

Sustainable highways design – the road ahead

Sustainability and climate change will be key considerations of future road design, thanks to a panel of design experts, who are working closely with Highways England.

The Company's Strategic Design Panel (the Panel) today publishes its fourth progress and recommendations report. This report sets out the Panel's progress over the past year and a half (June 2019 to end of 2020) and makes key recommendations to take forward in the second road period.

The Panel made the following key recommendations, which include:

- accelerate communication and training to promote and embed its design vision and principles into its processes and culture
- act on the Panel's recommendations for adapting to climate change, reducing carbon, supporting biodiversity and the design of corridors
- publish a design strategy to clearly articulate its ambitions for the second road period and beyond

The Panel is tasked with challenging and supporting Highways England to improve the quality of England's strategic road network (SRN). The Panel's role is to make sure that design excellence in landscape, engineering and built environment is considered in all of Highways England projects.

A key recommendation of the report suggests that road planning and design must accept the challenge to create a network resilient to climate change with an emphasis on sustainable design.

The report says:

Roads are long in their planning and long-lasting in operation. Designers must anticipate changes in long-term technological, social and environmental conditions under which they will function well into the future.

Although it is acknowledged that road use rather than road operation or construction, is currently by far the largest generator of carbon emissions on the network, good planning and design can have a positive impact in all three areas.

Mike Wilson, Chief Highway Engineer and Chair of the Highways England Strategic Design Panel, said:

The three essential qualities of good road design are safe, functional and elegant. And it is the latter, with careful

attention to detail, that will elevate the quality of the network and deliver our vision of good design for people and places.

In the second road period we will embed our principles of good road design further, so that their use becomes business as usual and second nature.

I do not doubt there will be new design challenges ahead, but we have great multi-disciplinary design teams and with the support of the Strategic Design Panel, we will rise to these.

Minnie Moll, Chief Executive at Design Council, said:

Infrastructure has the power to connect communities, boost economic growth and enhance the built and natural environment. Of course, this can only be achieved if it is well designed – with people and the planet considered throughout the process.

I'm therefore delighted to see Highways England continue to place design at the heart of their work. Their establishment of a review panel, involving Design Council, to provide independent design advice for schemes has been a critical step forward. This work clearly demonstrates the value of multi-disciplinary thinking and uses our insights from best practice across major infrastructure projects.

I am heartened by what has been achieved so far and now look forward to supporting Highways England to achieve their goals around sustainability and design. By working together, we can help ensure that England's major roadways are of the highest design standards and leave a positive legacy.

The Panel at work

The Panel continues to positively influence the design of schemes, and specifically commended the landscape-led design approach of the proposed A417 Missing Link in Gloucestershire. The design of the scheme has embraced the principles of good design and goals of sustainable development to enhance both the character of the place and experience of people.

Advice from design reviews of the A417 Missing Link has encouraged a change in the proposed road's gradient which will further reduce visual impact and also impacts on local woodland and water courses, waste, traffic, carbon footprint, and construction time, while making cost savings.

Steve Roberts, Lower Thames Crossing, Engineering Design Lead, said:

The advice of the Design Panel was invaluable in the shaping of our scheme proposals, particularly in the early stages of development,

helping to define those factors that should influence the design and how the design should respond to its context.

On a large complex project like Lower Thames Crossing, with significant inter-disciplinary working, the Design Panel, with its broad range of experts, was a useful forum to review the balance of constraints and opportunities within the scheme and the overall level of ambition in our design.

Who is on the Panel

The Panel includes members from across a range of disciplines, representing stakeholders who are committed to improving the design and quality of the SRN.

- Campaign for Better Transport
- Transport Focus
- Institution of Structural Engineers
- Chartered Institute of Highways and Transportation
- Institution of Civil Engineers
- National Trust
- Landscape Institute
- Connected Places Catapult
- Royal Institute of British Architects
- Design Council
- Campaign to Protect Rural England
- Historic England
- Natural England

Read the [Strategic Design Panel progress report 4](#).

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.

[**Liz Truss unveils plans to work with G7 to tackle global trading challenges**](#)

- International Trade Secretary to chair ministers' meeting of first ever G7 Trade Track.
- UK will champion free and fair trade for all nations, and call out unfair trading practices.
- The G7 will also work with the WTO's new leadership to modernise the organisation, particularly in key areas like digital and the environment.

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss will today (Wednesday 31 March) set out an ambitious agenda to work with G7 countries and the WTO's new Director General to reform global trade as she chairs the first-ever G7 Trade Track Ministerial meeting.

As President of the G7, the UK will use the meeting to push for the reform of the WTO, so the organisation is fit to challenge unfair trading practices as well as ensuring trade helps tackle climate change.

Trade Ministers from the member countries of Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, US, UK and the EU, will be joined at the virtual meeting by the newly-appointed Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO), Dr. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala.

The UK will encourage G7 partners to develop a set of principles for digital trade, underlining the common goals of Trade Ministers around open digital markets and the fight against protectionism.

The UK will also seek to champion the cause of values-driven free trade and work with G7 partners to challenge practices that distort markets. The group will also discuss how to make global trade greener.

International Trade Secretary Liz Truss said:

2021 is the year that we need to grip WTO reform: the organisation has fresh impetus under the dynamic leadership of Dr. Okonjo-Iweala, who has the resolve and energy to drive forward the reforms we need to global trade, and a newly-independent Britain is ready to work with democracies from across the world to ensure trade helps the world build back better from the Covid-19 pandemic.

Our G7 alliance of like-minded democracies is united not just in its fundamental values, ranging from freedom and fairness to the environment and innovation. It is also united in its fierce belief that the best way forward for us all lies in trade.

But people cannot believe in free trade if it is not fair. Public trust has been corroded by pernicious practices, from the use of forced labour to environmental degradation and the stealing of

intellectual property.

That is why the UK will strive with its G7 partners to restore trust in the global trading system by leading the charge for a better WTO which is fit for the 21st century, with a rulebook that keeps pace with modern opportunities and challenges. We can no longer be held back by outdated rules, some of which have barely moved on from 1995.

As well as reform, the Trade Secretary will also be working with G7 partners, including new US Trade Representative Katherine Tai, and WTO Director-General to fight for more women to be represented in trade.

The next G7 Trade Ministerial meeting is due to take place in-person in May where the UK will be looking to strengthen our dialogue and further advance our shared agenda with our G7 partners.

[Cameroon: 160 Commonwealth Point of Light](#)

World news story

Etong Fanny Bessem recognised for improving access to healthcare in Cameroon amidst COVID-19.



With thanks to Favour Low-Cost Health Care Foundation Cameroon, in which Etong Fanny Bessem is both Co-founder and Executive Director, she has been working to improve access to healthcare as well as carrying out humanitarian interventions in various local communities in Cameroon especially in the Southwest, West and Centre regions.

These include providing free medical equipment and over 2,000 items of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to health workers during the COVID-19

pandemic. Her team has reached out to over twenty thousand people across the country. She is also a member of the Women Mediators Across the Commonwealth network, which aims to increase the participation of women from the Commonwealth in mediation at all levels.

Etong Fanny Bessem received her physical certificate from the British High Commissioner to Cameroon, Rowan Laxton, during an event that coincided with the visit of the FCDO Minister for Africa, James Duddridge MP.

Etong Fanny Bessem said:

This award is for my team who volunteer their time and resources to make sure the vulnerable have free healthcare services. To think, just one month from giving birth at the peak of COVID-19, I was in the field with my team responding to COVID-19, distributing and educating the population, giving free ANC to pregnant internally-displaced women and delivering their babies – and someone was watching our effort. I can go on and on, but thank you to the British High Commissioner for putting a huge smile on our faces with this recognition. I thank our partners and international partners for supporting my call when our country needed it most.

Working as a female volunteer in Cameroon is interesting and also challenging. With the ongoing crisis in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon, access to quality health care in rural areas especially, has become a major challenge. Poor road networks, high costs to health care, restrictions in people's movements due to the crisis and now the COVID-19 pandemic. My team and I could do more if we received more support to our work in terms of financial, material and human support.

Published 31 March 2021

[**Dstl unveils new Exploration Division**](#)

Press release

The new division will identify and accelerate transformative technologies, systems, concepts and strategies for defence and security.



As part of the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl), Exploration Division will pinpoint futuristic high impact ideas with the greatest potential. Such ideas could be 'over the horizon' technologies, next generation concepts or existing systems that could be adapted for Defence and Security. The initiative will increase Dstl's ability to shape generation-after-next equipment and strategy for the armed forces while continuing to support current operational requirements.

Exploration Division will use AI and data analytics to scan the horizon for transformative technologies such as quantum sensing or quantum cryptography, neuromorphic computing, and telepresence. It will incubate the most promising of these and will imagine entirely new systems to provide the UK's armed forces and security forces with game changing capabilities to create strategic advantage over future adversaries.

It will draw on Dstl's expertise in horizon scanning, systems thinking, wargaming, simulation, social science and operational research to explore novel tactics and strategies and driving the transition of good ideas into conceptual force design and anticipatory policy.

Involving suppliers and customers throughout this process will provide a safe space in which to challenge accepted plans, and is designed to provide the stimulus for wider innovation in Defence and Security. Dstl will find new things no one else has done before, prove their worth, and help customers deliver them, or manage the risk from them.

Professor Andy Bell, Dstl's Chief Technical Officer, said:

The creation of Exploration Division will secure Dstl a leading role in shaping the future of Defence and Security. Identifying novel concepts and accelerating research and development will bring future systems and technologies into service quicker and more cost-effectively. This will enhance UK security by providing innovative and world-leading equipment to our forces, as well as transformative concepts of operation and strategies with which to achieve success.

[“Thank you” to business who helped develop our delivery plans](#)

News story

Magnox has issued a special “thank you” to all those businesses who recently participated in market engagement sessions to inform our thinking on future delivery.



In total more than 60 companies, from large multi-nationals to SMEs, took part in one-to-one sessions to share their expertise and ideas about how we could develop reactor decommissioning at Trawsfynydd, and potentially beyond.

The insight gathered from the “ideas to input” sessions will help shape our supply chain strategy, technical solutions and programme delivery approach, but sharing ideas does not guarantee future work or any invitation to tender in due course.

Linda Sapsford, Head of Procurement and Supply Chain, said:

We are very grateful to those representative businesses who took the opportunity to talk to us and share their knowledge and experience.

The sessions were invaluable in allowing us to see what might be possible in delivering our future work and we shall take account of what we have heard when developing our forward plans.

Thank you very much to everyone who gave us their time.

Magnox has committed to engaging with the supply chain again in due course as its plans take shape.

Published 31 March 2021