

Press release: Improved journeys to South West a step closer as A303 preferred route announced

Highways England announced the preferred route for the dualling of a 30 mile section of the A303 between Sparkford and Ilchester.

The move for the £179 million scheme follows the recent announcement of the preferred route for the £1.6 billion upgrade of the A303 further up the road near Stonehenge.

Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said:

The government is taking the big decisions for Britain's future and investing in the biggest roads upgrade in a generation.

Our major upgrade to the A303, linking the M3 in the south-east and the M5 in the south-west, will create an expressway to boost the regional economy and provide better transport links.

As part of this work, the £179 million upgrade between Sparkford and Ilchester will cut congestion, reduce journey times and improve safety for all road users.

Jim O'Sullivan, Highways England chief executive, said:

The A303 is a vital route between the South West and the rest of the country and this upgrade is absolutely necessary to provide much needed capacity and to relieve the congestion which drivers have suffered for years.

People who responded to our consultation earlier this year demonstrated strong support for option one, which closely follows the route of the existing A303 and so would have less impact on the rural setting.

We now look forward to continue to work with our partners and the local community to develop more detailed proposals to start construction in 2020.

In the meantime, we invite visitors to our planned drop-in sessions where we can discuss the preferred route with those interested.

As part of its £15bn investment in motorways and main 'A' roads the Government is committed to upgrading all remaining sections of the A303

between the M3 and M5 to dual carriageway standard, starting with three schemes: those on the A303 at Stonehenge and between Sparkford and Ilchester, and the third on the A358 between Taunton and Southfields.

Two options for the three-mile section between Sparkford and Ilchester were consulted on earlier this year. The preferred route will support the local economy to grow by making the area more accessible for both tourism and business.

The proposed route will offer a high quality dual carriageway with new two-level junction access with local roads and communities. The proposal will protect biodiversity and road users would benefit from the shorter route.

It will improve local access for pedestrians, equestrians and cyclists.

Formal consultation is due to take place early next year along with the submission of a development consent order planning application.

Two public drop-in events where people can view the preferred route and talk to our project experts will be held at:

- Haynes Motor Museum, Wolverlands, Sparkford, Yeovil BA22 7LH Tuesday 7 November 2017 3pm to 7pm
- Haynes Motor Museum, Wolverlands, Sparkford, Yeovil BA22 7LH Friday 10 November 2017 3pm to 7pm

Copies of the preferred route plans and supporting reports will also be available at the following local information points from Tuesday 24 October:

Public Information Points

- Wincanton Library, 7 Carrington Way, Wincanton, Somerset, BA9 9JS
Barrington Court, Barrington, Ilminster, TA19 0NQ
- Yeovil Library, King George Street, Yeovil, Somerset, BA20 1PZ Lytes
Cary Manor, near Somerton, Somerset, TA11 7HU
- South Petherton Library, St. James Street, South Petherton, Somerset,
TA13 5BS Montacute House, Montacute, TA15 6XP
- Taunton Library, Paul Street, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 3XZ Somerset County
Council, County Hall, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 4DY
- Martock Library, The Shopping Centre, Martock, Somerset, TA12 6DL South
Somerset District Council, Brympton Way, Yeovil, Somerset, BA20 2HT

More information about the preferred route can be [viewed on the scheme website](#).

General enquiries

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

Media enquiries

Journalists should contact the Highways England press office on 0844 693 1448

and use the menu to speak to the most appropriate press officer.

[Press release: Be prepared and protect your property against risk of flooding](#)

Be prepared for the unexpected is the stark warning from volunteer flood wardens in Calderdale.

Katie Kimber is one of two Environment Agency flood wardens in a newly formed group set up to help protect residents and businesses in Luddenden Foot and they are looking to recruit more this Autumn.

She lives a row of houses at the bottom of the Calder Valley that has a canal running at the front and a river behind them, with their gardens protected by a high wall. Until Boxing Day 2015 they had never been flooded.

Katie said:

I was completely unprepared. I had only just moved to the area and even though the damage I suffered was minimal compared to houses just a stone throw away it made me determined to be ready for the next time.

The mother of two children, aged 12 and 15, now has a flood plan for her own property and has helped set up a flood container for her local community kitted out with sandbags, Floodsax, brushes, spades, gully cleaners, wheelbarrows, gloves and hand hygiene gel – all the provisions needed for clean-up operations.

Katie has recently attended a sessions with Calder Valley Search and Rescue where the team demonstrated the dangers of water and how to keep safe during a flood event. She has worked with her husband to develop an app called Flood Aware for tracking water levels in the local area. Her role is to work with the Environment Agency to provide them with valuable local knowledge about what is happening on the ground and to support her community in the event of a flood – particularly older and vulnerable people living in the hamlet.

Her advice to all residents is to make sure they have measures in place to protect their own property, sign up for the Environment Agency weather warnings and flood alerts available by email, text and phone, check what the warnings mean and what they should do, keep a close eye on the weather outside and the levels of nearby rivers, particularly during prolonged, heavy rain.

Katie, whose day job is working for Watermark Flood Fund Calderdale, a

Community Foundation For Calderdale project which raises money to provide grants in case of future flooding and provides public relations support for Landlines and Watermarks – a unique community arts project with a water theme – said:

Expect the unexpected, have FloodSax or something similar ready under your sink and an emergency bag full of essentials such as a change of clothes, wellies, mobile phone, snacks. Even if you feel silly knock on your neighbour's door if you have any concerns.

A positive to come out of the recent flooding incident is we have become a very close-knit community, we know and look out for each other.

Karl Boggis, father of two young boys, joined the Mytholmroyd flood group shortly after there were two flood events just two weeks apart in his village in 2012. The group has developed from being a small local pressure group to being the 'eyes and ears' of organisations such as the Environment Agency (EA) with 22 active volunteer wardens covering eight zones. The flood wardens receive early warnings of bad weather on the horizon from the EA's duty officer and one of group's first tasks is to set up a communications cell in one of their living rooms to provide people of Mytholmroyd with regular updates using their Facebook Group about all flood related activity.

Karl is part of the Mytholmroyd flood group

They communicate with each other using radios, visit neighbours to ask them to move any cars at risk and move property upstairs to safety, help evacuate local schools if necessary and will direct traffic to keep it out of flood water.

Karl, a town councillor and former town Mayor, said:

We know all the hot spots now, which areas are more at risk of flooding so we visit them first to check everything is OK and make them aware of the likelihood of bad weather. We have evacuation plans for some houses, check drains and gullies to make sure they are not blocked. When necessary, we will open up the cabin store in Mytholmroyd for people to collect sandbags.

A lot of our work is through effective communications and making sure people don't panic. We ask people to stay at home, turn their radios on and if they have elderly neighbours please check on them.

As part of my role I visit people in my local community to

introduce myself as their flood warden so they know who to contact if they have a problem. Most of our hard work is actually to help people clear up after a flood.

Karl, a property developer who also works part-time in a utility warehouse distributor, had six of his seven properties badly damaged during the Boxing Day floods with water reaching 10ft in his own house. He said:

Sometimes we do get alerted to bad weather and it doesn't materialise which does make people complacent. However, the effects of floods are so devastating it is much better to be warned and be safe than sorry.

All flood wardens in Calderdale are being encouraged to take part in an exercise to test their flood plans on the 20th October to coincide with the Upper Calder flood sirens being sounded as part an annual test.

When asked what qualities you need to be a flood warden Karl said:

You need plenty of community spirit, a desire to help and good local knowledge helps.

Jon Follows, flood resilience officer with the Environment Agency, said:

The local knowledge flood wardens can provide on the ground is invaluable. They complement our work by implementing their community action plans and offer a key point of contact for us to be able to warn and inform people.

These days with climate change our weather is becoming even more unpredictable and so it's vital for communities at risk to protect themselves by signing up for free flood warnings, and prepare a flood plan.

1 in 6 properties in England are at risk of flooding – that's almost 5 million people. A big worry is that only about half of the people who are in a flood risk area, actually know about it.

Jon's advice is to start by taking three simple steps to help protect you, your family and home from the devastating effects flooding:

If you are interested in becoming a flood warden or would like to ask questions, please email the flood resilience team at

yorkshiresw.fim@environment-agency.gov.uk.

For the latest information on current flood warnings and the local weather forecast, Calderdale residents can visit the 'Eye on Calderdale' website – www.eyeoncalderdale.com

You can also stay up to date by following @EnvAgencyYNE and #floodaware on Twitter.

On Boxing Day 2015 around 370 properties were flooded in Mytholmroyd as extreme rainfall affected the upper Calder Valley. Since then, Environment Agency teams have carried out thousands of inspections, made crucial repairs and constructed temporary defences. A flood action plan for the town was published in May 2016 setting out plans for permanent improvements to flood protection.

[Press release: Dual carriageway bypass unveiled for key A585 improvement](#)

Plans for the new dual carriageway – between Windy Harbour and Skippool – were unveiled today as part of Highways England's preferred route announcement (PRA) for the project which is part of the Government's £15 billion Road Investment Strategy (RIS).

Roads Minister Jesse Norman said:

The Government is taking major decisions for Britain's future and delivering the largest roads upgrade in a generation.

The £100 million new bypass along the A585 near Poulton-le-Fylde will boost the regional economy as well as reduce congestion and cut journey times for drivers.

The 2.7 mile Windy Harbour to Skippool section is one of the busiest and most congested along the 11.5 mile road which links Fleetwood to the M55. The Shard and Little Singleton junctions are particular congestion bottlenecks.

The announcement follows last year's consultation – in which 78 percent of people and both Fylde and Wyre councils backed the bypass option over an alternative to improve the existing single carriageway road.

Highways England project manager David Hopkin said:

We are delighted to announce we have decided to take the Southern Bypass option forward. It was comfortably the most popular option in a consultation in which almost everyone agreed that something needs to be done about congestion along this section of the A585.

The new road will help secure and improve opportunities for housing and jobs in this part of Lancashire and contribute to improved connections to the whole of the motorway network.

Work to construct the new road could start in early 2020 but the bypass is subject to a statutory consultation.

Highways England also revealed today it is continuing to consider options for the Garstang New Road junction. Another idea to link the new bypass to Shard Road which was raised by local people during the consultation will also be investigated.

More details of the consultation report and today's announcement are [available on the scheme website](#).

General enquiries

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

Media enquiries

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

[Press release: New programme launched to improve colleges](#)

First ever recruitment round opens to find National Leaders of Further Education

The Department for Education has today (24 October) announced a programme to recruit a team of high-performing leaders to provide specialist support to struggling FE colleges.

The National Leaders of Further Education (NLFE) will be comprised of experts from the FE sector who will work to improve colleges judged as "Requires Improvement" or "Inadequate" in their most recent Ofsted inspection.

Successful applicants will provide mentoring and support to develop the

skills of senior staff at impacted colleges and will partner their colleges on the delivery of improvement programmes.

They will also work with other NLFE as part of a network and share best practice with institutions across their region.

Apprenticeships and Skills Minister Anne Milton said:

This country has fantastic leaders across the FE sector and we want to harness their ability to raise standards across the FE Sector.

We want to make sure that improvements to schools are replicated in colleges. The National Leaders of Further Education, which will sit alongside the Strategic College Improvement Fund can ensure this happens. I look forward to welcoming these leaders into this exciting programme.

ENDS

Notes to editors

The NLFE programme is modelled on the highly successful National Leaders of Education scheme in schools.

Interested applicants should contact FE.leaders@education.gov.uk. Applications will close on 14 November 2017.

[News story: PE and Sports Premium doubles to £320 million](#)

The department is doubling the funding that primary schools receive to improve the quality of their PE and sport provision from £160 million to £320 million a year, and today (Tuesday 24 October) we have published details of the [individual allocations](#) at school level. We have also published our [funding guidance](#) for this scheme alongside case studies showing how some schools have delivered a real impact for pupils through sports and physical activity.

The PE and Sport Premium is part of a series of programmes led by the department to improve healthy lifestyles among pupils and tackle childhood obesity. As part of the [Childhood Obesity Plan](#), we are working with other departments and agencies – including the Department of Health and the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport – to make sure children are healthy and active.

Minister for Children and Families Robert Goodwill said:

We want to make sure all children have a healthy and active lifestyle and it's vital that we encourage this in our classrooms. That's why we have doubled the Primary PE and Sport Premium to £320 million per year to improve the quality of PE and sport in our schools. I'm also pleased that more pupils will benefit from our new £100 million Healthy Pupil Capital Fund, which will help improve facilities, such as sports halls and playgrounds.

Public Health Minister Steve Brine said:

Investing in school facilities such as sports halls, playgrounds, kitchens and dining facilities will undoubtedly make a significant difference to children's health across the country. The school environment is critical in shaping a healthy lifestyle, which is why we are using the money from the soft drinks industry levy to double the PE and sport premium. This is another positive outcome from our world leading Childhood Obesity Plan.

Healthy eating, physical activity and sport not only help tackle childhood obesity, but can also have a positive impact on pupils' behaviour, attendance, concentration and attainment, helping children to reach their potential.

The government is delivering a series of actions to improve children's health. Alongside the doubled PE and Sport Premium, we are investing £100 million through the [Healthy Pupils Capital Fund](#) to facilitate improvements to children's physical and mental health by increasing and improving access to and use of relevant facilities, such as kitchens, dining facilities, changing rooms and sports facilities.

As part of our wider programme of work, we are also investing a further £26 million in breakfast clubs. This money will encourage innovation and kick-start or improve breakfast clubs in at least 1,500 schools, with a focus on increasing provision for disadvantaged pupils in [Opportunity Areas](#).