



Department  
for Transport

# National Highways' Performance

## Report to Parliament 2024/25



July 2025



**National Highways' Performance**

# **Report to Parliament 2024/25**

Presented to Parliament pursuant to section 14 of the  
Infrastructure Act 2015



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## Foreword



I am pleased to lay this report before Parliament covering the performance of National Highways, the strategic highways company responsible for the motorways and major A roads that form England's strategic road network (SRN). This report focuses on National Highways' performance in 2024/25, the final year of the second Road Investment Strategy (RIS2, 2020-2025).

We have made significant investments in the strategic road network during 2024/25, supporting National Highways to maintain, operate and enhance the SRN. This government provided approval for National Highways to start work on road schemes like the A47 in Norfolk and A57 in Greater Manchester, helping to improve journey times and support housing growth, with work also completing on major enhancements such as the M2 Junction 5 improvements in Kent.

The SRN is one of the country's most vital pieces of infrastructure. In March we committed £4.842 billion for continued investment in the SRN through an Interim Settlement for 2025/26. Work is also well underway on finalising the third Road Investment Strategy (RIS3), a new long-term strategy starting in April 2026. RIS3 will have a greater emphasis on maintenance and renewals and will be informed by the outcomes of the June 2025 Spending Review and the Government's 10-year Infrastructure Strategy.

When taking office, we inherited a portfolio of schemes that were either unaffordable or unfunded, when it was becoming clear that the need was to prioritise investment in maintaining the current network. This government will not shy away from taking difficult decisions, that is why it was necessary in 2024/25 to instruct National Highways to stop development on 8 enhancement schemes that were identified as being unaffordable, undeliverable or offering poor value for money.

Going forward we will continue to work closely with National Highways and the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) to protect the investments we are making in the SRN in 2025/26 and

into RIS3, keeping a close eye on value for money and affordability. We will continue to set and monitor against performance measures that are aligned to this government's missions with regular, transparent reporting from National Highways to my department and the ORR.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Heidi Alexander', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Heidi' being more legible than the last name 'Alexander'.

Rt Hon Heidi Alexander MP

**Secretary of State for Transport**

July 2025

## Executive summary

1. This is the Secretary of State's report to Parliament on the performance of National Highways from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025. It builds on advice from the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) in its role as Highways Monitor, Transport Focus as the passenger watchdog and National Highways' own performance reporting.
2. The year 2024/25 marked the final year of the second road period (2020-2025), delivering the second Road Investment Strategy (RIS2), a £23 billion investment in England's strategic road network.
3. This year saw seven schemes completed and opened for traffic, with construction beginning on three new major enhancements. By the end of March 2025, National Highways also completed its National Emergency Areas Retrofit (NEAR) Programme, delivering 138 emergency areas across the All Lane Running (ALR) smart motorway network in 2024/25.
4. National Highways has met 7 of 12 Key Performance Indicator (KPI) targets for RIS2, missing 4. Final performance data for the safety KPI will not be available until Autumn 2026, however National Highways is currently off-track to meet this target.
5. On 24 March 2025 under section 3(7) (a) of the Infrastructure Act (2015), the Department for Transport presented to Parliament and published statutory directions and guidance to National Highways for a one-year Interim Settlement, setting the expectations and funding for National Highways in 2025/26, ahead of RIS3 which will now begin in April 2026.



# 1. Introduction

## Purpose of the Report

- 1.1 National Highways was appointed as the strategic highways company by the then Secretary of State for Transport, by way of an Order made under Section 1 of the Infrastructure Act 2015. This report covers National Highways' performance for the year from 1 April 2024 to 31 March 2025, the final year of the second Road Investment Strategy (RIS2, 2020-2025).
- 1.2 The Office of Rail and Road's Annual Assessment of National Highways' performance End of Road Period 2 April 2020 to March 2025, and National Highways' Annual Report and Accounts 2025 will both be laid before Parliament and published. National Highways will also publish its Interim Period Delivery Plan, focusing on what the company will deliver in the 2025/26 financial year.
- 1.3 This report draws on these documents and other advice to highlight key points of National Highways' performance and delivery over the past year.
- 1.4 Due to the 2024 General Election and the subsequent change in government, there was no Secretary of State report for 2023/24, however ORR's independent assessment covering National Highways' performance during this period was produced and laid in Parliament on 29 July 2024<sup>1</sup>.

## Context

- 1.5 The strategic road network (SRN) is comprised of England's motorways and major A roads. As the strategic highways company, National Highways was charged with delivering RIS2 to ensure the SRN is safe, reliable and efficient for everyone, whilst minimising its impact on the environment.
- 1.6 The Autumn Budget 2024 confirmed that the start of the next Road Investment Strategy (RIS3) would be delayed until April 2026. On 24 March 2025 the department

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.orr.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2024-07/annual-assessment-of-national-highways-performance-2024-web.pdf>

published, and laid in Parliament, statutory directions and guidance to National Highways for a one-year Interim Settlement covering 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026.

## Monitoring, Assurance and Oversight

- 1.7 Management and effective oversight of the portfolio is supported by an established governance framework with underpinning structures and processes.
- 1.8 For independent monitoring of National Highways, the Secretary of State is advised by the Office of Rail and Road (ORR) which scrutinises and reports on the performance and efficiency of National Highways. ORR has powers to hold National Highways to account, investigate and fine it for failure to deliver the RIS, its statutory directions and guidance, or to act in accordance with its licence.
- 1.9 Transport Focus, the independent watchdog, gathers stakeholder views on the performance of, and their priorities for, the SRN. Its responsibilities are to secure improvements, make a difference and to influence decisions on behalf of road users.
- 1.10 National Highways provides regular information to the department and ORR to allow monitoring of performance and delivery. This includes progress against individual projects and programmes, as well as targeted Key Performance Indicators, additional supporting performance indicators and other descriptive commitments set out within the RIS or Interim Settlement.
- 1.11 The department's role as client includes overseeing progress and performance of the delivery of the RIS and working with National Highways to identify and manage risks at a portfolio level, supporting the company to take mitigating action where necessary. The department is also responsible for working with National Highways and ORR to set future Road Investment Strategies.
- 1.12 Tier 1 enhancement schemes, those over £500 million or identified as novel or contentious, are subject to additional scrutiny by HM Treasury and the National Infrastructure & Service Transformation Authority (formerly the Infrastructure and Projects Authority).

## 2. Capital Delivery

### Major enhancements

- 2.1 At the heart of RIS2 was a programme of major enhancements to provide significant improvements to the SRN for the benefit of road users across the country, with National Highways starting construction on three new schemes in 2024/25:
- A47 Blofield to North Burlingham
  - A47 North Tuddenham
  - Mottram Moor & A57 Link Road
- 2.2 Two additional schemes were originally planned to start construction in 2024/25 but saw their start of works dates delayed due to reasons outside of National Highways' control. There will now enter construction in 2025/26:
- M3 Junction 9 (Q1 25/26)
  - A47 Thickthorn (Q3 25/26)
- 2.3 National Highways completed work on seven schemes that opened to traffic in 2024/25, these were:
- A30 Chiverton to Carland Cross
  - M621 Junctions 1-7
  - A303 Sparkford to Ilchester
  - M6 Junctions 21a-26
  - M2 Junction 5
  - A1 Birtley to Coal House
  - A21 Safety Package

- 2.4 At the end of March 2025 there were 11 major enhancements in construction across the SRN. Development work continues on 8 schemes, including the Lower Thames Crossing which, following careful consideration, received approval of its Development Consent Order in March 2025, representing a big step forward for the project. Construction timelines for these schemes will be set out in RIS3.

## NEAR Programme

- 2.5 In its 2021 inquiry, the Transport Committee recommended that all existing All Lanes Running (ALR) smart motorways should be retrofitted to meet the new Emergency Area (EA) spacing standard where physically possible. In January 2022, £390 million was committed to the National Emergency Area Retrofit (NEAR) programme to construct over 150 additional EAs. In March 2025 National Highways met this commitment after delivering 138 EAs during 2024/25. Combined with 13 previously completed areas, this brings the total to 151 additional emergency areas.
- 2.6 With the NEAR programme completed, just over two-thirds of the ALR smart motorway network is compliant with the new spacing standard and have places of relative safety (PRS), including Emergency Areas, spaced at an average of less than one mile. The spacing between PRS averaged across all operational ALR schemes is approximately 0.88 miles. Across the remaining third of ALR smart motorways, the average spacing is 1.08 miles, excluding the M1 J39–J42, a single scheme with the highest spacing. As these are averages, some individual schemes will have greater spacing than the average, whilst others will have less.

## Designated Funds

- 2.7 The Designated Funds programme featured small capital investments to deliver targeted improvements on, and adjacent to, the SRN, providing a range of benefits for road users, neighbours and the environment. Working with external stakeholders, National Highways invested £868 million in over 2,500 schemes across RIS2. These were allocated to four themed funds: Safety & Congestion, Environment & Wellbeing, Users & Communities and Innovations & Modernisation.
- 2.8 In 2024/25, £227 million was invested in 865 schemes, the majority of these falling under Environment & Wellbeing. Schemes ranged from addressing flooding hotspots to supporting delivery of National Highways' Key Performance Indicator targets such as biodiversity and noise mitigations.

## Renewals

- 2.9 The SRN is a critical piece of national infrastructure, supporting economic growth by connecting millions of people with towns, cities, ports and airports every day. To keep traffic flowing, it is important that assets on the SRN such as road surfacing and bridge structures are maintained and renewed to the standards set out in the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges, as well as for compliance with National Highways' licence and legal duties to maintain the existing highways network.
- 2.10 This year saw National Highways deliver its largest annual renewals programme to date, investing £1.2 billion delivering:

- 914 lane miles of asphalt surfacing
- 192 miles of renewed road safety barriers
- 16 miles of new concrete barriers
- 144 miles of refurbished or repaired concrete roads, and,
- 29 significant structures which had renewal work completed on.

## 3. Performance

### Overview

- 3.1 RIS2 contained 12 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) with stretching end of RIS targets. There was also a suite of supporting Performance Indicators sitting beneath the KPIs that were also reported and monitored, although not targeted.
- 3.2 National Highways made progress in delivering against its KPIs in 2024/25, achieving or exceeding the target for 7 of the 12 KPIs and taking steps with the department and ORR to address performance in areas where targets have not been met.

### Safety

- 3.3 As part of RIS2, National Highways was set a KPI target to reduce the number of people killed or seriously injured (KSIs) on the SRN by 50% by the end of December 2025, against a 2005-2009 baseline.
- 3.4 In 2024/25, National Highways continued to take action in working towards its KPI target. This included progressing delivery of its enhanced safety plan of 43 actions designed to further reduce casualties on the SRN. ORR has assessed that National Highways was doing everything it reasonably could in the final year of the second road period in working to achieve its target.
- 3.5 Data is published for each calendar year as part of wider road safety statistics. As of 2023, the latest available year for road casualty data, National Highways had achieved a 39% reduction in KSIs on the SRN against the baseline. Despite National Highways' work, ORR assesses that it is improbable the KPI target will be met. The final outturn position will not be known until Autumn 2026, when the validated road casualty data for 2025 will be available.
- 3.6 National Highways' Safety Action Plan for 2025/26 will be published as part of its Interim Period Delivery Plan for 2025/26, setting out actions to further improve safety on the network.

## Operational Performance

- 3.7 One of National Highways' core functions is to ensure that the SRN is a well maintained and resilient network. This is demonstrated through the outcome of its pavement (road surface) condition KPI, in 2024/25 National Highways exceeded its 96.2% target, with 96.5% of the network's pavement assets in good condition.
- 3.8 RIS2 also contained KPIs to measure National Highways' performance in supporting fast and reliable journeys on the SRN. National Highways exceeded its 2024/25 performance targets for Roadworks Network Impact and Incident Clearance, where it cleared 88.7% of motorway incidents within one hour, against the 86% target.
- 3.9 The Average Delay KPI for RIS2 was set as an ambition rather than a target due to the range of factors that influence delay, some of which are broadly outside National Highways' control, such as traffic levels. However, this does not detract from the importance of this metric and the need for National Highways to do all it can to reduce delay. At the end of RIS1 (2019/20) the observed delay was 9.5 seconds per vehicle per mile (spvpm). Average Delay increased towards the end of RIS2 to 11.8 spvpm in 2024/25, meaning National Highways missed its KPI ambition for Average Delay at the end of RIS2 to be no worse than the end of RIS1.
- 3.10 Part of the increase in Average Delay can be linked to a rise in roadworks which, although needed to maintain and improve the SRN, can have a short-term impact on delay. Analysis of the NEAR programme estimated it contributed an additional 0.7 spvpm to overall delay experienced by users on the network in 2024/25. The completion of the NEAR programme now means a significant amount of roadworks and average speed limits have since been lifted.
- 3.11 The government is concerned with the rise in average delay and recognises how costly delays can be to businesses and how frustrating they are for road users. Addressing delays on the SRN is a priority in driving economic growth. We have therefore worked with National Highways and ORR to develop a Customer and Delay Action Plan for 2025/26. This sets out a programme of analysis and research to improve understanding of delays and to identify improvements to mitigate delays from factors within the company's control. It includes regional action plans and ways to optimise management of roadworks and diversion routes to minimise the associated delays to road users. We will work with ORR to ensure National Highways is held to account for delivering the action plan and uses the outcomes to inform its approach to managing delay in RIS3.

## The Environment

- 3.12 National Highways has a responsibility to make sure the work it does has a minimal effect on the surrounding environment, implementing strategies for the benefit of communities. In 2024/25 National Highways continued to make a positive impact with its environmental management of the SRN, meeting three out of its four KPI's
- 3.13 With the volume of traffic that regularly utilises the SRN, households situated near or on the network can experience noise pollution from vehicle tyres and engine noise. Noise mitigations vary project to project and can include laying lower noise pavement

surface, installing noise barriers or upgrading houses with insulation or double glazing.

- 3.14 In 2024/25 National Highways was able to provide noise mitigations for 2,579 properties. This meant it mitigated 7,776 households over RIS2, exceeding its KPI target of 7,500.
- 3.15 National Highways is responsible for a significant amount of animal and plant life across its soft estate; this is measured through Biodiversity Units (BUs). National Highways had a KPI target to ensure there was no net loss of biodiversity by the end of RIS2. In 2024/25, National Highways delivered and assured 1,775 BUs and ending RIS2 with a net gain of 596 BUs, meeting its end of RIS target.
- 3.16 For RIS2, National Highways had an air quality KPI tasking them with bringing sections of the network that potentially exceeded legal levels of nitrogen dioxide within compliance, in the shortest time possible. Monitoring devices identified 128 potential links across the network and from starting the year with a total of 30 links in exceedance of the legal limit, the year ended with 19 links still in exceedance. The department and ORR recognise National Highways has done all it can within its limited control to improve air quality on these links, therefore is deemed to have met its requirements through the KPI.
- 3.17 The Greening Government Commitments act as a baseline for reducing the environmental impacts of work completed by government. All public bodies are set carbon reduction targets. The revised RIS2 target for National Highways was to achieve a 56% reduction in its corporate emissions, when compared to the 2017/18 baseline. "Corporate carbon" refers to the emissions produced by National Highways from its day-to-day business activities including electricity usage across its buildings and for lighting the SRN, traffic officer vehicle mileage and business travel.
- 3.18 Over RIS2 National Highways delivered a series of programmes to reduce its corporate carbon, including the installation of LED lighting across the SRN and transitioning its traffic officer vehicle fleet to low emission vehicles. In 2024/25 it achieved a 51% reduction in corporate carbon emissions against the baseline. Although this represents good progress, it does mean it has missed the KPI target.

## Customer Service and Satisfaction

- 3.19 A key measure of National Highways' management and operation of the SRN is by assessing the overall experience of those who rely upon and use the network on a regular basis.
- 3.20 The experience of road users is monitored through the Strategic Road User Survey (SRUS), a monthly survey run by Transport Focus that collates the views of drivers based on their most recent journey on the SRN. The survey measures factors deemed important to the definition of a successful journey such as management of roadworks and journey time. The SRUS overall satisfaction score is used for the Road User Satisfaction KPI in RIS2.



- 3.21 The KPI target for 2024/25 was 71%, however National Highways missed this, achieving 68.6% overall satisfaction for the year. Analysis by Transport Focus in its Strategic Road User Survey Annual Report for 2024/25, attributed the lower satisfactions score to extensive roadworks to add extra emergency areas to smart motorways. These sections of the network saw an increase in delays due to the NEAR programme which featured temporary lane closures and speed limits along some of the busiest roads on the network.
- 3.22 With the NEAR programme now completed and National Highways' customer improvements action plans in place for 2025/26, the department has set National Highways a target to improve on its 2024/25 score and achieve at least 69.6% overall satisfaction in 2025/26.

## 4. Finance

### Investment

- 4.1 The department provided National Highways with £5.1 billion of funding in 2024/25. This included significant investments of £1.7 billion on major enhancements, £1.2 billion on renewals and £473 million for maintaining and operating the network.

### Efficiency

- 4.2 National Highways had an ambitious target of achieving £2 billion of efficiencies by the end of RIS2 and has worked closely with ORR to improve how it evidences reported efficiencies. Despite some challenges during RIS2, such as high inflation, National Highways has reported £2.2 billion of efficiencies over the period, exceeding the KPI target.
- 4.3 In particular it achieved £764 million of efficiencies through its renewals programme, making it well placed to support the government's plans for renewal over the next decade.

### Value for Money

- 4.4 With pressure on the public purse, it's important to maintain a vigilant eye on the RIS portfolio to ensure it continues to provide value for money for the taxpayer. That is why in 2024/25 the government took the decision to stop development on eight schemes that had affordability or delivery issues or no longer provided value for money. These are set out in Annex A.
- 4.5 At the end of 2024/25, the RIS2 portfolio offered medium value for money with a weighted Benefit Cost Ratio of 1.8 - this means the economy will see an estimated return of £1.80 for every £1.00 of investment.

## 5. Future RIS

### Interim Settlement 2025/26

- 5.1 The Autumn Budget 2024 confirmed that the start of the next Road Investment Strategy (RIS3) would be put back until April 2025. This was to allow future investment choices to be considered as part of the Spending Review in 2025.
- 5.2 On 24 March under section 3(7) (a) of the Infrastructure Act (2015), the department presented to Parliament and published statutory directions and guidance to National Highways for a one-year Interim Settlement covering 1 April 2025 - 31 March 2026. This set out £4.842 billion of funding for the continued operation, maintenance and enhancement of the SRN between RIS2 and RIS3.

### RIS3

- 5.3 Over the past year, the department has continued to work closely with National Highways, the ORR and Transport Focus, building on lessons from previous road periods to shape RIS3, which will set out National Highways' objectives and funding from 1 April 2026.
- 5.4 National Highways has provided insight into asset condition and investment priorities, which have shaped the development of the RIS, including contributions to the evolving RIS3 funding envelope and scheme prioritisation, ensuring that RIS3 reflects a greater emphasis on maintenance, renewals and the completion of existing commitments.
- 5.5 The department will publish RIS3 by the end of March 2026.

## Annex A: Changes to RIS2 in 2024/25

### A.1 Major enhancements cancelled in 2024/25

A27 Arundel Bypass	A5036 Princess Way
A358 Taunton to Southfields	A27 Worthing and Lancing
M27 Southampton Junction 8	A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down
A1 Morpeth to Ellingham	A47 Great Yarmouth Vauxhall Junctions

### A.2 Changes to scheme commitment dates, included in National Highways' Delivery Plan Update 2024/25.

Scheme	Existing Commitment		Revised Commitment	
	Start of Works	Open for Traffic	Start of Works	Open for Traffic
A47 Blofield to North Burlingham	TBC	TBC	2024/25 Q4	RP3
A47 Thickthorn Junction	TBC	TBC	2024/25 Q4	RP3
A47 North Tuddenham to Easton	TBC	TBC	2024/25 Q4	RP3
A47 Wansford to Sutton*	2023/24 Q4	RP3	RP3	RP3
Mottram Moor and A57 Link Roads	TBC	TBC	2024/25 Q3	RP3
A38 Derby Junctions	TBC	RP3	RP3	-

A66 Northern Trans-Pennine	2023/24 Q4	RP3	RP3	-
Lower Thames Crossing (LTC)	2024/25 Q4	RP3	RP3	-
M60/M62/M66 Simister Island	2024/25 Q4	TBC	RP3	-
A12 Chelmsford to A120*	2023/24 Q4	RP3	RP3	-
M6 Junction 21a - 26	Started	2024/25 Q1	Started	2024/25 Q4
M54 to M6 Link Road	TBC	RP3	RP3	-

\*Scheme was subsequently cancelled in July 2025.

### A.3 Missed commitments

<b>Scheme</b>	<b>Previous Open for Traffic date</b>	<b>Revised Open for Traffic date</b>
A303 Sparkford to Ilchester	2023/24 Q4	2024/25 Q3
A30 Chiverton to Carland Cross	2023/24 Q4	2024/25 Q1
A63 Castle Street	2024/25 Q4	2025/26

### A.4 Changes to RIS2 Funding and Performance Metrics in 2024/25

<b>Description</b>	<b>Change</b>	<b>Reason for change</b>
Statement of Funds Available	Total RIS2 funding was changed from £24.009 bn to £23.042 bn	To reflect changes to the RIS2 portfolio in 2023/24 and 2024/25
Road User Satisfaction (KPI)	2024/25 target set to 71%	There was no existing target set for 2024/25
Roadwork Information Timeliness & Accuracy (KPI)	Change to RIS2 target from 90% to 75%	The change reflects deeper understanding of the level of cancellations due to reasons outside of National Highways' control.

Roadwork Network Impact (KPI)	Change to 2024/25 target from 47 million weighted lane metre days (WLMD) to 51 WLMD	The change reflects the increased programme of works in 2024/25.
Efficiency (KPI)	Change to RIS2 target from £2.111 bn to £1.990 bn	The change reflects the reduction in RIS2 funding
Drainage Resilience (Performance Indicator, PI)	Change to methodology so it is now weather normalised	Methodology is now weather normalised, so the PI better reflects National Highways' performance
Logistics & Coach Survey (PI)	Addition of the PI to RIS2	Added as a PI as per the commitment within RIS2.



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