreation Ground, St Mary's Lane, North Bexhill; Combe Haven dismantled railway, north of Worsham Lane, Bexhill; Marline Valley; and Baldslow, St Leonards-on-Sea.
6. During the Inquiries an additional Side Roads Order No 2 and a supplementary CPO for the Western Bypass were published in February 1996 and June 1996 respectively. These were not published in time to be considered by the Inquiries.

### **THE INSPECTOR'S REPORT**

7. The Inspector has considered all the objections to, and representations about, the draft orders and certificate application made in writing and orally at the Inquiries and has submitted his report to the Secretary of State. A copy of the Inspector's conclusions and recommendations accompanies this letter. All references to the report in this letter are indicated by the abbreviation "IR" followed by the paragraph number in the report.
8. The Inspector summarises the case for the Highways Agency at IR 1.1.1 to 1.33.2 and their closing statement at IR 10.1.0 to 10.1.21. The case for the supporters of the proposals is summarised at IR 2.1.1 to 2.3.5. The cases made by the objectors are summarised at IR 3.1.1 to 8.23.21, including the Highways Agency's responses, and the representations are summarised at IR 9.1.0 to 9.18.9. The Inspector's conclusions are at IR 11.1.0 to 11.78.19 and his recommendations at IR 12.1.1 to 12.1.7.
9. At the opening of the Inquiries there were over 1100 objections outstanding; 26 of which were subsequently withdrawn during the Inquiries. 68 objectors made appearances or were represented. Thirty-four representations not amounting to objections were received and 9 appearances were made. 155 individuals and organisations submitted letters in support of the schemes and 15 supporters made appearances. There were 16 alternative proposals to routes or parts of routes and 3 alternative junctions were proposed before and during the Inquiries. Ten modifications were proposed to the published Side Roads orders, some of which were incorporated into amended orders.

### **OBJECTIONS TO PROPOSALS**

10. Among the objectors to the published schemes were: The Council for the Protection of Rural England; the Friends of the Earth; Transport 2000, and a number of other national and local environmental groups and amenity societies. The Countryside Commission objected specifically to the Eastern Bypass and the eastern end of the Western Bypass. Although East Sussex County Council and Hastings Borough Council both fully supported the published schemes they did also object to several specific issues as summarised at IR 3.17.1 and IR 7.31.1 respectively. Others who objected on specific points included: Guestling Parish Council, Icklesham Parish Council, Udimore Parish Council, Rye Town Council and J Sainsbury PLC (IR 7.43.1). Four hundred local objectors produced standard form letters of objection to the three schemes.



## GOVERNMENT OFFICE FOR THE SOUTH EAST

11. The principal grounds of those who objected to the schemes fell broadly into four categories: the need for the schemes (including traffic forecast and cost benefit); environmental issues, including effects on Sites of Special Scientific Interest ("SSSI") and the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty ("AONB"); the junction locations and the effect these would have on local roads; and the impact on individual properties.

### **SUPPORT FOR PROPOSALS**

12. The Inspector has reported 155 individuals and organisations that submitted letters in support of the schemes. This included support from the Sussex Chamber of Commerce Training and Enterprise, Bexhill Chamber of Commerce and Tourism, The British Road Federation, The Hastings and St Leonards Chamber of Commerce and several local businesses including Boots Properties, Redland Brick and Furness Controls Ltd. The schemes also received support from East Sussex County Council, Rother District Council and Hastings Borough Council. There was also a petition handed-in at the Inquiries signed by 172 residents of the Bexhill Road and surrounding area confirming their full support of the Western bypass scheme.

### **MODIFICATIONS TO THE ORDERS**

13. Since publication of the draft orders and during the Inquiries, the Highways Agency were able to satisfy some of the concerns of those affected by suggesting changes to the published orders. This in addition to new information brought to the attention of the Highways Agency resulted in a number of modifications and amendments to the draft orders. These modifications are listed in inquiry document H168 at Annex F of the Inspector's report.

### **THE INSPECTOR'S CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

14. A summary of the Inspector's conclusions is contained at IR 11.77.1 to 11.77.3 with an overall summary at IR 11.78.1 to 11.78.19. He was satisfied that the published schemes were supported at national, regional, county and district levels and took full account of Structure and Local Plans policies. He concluded that the Western bypass was at the heart of the three schemes and was essential to the relief of the A259's traffic problems. He was satisfied, for the reasons given in his report, that it should proceed. He therefore recommended that the orders for the Western Bypass be made subject to the modifications proposed to orders 7 and 10 referred to at Annex A to this letter.

15. In respect of the Eastern bypass, the Inspector was content that its construction had been demonstrated to be in the national interest. He went on to conclude that the route of the bypass was the best that could be devised within the High Weald AONB with the exception of its eastern end where it was planned to rise above the Doleham Ditch/Sailor's Stream confluence before crossing over the Hastings-Ashford railway. To reduce the impact of this aspect of the bypass upon the AONB he recommended that a tunnel below the railway would be less intrusive and was preferred to the published option of a bridge. He went on to recommend that the orders in respect of this Eastern Bypass should not be made until a fuller investigation of the tunnel alternative had been carried out. He further concluded that if a tunnel alternative proved unacceptable on grounds of cost or through engineering difficulties then the bypass should proceed with the revised vertical alignment as shown in Annex K attached to his report.

16. In respect of the Pevensey to Bexhill Improvement scheme, the Inspector concluded that none of the objectors' alternative solutions that had been suggested were preferable to the published scheme. He went on to conclude that, on balance, as he considered the advantages gained by improving the safety of the road and reducing the personal injury accidents and fatalities outweighed the ecological effect of the scheme crossing the Pevensey Levels SSSI, the scheme should proceed. He therefore recommended that the orders for it be made subject to the proposed modifications to orders 2 and 3 referred to at Annex A to this letter.



GOVERNMENT OFFICE  
FOR THE SOUTH EAST

17. The Inspector further recommend that the exchange land certificate referred to at paragraph 5 above be issued.

**POST INQUIRY DEVELOPMENTS AND CORRESPONDENCE**

18. In June 1997, the Government announced a comprehensive Roads Review, the objective of which was to determine what role trunk roads should play in an integrated transport policy and to establish a targeted programme of improvements for the trunk road network in England. This review was conducted as a key component of the development of the Government's integrated transport policy announced in the White Paper *A New Deal for Transport: Better For Everyone* published in July 1998. The new appraisal system used for the Roads Review took a strategic view of individual schemes and judged proposals in the road programme which the Government inherited, including the three schemes which were the subject of the Inquiries, on the criteria of accessibility, safety, economy, the environment and integration.

19. Following the close of the Inquiries correspondence was received from some 280 local residents, each submitting a pre-printed letter claiming that they would be seriously affected by the proposed construction of a two level junction near Mayfield Farm on the Western Bypass. Many letters supporting the three schemes as part of the Weald and Downland Design, Build Finance and Operate ("DBFO") project were also received. The Government decided as a separate matter in July 1997 that the schemes within the DBFO project should be looked at individually as part of its Roads Review.

**THE VIEWS OF THE SECRETARY OF STATE**

20. The Secretary of State has carefully considered the Inspector's report and all the objections to, and representations about, the draft orders and certificate application. In reaching his view he has taken into account the requirements of local and national planning, including the requirements of agriculture. He has also taken account of the assessment of the three schemes made during the Roads Review referred to at paragraph 18 above.

21. The Secretary of State is satisfied that the environmental assessments undertaken for the proposed schemes meet the requirements of European Community Directive 85/337/EEC ("the Directive"). He has considered the Environmental Statements published pursuant to section 105A of the Highways Act 1980 (which implements the requirements of the Directive), and all the opinions expressed at the Inquiries and in writing in relation to these statements.

22. The Secretary of State is also satisfied that there is nothing in the correspondence received after the close of the Inquiries which causes him to alter his view on the Inspector's conclusions and recommendations. In particular he notes that the impact of the Mayfield Farm Junction was addressed during the Inquiries and that the Inspector concluded that the published scheme arrangement for the Western Bypass junctions at Mayfield Farm and Castleham represented the best balance of advantages and disadvantages presented to him (IR 11.59.7).

23. In the light of the Inspector's report and the Roads Review the Secretary of State has reached the following conclusions with respect to the three schemes which were the subject of the Inquiries.

**Pevensey to Bexhill Improvement**

24. The Secretary of State endorses the Inspector's findings at IR 11.32.1 that the Pevensey Levels SSSI and National Nature Reserve (NNR) is one of the finest wetlands in England and acknowledges that it is a candidate RAMSAR wetland site of International Importance. He also notes that the published improvement scheme would mean the loss of 7ha of the SSSI. He further notes that the Inspector was persuaded that, despite the substantial mitigation measures proposed, he considered the effects of the scheme upon the countryside and its ecology were nevertheless real (IR 11.20.1). Although the Inspector took these issues fully into account, a deciding factor in the Inspector's



GOVERNMENT OFFICE  
FOR THE SOUTH EAST

recommendation to proceed with the improvement scheme was his conclusion that the road's current dangers would increase further with forecast traffic flows. Against this background, the Secretary of State takes the view that the improvement of safety is the prime motivation for proceeding with the proposed dualling of this section of the A259 because, as the Inspector found as fact, the number of fatal accidents is about twice the average for this type of road.

25. The Secretary of State is nevertheless concerned about the damage to the SSSI which would be caused by the proposed scheme. In developing its integrated transport policy the Government has decided that there should be a strong presumption against new or expanded transport infrastructure which would adversely affect environmentally sensitive areas, including SSSIs and AONBs, unless there is an overriding public interest that dictates the development should proceed. The Secretary of State has therefore asked the Highways Agency to advise on whether the safety improvements on this section of the A259 could be achieved by smaller scale measures that would not involve taking any land from the Pevensy Levels SSSI. Therefore, subject to the result of this further work, the Secretary of State is minded not to make the orders for the Pevensy to Bexhill Improvement scheme. The Highways Agency's advice will be published in order to give interested parties an opportunity to comment before the Secretary of State makes a final decision on the orders.

**Bexhill and Hastings Western Bypass**

26. The Secretary of State acknowledges the Inspector's conclusion at IR 11.78.3 that the Bexhill and Hastings Western Bypass is at the heart of the three schemes and essential to the relief of the A259's traffic problems. He also notes the Inspector's findings that this bypass would bring increased prosperity to the area and open up access to areas designated for development. In developing its integrated transport policy the Government has accepted that as well as supporting the national economy as a whole, transport provision is important to local economies, not least because it can influence business in deciding where to invest. The Government has considered how best trunk road investment can support its regeneration and social inclusion objectives that take full account of the needs of all sectors of society, including the disadvantaged and those with impaired mobility.

27. The Secretary of State notes that among the purposes of the three schemes reported by the Inspector was the improvement of access to Bexhill and Hastings and the provision of opportunities for commercial and industrial growth to help revive the economy of the area. The Secretary of State has considered whether these purposes might be secured by the Western Bypass alone or whether they might possibly be achieved by other, more cost-effective, means. The Secretary of State acknowledges that the main practical problem of proceeding with the Western Bypass alone would be that through traffic to and from the A259 at Guestling Thorn would have to use the B2093, The Ridge, an already heavily used local road which was not designed to take large volumes of through traffic. As this road has development, including houses and a hospital on either side, there appears to be little possibility of improving it to take additional traffic. While the Secretary of State is presently minded to make the orders for the Western Bypass, he wishes his final decision to be informed by the results of a further study he proposes to ask the Highways Agency to commission on options to improve access to Hastings and solutions to regeneration/land use planning pressures in the area. Issues to be covered in this study will include other possible ways of managing the problem of the effects on the local road network of proceeding with the Western bypass as a stand alone scheme, including possible measures to manage demand for travel in Bexhill and Hastings. Before reaching a final decision the Secretary of State will publish the results of the study and invite comments from interested parties.

**Hastings Eastern Bypass**

28. The Secretary of State accepts the Inspector's findings that the Eastern Bypass is not in any way dependant on the six other A259 schemes referred to at IR 11.78.11 along the A259 corridor that were dropped from the roads programme in November 1996. However, in agreement with the Inspector, he accepts that the need for the Eastern bypass arises from the need to relieve traffic pressure on the B2093, The Ridge, which would otherwise be brought about as a consequence of construction of the Western Bypass. The Eastern Bypass would be wholly within the High Weald AONB. Therefore, in the



GOVERNMENT OFFICE  
FOR THE SOUTH EAST

light of the Government's policy of a strong presumption against new or expanded transport infrastructure which would adversely affect environmentally sensitive areas, the Secretary of State is presently minded to make the orders authorising the construction of the Eastern Bypass only if it is clearly demonstrated that it is in the public interest, that there is no practicable alternative and if he decides to make the orders for the Western Bypass. The need for the Eastern Bypass will be carefully considered within the context of the study referred to at paragraph 27 above.

29. Should the study referred to at paragraph 27 above lead to the conclusion that the Eastern Bypass should be constructed, the question of its detailed alignment would remain. The Secretary of State agrees with the Inspector's conclusion that the published route of the Eastern Bypass is, on balance, preferable to all other alternatives suggested and the best that could be devised within the High Weald AONB except for the proposed crossing of the Doleham Ditch/Sailor's Stream confluence. The Secretary of State has decided, in accordance with the Inspector's recommendation, that the Highways Agency should carry out a separate study into the feasibility and cost of placing the Eastern Bypass in a tunnel beneath the Hastings-Ashford railway line at this location in order to minimise the intrusion of the bypass into the AONB. The results of this engineering study will also be published in order to give interested parties an opportunity to comment before the Secretary of State makes a final decision on the making of the orders for the Eastern Bypass.

**NEXT STEPS**

30. In accordance with the conclusions conveyed by the preceding paragraphs of this letter the Secretary of State has decided to defer decisions on the making of the orders and issue of the certificate under section 19(1)(a) of the Acquisition of Land Act 1981 referred to in Annex A. Before reaching final decisions the Secretary of State wishes to consider:

- a) a more detailed assessment by the Highways Agency of the benefits of smaller scale safety improvements referred at paragraph 25 instead of the proposed dualling of the A259 between the Haven Roundabout and the Lamb Inn and any comments by interested parties on this alternative approach;
- b) the report of the study of options to improve access to Hastings referred to at paragraph 27 and the comments of interested parties thereon;
- c) the report of the study into the feasibility and cost of placing the Eastern Bypass in a tunnel beneath the Hastings-Ashford railway line referred to at paragraph 29 and the comments of interested parties thereon.

31. Representations on the matters referred to at paragraphs 30 a, b & c above will be invited at the same time when studies have been completed. Anyone wishing to comment on these matters in advance of the studies should do so now in writing to Tony Sherwood, Zone 3/01, Great Minster House, 76 Marsham Street, London, SW1P 4DR.

**AVAILABILITY OF INSPECTOR'S REPORT**

32. Arrangements have been made for those who may be interested in seeing a full copy of the Inspector's report for it to be placed on deposit for inspection during office hours at the addresses shown in Annex B to this letter.

33. A statutory objector or interested party may apply to the Secretary of State, within six weeks of the receipt of this letter, to inspect any document, photograph or plan appended to the Inspector's report. These documents are available for inspection at the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions, Great Minster House, 76 Marsham Street, London SW1P 4DR. Anyone wishing to inspect the documents should make arrangements to do so by either writing to Tony Sherwood whose address is given at paragraph 31 above or by telephoning 0171 890 6095 or 6065. Applicants should



GOVERNMENT OFFICE  
FOR THE SOUTH EAST

state the date and time (within normal office hours) when it is proposed to make the inspection. A least three days notice should be given if possible.

Yours faithfully

David Saunders

David Saunders



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ANNEX A

**DRAFT ORDERS AND CERTIFICATE BEFORE THE PUBLIC INQUIRIES**

**A259 PEVENSEY TO BEXHILL IMPROVEMENT**

1. THE A259 TRUNK ROAD (PEVENSEY TO BEXHILL IMPROVEMENT SLIP ROADS) ORDER 199 .
2. THE A259 TRUNK ROAD (PEVENSEY TO BEXHILL IMPROVEMENT SIDE ROADS) ORDER 199 .
3. THE A259 TRUNK ROAD (PEVENSEY TO BEXHILL IMPROVEMENT) COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER (NO SE ) 199 .

**A259 BEXHILL AND HASTINGS WESTERN BYPASS**

4. THE A259 TRUNK ROAD (BEXHILL AND HASTINGS WESTERN BYPASS) ORDER 199 .
5. THE A259 TRUNK ROAD (BEXHILL AND HASTINGS WESTERN BYPASS SLIP ROADS) ORDER 199 .
6. THE A259 TRUNK ROAD (BEXHILL AND HASTINGS WESTERN BYPASS) (DETRUNKING) ORDER 199 .
7. THE A259 TRUNK ROAD (BEXHILL AND HASTINGS WESTERN BYPASS SIDE ROADS) ORDER 199 .
8. THE A21 TRUNK ROAD (BEXHILL AND HASTINGS WESTERN BYPASS LINK) ORDER 199 .
9. THE A21 TRUNK ROAD (BEXHILL AND HASTINGS WESTERN BYPASS LINK SIDE ROADS) ORDER 199 .
10. THE A259 TRUNK ROAD (BEXHILL AND HASTINGS WESTERN BYPASS) COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER (NO SE ) 199 .

**A259 HASTINGS EASTERN BYPASS**

11. THE A259 TRUNK ROAD (HASTINGS EASTERN BYPASS AND SLIP ROADS) ORDER 199 .
12. THE A259 TRUNK ROAD (HASTINGS EASTERN BYPASS)(DETRUNKING) ORDER 199 .
13. THE A259 TRUNK ROAD (HASTINGS EASTERN BYPASS SIDE ROADS) ORDER 199 .
14. THE A259 TRUNK ROAD (HASTINGS EASTERN BYPASS) COMPULSORY PURCHASE ORDER (NO SE ) 199 .

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15. NOTICE OF INTENTION TO ISSUE A CERTIFICATE UNDER SECTION 19(1)(a) AND PARAGRAPH 6(1) TO SCHEDULE 3 OF THE ACQUISITION OF LAND ACT 1981.



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FOR THE SOUTH EAST

**ANNEX B**

**DEPOSIT POINTS FOR INSPECTION OF INSPECTOR'S REPORT**

The Director  
East Sussex County Council  
Transport & Environment  
Department  
Sackville House  
Brooks Close  
LEWES  
East Sussex BN7 1UE

Hastings Borough Council  
Hastings Information Centre  
Queens Square  
HASTINGS  
East Sussex

The Chief Executive  
Rother District Council  
Town Hall  
BEXHILL-ON-SEA  
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The Highways Agency  
Federated House  
London Road  
DORKING  
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# Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions

## *News*

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*News Release 322:*

*12 July 2001*

### **Decision on first Multi-Modal transport study announced**

#### **Government announces transport package for Hastings but rejects by-passes**

The Government today announced decisions on the first of its Multi-Modal Studies examining some of the most severe transport problems around the country. The study looked at transport issues in Kent and the area around Hastings in South East England.

Stephen Byers, Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, said:

"The studies will drive major investment decisions over the period covered by our 10 Year Plan for Transport. This new approach to decision making is an important step forward. We will consider the contribution all types of transport can make to solving problems, not just roads."

"Each study is addressing very different problems so the strategies and decisions which emerge will be unique. The impact on the environment must be a key consideration and in each case we will have to weigh up the benefits of a particular road, or rail link and balance it against the environmental impact. The conclusion will vary in each case. So, no individual decision will set a precedent for others to follow."

"Ministers need not accept all recommendations from Regional Planning Bodies. There may be instances where strategies or individual projects raise issues of national importance. Where this is the case my priority will be to ensure that final decisions reflect, and are properly co-ordinated with, our wider national policy objectives."

The Hastings Multi-Modal Study looked at the regeneration case for two new bypasses - the Western and Eastern Hastings bypasses.

John Spellar, Minister for Transport, today announced the decision to reject proposals for the two bypasses but announced a range of measures to tackle transport issues in the town.

He said:

"The study did not build a convincing regeneration case for the by-passes - it concluded that although the by-passes could possibly help to generate employment in the area this would not necessarily help those in most need. There would be reduced congestion in some areas of the town but the position would get worse in other areas. Against these rather weak arguments we had to place the evidently severe implications for the environment - two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), an Area of

Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and a designated wildlife site surround Hastings.

"I have carefully considered the Study and concluded that whilst transport investment is important to the regeneration of Hastings I do not believe the two by-passes are the solution. I do favour tackling the bottleneck on the A21 between Tonbridge and Pembury through a road widening scheme and I believe improvements to rail and bus services will also help.

"These transport improvements need to be integrated within a wider regeneration strategy which the authorities are now working on.

"Go-Via have agreed to the electrification of the Ashford to Hastings rail route and to studying the scope for further improvements. As a result of this Study, the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) have also agreed to look at improvements to the service between Wadhurst and Tonbridge and investigate what further measures are required on the route to provide faster, better quality of service.

"I have asked the SRA to work with the local councils to consider proposals for a new station at Glyne Gap and at proposals for Ore-Bexhill metro rail service.

"I am also inviting East Sussex County Council to come forward with well thought out proposals for improving bus services in Hastings to tackle regeneration. They are now reviewing their Local Transport Plan and I look forward to considering their proposals."

He added:

"Regeneration is an important priority for the Government - some wards in Hastings suffer from some the most severe deprivation in England. It is important that we have a strategy to tackle this and we stand ready to help but we do not believe the by-passes are the solution."

### **Notes to editors**

1. Mr Byer's letter to the Leader of the South East England Regional Assembly and the replies to the Parliamentary Questions are attached.
2. The Access to Hastings Multi-Modal Study is the first of a national programme of Multi-modal studies to report.
3. The consultants' report is available at: <http://www.sdgworld.net/AtoH>  
The report was considered on 14 February 2001 by the South East England Regional Assembly.

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### **From the Secretary of State**

Councillor David Shakespeare  
South East of England Regional Assembly  
Cross Lane  
Guildford  
GU1 1YA

## Access to Hastings Multi-Modal Study

You wrote to John Prescott on 21 February setting out the recommendations of the South East England Regional Assembly following completion of the consultants' report for the Access to Hastings Multi-Modal Study. My colleagues and I are most grateful to the Assembly for their careful consideration of this weighty report, and indeed to all those who contributed to that report, including the Steering Group, the Consultants and all those who gave their views in response to consultation.

I agree with the Assembly's view that a substantial transport investment programme must be an essential component of a wider regeneration programme of the Hastings area. The consultants point to a large number of difficulties caused by the deficiencies of the current transport system in the area. These include unreliable journey times on the strategic road links between Hastings and the surrounding areas, poor rail services, infrequent and unreliable public transport services and a series of problems for walkers and cyclists. They also point to the fact that five wards in Hastings are categorised as being in the worst 10% of the 8414 wards covered by the National Index of Multiple Deprivation.

Multi-modal studies present a wholly new way of addressing such problems, and as required, the Consultants have presented integrated strategies which take into account the regional planning context and include a wide range of measures covering roads, rail, local public transport and supporting transport measures. Even so, the consultants have made the point that transport investment will not in itself be sufficient to achieve regeneration. I note that the Assembly also believes that a wider regeneration package must be devised by SEEDA and the local authorities. Although substantial public funds are already being channelled into regeneration of the area it is not easy at present to discern the overall strategy for prioritising measures and distributing funds, and I look forward to the Area Investment Framework now being prepared by the parties. This will need clearly to build on the Study by showing how planned transport investment contributes to the strategy and to the regeneration of the area. As you suggest, there will also need to be further urban capacity and design studies to ensure urban renaissance potentials are realised.

Turning to the specific recommendations in your advice, I agree that the Local Transport Plan should incorporate a series of measures for local public transport improvements, focussing particularly on improved bus services and a strengthened Quality Bus partnership. Local partners will need to give consideration to measures such as ticketing, marketing and a publicity strategy for public transport. I will give careful consideration to bids for supplementary funding for any schemes not already in East Sussex's Local Transport Plan when the Annual Progress Report becomes available.

As you suggest, the feasibility of a number of measures within the proposed rail investment programme requires clarification, together with the funding implications. I have asked the SRA to work with the local authorities to consider further the proposals for the Bexhill Ore Metro, Glyne Gap Station and an enhanced local rail service between Wadhurst and Tonbridge. I have also asked those managing the South Coast Multi-Modal Study to ensure consideration of the proposal to construct the Polegate Chord.

Electrification of the Ashford to Hastings rail route will be undertaken as part of the renewed franchise arrangements for this route, and GO-Via have also agreed to study further measures to achieve a faster and better quality rail service. Subject to that study and progress with the CTRL it will be possible in due course to consider further improvements to assist rail travel between Hastings and London.

Turning to highway schemes, I accept your recommendation that the published A259 Pevensey to Bexhill scheme should be withdrawn but that safety on this section of route should continue to be monitored closely. I also agree that in place of the published six lane off line scheme on the A21 between Tonbridge and Pembury the Highways Agency should progress work on the feasibility of an on-line dual two scheme.

The consultants have highlighted the importance of the A21 in providing strategic access to Hastings but were not able to reach authoritative conclusions on the feasibility of further improvements between Pembury and Hastings. There are difficult issues here. On the one hand the consultants point out that major improvements to this section could attract new residents to the area and make the existing employment base in Hastings a little more secure. On the other hand, major improvement would be likely to be extremely expensive and would inevitably involve serious damage to the High Weald AONB. The consultants' conclusions suggest that it is extremely unlikely a major scheme could be justified in these circumstances.

As you are aware, the A21 Lamberhurst Bypass is in the Targeted Programme of Improvements and is likely to start construction in 2002. A series of other improvements on the A21 may also be feasible, particularly to alleviate congestion, safety and accessibility problems in villages along the route, although we will still need to bear in mind the environmental sensitivity of the area in considering proposals. I have asked the Highways Agency to prepare a draft programme of work to identify possible measures and to discuss further with the Assembly and its key partners how best this may be taken forward. This further work will also need to be co-ordinated with the SRA-led work on enhanced rail service between Wadhurst and Tonbridge.

The consultants felt unable to make a recommendation on the case for the proposed A259 Western and Eastern bypasses, although they were able to conclude that it was not practical or desirable to construct the Western bypass in isolation. I have considered with great care the arguments in the consultants' report, the Assembly's views and the views of other parties which have been submitted to me.

The bypasses would release land for the proposed North Bexhill business park. However, the consultants draw attention to the risk that at least in the short term, investment on the edge of Bexhill could have adverse effects for those wards in central Hastings which currently experience the worst deprivation. I recognise the assurances which SEEDA has given of assistance in developing the business parks and your own concern that all possible support should be provided for the economic and social regeneration of the area.

Although the bypasses would offer the opportunity for environmental improvement within Hastings, the bypasses would themselves cut through areas of designated high environmental value. The Western bypass would proceed on the viaduct across the Combe Haven SSSI site, and a modified junction at the western end of the bypass would be within the Pevensey Levels SSSI and Ramsar site. The Eastern Bypass runs through the sensitive Brede Valley area within the High Weald AONB.

Both 'A New Deal for Trunk Roads in England' and the Ten Year Plan provide a strong presumption against harming sensitive sites including sites of special scientific interest, AONBs and habitats given international protection. The requirements of the Ramsar convention would only permit damage to the Pevensey levels site in the 'urgent national interest' and the Ramsar policy statement issued by DETR in November 2000 makes it clear that derogation of the urgent national interest can be used only where there are no alternatives and the benefits of the development demonstrably outweigh the acknowledged international status of the site.

In my view, the balance of the arguments presented in favour of the bypasses is not sufficient to outweigh these very strong environmental requirements. I believe, therefore, we must look for alternative means to prevent the further decline of the area and to optimise its economic potential.

In addition to the programme of transport investment outlined above, there are other avenues to be explored. Partnership between the responsible local bodies will be crucial and the Area Investment Framework will be the mechanism for drawing together a comprehensive strategy and driving it forward. In developing the Framework I hope the partners will bear in mind that the outstanding environment in the High Weald is one of the area's potentially greatest assets, although the rural economy has encountered recent problems of decline. I hope that the partners will also consider opportunities for rural regeneration, and for improving the synergy between urban and rural environments to mutual benefit.

I am confident that my decisions will provide a sound foundation on which the economy of Hastings may be rebuilt. I look forward to working closely with the Assembly and other partners as we develop more detailed proposals.

**Steven Byers**

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## **HOUSE OF COMMONS WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION**

For answer on: Thursday 12 July 2001

Date answered: Thursday 12 July 2001

**Mr Brian Jenkins (Tamworth)**

**3** To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, if he will make a statement about the multi-modal study programme. [4026]

**Mr Byers**

The Multi-Modal Studies are looking at some of the most severe transport problems around the country. They are considering the contribution all modes of transport can make to solving these problems. They are also looking at the contribution existing, previously considered and new transport infrastructure can make. The key objective is to give decision makers the information needed to identify tailored, integrated and sustainable transport solutions. The studies will drive major investment decisions over the period covered by our 10 Year Plan for Transport.

The studies are founded on our New Approach To Appraisal, launched in 1998 in our Integrated Transport White Paper. They weigh strategies and their component projects according to their economic, environmental, safety, accessibility and integration impacts. This ensures that costs and benefits are fully explored and understood before decisions are taken. This new approach to decision making is an important step forward. We will consider the contribution all types of transport can make to solving problems, not just roads.

Each study is addressing very different problems so the strategies and the decisions that emerge will be unique. The impact on the environment must be a key consideration and in each case we will have to weigh up the benefits of a particular road or rail link and balance it against the environmental impact. The conclusion will

vary in each case. No individual decision will set a precedent for others to follow.

Decisions will be taken through the new arrangements for the development of Regional Transport Strategies within Regional Planning Guidance. Ministers need not accept all recommendations from Regional Planning Bodies. There may be instances where strategies or individual projects raise issues of national importance. Where this is the case my priority will be to ensure that final decisions reflect, and are properly co-ordinated with, our wider national policy objectives.

## **HOUSE OF COMMONS WRITTEN PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION**

For answer on: Thursday 12 July 2001

Date answered: Thursday 12 July 2001

### **Bridget Prentice (Lewisham, East)**

2 To ask the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, if he has considered the recommendations of the South East England Regional Assembly following completion of the Access to Hastings multi-modal study; and if he will make a statement. [4025]

### **Mr Spellar**

The Secretary of State has today replied to the Chairman of the South East England Regional Assembly, and I am placing a copy of his letter in the House of Commons Library.

Multi-modal studies represent a wholly new approach to the consideration of transport provision. The Access to Hastings Study is the first of these multi-modal studies to have been completed, and I am grateful to all who have contributed to it.

The study contains a large number of recommendations designed to relieve congestion and safety problems in Kent and East Sussex and to contribute to the regeneration of the economy in the area around Hastings and Bexhill. I have considered the study's recommendations in light of the guidance for handling Multi-Modal Studies outlined in the Secretary of State's Parliamentary answer of today. I am able to accept most of these recommendations, although in some areas further work is required to develop proposals before any funding commitments can be given.

The study has shown a wide measure of agreement that, in place of the proposed six lane off-line scheme on the A21 between Tonbridge and Pembury, the Highways Agency should consider the feasibility of a four lane on-line scheme. I have asked the Agency to progress that work. There is also broad consensus that the proposed A259 Pevensy to Bexhill scheme may now be dropped, given the safety improvements which have now been put in place. I have asked the Highways Agency to continue to monitor safety on this stretch of road.

I have also asked the Agency to prepare a draft programme of work to identify possible further measures on the A21 South of Pembury. I have stressed, however, that this work will need to bear in mind the environmental sensitivity of the area.

The study has demonstrated the potential merits of public transport investment in bus and rail. GoVia has agreed to the electrification of the Ashford to Hastings rail route and to looking at the scope for further improvements. As a result of this Study, the Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) have also agreed to look at improvements to the

service between Wadhurst and Tonbridge and investigate what further measures are required on the route to provide faster, better quality of service. I have asked the SRA to work with the local councils to consider proposals for a new station at Glyne Gap and proposals for Ore-Bexhill metro rail service.

I am also inviting East Sussex County Council to come forward with well thought out proposals for improving bus services in Hastings to tackle regeneration. They are now reviewing their Local Transport Plan and I look forward to considering their proposals.

Although I recognise the strong views held by the Regional Assembly and others in favour of the proposed A259 Western and Eastern bypasses, I have decided not to proceed with these schemes. The study did not build a convincing regeneration case for the by-passes - it concluded that although the by-passes could possibly help to generate employment in the area this would not necessarily help those in most need. There would be reduced congestion in some areas of the town but the position would get worse in other areas. Against these rather weak arguments we had to place the evidently severe implications for the environment - two Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and an internationally recognised wetland surround Hastings.

I believe, therefore, we must look for alternative means to prevent the further decline of the area and to optimise its economic potential. Regeneration is an important priority for the Government - some wards in Hastings suffer from some the most severe deprivation in England. But we do not believe the by-passes are the solution. A regeneration strategy for Hastings needs to be developed which shows clearly how transport and other measures may be implemented to ensure a sustainable economic future of the area. I have asked my officials to work closely with the South East England Development Agency and local partners on that.

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[Return to July 2001 News Index](#)

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## **SECRETARY OF STATE'S RESPONSE TO SOUTH COAST MULTI-MODAL STUDY**

### Introduction

The South Coast study was set up to develop a transport strategy for the corridor between Southampton and Margate which addresses congestion, safety and environmental problems and supports regeneration and economic growth. Three road schemes on the A27 were specifically remitted to the study for consideration – the proposed Arundel bypass, proposed bypasses of Wilmington and Selmeston, and improvements at Southerham-Beddingham.

The analysis carried out by the study provides a framework for considering future transport investment decisions in the study area. The recommended strategy includes enhancements to the strategic road network to tackle congestion alongside measures to improve access to ports and airports, improve public transport, manage future growth in travel demand and provide balanced choices for transport users.

### Trunk road recommendations

We have already announced our intention to take forward a number of trunk road improvements which will benefit the study area including:

- M27 technology improvements
- Small scale improvements to the A27 between Worthing and Lancing
- A21 Lamberhurst bypass
- A21 Tonbridge to Pembury dualling

The Secretary of State is today agreeing to the inclusion of the A21 Tonbridge to Pembury scheme in the Targeted Programme of Improvements.

The study has made recommendations for further improvements to the trunk road network. The Secretary of State has considered these in the light of the advice he has received from the Regional Assembly, the Highways Agency and other interested organisations including the Statutory Environmental Bodies. In particular, he has been mindful to ensure that we balance the need for improved accessibility against the potential impact of schemes on the environment. The Government remains committed to its policy presumption against new or expanded transport infrastructure that will adversely affect environmentally sensitive areas and sites, except where there is an overriding public interest in the development proceeding.

In the light of the above considerations, the Secretary of State has concluded that he is unable to support a number of trunk road schemes which would impact on environmentally sensitive areas. His response on specific schemes is set out below.

The Secretary of State confirms his support for the following scheme:

- M27 widening between junctions 3 and 4, climbing lane between junctions 11 and 12, junction improvements and introduction of improved technology.

The Secretary of State is asking the Highways Agency to carry out further detailed work on this scheme and to bring forward proposals for entry into the Targeted Programme of Improvements. In particular, he is asking the Agency to ensure that detailed design work is carried out to high environmental standards in order to minimise any adverse environmental impacts. Subject to the successful completion of all necessary planning and statutory procedures, the Secretary of State would expect to see the scheme delivered over the next decade.

The Secretary of State also accepts that improvements on the A27 at Beddingham are required to address safety issues at the level crossing. However, this scheme runs through an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, is

in the area designated for the South Downs National Park and would have significant landscape impacts. In view of the importance of the level crossing issue, the Secretary of State is asking the Highways Agency to review the current scheme and report back as soon as possible on options with a particular emphasis on minimising any impact on the sensitive surrounding environment. A bridge over the railway appears to be the best way of resolving the safety issue but the Secretary of State is not prepared to accept dualling of this section of the A27.

The Secretary of State does not support the following schemes on the A27 as currently recommended by the study:

- improvements through Worthing and Lancing in the form of a tunnel or tunnels;
- Chichester bypass improvements;
- a bypass of Arundel;
- bypasses of Selmeston and Wilmington.

Each of these schemes would have significant environmental impacts. A tunnel at Worthing would impact on regionally important groundwater sources. It also has a very high cost. Improvements to the Chichester bypass would impact on a number of aspects of the local environment. A bypass of Arundel would have negative impacts on heritage and landscape as well as the water environment. The bypasses at Selmeston and Wilmington would adversely impact on the Sussex Downs AONB and surrounding landscape and on biodiversity.

Taking these schemes forward in the form proposed would not be consistent with our policy presumption against new or expanded transport infrastructure that adversely affect environmentally sensitive areas and sites, except where there is an overriding public interest in the development proceeding.

The Secretary of State is therefore asking the Highways Agency to work with local authorities and Statutory Environmental Bodies to identify less damaging options, including management measures which reduce the need for major road construction, and to report back to him. The Secretary of State recognises the importance of finding solutions which are capable of delivering planned housing and economic growth.

Revised proposals for the Worthing – Lancing section of the A27 should take account of the effectiveness of the measures already being taken forward to improve key roundabouts, introduce traffic calming and improve public transport services.

The following schemes recommended by the study may be justified in the longer term, subject to satisfactorily resolving potential environmental impacts, but the Secretary of State is not asking the Highways Agency to prioritise work on them at this stage:

- improved Dover access via A2 capacity improvements between Lydden and Dover;
- A27 upgrade between the M27 and A3(M).

The Secretary of State is also asking the Highways Agency to review safety and other local issues along the corridor in the light of its South Coast Route Management Strategy, including the section between Pevensey and Brenzett and, where necessary, bring forward appropriate remedial measures.

#### Local Transport Recommendations

We are already providing a significant increase in resources to local authorities to deliver improved local transport services in the areas covered by this Multi-Modal Study.

The Multi-Modal Study has recommended one local road scheme to be taken forward: the Bexhill – Hastings link road. This scheme is part of the package of regeneration measures for Hastings which is being developed following our decisions on the Access to Hastings Multi-Modal Study announced in July 2001. The Secretary of State recognises that that this road will have some impact on the environment. He is therefore asking East Sussex County Council to work closely with the Statutory Environmental Bodies in developing this scheme in more detail, in order to minimise the environmental impacts. Further consideration will be given to funding in the light of the performance of the scheme against our appraisal criteria including environmental impacts. The Secretary of State is also asking the Highways Agency to liaise with East Sussex County Council and the Statutory Environmental Bodies in addressing issues of access between the Link Road and the A21.

The study also recommended a set of measures for tackling congestion in the main towns along the corridor including:

- a package of improved bus services focussed on a number of urban areas in the corridor;
- park and ride sites
- demand management measures including increased parking charges and, in the longer term, cordon charging;
- in the longer term a light rail scheme for Brighton and an extension of the South Hampshire light rail scheme from Fareham to Southampton.

The Secretary of State encourages local authorities in the study area to work with local partners and delivery agencies to develop the shorter term proposals in more detail and, where appropriate, submit proposals for funding to the Department through the Local Transport Plan process. Where appropriate provision of funding will depend on the performance of schemes against our appraisal criteria.

The Secretary of State is also asking local authorities to give careful consideration to recommendations for local congestion charging. To facilitate the establishment of cordon charging schemes, the Government commits that any local authority which introduces its own scheme before 1 February 2011 under the powers already available will continue to keep the revenue for the first decade after implementation, even if a national scheme is subsequently introduced.

The Secretary of State is content for the light rail schemes recommended by the study to be identified as possible longer term measures but he does not consider that work on these should be prioritised at this stage. In addition, he would expect alternative lower cost bus-based options to be fully considered should further work on these proposals be taken forward in the future.

The Secretary of State endorses the recommendation of the study for the promotion of measures to reduce travel demand and encourage more sustainable travel choices and he looks to local authorities to take these forward. In particular, the guidance on Local Transport Plans asked authorities to set out how they would work with employers, schools and other local organisations to develop travel plans. They publish annual reports of progress on implementing their LTPs. They should also use their powers under the development control process to require travel plans for all new developments with significant transport implications. Guidance on these powers is contained in "Using the planning process to secure travel plans" which we published jointly with the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister in July 2002.

The Secretary of State also supports the recommendation from a number of studies on the need for close integration between land use and transport policies. Current national planning policy already places a strong emphasis on locating development in appropriate locations to promote sustainable transport choices and reduce the need to travel, especially by car. The Secretary of State looks to local planning authorities to locate major generators of personal travel in areas best served by public transport.

Any additional revenue costs arising from the implementation of local transport improvements and measures to reduce travel demand would need to be met from local authorities' own resources.

### Rail Recommendations

The study has recommended the following rail improvements:

- rolling stock improvements;
- double tracking between Ashford – Hastings and Fareham – Botley;
- new stations;
- a new chord at Eastleigh;
- service enhancements throughout the corridor including 5 trains per hour, at existing stations between Bexhill and Ore.

The Regional Assembly has additionally recommended further consideration of the Willingdon Chord.

In considering these recommendations it is important to recognise the significant programme of rail improvements which is already being taken forward which will support achieving the objectives of the South Coast study. These include:

- a new hourly service between Ashford and Brighton from late 2005 with air-conditioned, high quality rolling stock and a journey time of around 100 minutes;
- replacement by December 2004 of slam door rolling stock on South Central, South Eastern and South West Trains franchises with air-conditioned rolling stock with power supply upgrade and enhanced depot facilities for new rolling stock;
- Route Utilisation Strategy to be carried out for the Brighton mainline in 2004 which will take into account multi-modal study outputs;

The scale of funding that we are already putting into the railways means that our capacity to deliver additional significant investment recommended by the Multi-Modal Studies is inevitably limited. However, the Secretary of State encourages the SRA to examine the scope for delivering the study's rail objectives as part of its planning activities, such as the Kent / South East Regional Planning Assessment, and including work on capacity utilisation. He considers that the Willingdon Chord should be regarded as a longer term proposal and he is not asking the SRA to prioritise work on this scheme at this stage.

#### Implementation of study recommendations

It is for the delivery agencies, in particular the Highways Agency, Strategic Rail Authority and local authorities in the study area, to develop their programmes in the light of the Secretary of State's response to study recommendations. A co-ordinated approach to implementation may be needed on some issues. The Secretary of State is therefore asking the Government Office to liaise with the Regional Assembly and the delivery agencies in developing appropriate co-ordination arrangements.

**DEPARTMENT FOR TRANSPORT**

**9 JULY 2003**

# LOCAL TRANSPORT CAPITAL SETTLEMENT 2005-06

## Decision on Bexhill-Hastings Link Road

In his response to the South Coast Multi-Modal Study, the Secretary of State asked you to work up proposals for this scheme in consultation with the Statutory Environmental Bodies with the aim of minimising environmental impacts. Ministers have given very careful consideration to the proposed scheme, which runs through largely open countryside skirting Coombe Haven SSSI. They have had regard in particular both to the potentially adverse environmental impacts, and to the economic benefits including the contribution that the scheme will make to the regeneration of Hastings. In the light of these considerations Ministers have concluded that on balance the benefits of the scheme outweigh the costs, including environmental costs, and that it is in the public interest for the scheme to be taken forward.

In the light of this I am pleased to tell you that **the scheme has been Provisionally Accepted**. This means that Ministers accept the case for the scheme as presented in the Annex E document and will be prepared to fund up to **£47.120m** of the scheme's costs with the following provisions:

- The gross and net costs of the scheme remain unchanged.
- The scheme design and the value for money it offers remain significantly unchanged.
- Satisfactory completion of statutory procedures.
- The scope for securing developer contributions towards the cost of this scheme will be explored in detail.
- Suitable consultation with the relevant Statutory Environmental Bodies.

If any of the conditions of the provisions outlined above are breached, the Department reserves the right to withdraw approval of the scheme or there may be no legal basis on which it can proceed so that full approval cannot be given.

Provisional approval of the scheme does not mean that the Department accepts the authority's timings for the scheme being progressed. This issue will be discussed and finalised as and when the scheme returns for full approval, taking into account, amongst other criteria, overall prioritisation and availability of funding.

This decision is given solely in respect of the appraisal case for this scheme and is entirely without prejudice to any view that the Secretary of State, or other Ministers, may take on any future application for statutory powers or in accordance with any other functions. As mentioned above, you should work closely with the Statutory Environmental Bodies to ensure that appropriate environmental mitigation measures are incorporated as the scheme is taken forward, particularly in view of the adverse environmental impacts identified in the appraisal.

We will consider requests for funding as and when the scheme returns for full approval. I should be grateful if you would keep us informed of progress towards completion of the statutory processes through the monitoring arrangements for major schemes. Funding allocations need to be confirmed each year and are open to amendment and Ministers reserve the right to reconsider their decisions on this scheme if the outcomes of the statutory process lead to any significant changes to the scheme. We can give no guarantees on meeting any increase in costs over and above the Government's agreed total contribution.