

Speech: Rob Wilson's speech to the London Library Ambition sector forum

I am delighted to join you this morning to support the publication of our new Ambition document. I hope it's a great opportunity to really look at some of the practical proposals it makes to help libraries thrive in the future.

It's the first time central and local government has joined with sector stakeholders to draw up a strategy for public libraries in England and commit to a plan to deliver that. It's built on – and I hope you would recognise this – extensive consultation and input from the sector. We have all signed up to what it says, and to a successful future for libraries.

And why have we done that? Libraries are hugely important for the communities they serve. They not only provide access to books and other literature, but also help people to help themselves and improve their own opportunities. They bring people together and they provide practical support and guidance.

And libraries support people in different ways at each stage of their lives, and they can help government to achieve strategic priorities by delivering services in communities – whether related to health, social cohesion, information and digital literacy, jobs and business support or the enjoyment that literature and cultural activity brings.

Now I've been a councillor myself; I know councils have to make important decisions about resources, to meet local needs and also legal requirements as well.

But I believe that if councillors think imaginatively about how libraries can help deliver their priorities, providing real leadership, then Local Authorities will start to see libraries as an asset to be developed. Ambition challenges government at all levels to think 'Libraries First' in planning services for communities – and I'll be championing that message with ministerial colleagues and councillors.

Ambition challenges councils and the library services they run to think and act differently. Standing still isn't an option. The way people use libraries and other public services is continuing to change. So we all need to think in innovative ways.

There are great examples of Local Authorities doing interesting and positive things – the Taskforce shares stories and ideas through its blog to stimulate original thinking. I've seen some great approaches during my own library visits; so for example,

- the new Curve in Slough, which is a part of the entire town's regeneration process. Alongside the library, it hosts Slough Museum, a multi-purpose community and performance space, community learning spaces, the Council's registrars services and a café with garden

terrace.

- And Farnham Common, a thriving library run by a community group with financial and professional support from the council. It raises extra income to support the library service from renting space to the children's centre and police who share the building and also through community events and fundraising.

Councils should embrace change; should seek to do things differently, and to be as bold as possible. If they do, DCMS will help them. We are already helping to spark creative new approaches – for example through grants from our new £4 million 'Libraries: Opportunities for Everyone' innovation fund to assist libraries helping people living in disadvantaged areas. We've received over 100 bids, which Arts Council England is currently evaluating.

We're also providing advice and support to councils that want to find different and more effective ways to run their library services, such as public service mutuals; 4 library services have already successfully gone down this particular route.

I believe this is a really positive direction to take as I want to see more staff owning part of the service they run – so we will offer support to Councils who want to do go down this route. The challenge is to think strategically about reform and service delivery and not to tinker piecemeal.

Some changes will of course be more challenging. People often think of libraries as buildings – But it's not just the buildings that make libraries, it's the service that's important. Sometimes their location or layout no longer suits the things local councils and local communities want.

If so, then changes – such as co-location with other services or sometimes closures may be actually justified, and indeed required, in favour of providing library services in other ways; maybe through outreach into communities or online.

But, and I want to make this absolutely clear, councils should make decisions like this based on robust evidence – rather than reducing provision in ad-hoc or very reactive ways.

Councils should be marshalling evidence about local needs, then actively discussing options to meet these with the community and with library professionals. I'll also expect councils to consider a full range of funding and delivery options before making significant reductions to their library services.

And if we receive complaints as part of our superintendence role, and where local authorities do not appear to be meeting their statutory duties, we will investigate. Where needed, I will take action under the 1964 Act. Libraries will not be seen as a soft option.

These sector events today and around the country are a start – I hope a

useful and enjoyable start – to spreading the word about Ambition and sharing learning about things we can all do to help libraries succeed. But they aren't the end – keep an eye out for future masterclasses the Taskforce will be running to delve into some of these areas in more depth.

That way we can all work together to take library services forward into a sustainable and successful future.

Press release: Industrial Strategy will help unlock Northern Ireland's potential

From:

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Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, James Brokenshire, today hailed the launch of a modern Industrial Strategy which will build on the UK's strengths and tackle its underlying weaknesses to secure a future as a competitive, global nation.

Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP said:

The Industrial Strategy is a vital part of the plan set out by the Prime Minister last week to drive growth across the whole United Kingdom and create more high skilled, high paid jobs and opportunities.

New Sector Deals and investment in research and development will support the industries of the future where the UK – and Northern Ireland in particular – has the potential to lead the world, from electric vehicles to biotech and quantum technologies.

My engagement with the Northern Ireland business community over the last six months has left me in no doubt about the opportunities that Northern Ireland can unlock. Today's Strategy Green Paper offers Northern Ireland businesses a valuable opportunity to

address sector-specific challenges and work with government on solutions that can help.

I will continue to engage with all relevant stakeholders in Northern Ireland to explore how to maximise the positive impact that this Strategy can have in Northern Ireland, particularly in exploring Sector Deals, removing barriers to innovation and growth and developing new trade and investment deals to increase exports.

I will also be making the case for political stability as a fundamental basis for industrial success. Securing strong, stable devolved institutions in Northern Ireland that will provide leadership, support innovation and boost skills will be vital to delivering on Northern Ireland's potential as a place to invest and do business.

There is a pedigree of achievement in Northern Ireland to build upon with 54,000 more people in work than in 2010. Now is the time to build on that success and look ahead to future opportunities, as the government steps forward to help build a United Kingdom that works for everyone.

[Press release: Planned road works in the North West: summary for Monday 23 to Sunday 29 January 2017](#)

The following summary of planned new and ongoing road improvements over the coming week is correct as of Friday 20 January and could be subject to change due to weather conditions or unforeseen circumstances. All our improvement work is carried out with the aim of causing as little disruption as possible. Drivers looking for roadworks information (such as overnight carriageway closures) for individual schemes should now [visit Traffic England](#).

Some of our larger schemes have project pages giving other information. These can now be accessed from [a dedicated regional page](#).

M6 junctions 16 to 19: Cheshire smart motorway

Work is underway to upgrade the M6 to a smart motorway between Crewe and Knutsford, converting the hard shoulder to an extra lane and introducing new variable speed limits. The project is due to be completed in spring 2018. The northbound carriageway is due to be closed overnight (10pm to 6am) between junctions 18 and 19 on Wednesday 25 and Thursday 26 January. A diversion will be in place.

The closures are as follows:

- Wednesday 25th January, full closure M6 south bound J19 to J18 10pm-6am.
- Thursday 26th January, full closure M6 northbound J18 to J19 10pm-6am.
- Friday 27th January, full closure M6 northbound J18 to J19 10pm-6am.

M6 junction 22 Newton-le-Willows

Essential bridge maintenance work is underway to replace 40 corroded bearings on the M6 junction 22 bridges. Average speed cameras and a 50mph speed limit are in place. The work, between junctions 21a and 23, is due to be completed in the spring.

M6 junction 34 Lancaster

Lancashire County Council's new link road between junction 34 of the M6 and Heysham has now opened but finishing work will require lane and hard shoulder closures along the M6 through junction 34 to continue for the time being.

More information is [available on the scheme website](#).

M6 North of Tebay services

20 January to 5 March. Night time single lane running will be in place southbound between 8pm and 6am with 2 lanes open daytime. A 50mph speed limit will be in force. Tebay services exit slip closure is required for 1 night only for resurfacing works.

M60 junction 8 Sale to junction 20 Rochdale

A major smart motorway scheme is taking place to cut congestion and improve journey times on parts of the M60 and the M62 in Greater Manchester. The scheme involves overnight slip road and carriageway closures, with narrow lanes and a temporary 50mph speed limit in place for the safety of drivers and road workers.

Details on overnight closures are [available on our Facebook page](#).

M61 junctions 4 Atherton to junction 5 Westthoughton

A scheme is taking place overnight to replace the central reservation barrier

between junctions 4 and 5 on the M61. The work is being carried out between 9pm and 5am, Monday to Friday, and is due to be completed by February. Temporary lane closures will be in place.

M61 to A580 Kearsley

The southbound link road from junction 2 of the M61 near Kearsley to the eastbound A580 East Lancashire Road is closed overnight for resurfacing. The work will take place between 8pm and 5am, Monday to Friday, and until 7am at weekends. The scheme is due to be completed by early February.

M6/M62 Croft Interchange

Work has begun to install smart motorway technology on the link road between the two motorways.

The following closures will be in place:

- night-time full closures of the M62 East-bound on Monday/Tuesday/Wednesday (23/24/25 Jan) for establishment of the narrow lane
- night-time full closures of the M62 West-bound on Thursday (26 Jan) for establishment of the narrow lanes

M66 Junction 2 Bury to Junction 4 at M60/M62

Resurfacing work started on Monday 16 January between junctions 2 and 4 of the M66. Some bridge repairs and electrical work will also take place. The work will be carried out between 8pm and 6am and will require some lane or full carriageway closures. A temporary 50mph speed limit will also be in place, and the scheme is due to be completed by March.

A556 Knutsford to Bowdon

A £192 million project is being delivered to build a new dual carriageway linking the M56 to the M6 in Cheshire. The A56 Lymm Road will be closed at the junction with Bowdon roundabout between 6am and 6pm on Saturday 21 and Sunday 22 January.

A585 West Drive to Fleetwood Cycleway

Work is taking place on a new shared footpath and cycleway between West Drive and Fleetwood. Narrow lanes and a temporary 30mph speed limit are being used along the route to help provide a safe space for workers constructing the new shared paths. Work will take place between 7am and 7pm each day with occasional overnight work. The project is due to be completed by the end of March.

A585 Esprick

20 to 24 January. Daytime traffic signals are in place to replace an existing damaged fire hydrant frame and cover 9.30am to 3.30pm.

A590 Lindal in Furness

Work is being carried out to tackle flooding between Pennington Lane and Bank End Cottages. Narrow lanes and a temporary 30mph speed limit will be in place until completion at the end of March.

A590 Quebec Street

Daytime traffic signals will be in place 9.30am to 3.30pm for 1 day on 23 January. They be re-erected on 26 January for 7 days between the same times. Quebec Street and Swan street will be closed and diversions in place from 23 Jan for 2 weeks for removing the existing tarmac and replacing it with a new asphalt surface and new road markings.

A595 Egremont

Repairs are taking place to the safety barriers adjacent to Wyndham Place on the A595 and are due to be completed by the end of February. A contraflow system is in place on the southern approach to the Main Street/East Road roundabout.

A55 Junction 40 Nantwich

The southbound entry slip road at junction 40 of the A55, where it meets the A51, will be closed overnight for resurfacing and electrical work for two nights from Saturday 21 January. The slip road will be closed between 8pm and 7am, with a diversion in place.

A66 Brough

Resurfacing work started on Monday 14 November and will continue until the end of January. Overnight lane closures will be in place, between 8pm and 6am, with traffic led through the roadworks by a contractor's vehicle.

A66 Embleton

Work is taking place to install new signs and paint white lines at the Embleton junction. Temporary night time traffic lights will be in place 23 to 26 January traffic lights are in place, and the scheme is due to be completed later this month.

A66 Bassenthwaite Lake

A contraflow system is in place while work is carried out on the embankment

in the central reservation next to Bass Lake. The scheme is due to be completed in the spring.

A66 Thornthwaite (Osprey Site)

Construction work is being carried out to protect the A66 from flooding, at the Osprey Site near Thornthwaite, by raising the height of the carriageway. Temporary traffic lights are in place along with a 40mph speed limit. The scheme is due to be completed in the spring.

A66 Marron Bridge

Maintenance work begins on 27 January on Marron Bridge, between Broughton Cross and Bridgefoot on the A66. Temporary traffic lights will be in place, mainly during off-peak hours, for the first phase of the scheme. A 30mph speed limit will be in place. Night time closures will take effect from 27 January. The project is due to be completed by March.

A665 Bury Old Road

A scheme is taking place to upgrade the safety barriers on the A665 bridge on Bury Old Road over the M60 near junction 17. The work will be carried out between 8.30am and 11pm, Monday to Friday, with temporary traffic lights and lane closures in place from 6.30pm. Some overnight and weekend working may also be required. The Kenilworth Avenue junction with Bury Old Road will be closed throughout the scheme, with a diversion in place. The project is due to be completed by March.

General enquiries

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

Media enquiries

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[Press release: Find out more about updated plans to improve the A63 in Hull](#)

Motorists, hauliers and local residents are invited to find out more about proposals to improve almost a mile of the A63 in Hull, reducing congestion, and improving the city's east to west links.

Two public consultation exhibitions are taking place at the Mercure Royal Station Hotel later this week. Highways England is seeking views on the A63 proposals and there will be an opportunity to speak to the project team.

The exhibitions will take place on:

- Friday 27 January 12.30pm – 8pm
- Saturday 28 January 10am – 4pm

Highways England's plans to upgrade a major route running through the city of Hull, went on show to the public last week. The Statutory consultation period launched on Monday 16 January and runs until Monday 13 February.

The section between Ropery Street and the Market Place/Queen Street junction carries around 45,000 vehicles per day and as a result, the road suffers from congestion, particularly at peak times.

Highways England project manager Jimmy Holmes said:

We are committed to improving the A63 through Hull and would really like people to get involved in the consultation event and give us their feedback, particularly on the new information which is now available.

The A63 Castle Street scheme will improve access to the Port of Hull by widening some sections of the road, upgrading the Mytongate junction and a bridge over the A63.

I understand people may have felt they have already done this but things have changed and it is vital we have the most up to date views available.

Highways England last consulted on the scheme in 2013, since that time we have been developing the scheme further and completing additional environmental and traffic assessments.

Councillor Martin Mancey, Portfolio Holder for Transport at Hull City Council, said:

This is another key step in Hull's changing fortunes, and the upgrade of this arterial route will enhance the city's connectivity to key routes such as the M62, which is crucial for the city's position as a key player in the Northern Powerhouse.

Once completed, I anticipate it will also contribute to a significant reduction in traffic congestion elsewhere in the city, caused by traffic currently queuing to join Castle Street from the City Centre and by those using alternative routes to avoid the congestion on Castle Street.

We've had significant private sector investment in the city and have welcomed global businesses like Siemens to Hull, creating well paid jobs for local people, and making Hull one of the fastest growing economies in the North. Coupled with the capital investment in our cultural and visitor infrastructure, perceptions of the city are changing and both public and business confidence and aspiration are at an all-time high.

We want to continue this momentum, and this can only be made possible by developing a transport network that is fit-for-purpose.

Copies of the consultation are available at various venues including Hull City Council, Guildhall, Hull. Leaflets have been delivered to interested parties and they are also available to [view on the scheme website](#).

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[Press release: Have your say on plans to widen A12 in Essex](#)

The project, which will see the widening of the A12 between junction 19 (Boreham interchange) and junction 25 (Marks Tey interchange) in Essex, will reduce congestion, improve safety and boost the economy. It is part of the government's record £15 billion investment in England's motorways and major A roads.

A Highways England consultation seeking public views on the proposals starts today and will run until Friday 3 March 2017.

Four options were shortlisted to be put forward to consultation:

- Option 1 – widening the existing A12 corridor (the online option)
- Option 2 – widening the existing A12 corridor between junctions 19 to 22 and 23 to 24 and two new bypasses between junctions 22 and 23 (Rivenhall) and between junctions 24 and 25 (Marks Tey)
- Option 3 – a variation of option 2 with only one new bypass between junctions 22 and 23 (Rivenhall)
- Option 4 – a variation of option 2 with only one new bypass between junctions 24 and 25 (Marks Tey)

Map showing the different options up for consultation on the A12 between junctions 19 and 25

Highways England programme leader Richard Hofton said:

Deciding how best to plan and carry out improvements along the A12 is vitally important and we've been working hard to identify a range of possible solutions to take forward.

There are important choices to be made and we are keen to get as many views as we can, so I encourage anyone who would like to find out more to check out the consultation materials online or come and see us at one of our public exhibitions.

People are invited to attend one of the seven public exhibitions, held at venues along the A12 route between Chelmsford and Colchester, to find out more and take part. A consultation into plans for proposed improvements on the A120, which is being organised by Essex County Council is also being run at the same time and some of the events will be run jointly.

All responses to the A12 consultation will help Highways England take the best possible improvements forward. For more information about our proposals and the public exhibitions, and to provide your views, please visit the [scheme website](#).

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