

Foreword

Highways England is a new organisation, launched in April 2015. We are responsible for England's strategic road network, and we have an ambitious programme to deliver the Government's Roads Investment Strategy. This investment is designed to maximise the road network's support to the UK economy, and to support the quality of life of communities up and down the country. As we do this we will ensure that all activity on our roads is delivered in a way that not only minimises harm, but ultimately improves the environment.

This strategy is designed to communicate our approach to key stakeholders as we drive forward our work to improve the environment. We are keen for partners to help us solve these challenges and work with us as we implement the solutions.

This is our first Environment Strategy as Highways England and with it we intend to promote positive change and to strive for the best possible environmental outcomes.

Through the operation, maintenance and improvement of our roads, our aspiration is:

“a strategic road network working more harmoniously with its surroundings to deliver an improved environment.”

This is our vision for the environment, and we are committed in our resolve to deliver it.

Introduction

Highways England is a public sector company, owned by the Government. The primary role of Highways England is to operate, maintain and improve the motorways and major A roads in England (known as the strategic road network).

Our environmental performance is important to us. We understand that our operations can impact upon the environment and we are committed to improving our environmental outcomes. This, the Highways England Environment Strategy for the first Road Period, 2015/16 to 2019/20, sets the vision that will guide our environmental actions and activities over the next five years.

This Environment Strategy has been developed in line with the Strategic Business Plan and Road Investment Strategy, which sets out a vision for the strategic road network (see Figure 1). It will sit alongside and complement our other strategies, such as our Sustainable Development Strategy and Asset Management Strategy.

As set out in the Road Investment Strategy, our ambition for the next 25 years is to revolutionise our roads and create a modern strategic road network that supports a modern Britain, making a real difference to people's lives and businesses' prospects.

Within this ambition, and in our Strategic Business Plan, we have defined an 'improved environment' as one of our strategic outcomes, with a focus on people and the built and natural environment.

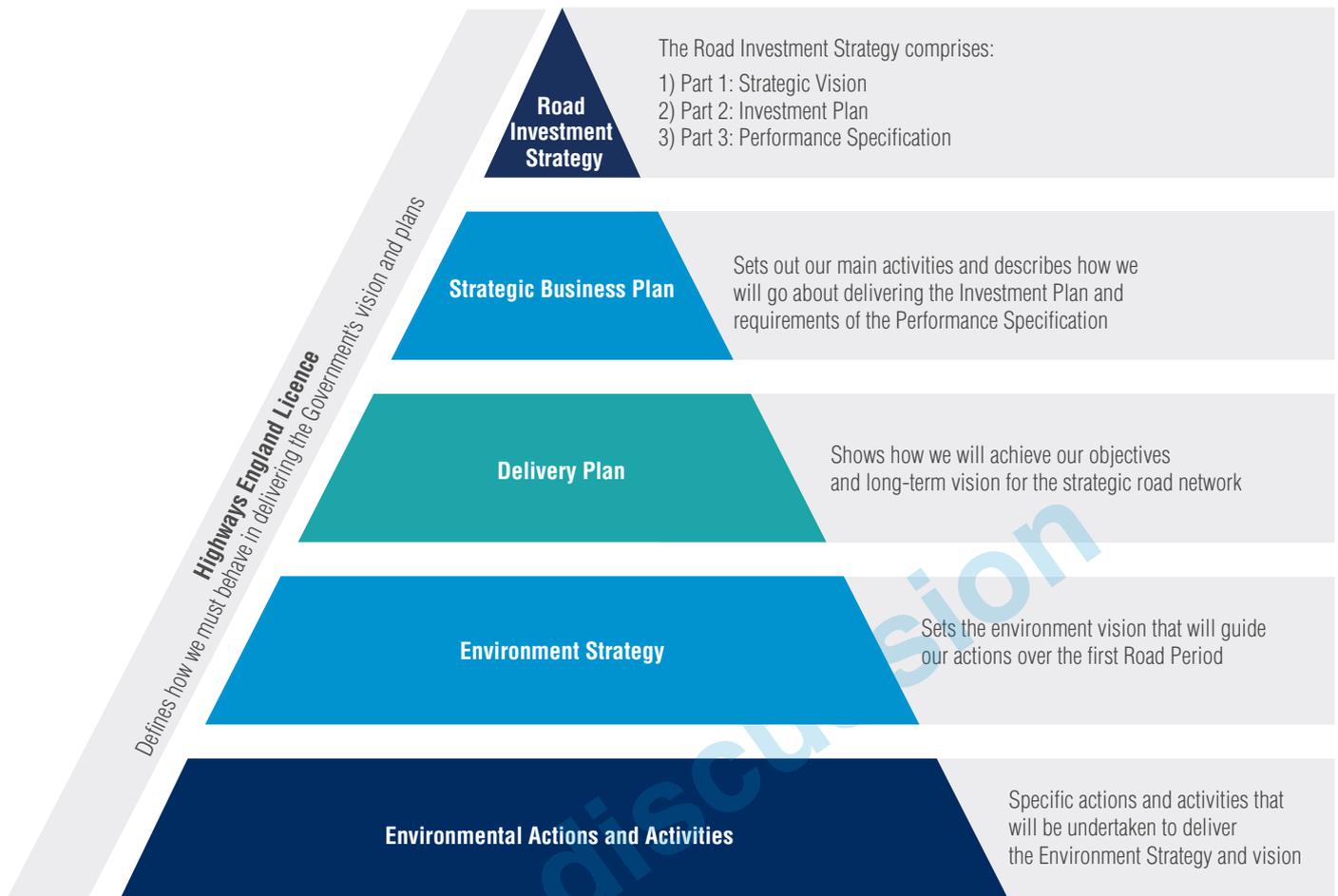


Figure 1

This Environment Strategy is our first step in delivering this outcome. It will guide the direction of our environmental actions and activities over the next five years in order to most effectively deliver our vision for the environment.

Vision for the environment

With our launch as Highways England, we are refining our environmental focus so that enhancement, rather than reduced harm, underpins our approach. By rebuilding our focus in this way, we intend to deliver truly improved environmental outcomes on the strategic road network and our vision for the environment is at the heart of this:

“A strategic road network working more harmoniously with its surroundings to deliver an improved environment.”

Strategic levers

We have identified nine strategic levers that, appropriately applied, will help us achieve our environment vision. The levers are broad areas of action through which we will stimulate, innovate and drive change, allowing us to progress from where we are now to where we aspire to be. The levers are deliberately high level and cross-cutting – that is, they can apply to all aspects of the environment, from biodiversity and water quality to landscape and built heritage, and to all levels within our organisation, supply chain and stakeholders.

The strategic levers, which are set out in the table overleaf, have been developed in consultation with key stakeholders.

Lever	Definition	The Lever in Action
Health, Safety and Wellbeing	Driving environmental improvement through the recognition of its benefits to safety, health and wellbeing.	Deliver a reduced exposure to pollutants. For example, through the Road Investment Strategy commitment to mitigate noise in Noise Important Areas over Road Period 1. Deliver improved safety through projects to manage water and reduce the risk of flooding to communities who live alongside the network.
Reputation and Influence	Being a trusted and influential environmental organisation in everything we do.	Take opportunities to influence our customers to more effectively use our network and change travel behaviour. For example, through managing use of the network. Act as an advocate for positive changes in the direction of legislation and regulation in Government. For example, to support Defra as they implement their National Air Quality Plan to deliver a step change in air quality by 2020. Derived from a strong reputation, form trusted partnerships to enable more efficient working. For example, through delegated authority in licensing.
Engaging Stakeholders	Collaborating with others to provide increased environmental benefits over those that we can achieve alone, whilst delivering value for money.	Identify joint projects with our stakeholders that can be implemented in the first Road Period.
Leadership and Culture	Embedding a culture of environmental improvement at all levels within the business.	Develop and implement an environmental change programme across the organisation.
Asset Knowledge	Bringing together accurate information on our assets and surroundings to enable decisions to be made which improve environmental performance.	Improve the depth and breadth of our environmental data to enable more effective data sharing and asset management. For example, work with Local Environmental Records Centres and explore data sharing agreements.
Appraisal, Evaluation and Performance	Using refined appraisal and evaluation techniques to assure environmental performance.	Develop environmental metrics to reflect genuine outcomes of defined value. For example, developing a biodiversity metric that will identify the progress being made towards the target of no net loss of biodiversity on land managed by Highways England by 2020.
Procurement	Developing a more values based procurement approach to deliver environmental improvement.	Develop environmental metrics to reflect genuine outcomes of defined value. For example, developing a biodiversity metric that will identify the progress being made towards the target of no net loss of biodiversity on land managed by Highways England by 2020. Reduce the environmental footprint of our supply chain. For example, incentivising through improved environmental contract requirements and KPIs.
Design Quality	Putting environment at the heart of design quality.	Further develop our guidance and standards for road design, to incorporate environmental compatibility with the natural and built environment into the design of schemes delivered in Road Period 1.
Benefits Realisation	Realising the commercial value of environmental services of our estate to support further environmental improvement.	Explore the use of an environmental capital approach to expose and trade environmental services with other stakeholders for the overall benefit of the environment. For example, consider the ways in which the management of road verges and associated land contribute to wider ecosystem services.

Within the Environment Strategy, all levers will make a contribution towards our environment vision, but the contribution of some will be felt sooner than others. For this reason, and for the period of this strategy, we will prioritise our attention to:

- Health, Safety and Wellbeing
- Reputation and Influence
- Engaging Stakeholders
- Asset Knowledge
- Appraisal, Evaluation and Metrics
- Design Quality

Implementing the levers

In combination with the environment vision, the strategic levers will inform our environmental actions and activities throughout Road Period 1.

Through engagement with our internal and external partners and stakeholders, we will undertake a review of our activities in 2016 in order to devise the most suitable methods of implementing the levers and prioritise resulting actions. An action tracker will be used to enable the Highways England Board Committee and Executive Committee to monitor progress of actions. Where appropriate, we may need to develop specific action plans, such as our Biodiversity Plan.

We will review this Environment Strategy following publication of a revised Road Investment Strategy at the end of Road Period 1.

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Highways England creative job number S150482

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Registered office Bridge House, 1 Walnut Tree Close, Guildford GU1 4LZ
Highways England Company Limited registered in England and Wales number 09346363