

# Road Network Policy Consultation - Response

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# Introduction

1. On 1 February 2011 the Government opened a consultation, proposing to decentralise responsibility for the primary route network (PRN) and roads classification; and restating its policy on the principles of the strategic road network (SRN) and detrunking policy.
2. On 1 May the consultation closed, with a total of 83 responses from local government, intelligent transport systems providers, motorists' organisations, pedestrian and cyclist advocates and members of the public.
3. This document summarises those responses and explains how the Government is modifying its proposals to take into account the ideas and concerns raised during the consultation. Since the reaction to these proposals was largely positive, it also lays out our plans for introducing the new system.

## Key points of the consultation

4. The road network in England is organised through three main systems:
  - Major national roads form a strategic road network (SRN), operated by the Highways Agency on behalf of the Secretary of State;
  - Important routes for medium-to-long-distance navigation, including the SRN, form a primary route network (PRN);
  - Other than motorways, all roads are A roads, B roads, classified unnumbered or unclassified according to their importance and use.
5. The SRN is a network of national importance, and it is appropriate for it to be administered by a single organisation. Other roads, including the non-SRN elements of the PRN, are of primarily local importance.
6. Policy for managing PRN and roads classification has not been revisited for many years, and still largely reflect the centralising ethos of the 1960s. Decisions cannot be made on the smallest of changes without the approval of Whitehall. In the era of localism, this is no longer appropriate. We proposed to transfer responsibility for classification and primary routing to the local highway authority. We also wanted to restate policy on the SRN to provide greater clarity about its definition - in

particular by reiterating the principles around which the network was constructed, and by explaining the ways in which any changes to the SRN could be made.

7. Under the new approach:
  - The Department would remain responsible for the SRN in England;
  - The Department would maintain a list of 'primary destinations', but local authorities will decide by which routes they are best connected, working together where necessary; and
  - Local authorities would have responsibility for road classification in their area.
8. To help with a more decentralised system, it would be important that records are kept in a standardised fashion. Local authorities would be responsible for recording the status of their network, and for sharing the information with interested parties.
9. We also said we would look for ways in which private 'satnav' companies can work together with central and local government to manage traffic and provide better information to motorists.

# 1. Strategic Road Network

## Principles

**1.1** The consultation document did not propose any changes to our policy on the SRN. However, given that we were proposing reforms to other sections of the road network, we believed that it was appropriate to restate what that policy currently is, and to offer an opportunity to comment.

**1.2** Respondents generally supported the underlying principles of the SRN, which were identified as:

- linking the main centres of population;
- facilitating access to major ports, airports and rail terminals;
- enabling access to peripheral regions; and
- providing key cross-border routes to Scotland and Wales.

They thought that these four points meant that the network's purpose had been well defined. They felt that the principles offered sufficient local flexibility to allow their widespread application without leading to unintended consequences, and that they captured the key points of what the strategic road network should do.

**1.3** As such, we do not propose any major modifications to the overarching logic of the strategic road network.

## Extent of the network

**1.4** Some private individuals and representative groups suggested non-specific additions to the strategic road network. These generally focused on 'last mile' connections – the section of a route between the last junction with the SRN and the front gate of the relevant facility – which is generally on local authority roads. Different respondents suggested adding the last mile connections to:

- major industrial/commercial sites
  - major transport interchanges
- 1.5** These last mile connections frequently form part of long-distance journeys, and traffic on these routes often contains an above-average proportion of non-local traffic. However, the situation is complicated when the local perspective is taken into account as these roads usually perform a variety of non-national functions as well.
- 1.6** For example, the main access to Birmingham Airport is the A45. This is also a major route into Birmingham itself, and between Birmingham and Coventry. If the road was included as part of the SRN for its 'last mile' stretch, it could end up being managed predominantly for the benefit of those using the airport; which in turn would disadvantage those using the road for other journeys. It would also create practical difficulties in terms of maintenance and administration, which do not arise under the current model. As such, we do not propose to add last mile sections to the SRN.
- 1.7** Three representative bodies suggested that there should be a general increase in the size of the SRN, to incorporate up to 10% of the road network (up from the current 2.5%). Over the past ten years the Agency has successfully worked with local authorities to detrunk over 3,000 km of its network, handing over roads to local control. At present, the Government's policy is to increase local control over assets and services, and a major centralisation of the road network would be contrary to this aim.
- 1.8** At present, we do not believe that there is a strategic imperative to expand the SRN. In paragraph 1.2 we noted that the purpose of the network was:
- linking the main centres of population;
  - facilitating access to major ports, airports and rail terminals;
  - enabling access to peripheral regions; and
  - providing key cross-border routes to Scotland and Wales.
- 1.9** The existing network seems to fulfil all of these purposes adequately. The SRN has a presence in every county, and links all of the seven largest airports and ten largest ports. There are seven connections to Wales and two to Scotland. Only three of the 66 English urban areas with a population above 100,000 are not on or near the SRN – and one of these is served by an extensive system of locally-managed dual carriageways.

- 1.10** As such, we believe that the network at its current size can already do what is required of it. There is no political or practical reason for such an expansion at this point in time.
- 1.11** Some local authorities wanted to explore the possibility of detrunking specific roads. We will investigate these cases individually, involving neighbouring authorities where they have a stake in the road in question.
- 1.12** Other authorities were concerned that a major programme of detrunking would be forthcoming. We would like to reassure authorities that we have no plans to institute a further round of detrunking.

## Strategic National Corridors

- 1.13** Four local authorities suggested the creation of new strategic national corridors (SNCs) to connect Norwich, Plymouth and western Cumbria, and to include the A3. In May 2011 the Department completed a [consultation exercise](#) looking at SNCs, which introduced new SNCs to link Edinburgh and Belfast.<sup>1</sup> We considered other requests for additional SNCs at this time, and we do not feel that sufficient time has elapsed to warrant a re-evaluation.
- 1.14** One local authority asked for clarification about the status of routes of strategic national importance (RSNIs – roads that form part of an SNC) that do not form part of the SRN – most commonly the last mile connection to a port or airport. They wanted an indication of whether there were plans to incorporate these roads into the SRN. We do not propose to change the status of any roads at present, or the funding arrangements associated with them.
- 1.15** One authority also questioned whether improvements would receive preferential funding if they formed part of a RSNI. Under current arrangements, we do not favour improvements on a RSNI over other improvements. The distinction has traditionally been that we would expect local partners to play a greater role in suggesting improvements that do not sit on a RSNI. We will be announcing future arrangements for investment in the road network, reflecting the abolition of the regional tier of government, during 2012.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www2.dft.gov.uk/consultations/closed/2010-33/snc-responses-summary.pdf>



## International Networks

- 1.16** Separate to this consultation, further developments on the TEN-T network suggest that sections of the TEN-T network, in particular last-mile sections, may not coincide with the SRN in all locations. Based on this, we are looking to ensure the following principles are recognised by the Commission:
- All SNCs to be represented on the TEN-T comprehensive network; and
  - The TEN-T network to follow SNCs where possible, the SRN where this is not possible; the PRN where there is no appropriate route on the SRN; and other roads where no SNC/SRN/PRN route is practical;
- 1.17** The nature of the revised TEN-T network is different to both the SRN and PRN, and that some TEN-T routes will necessarily be on local roads.

## 2. Primary Route Network

### Principles

- 2.1** The consultation proposed a partial decentralisation of the existing system for organising the PRN. The system is constructed from a series of primary routes, which are used to link a series of primary destinations (major towns, junctions, etc). Under the new system central government would determine the location of primary destinations, but local highways authorities would be free to choose the primary routes that link them. All sections of the SRN will remain part of the PRN.
- 2.2** The reaction to this policy was positive. The majority of respondents welcomed greater flexibility, and local authorities thought the opportunity to use the PRN to help influence local traffic would be useful. Balanced against this, some private individuals were concerned about a loss of cohesion, or that some local authorities would act without informing their neighbours. One local authority said they would prefer the whole system to remain under the control of the DfT.
- 2.3** Based on the response we have received, we will proceed with the introduction of the new system. However, we will make some modifications to our proposals, as described below.

### Primary Destinations

- 2.4** We proposed the introduction of five new primary destinations, to match major ports and airports previously identified as destinations for strategic national corridors. These are:
- Birmingham Airport
  - East Midlands Airport
  - Luton Airport
  - Thamesport (for Medway Ports East)

- Port of Tilbury

Respondents were fully in favour of adding these destinations to the PRN.

**2.5** Some respondents noted that passenger numbers at East Midlands Airport were lower than at some regional airports, such as Bristol International Airport. East Midlands Airport was identified as one of the top-7 English airports because of the volume of freight that it handles, which is second only to Heathrow. In order for these other airports to qualify as primary destinations, their freight or passenger numbers would need to increase until they could be classed as being of equal significance to the existing top-7.

**2.6** There were also suggestions for a further 30 new primary destinations. In general, we would prefer to avoid a wholesale expansion of the list of primary destinations. This is for two reasons:

- The PRN is designed to help medium and long-distance travel by indicating a good route for through-travel. When there is a proliferation of primary destinations or primary routes in an area, it can become unclear which route a driver is being encouraged to follow. Motorists could potentially end up using less-suitable roads or getting lost.
- The addition of a new primary destination requires re-signing stretches of road, which has cost implications for local authorities. In some cases, re-signing can spread over several local authority areas, and as a result some authorities responding to the consultation asked that we bear in mind the expense of major changes to signing or numbering.

**2.7** We would stress that a location does not have to be a primary destination in order to be signed from the road network. Local authorities are still free to sign destinations at any distance, and to cooperate with other authorities or with the Highways Agency for signing further afield. We would expect all of the locations listed below to be adequately signed regardless of their status on the primary route network.

**2.8** There is no single test that determines whether a location should be a primary destination, and several factors have informed our judgement. We have reviewed the proposed destinations using a consistent approach, based around the criteria listed in the consultation document:

- **Population** – the size of the settlement;
- **Attraction** – the amount of traffic that will come to this location;

- **Nodes** – locations that motorists are very likely to pass through in order to get to a final destination; and
- **Density** – the number of primary destinations already in the area.

We have also considered whether a location is already on the PRN, as this would reduce the practical benefits of designating it as a primary destination. In all cases where the decision has been to change status we have ensured that the local authority is in favour, as they will bear the costs of any change.

## 2.9 We have assessed the proposed destinations as follows:

Location	Decision	Justification
Bishops Stortford	Not approved	Very close to another primary destination (Stansted Airport); already connected to the PRN (M11, A120) and well signed from the motorway.
Bristol International Airport	Not approved	Close to another primary destination (Bristol); not one of the top-7 English airports; already connected to the PRN.
Callington	Not approved	Neither a large settlement nor a significant node in long-distance travel.
Cambourne/Pool/Redruth	Not approved	Redruth is already a primary destination; and signing multiple towns as one could confuse motorists.
Colne	Confirmed	Local authority records Colne was already agreed as a primary destination. Serves as a key node for traffic driving from West Yorkshire to the M65.
Daventry rail freight terminal	Not approved	Close to a primary destination (Rugby) and already served by the PRN (M1 J18); already well signed from the motorway. Freight traffic is not comparable to major container or ro-ro ports that are identified as primary destinations in their own right.
Dearne Valley	Not approved	Location is diffuse, stretching most of the distance between Barnsley and Doncaster; inclusion might therefore not help motorists trying to find their destination. PRN serves parts of the Dearne Valley already.
Ellesmere Port	Not approved	Town is already well served by the PRN (M53), and close to another primary destination (Birkenhead). Local authority did not request change.
Hatfield	Not approved	Close to a primary destination (St Albans) and already

		served by the PRN (A1(M)).
Hayle	Not approved	Close to a primary destination (Penzance) and already served by the PRN (A30)
Ledbury	Not approved	Already served by two PRN routes (A419, A449) and already signed in a similar manner to a primary destination.
Leeds Bradford airport	Not approved	Close to another primary destination (Leeds); not one of the top-7 English airports; already connected to PRN.
Liverpool John Lennon Airport	Not approved	Very close to another primary destination (Speke); not one of the top-7 English airports; already connected to PRN. Local authority would prefer to continue to sign Speke.
London Gateway Port	Not approved	Construction of port not yet completed. Once usage is sufficient to justify inclusion, we are happy to re-examine the case.
Looe	Not approved	Neither a large settlement nor an important node in long-distance travel.
Lytham St Annes	Not approved	Already close to another primary destination (Blackpool).
Marlborough	Retain in network	One residents' group requested the removal of Marlborough from the network. Local authority has requested that Marlborough be retained. Approximately ten miles from nearest primary destination.
Minehead	Add to network	Local council has requested addition. Minehead is almost twenty miles from the nearest primary destination, and around fifteen miles from any part of the PRN, making it one of the furthest towns from the PRN in the whole of England.
National Exhibition Centre	Not approved	Extremely close to newly approved primary destination (Birmingham Airport); already well-signed from motorway.
Northallerton	Not approved	Town is relatively close to PRN destination Thirsk, which is an important junction. Town is currently the only county town not on the PRN. Local authority does not believe that traffic is sufficient to justify inclusion on the PRN.
Port of Liverpool	Not approved	Port of Liverpool is a top-10 UK port, and clearly a destination in its own right. At present, it sits within Bootle, which is itself a primary destination. Local authority would prefer to continue to sign Bootle, rather than Port of Liverpool.
Puckeridge	Not approved	Neither a large settlement nor an important node in long-distance travel.

Saltash	Not approved	Very close to a primary destination (Plymouth) and already served by the PRN (A38)
Southend Airport	Not approved	Very close to another primary destination (Southend); passenger traffic is not yet at a level where it is comparable with a top-7 English airport.
St Ives	Not approved	Close to a primary destination (Penzance) and already served by the PRN (A30)
Stone	Ratify removal	Local council believes this location has already been removed from the network, and wishes to confirm. Town is close to other primary destinations (Stoke on Trent, Stafford), is already served by the PRN (A51, A34).
Torpoint	Not approved	Neither a large settlement nor an important node in long-distance travel.
Wellington	Not approved	Close to a primary destination (Taunton) and already served by the PRN (M5 J18)
Winsford	Not approved	Close to another primary destination (Northwich) and already served by the PRN (A54)

**2.10** In addition, two representative bodies suggested that the PRN should include all towns over a certain size (between 25,000 and 30,000). There is a clear logic to this proposition. However we believe there are two reasons why such an approach would prove difficult in practice.

- The density of towns varies significantly across the country. A town of 30,000 near the M25 is much less significant to the local transport network than a town of 30,000 on the North York Moors. The PRN is designed to ensure adequate coverage of the country, and this relies on a degree of flexibility.
- As mentioned above, major changes to the PRN would mean replacing large numbers of signs, at considerable cost to local authorities and the Highways Agency. Any dramatic recasting of the network therefore needs to offer a corresponding benefit.

As such, we do not propose a radical overhaul of primary destinations at the present time.

**2.11** One authority suggested the reintroduction of ‘super primary’ destinations, representing the largest urban areas in the country, signed for the surrounding fifty miles. In practice, very large urban areas are already well signed on the SRN; and large-scale change on locally-managed sections of the PRN could require the replacement of a very large number of signs. Without indications of a clear benefit, we would be reluctant to impose this on local authorities.

## Cooperation between authorities

- 2.12** A common concern for local authority respondents was that decentralising responsibility for individual primary routes would lead to disputes between neighbouring authorities. There was a fear that one authority might make a decision on a primary route that was strongly against the interests of travellers from a neighbouring county; or that in the worst case the PRN might become disconnected at a county boundary.
- 2.13** We recognise that this is a risk and would be a serious problem, and we will introduce stronger safeguards to prevent this from happening:
- Whereas before we expected authorities to talk with their neighbours before making a change to a primary route, we will now require them to consult affected highway authorities ahead of any changes. They will be required to ensure that they do not unreasonably frustrate traffic travelling from the neighbouring county.
  - Where a change involves a significant change to a primary route belonging to several highway authorities, we will require the authority proposing change to secure the agreement of the others along the Route. This will include the agreement of the Highways Agency where the SRN is affected.
- 2.14** We also reiterate (see below) that local authorities can appeal to DfT to resolve cases where it is perceived that another highway authority has behaved improperly. Taken with the changes above, this should ensure that authorities that act in a reasonable and rational way are able to protect their interests by both progressing and resisting change in concert with their neighbours.
- 2.15** One local authority suggested that a process needed to be arranged with Scotland and Wales. Roads classification is a devolved matter, and we cannot mandate cooperation in either area. However we understand that parallel revisions are being considered in other parts of the UK.
- 2.16** There were also private respondents and representative bodies who felt that decentralisation would lead to an inconsistency of approach between local authority areas; and that a greater central role was required to ensure a unified national standard. This overstates the extent to which a clear national standard currently exists – the contrast between some counties is already significant. Local variation is not a problem, provided that the PRN continues to function as a coherent network.

## Pressure to downgrade

**2.17** Some local authorities were concerned that there would be pressure to downgrade existing primary routes, particularly from activist groups living along the current Route. On a related topic, several members of the public and residents' groups suggested that the PRN be prevented from including roads with weight, width or height restrictions.

**2.18** We recognise that this is a difficult situation, and it was partly for this reason that the consultation document noted that:

*3.13 The PRN is designed to fit together as a network, and primary routes must link up to one another. If changes are made to a route, it must still form part of a coherent and sensible network. The Department recognises that this will, in places, mean that primary routes will go through densely populated areas or sites with environmental issues.*

**2.19** In our guidance, we will make this point more strongly. We fully recognise that there are some roads in some places where traffic does have a significant environmental impact, but where there is no other viable route for vehicles to take. We will make clear that, in these cases, local authorities will have no option but to maintain the existing primary route. In some parts of the country, this may entail using roads that are subject to restrictions.

**2.20** We will continue to require local authorities to provide a primary route between two nearby primary destinations, unless they can demonstrate that traffic has fallen to such a level that it is no longer required. In such cases, the Department would want to consider whether there is a case for removing either primary destination from the PRN.

**2.21** One authority suggested that we should avoid routing the PRN through places where further improvements to the network were impossible. We believe that these reforms should make such an approach easier to deliver, should the local authority be so inclined.

**2.22** A few respondents were also concerned that Routes could be downgraded for financial reasons. As noted in the consultation document, there is no requirement to maintain the PRN at a particular standard – it is already left to local discretion (except for bridge loadings). Given the number of proposed additions to the list of primary destinations, it appears there are still strong positive reasons for maintaining a primary route.



## Appeals Process

- 2.23** Some authorities expressed concern that an appeals process had been proposed for local residents, but that no comparable process existed for local authorities. We would like to confirm that the appeals process is meant to cover all interests, including members of the public, local authorities, motorists' organisations and others.
- 2.24** As noted above, we are strengthening procedural requirements to consult neighbouring highway authorities ahead of relevant changes; and this provides a clearer basis for an appeal. The Department is fully prepared to intervene should an authority be found to be making perverse decisions, or to be ignoring the need to consult with its neighbours.

## Funding

- 2.25** Two local authorities requested that additional funding be made available to cover the cost of any changes to the PRN, particularly to cover the costs of bridge strengthening.
- 2.26** Changes to signing and administrative costs are already the responsibility of the highway authority, and have always been so. The Department has already funded an extensive programme of bridge strengthening, to ensure that the whole of the existing PRN complies with European standards. If a local authority wishes to change the course of a primary route, then it is their responsibility to meet the costs of any improvements or resigning.

# 3. Roads Classification

## Principles

- 3.1** The consultation proposed the full decentralisation of decision-making on roads classification, so that the local highway authority would decide the status of roads in its area. The SRN would remain the responsibility of the Highways Agency, and roads on the PRN would be either A roads or motorways; but aside from this a local authority would be free to class a road in whatever way they felt to be appropriate.
- 3.2** A large majority of respondents welcomed the change, as it enables local authorities to streamline their approaches to roads management and reduce bureaucracy. Some authorities said that they were already taking steps towards such a system on a local level, and that this would significantly simplify the process of carrying out their plans. Environmental and residents' groups saw it as giving greater freedom to downgrade roads in environmentally sensitive locations.
- 3.3** A minority thought that the system would encourage parochialism, and would lead to a loss of network cohesion. The appeals process will offer an avenue for challenging perverse decisions, and clear guidance will indicate what is and is not possible when reclassifying a road. In addition the Association of Directors for Environment, Economy, Planning and Transport has already said that it will help to ensure a consistent picture across the country.
- 3.4** Based on this response, we will implement the proposals laid out in the consultation document, subject to the points noted below.

## Cooperation between authorities & appeals

- 3.5** Some authorities were concerned that there would be insufficient cooperation between local authorities, which could lead to inconsistent treatment of a road as it crossed from one county to another. As was noted in the section on the PRN, some respondents were concerned that a particular road might change classification at the county line, which would only serve to confuse motorists.

- 3.6** We will strengthen the requirement to secure agreement of a neighbouring authority where a change in classification will affect a road crossing the county boundary, or a road that carries a substantial amount of traffic between the two counties.
- 3.7** In all cases where the road crosses the county boundary, we will require the proposing authority to secure the agreement of the neighbouring authority. No road should change its classification solely because it has crossed from one highway authority to another.
- 3.8** For all changes to the classification of an A or B road carrying a substantial amount of traffic from one county to another, the proposing authority must ensure that changes do not unreasonably frustrate the free flow of traffic. Likewise, where there is a significant effect on flows of traffic from the strategic road network onto the local road network, the proposing authority should ensure traffic continues to flow effectively.
- 3.9** Again, as with the PRN, there was concern from some local authorities that there was no clear appeals process for them to use. The appeals process for members of the public is also designed for local authorities who are concerned about irregularities in the decision processes of their neighbours.
- 3.10** Two respondents suggested that some kind of independent regulator or arbitration body would be useful to decide in disputes. The volume of reclassification work is not sufficient to justify creating such an institution.

## Coordination in urban areas

- 3.11** Local and transport authority respondents in major urban areas noted that there was potentially a tension between the interests of London or metropolitan boroughs and the traffic policy implemented across the whole urban area. One respondent suggested that in such cases a regional approach should be adopted to classification decisions.
- 3.12** Local highway authorities remain legally responsible for a road, and for the costs of any modifications in signing. They also continue to have responsibility for day-to-day traffic management. In such a situation, it would be inappropriate to force them to surrender control of classification in their area. However, we support voluntary cooperation between urban authorities, and have no objections if they vest day-to-day responsibility in a coordinating body.

## Pressure to downgrade

- 3.13** As with the PRN, some local authorities were concerned that the new system would be used to apply pressure to downgrade roads for the benefit of a small number of local residents.
- 3.14** In order to meet this concern, we will strengthen our guidance around road classification in the same way as for the PRN. In particular, we will reiterate that the needs of medium and long distance travel will require A roads to go through populated areas, and may cause environmental problems as a result. We will make clear that, in some cases, local authorities will have no alternative but to continue allowing an A road to follow a particular route.

## Classification framework

- 3.15** Some respondents, either members of the public or local authority staff, felt that it would be beneficial to set out criteria for the use of a particular class of road. For example authorities could be required to link towns of a certain size using a B road, and of a larger size using an A road. One respondent felt it would be particularly helpful to link this to suitability for HGVs.
- 3.16** It is for individual local authorities to adopt their own systems for using roads classification and for this reason we will not mandate a single national standard. What will make sense for traffic in central London will not make sense for rural Lincolnshire – and one standard designed to cover both will end up serving neither. The end result would be confusion for motorists.
- 3.17** The need for flexibility is particularly strong for certain types of traffic. In some areas HGVs will necessarily have to travel by difficult roads; whilst in others there will be more flexibility in routing, and authorities will be able to take a view of which route suits traffic best. Imposing a minimum standard might result in areas being cut off from the main road network, which would be of no help to locals or motorists.
- 3.18** The same is also true of walkers and cyclists – in some places there may be particularly suitable routes, while in others they may have to coexist with other forms of traffic. Authorities will need to take their own decisions about how these situations are handled.
- 3.19** To provide more clarity, we will look to include some examples in our guidance. However, ultimately we hope that local authorities will be able to share best practice in managing classification decisions, either directly or through professional bodies with an involvement in transportation.

## Consultation

**3.20** There was uncertainty among local authorities around whether they would be required to run their own consultations when changing a road's classification. We propose that authorities will need to consult a neighbouring authority when they are reclassifying a road that runs across the county boundary, or which takes a substantial amount of traffic from one authority to another. Beyond this, however, we do not intend to prescribe any further consultation.

**3.21** We note that consultation is not required under the current system, and do not think it is appropriate to impose a stricter consultation requirement at present. Local authorities are free to put in place any arrangements they wish; but in the current climate we recognise that some authorities may wish to direct resources elsewhere.

## 4. Data Arrangements

- 4.1** The Department's proposals for reforming data collection around reclassification centre on three changes:
- Local authorities become responsible for maintaining records on PRN and classification changes, and inform the Department and Ordnance Survey directly;
  - Reporting forms are streamlined from eight to one; and
  - The National Street Gazetteer becomes the central record of any changes to the PRN or classification (the Trunk Road Street Gazetteer for the SRN).
- 4.2** Many respondents, particularly among local authorities, thought that this would reduce the work involved in data collection; and the remainder thought that it would not lead to any increase in the workload.
- 4.3** One transport authority proposed to centralise reporting for the authorities in its area, and we are supportive of this approach.

### Sharing information

- 4.4** No respondents thought that any key groups were excluded from the reporting system. The only concern, raised by some local authorities, was that a neighbouring local authority might not be informed when a change took place. The changes mentioned in chapters 2 and 3 above aim to prevent this from being an issue; and the revised form will ensure that consultation between local authorities has taken place before a road is formally reclassified.

### Data formats

- 4.5** Ordnance Survey and several local authorities noted that it would be helpful to record changes in a standardised format, which included references to systems used in mapping programmes. Several

suggestions were made as to what references should be included, including:

- Ordnance Survey's Mastermap Topography Layer TOID (Topographic Identifier)
- Ordnance Survey's Mastermap Integrated Transport Network (ITN) TOID

**4.6** Our records need to be permanent and stable, while these particular references are subject to change. We therefore propose to base reporting on grid coordinates of the start and end point of each change. This will be supplemented by descriptive text, in cases where there would be ambiguity.

**4.7** However, the revised form will also provide the facility for authorities to report against other datasets, should they wish to.

## Common portal

**4.8** Several authorities, together with Ordnance Survey, suggested that it would be useful to have a common mapping portal through which reporting could take place. The Department has considered this, as part of a wider system relating to a number of geographically-specific functions (traffic orders, speed limits, etc), and can understand the appeal of such a platform. However, given the current economic climate, such a project is not a priority. We will look to provide the best reporting mechanism with tools already available.

## 5. Satellite Navigation

- 5.1** One of the purposes of the consultation was to find out whether the existing system of classification was working effectively alongside recent developments in satellite navigation (satnav) technology. The final section of the consultation asked whether there were any cost neutral ways of improving communication between satnav and mapping companies on the one hand, and central and local government on the other.
- 5.2** There was clear agreement among respondents of all types that the existing situation was not ideal, but there was less certainty about a potential solution.

### Organising data

- 5.3** Many respondents, particularly local authorities and those involved in intelligent transport, focused on the sharing and organisation of data. ITS-UK, an umbrella body representing the intelligent transport systems industry, recommended that it would be more productive to focus on organising the provision of data rather than trying to control the algorithms used in satnav devices. This view was supported by several respondents, whose suggestions included:
- Introducing a single standard for providing update information to satnav companies and try to provide this through a single source;
  - Doing more to share road works data, winter maintenance priority routes, tactical diversion data and authorities' HGV and coach advisory routes;
  - Providing a clear process for recording unsuitable stretches of road, both for local authorities and for the general public.
- 5.4** Some authorities reported that they had already had success working with mapping providers and satnav companies to share data and pursue common objectives, and that these were usually based around providing a standardised flow of information. The Highways Agency already shares a range of data with satnav companies, including traffic flow and incident information, which is used by satnav service providers in association with



other data to provide dynamic routing advice, usually as part of a subscription service.

## Regulation

- 5.5** Other respondents wanted to see a more regulatory approach, particularly members of the public and residents' groups. There were suggestions to require:
- Mapping providers to validate their data;
  - Satnav companies to consult about changing their algorithms;
  - Algorithms to be calculated in a particular way;
  - Satnav companies to be liable to misdirection by their devices; and
  - Driving with an outdated satnav, or satnav companies not providing regular map updates, to be made a criminal offence.
- 5.6** The Government is committed to reducing the burdens on business, and we would only look to introduce regulations as a last resort, following rigorous assessment of any possible consequences.
- 5.7** We do not propose to introduce new and potentially counterproductive regulations on the sector. These could ultimately reduce either the ability of an ordinary motorist to buy a satnav device or the freedom with which they can use it, and the ability of device and service providers to innovate.

## Designating routes

- 5.8** Some respondents, again mostly members of the public or residents' groups, wanted the option of designating a particular route as 'unsuitable' for goods vehicles or for all non-local traffic. This is an understandable response from a range of communities that feel they suffer from through traffic that may have been directed by satnav devices.
- 5.9** A system for avoiding certain routes is partially in place already – several satnav companies produce HGV-specific devices which indicate roads that are unsuitable for large, wide and heavy traffic. The problem of unsuitably directed traffic tends to arise where HGVs are using ordinary car satnavs, which do not provide the same warnings. Giving these roads a special designation would do nothing to change the behaviour of this second group.

- 5.10** More generally, declaring certain roads ‘off-limits’ to satnav devices, or forcing satnav devices to follow physically signed routes, would be against the interests of many ordinary motorists who own a satnav. Applied on a large scale this would undermine the usefulness of these devices and potentially impede the continuing evolution of their capabilities. Likewise, forcing satnav devices to follow physically signed routes would seem to be a step backwards.

## Moving forward

- 5.11** The Government is already taking steps to reduce misdirection by satnav devices. This new sign will be made available as part of the revisions to the regulations on traffic signs – which we expect to come in to force in late November. It is an informative sign, intended to be placed where there are problems with drivers using satellite navigation, which does not require a formal traffic order to be made to be placed.



- 5.12** The most practical approach to improving the situation around satnav devices seems to be greater data-sharing between highway authorities (including the Highways Agency) and, in particular, mapping providers. As such, we intend to follow the suggestion of several respondents and organise meetings in which these two groups, together with satnav companies and central government, can discuss ways in which data sharing can be improved. ITS UK, the umbrella body for the satnav industry, and ADEPT<sup>2</sup>, a local government association, have agreed to co-chair the session.
- 5.13** Following our workshop, we will work with the participants to help deliver cooperative methods for data exchange, helping to provide satnav users with up-to-date information when making their journey.

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<sup>2</sup> Association of Directors of Environment, Economy, Planning and Transportation

## 6. General responses

- 6.1** We received some responses that do not neatly fit into any of the sections above.

### Individual roads

- 6.2** Several residents' groups or private citizens asked us to consider changing the status of individual roads. Given that we are decentralising control over the network, it would not be appropriate for us to mandate changes that the relevant highway authority has not requested.
- 6.3** We recommend that any individual or group looking to change the status of a road should contact their local authority.

### Road improvements

- 6.4** Several respondents suggested that investments should be made, either in specific road improvements or more generally in expanding network capacity. This consultation is intended to look at policy around road networks, and is not considering current or future investment priorities.

### Road numbering

- 6.5** One respondent suggested that we should end the use of road numbers with a (M) suffix (e.g. A1(M)), claiming that this was confusing to motorists. The (M) suffix indicates that motorway regulations apply to a road, in the same way as an M prefix.
- 6.6** Normally, an (M) suffix is used to indicate a stretch of road that is of motorway standard that forms part of a larger route. A change of numbering would therefore risk creating confusion - for example if the A1 were to be numbered A1, then for example M19, then A1 again. This would be worse in urban areas, where short stretches of motorway could result in motorists losing the route of their journey.

### Farm equipment

- 6.7** One respondent suggested preventing farm equipment from using some roads. Farm machinery is banned from Special Roads (i.e. motorways),

where there is no direct access to fields. However, farm equipment must be moved and farmers have a right to be able to access their property.

### **Toll roads**

- 6.8** One respondent was concerned that a local authority had removed tolls from a nearby road, thereby encouraging greater traffic. A local authority, either as the owner of a toll road or in cooperation with an owner, is entitled to remove a toll.

# Next Steps

- 7.1** The response to our proposed changes to the management of roads classification and the PRN has been largely positive. We will implement the proposals outlined in our consultation document, subject to the modifications laid out above.
- 7.2** To help local authorities prepare for the change and to give them time to write their own policies, we will introduce the new system on 1 April 2012. In the intervening period, we will only action changes to classifications or the PRN if they have been requested by the relevant highway authority.
- 7.3** We will release updated guidance in the next few months, to allow local authorities to develop their own policies ahead of April. This will be based on the material in the consultation document, and any local authority that wishes to take an early view should work from the principles laid out there. We will also release our updated classification form.
- 7.4** As discussed in chapter 5, we will work with ITS UK and ADEPT, to organise a workshop between local authorities and satnav companies. We expect this workshop to take place in early 2012.