

Safe roads, Reliable journeys, Informed travellers



Highways Agency Environment Strategy

Supporting our vision to be the
world's leading road operator

An Executive Agency of the
Department for
Transport

Foreword

The Highways Agency is responsible for operating, maintaining, and improving England's strategic road network which carries about one third of all vehicle traffic and two thirds of all road freight. This network plays a vital part in supporting Britain's economy and our quality of life. We are ambitious in our aim of seeking full and lasting economic, social and environmental benefits to meet the needs of present and future generations.

I am delighted to present the third Highways Agency Environment Strategy. The environment is right at the core of our business, and we are committed to achieving the highest standards of performance, taking opportunities to achieve real benefits, and minimising the negative consequences of our human desire to travel.

In the ten years since the publication of our last strategy, Towards a Balance with Nature, there has been an increase in the understanding of how road networks impact on the environment.

This has led to our activities being examined more closely by our many stakeholders. Good working relationships with our stakeholders are essential to increase knowledge and understanding of our environmental impacts. As a consequence we have established cooperation agreements (memorandums of understanding) with the three Statutory Environmental Bodies; the Environment Agency, English Heritage and Natural England.

There has also been an increase in environmental legislation and regulation, which rightly challenges us to both protect the environment and seek enhancements through the improvement of our network. Our new Environment Strategy will ensure that protecting and enhancing the environment is embedded into our business decision making processes and is considered at all levels of our operations.

We have set ourselves challenging objectives in our Environment Strategy, but through

continued involvement and co-operation from all our business areas, stakeholders and suppliers, we are confident that we will see positive results. This strategy will support our drive to be the world's leading road operator.

Graham Dalton,
Chief Executive



Introduction

The Highways Agency is an executive agency of the Department for Transport (DfT) and is responsible for operating, maintaining and improving the strategic road network (the network) in England, on behalf of the Secretary of State for Transport.

The Highways Agency's Strategic Plan (2010-15) sets out the strategic direction for the Highways Agency, and establishes our vision to be:

The world's leading road operator

To deliver this vision, our Strategic Plan identifies five goals which will indicate the progress of the Highways Agency towards achieving this vision.

1. We provide a service that our customers can trust
2. We set the standard for delivery
3. We deliver sustainable solutions
4. Our roads are the safest in the world
5. Our network is a dynamic and resilient asset

Our Environment Strategy supports the Highways Agency to meet the goals of our Strategic Plan, by enabling us to manage and develop our environmental performance.



Our Environment Strategy

This, the Highways Agency's third Environment Strategy, sets out our environmental priorities in relation to our activities on the network.

This Environment Strategy guides our actions over five years up to the end of March 2015. Towards the end of 2014 we intend to review the Environment Strategy and develop it for a further five year period.



Our rolling Environment Action Plan and reporting procedures, set in place under this Environment Strategy, will be used to monitor our performance.

The diagram below sets out the hierarchy of the plans and strategies from our Strategic Plan through to delivery and review.



Our Environment Strategy is divided into three parts. Each part will contribute to achieving our vision and objectives.

1. Environment Strategy

This document.

2. Managing our Approach to Environmental Performance

This contains a more detailed explanation of our Environment Strategy and Action Plan.

3. Environment Action Plan

Provides details of our in-year actions.

The effects of climate change are one of the most important challenges facing us, and our approach to this is considered separately from this strategy.

Our vision

As the operator of England's motorways and trunk roads, we have a responsibility to road users and to those affected by the operation of our network to minimise and mitigate the negative impacts of our roads and enhance the quality of the surrounding environment. To achieve this we have set a challenging vision:

The Highways Agency Environment Vision:

“To lead the world in the environmental performance of roads”

We have developed our Environment Strategy to set out the path we will take in delivering our Environment Vision and also working towards the vision and goals within the Highways Agency Strategic Plan.



Our objectives

To achieve our Environment Vision we have set ourselves seven objectives, to help guide the actions we take.

Effective Outcomes

Ensure the best practicable environmental outcomes across all our activities, while working in the context of sustainable development and delivering value for money.

Wellbeing

Contribute to human wellbeing and a better quality of life through the protection and enhancement of our environment.

Holistic Approach

Consider the cumulative environmental impact of our activities and identify holistic approaches to mitigate such impacts and improve our environmental performance.

Communication

Provide open communication of how our

activities impact on the environment in order to improve the transparency of our environmental performance. We will listen to others when identifying our environmental priorities.

Continuous Improvement and Knowledge

Improve the understanding and knowledge of all aspects of our environmental performance. Identify ways to continuously improve this performance and provide best practice approaches to our activities.

Collaboration

Engage with others to develop solutions that can provide increased environmental benefits over those we can achieve alone.

Capability and Capacity

Source, develop and allocate the appropriate skills and resources from within the Highways Agency, Department for Transport, our supply chain and stakeholders to deliver the Environment Strategy.



Our challenges

Climate Change resulting from global warming (and the implications for energy use) is one of the most important challenges facing us. It needs a focused approach distinct from wider environment issues, and consequently is not directly addressed in this document (though how climate change impacts on other environment areas is considered). Information on our strategy in response to climate change can be found on our website:

www.highways.gov.uk

Meeting the needs and expectations of our stakeholders is a challenge facing the entire Highways Agency. We have a very diverse range of stakeholders, whose needs and expectations are equally varied and may not always be compatible. For our environment activities, we will continue to listen and engage with our stakeholders to seek a common approach wherever possible.



This engagement is essential to maintaining the ongoing improvement of our performance.

This strategy also recognises the national economic pressures resulting from the worldwide recession – and the need to deliver more with less. In delivering the strategy we will seek to identify actions that increase the efficiency of our operations, and deliver multiple benefits.

Much of our work is in response to legislation and Government guidance, and this is one of our biggest challenges. We will continue to respond to this by developing guidance and tools to assist with assessing and managing our impacts on the environment.

Our priorities

Our environment remit is extensive and covers a full range of topics, within which we have set priorities. We strive to improve the quality of life for those using and affected by our network.

Air Quality

We are committed to delivering the most effective solutions to minimise the air quality impacts resulting from traffic using our network. We will operate and develop our network in a way that is compatible with working toward compliance with statutory air quality limits.

Noise and Vibration

We will continue to work with other Government departments to deliver the requirements of the Environmental Noise Directive. Managing noise levels at priority locations and working towards meeting the requirements of the Government's noise action plans will be given a high priority over the coming years.

Material Resources and Waste

We are committed to ensuring that a legal and responsible approach to materials and waste management is adopted in all our activities. We will work towards meeting the national waste strategy target of halving waste to landfill by 2012.

Soil and Geology

Our priority in this area is to recognise and respond to the challenges presented by the EU and Defra soil strategies. By doing so, we will minimise the impact of our activities on soils and vulnerable geological features.

Nature Conservation

Our aim will be to maximise opportunities for protecting and enhancing our diverse natural environment, and supporting its ability to adapt to the likely effects of climate change. We will continually update and implement our Biodiversity Action Plan, ensuring it is well embedded within our work.

Drainage and Water Quality

We are responding to the requirements of recent legislation and also the flooding events that have occurred over the last few years. Our priority here will be to continue to review and assess the network's resilience to flooding and develop contingency plans accordingly.

Landscape

We will continue to give a high priority to our work on developing ways to enhance the integration of our network into the landscape and to protect the landscape quality. We will focus on reviewing our assessment and design advice and to ensure that landscape design objectives are included in all future road improvement projects.



Cultural Heritage

Our priorities here are to preserve and manage our cultural heritage assets in a proactive manner. We will also respond to increasing Government and general public recognition of the historical significance of 20th century transport features.

Accessibility

We have a duty to improve links along and across our network for vulnerable users and to improve access to public transport for disabled users by 2016. Our priorities in this area are to consider the needs of vulnerable users at all stages of network improvements and to work in partnership with other organisations to promote accessibility.

Society and Community

Our aim is to consider community and social issues at all stages of developing and improving the network, and to improve the assessment methodology for social and community issues.

Spatial Planning

We will focus our efforts on reducing demand for road use by encouraging the adoption of sustainable locations for development and by supporting more sustainable travel choices. We will work closely with stakeholders to help manage the social impacts of planning decisions, and with users to help reduce the need to travel.

Delivering our vision

We will achieve our vision through delivery against the Managing our Approach to Environmental Performance document and our Environment Action Plan.

The actions within the Environment Action Plan are identified through consultation with our stakeholders and meet one or more of our objectives.

Actions will be delivered by our staff, our supply chain of contractors, and consultants and, where possible, in collaboration with stakeholders.



Our Environment Action Plan is a web based document, which is regularly monitored, maintained and developed. Over time this will become a solid record of achievement.

By delivering our actions we will work towards achieving our challenging vision to lead the world in the environmental performance of roads.

Measuring our success

We will judge the success of achieving our vision by our completion of actions contained within our Environment Action Plan.

The Action Plan is part of our management process and will be monitored annually, with performance reported in our Annual Report.

A management group is used to measure our performance in completing the actions. Progress will be judged against meeting milestones and achieving project objectives. This management group is also responsible for the reporting of progress to the Highways Agency Board.

We will also judge success through the feedback we receive from our many stakeholders. This is important to our success, and we will encourage feedback from our activities and ensure we act on it. We also recognise the need for robust benchmarking and comparison with other highway operators - to enable

demonstration of achievement, and to push us to world-leading performance.

Along with measuring success, we will also disseminate the outcomes of our activities to our suppliers, stakeholders and the general public. This will be done through project reports, articles on our website, corporate documentation and through professional and public events – all designed to ensure we can all learn from our experience of delivering our Environment Strategy.







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