

## The Road to Growth: Analysis of stakeholder discussion



An aerial photograph of a multi-level highway bridge spanning a valley. The bridge has several levels, with a large green and white truck on the lower level and a white car on the upper level. The surrounding landscape is a mix of green trees and brownish vegetation, suggesting a rural or semi-rural area. In the foreground, there is a farm with several buildings and a dirt road. The sky is overcast.

Highways England is the government company charged with operating, maintaining and improving England's motorways and major A roads (known as the Strategic Road Network). Formerly the Highways Agency, Highways England became a government company in April 2015.

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# Purpose of this document

The purpose of this document is to describe the non-statutory community and stakeholder engagement undertaken by Highways England to support the development of its strategic economic growth plan – *The Road to Growth*.

The discussion process sought to engage key stakeholders to develop and test Highways England’s emerging approach to supporting economic growth, prior to finalising the strategic plan.

*This document summarises the discussion on the draft strategic economic growth plan*



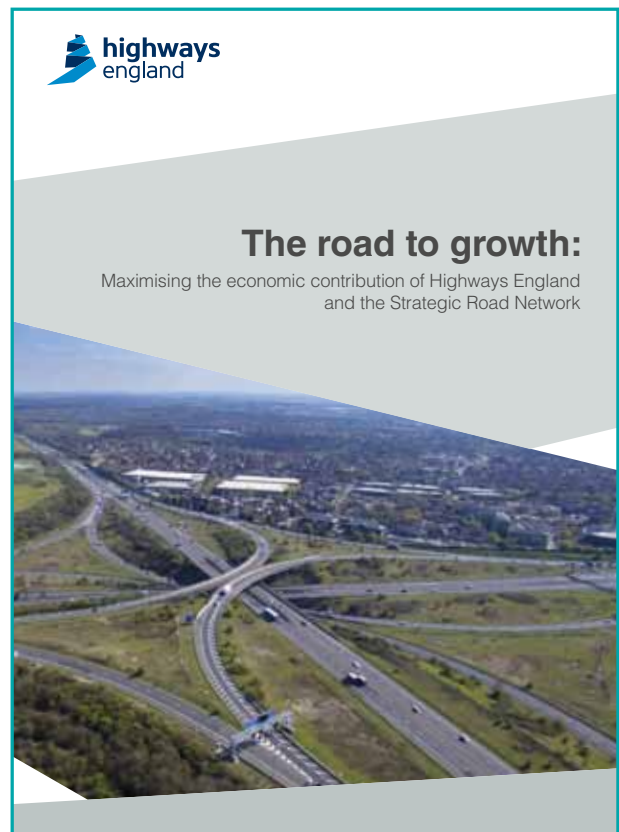
## Background

In 2015, Highways England commissioned an extensive programme of independent analytical research exploring the economic role of the strategic road network (SRN) and the patterns of business activity and development around it. This was a central element of our commitment to publish our first strategic economic growth plan (SEGP).

The research was carried out in 2016, supplemented by widespread discussions with many stakeholders and business users of the network. This included one-to-one meetings with every Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) in England, and engagement with many other stakeholders including sub-national transport bodies, business representatives, local authorities, government bodies and national infrastructure providers.

In November 2016 we published a stakeholder discussion paper (“*The Road to Growth: Discussion Paper*”). This outlined the findings of research and our interpretation of this; set out our economic vision; and identified the four strategic themes that we proposed would underpin our approach to supporting economic growth.

This report summarises the stakeholder responses to this discussion paper, which have informed the final shape of the strategic plan. We published *The Road to Growth in March 2017*.



## The discussion process

We published *The Road to Growth: discussion* paper on 29 November 2016 on Highways England's website, along with key evidence reports that supported its development. The discussion paper included a questionnaire outlining the areas of work on which we specifically sought feedback. We emailed more than 700 organisations to alert them to the publication, inviting them to take part in the discussion in one of three ways:

- Completing a web-based questionnaire (through the Citizen Space online consultation platform), which was open from the 29th March 2016 to 20th January 2017.
- Emailing questionnaire responses, observations and views direct to the Growth and Economic Development (GED) team at Highways England.
- Through face-to-face meetings with the GED Team.

Through all three mechanisms we received more than 130 responses. A majority of these came from stakeholder organisations that were targeted through the email alert, but we also received a few responses from other businesses and individuals.

The overall level of response was good and represented a reasonable cross-section of stakeholders. Pleasingly, in addition to responses from bodies with a specific spatial focus, we received responses from umbrella organisations on behalf of their members.

It is worth noting that organisations that have regular meetings with Highways England or meetings scheduled with the GED team during the discussion phase often did not respond through Citizen Space.

*We emailed more than 700 organisations to alert them to the publication, inviting them to take part in the discussion*



*The overall level of response was good and represented a reasonable cross-section of stakeholders*

# Structured discussions through CitizenSpace

Citizen Space is an online tool for structuring and managing public engagement. It is specifically designed to publish information and engage a wide range of stakeholders and analyse large amounts of feedback. This report is based on a statistical analysis of the 106 questionnaire responses we received. 98 of these were submitted through the Citizen Space platform, and a further eight were emailed to us directly.

More qualitative feedback received through other routes was considered by the various working groups responsible for drafting elements of the final *The Road to Growth* document. The questionnaire focused on six discussion points asking for the level of agreement against statements (on a five point scale ranging from 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree') and an explanation.

*The questionnaire focused on six discussion points asking for the level of agreement against statements*

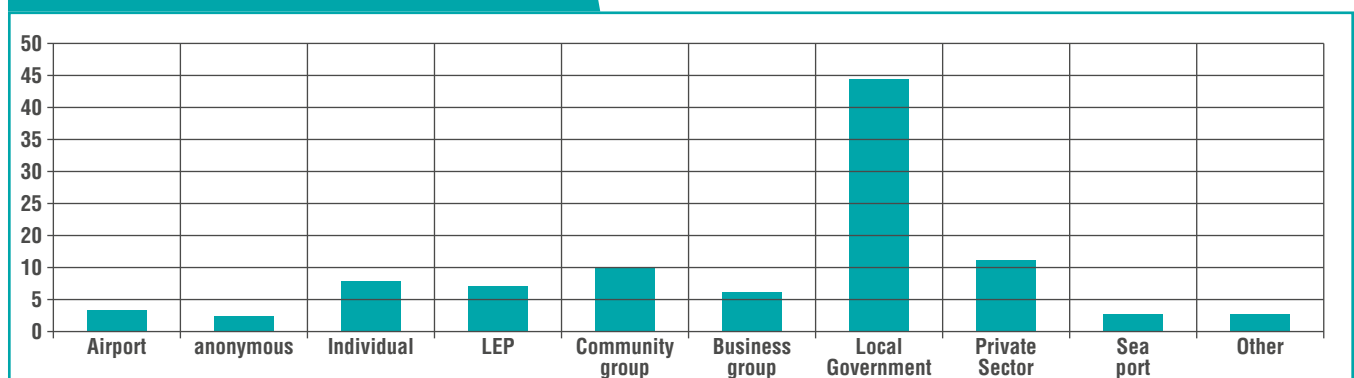


## The six discussion points were:

- 1 Do you agree with the areas of research we have focused on to better understand the relationship between the strategic road network and economic growth?
- 2 Do you agree with the vision we have articulated?
- 3 Do you agree with the strategic economic roles for Highways England that we have articulated?
- 4 Do you agree with our categorisation and definition of economic opportunity areas?
- 5 Do you agree the two-perspective approach to prioritising economic growth locations around the strategic road network?
- 6 Do you agree with our emerging approach (4 themes)?

The questionnaire also allowed for other comments and opinions to be added. Questionnaire responses came from a wide range of stakeholders ranging from individuals to Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) and Local Authorities (Figure 1).

Figure 1 Response by organisation type



# Summary of responses

Overall, the majority of respondents were supportive of the work being undertaken to develop the SEGP and how that research had been interpreted.

**More than half of respondents ‘agreed’ or ‘strongly agreed’ with all the elements of the SEGP focused on in the questionnaire (Figure 2).** Only 4% ‘strongly disagreed’ with any aspect of the work.

As is typical of the five point scoring system very few people give extreme answers and provide little justification when they agree or have no opinion.

Only two respondents ‘disagreed’ with all the questionnaire statements. One of these added the following comment to their answers: *“needs to be amended to take account of Highways England’s environmental responsibilities.”*

A few respondents disagreed with several aspects of the discussion paper due to a lack of SRN routes in the local area.

*“The SRN does not include the A12 between Lowestoft and Ipswich. We don’t disagree that the SRN plays a central role but the inference is that the local road network is not important and in East Suffolk unfortunately the A12, the main artery is not part of the SRN now”.*

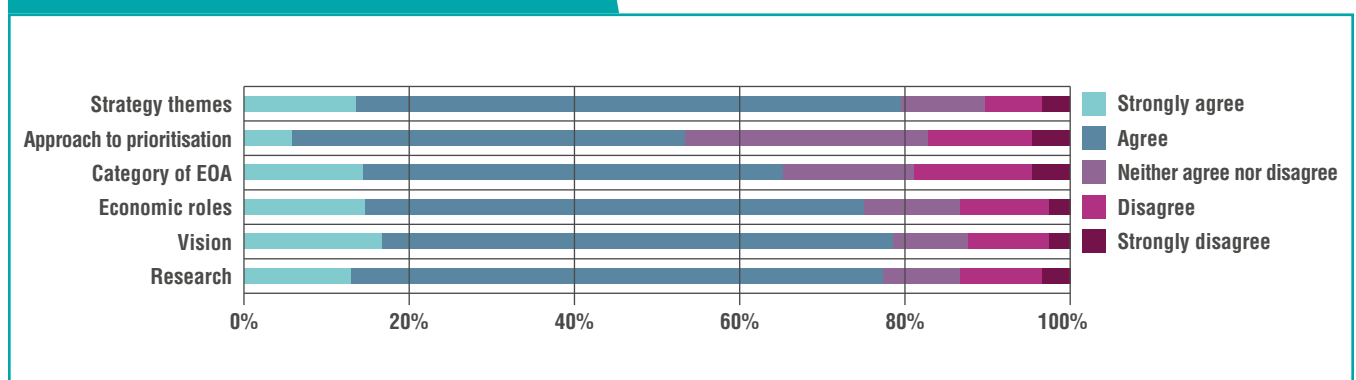
Some other responses highlighted a concern that the research and focus of the discussion paper for the SEGP was biased towards the current shape of the SRN. These respondents however did recognise that considerable investment would be needed to expand the SRN or deliver improvements in all areas where growth is likely.

*“Linking investment in the SRN to areas of economic growth and economic sectors that are most reliant on the road network is a sound approach. [Given] the significant population growth that is planned and expected for the area which is being supported by a wide range of public and private sector investment, support by way of investment in the SRN would be very welcome.”*

*Considerable investment would be needed to expand the SRN or deliver improvements in all areas where growth is likely*



Figure 2: Support for aspects of the SEGP



There were a few respondents who, whilst supportive of the broad approach, disagreed with significant aspects of the discussion paper. A specific concern arose from a few respondents around the focus of the research due to its lack of analysis of the contribution made by agriculture, which had not emerged in our research as a significant SRN-reliant sector. But, it was also

*“All the metrics seem to focus on the current situation rather than the potential for growth that could result from investment.”*

- The second area of concern related to the treatment of rural areas. There was a concern that the approach to defining EOAs did not reflect the nature of rural economies and that if

*“All the metrics seem to focus on the current situation rather than the potential for growth that could result from investment”*



suggested the existing pattern of the SRN had contributed to patterns of economic growth and that the lack of links into rural areas had held back local economic growth. This was coupled with a concern that the SEGP’s approach was not aspirational enough in looking at investments that could act as a catalyst to drive a step change in (local) economic performance. There were no responses that ‘strongly agreed’ with all aspects of the discussion document although there were a few that did ‘agree’ with all aspects of the discussion.

**Most uncertainty revolved around the approach to prioritisation and Economic Opportunity Areas (EOAs)<sup>1</sup>** with a quarter of respondents choosing ‘neither agree or disagree’. Two key concerns emerge from the responses:

- Firstly, while many respondents expressed agreement with the broad approach to prioritisation, there were concerns that the description lacked detail. Specifically, some respondents said the approach reflected historic patterns of development and did not account for future potential growth. They said this might lead to a ‘two-tier’ investment programme with areas of existing growth benefiting more than areas with potential.

this influenced prioritisation there would be an under-investment in areas of the network that supported rural economies.

*“Emerging along HE-managed corridors within a predominantly rural area such as Herefordshire would not emerge as a priority in a national context on absolute size/value scale, that a corridors cumulative effect and benefit should not be underestimated in terms of its local / regional significance.”*

Some feedback raised the issue of how future conditions might change, not only in the patterns of growth but in the way the SRN might be used in the future. A particular issue raised was how technology would impact on both growth and travel patterns: this ranged from the adoption of technology in the workplace (for example, agile working policies made possible by broadband) through to vehicle technologies such as driverless cars.

*“The use of the SRN to support growth is likely to change as new technologies emerge. These should play a key role in identifying and planning interventions, e.g. platooning HGVs and driverless vehicle technology both offer routes to more efficient use of the network”*

<sup>1</sup> Areas where the research identified significant potential for future growth in employment or housing.



There was one message that emerged repeatedly in response to different areas of the discussion which reflected the **need to consider cross-modal activities**. This issue emerged in two ways:

- Most common was the need to recognise that the SRN does not exist in isolation from other transport networks. Central to this was the interaction of the SRN to the local road network but the concern also extended other interchanges.

*“We feel that the importance of the integration between the SRN and the Local Road network needs to be stronger throughout the document. With a stronger focus on integrating HE schemes into the local network.”*

*We welcome the opportunity of longer term funding settlements that enables local authorities to work in partnership with Highways England on*

*schemes that result in the long term benefits for an integrated strategic and local network”.*

- The second concern focused on modal shift – encouraging the use of other transport networks (particularly rail) to reduce pressure on the road network.

*“The network is stretched and as a consequence you need to look at reducing demand wherever possible by integrating bus and rail opportunities for modal transfer into the way the network is managed”.*

Several responses also took the **opportunity to highlight specific local issues** with the network such as particular roads not being part of the SRN, the absence of SRN links into rural areas and problems with specific junctions. These issues were outside the remit of this discussion.

*We welcome the opportunity of longer term funding settlements that enables local authorities to work in partnership with Highways England*



*The network is stretched and as a consequence you need to look at reducing demand wherever possible*

# Response by organisation type

Overall there is no obvious pattern as to which type of organisation supported the approach set out in the discussion document. Figures 3 to 7 set out the responses to the key questions raised in the discussion paper, broken down by respondent group.

*Overall there is no obvious pattern as to which type of organisation supported the approach*



Figure 3 Do you agree with research areas?

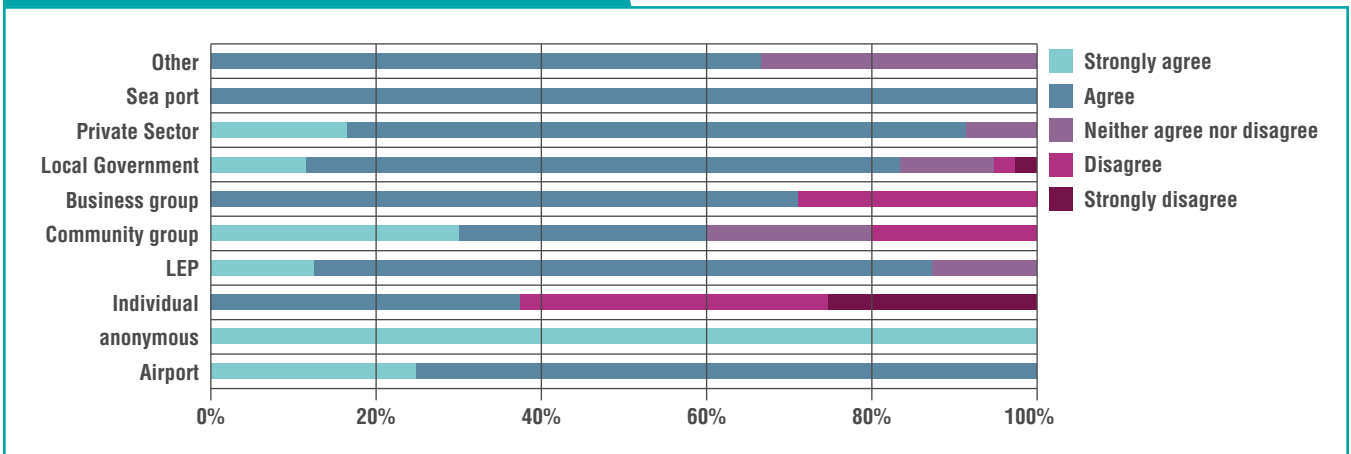


Figure 4 Do you agree with the vision?

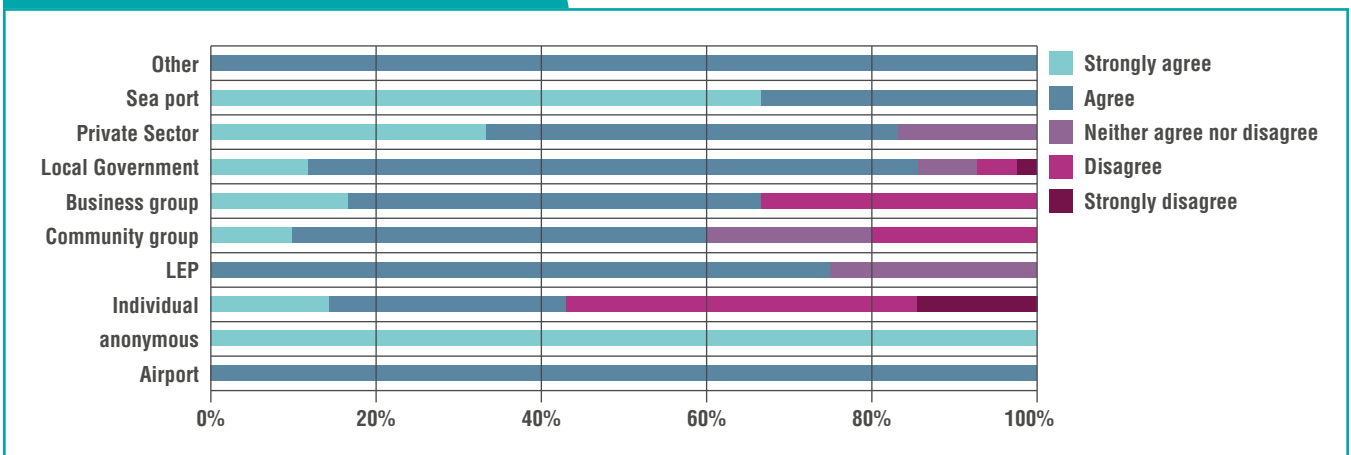


Figure 5 Do you agree with categories of Economic Opportunity Areas?

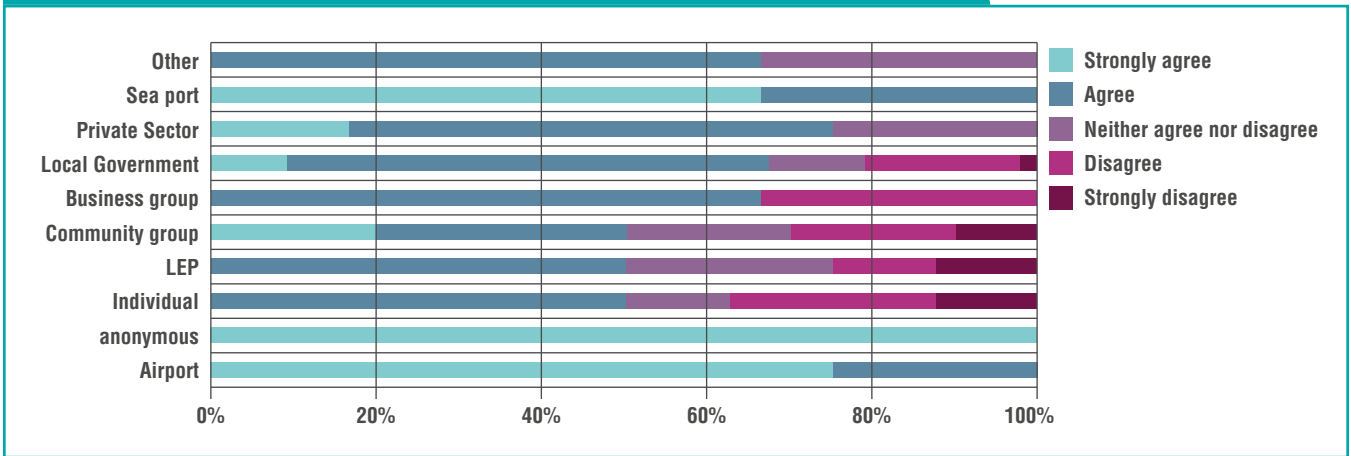


Figure 6 Do you agree with the approach to prioritisation?

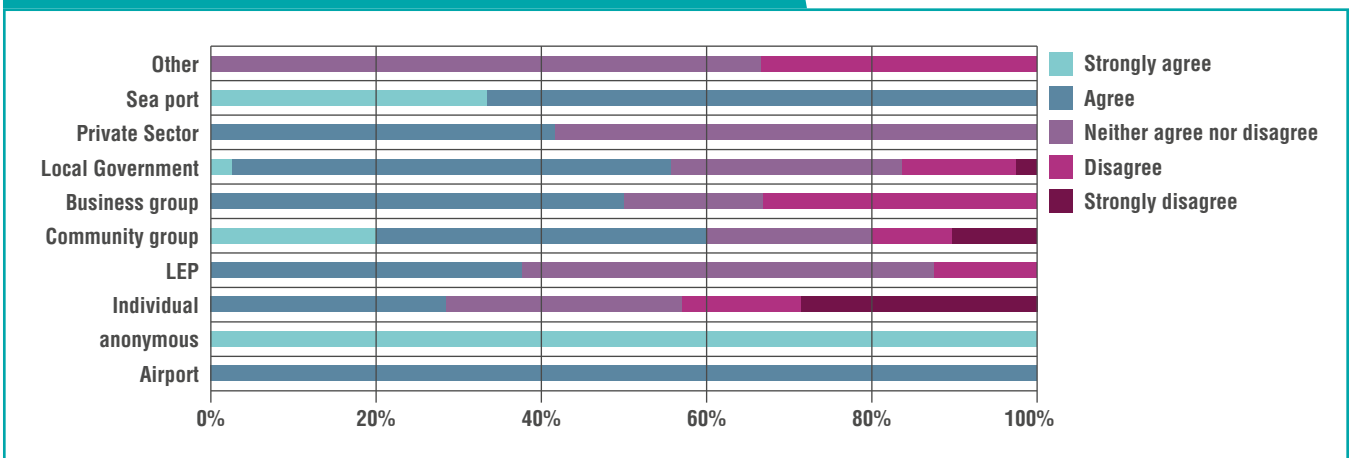
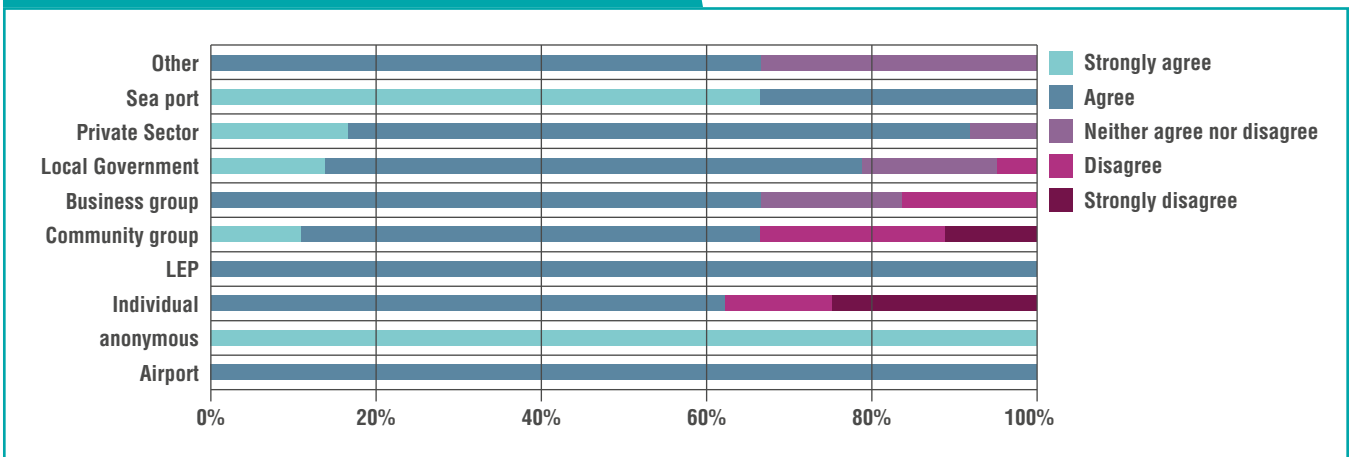


Figure 7 Do you agree with our strategic themes?



*key questions raised in the discussion paper,  
broken down by respondent group*

## Conclusions

Overall the discussion paper process has been positive with the three different modes of feedback allowing for a greater engagement with stakeholders and the development of a more collaborative final document.

Many comments are addressed in the more detailed approach we have developed for strengthening our impact with regard to our four economic roles. For example, in finalising *The Road to Growth* we have ensured a strong focus on cross-modal transport connectivity as part of our focus on enabling business performance, supporting productivity and competitiveness.

*Highways England will not promote growth at any cost and it has to be sustainable and balanced against other strategic objectives*



**A majority of those involved with the discussion process agreed or strongly agreed with the interpretation of the research, the emerging approach and the four themes.** Even where there were more mixed responses – such as the definition of EOAs or the approach to prioritisation – there was still a majority agreement (over 52% in the EOA example, with less than 15% disagreement, and the rest wanting more detail and certainty that their area would be prioritised).

Comments received have been considered carefully and several revisions to the approach or text made in the final *The Road to Growth*. For example, we have

- refocused the text on the international gateways for access to be “reliable” and “resilient” rather than simply improved
- amended some of the terminology around how we identify key economic locations and their “reliance” on the SRN as opposed to “dependency”
- made an effort, notwithstanding our remit to the SRN, to articulate the role of the wider road network and other transport modes.

However not all the feedback received during the discussion paper could be incorporated into amendments in *The Road to Growth*. Some comments fell out the remit of our economic growth strategy: for example the strong concern over environmental impact is picked up through separate procedures and strategies within Highways England and it is not appropriate to include them here. However, this feedback did lead to clarification that Highways England will not promote growth at any cost and it has to be sustainable and balanced against other strategic objectives.

Finally, throughout the discussion there was recognition of the step change the development and publication of a strategic economic growth plan was for Highways England.

# Annex A

## Organisations taking part in the Citizen Space discussion

<b>A46 Partnership</b>	<b>Gloucestershire County Council</b>	<b>Sedgemoor District Council</b>
<b>A5 Transport Partnership</b>	<b>Greater Lincolnshire LEP</b>	<b>Shropshire Council</b>
<b>Airport Operators Association</b>	<b>Halton Borough Council</b>	<b>Solent LEP</b>
<b>Anon.</b>	<b>Heart of the South West Local Enterprise Partnership</b>	<b>Somerset County Council</b>
<b>Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council</b>	<b>Here for Hereford</b>	<b>South East Essex Action Group Alliance</b>
<b>Bedford Borough Council</b>	<b>Herefordshire County Council</b>	<b>South Elmsall Travel Ltd</b>
<b>Birmingham Airport</b>	<b>Householder</b>	<b>Stansted Airport</b>
<b>British Property Federation</b>	<b>Hull City Council</b>	<b>Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP</b>
<b>Buckinghamshire County Council</b>	<b>Hydrock Consultants Limited</b>	<b>Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils</b>
<b>Buckinghamshire Thames Valley LEP</b>	<b>IM Properties</b>	<b>Suffolk County Council</b>
<b>Burges Salmon</b>	<b>Interserve Construction</b>	<b>Swindon Borough Council</b>
<b>Campaign for National Parks</b>	<b>Kent County Council</b>	<b>Tees Valley Combined Authority</b>
<b>Cannock Chase District Council</b>	<b>Lancashire Constabulary</b>	<b>Telford &amp; Wrekin Council</b>
<b>City of Lincoln Council</b>	<b>Leicester City Council</b>	<b>Thames Valley Berkshire LEP</b>
<b>Colchester Borough Council</b>	<b>Leicestershire County Council</b>	<b>The Bristol Port Company</b>
<b>Cornwall Council</b>	<b>Lincolnshire County Council</b>	<b>The Camping and Caravanning Club</b>
<b>Crawley Borough Council</b>	<b>Little Forest Lodge</b>	<b>The Marches LEP</b>
<b>Crowlas Bypass</b>	<b>London Luton Airport Limited</b>	<b>Transport for Greater Manchester</b>
<b>Crowlas Bypass Now</b>	<b>Luton Borough Council</b>	<b>Transport for London</b>
<b>Cumbria County Council and Cumbria LEP (Joint Response)</b>	<b>Marlow and District Chamber of Trade and Commerce</b>	<b>Transport Planning Society</b>
<b>Devon County Council</b>	<b>Network Rail</b>	<b>TRL</b>
<b>Disabled Motoring UK</b>	<b>Norfolk Chamber of Commerce - Transport &amp; Infrastructure Group</b>	<b>Urban Transport Group</b>
<b>DP World London Gateway</b>	<b>North East Combined Authority</b>	<b>Warwickshire County Council</b>
<b>East Herts Council</b>	<b>North Somerset Council</b>	<b>Waverley Borough Council</b>
<b>East Riding of Yorkshire Council</b>	<b>North Yorkshire County Council</b>	<b>West of England councils</b>
<b>England's Economic Heartland</b>	<b>Oxfordshire County Council</b>	<b>West Yorkshire Combined Authority</b>
<b>Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership</b>	<b>Peter Brett Associates</b>	<b>Wickford Action Group</b>
<b>Essex Chambers of Commerce</b>	<b>Plymouth City Council</b>	<b>Wiltshire Council</b>
<b>Essex County Council</b>	<b>Port of Tilbury London Ltd</b>	<b>Worcestershire County Council</b>
<b>Exeter City Council</b>	<b>Prologis UK Ltd</b>	<b>WSP   PB</b>
<b>Federation of Small Business</b>	<b>Rossendale Borough Council</b>	<b>York North Yorkshire and East Riding Local Enterprise Partnership</b>

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