

National Highways awards major A417 contract to Kier

The contract award follows a competitive procurement process through National Highways' Regional Delivery Partnership framework.

Kier and National Highways completed a budget setting process in the early part of this year (2022). Kier's team will include Volker, Arup, Tony Gee and RPS to prepare for and construct the 3.4-mile route.

The Planning Inspectorate is examining our Development Consent Order (DCO) application, which is needed for all Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects prior to construction starting.

Following the examination's conclusion in May, the Planning Inspectorate will send its recommendation of a decision to the Secretary of State for Transport in the summer, with a decision on the route expected by the Secretary of State in the autumn.

Michael Goddard, Project Director for the A417, said:

We are delighted to be working with Kier to move forward this vital scheme.

Kier has an extensive track record working with National Highways and delivering large scale infrastructure projects, so we are confident they will deliver a scheme that meets our landscape-led vision. We will work together to deliver a project that is sympathetic with the special character of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and will support economic growth, improve traffic flows at peak times and make the road safer.

Paul Baker, Kier Highways project director, said:

Delivering highways infrastructure which is vital to the UK is Kier Highways' purpose and we are proud to be doing this through the delivery of the A417 contract. We look forward to working with National Highways and our supply chain partners to deliver this vitally important infrastructure project to improve the connectivity of the strategic road network.

We are a national business with a local focus and throughout the duration of the project, we will support the local community through employment opportunities and social value initiatives that leave a positive legacy.

Councillor Mark Hawthorne, Leader of Gloucestershire County Council, added:

I'm really pleased we've reached this key stage of this vital project. After such a long wait, it really feels like the solution for the 'Missing Link' is much closer to becoming a reality.

Completion will bring improved safety and air quality along with more reliable journey times leading to huge benefits for our county's economy as well as creating new habitats and habitat connections for native wildlife.

The A417/A419 provides an important route between Gloucester and Swindon that helps connect the Midlands/North to the South of England. It's an alternative to the M5/M4 route via Bristol.

The Missing Link itself is a three-mile stretch of single-lane carriageway on the A417 between the Brockworth bypass and Cowley roundabout in Gloucestershire.

The Missing Link causes many problems for road users and those who live or work in the area. Congestion can be frequent and unpredictable, so some motorists divert onto local roads to avoid tailbacks.

This causes difficulties for neighbouring communities and local roads were not built to accommodate so much traffic. Poor visibility and other factors also mean that accidents, many of which are serious, occur frequently along this section of road.

Our aim is to improve this section of the A417 with a scheme that includes:

- 4 miles of new dual carriageway connecting the existing A417 Brockworth bypass with the existing A417 dual carriageway south of Cowley
- the section to the west of the existing Air Balloon roundabout would follow the existing A417 corridor. However, the section to the south and east of the Air Balloon roundabout would be offline, away from the existing road corridor
- a new junction at Shab Hill, providing a link from the A417 to the A436 towards Oxford and into Birdlip
- a new junction would be included near Cowley, replacing the existing Cowley roundabout
- the existing A417 between the Air Balloon roundabout and the Cowley roundabout would be repurposed. We would convert some lengths of this existing road into a route for walkers, cyclists and horse riders, while retaining other sections to maintain local access for residents.

Similarly, supporting the landscape vision of the scheme, we continue to work with our stakeholders to maximise the benefits. We will be creating new habitats and habitat connections for native wildlife including bats, bees, badgers and more to flourish.

To ensure this, we will deliver:

- 2 miles of dry-stone walls
- 8 miles of hedgerow
- 7ha of native woodland
- 5ha of scrub
- 15ha of native grassland
- 72ha of calcareous grassland
- helping us be at one with nature

Further information on upgrading the A417 can be found at on the [A417 web page](#).

General enquiries

Members of the public should contact the National Highways customer contact centre on 0300 123 5000.

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the National Highways press office on 0844 693 1448 and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.