

Chideock Parish Council Response to the Department for Transport Consultation “Proposals for the Creation of a Major Road Network”

The questions are laid out in Annex A of the consultation document.

Core Principles.

Q1. Do you agree with the proposed core principles for the MRN outlined in this document?

Chideock Parish Council agrees with the Core Principles, but, as a small parish in the SW on the A35 Trunk Road in West Dorset, has concerns that the Core Principals do not sufficiently encompass the significance and functionality of local regional networks, and their contribution to local areas within and across counties in a region. Specifically, the east-west link from Hampshire through Dorset to Devon (A31 – A35), the role of the A37 as an alternative westwards route, and the functionality and relationship of the A35 (County Road) A349 and A338 to the A35 (Trunk Road) and the A31 (Trunk Road) need consideration.

The Parish Council is particularly concerned that regions without a Sub-National Transport Body (STB) will be at a very significant disadvantage since it will be more difficult to organise and maintain the essential Regional Evidence Base and use it to produce a coherent, comprehensive plan of the sub-regional Major Road Network (MRN) vital to balance Traffic Flows within and through any sub-regional area.

The Parish Council is further concerned that, while proposals for changing the extent of the Strategic Road Network (SRN) are considered at regular intervals through the Road Investment Strategy (RIS) cycle, and De-trunking in particular, there is no explicit joined up way to examine a specific sub-regional network element and balance the SRN and MRN components. Specifically, in the case of the A35 Trunk Road from Bere Regis west to Honiton, the rebalancing by de-trunking, and its integration into the MRN A35 County Road.

The Parish Council welcomes the proposed MRN for the Devon / Dorset local area, particularly the inclusion of the A37 as an alternative route Dorchester – Honiton, since the A35 Trunk Road west of Dorchester is not fit for purpose as an SRN road and does not provide any significant through traffic connectivity or access to the South West Peninsula.

Defining the MRN.

Q2. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the quantitative criteria outlined and their proposed application?

The Parish Council agrees with the 2 Criteria, and particularly Agrees the exclusion of Congestion. The Council further agrees with the use of current, rather than projected, traffic levels, in conjunction with 5-year reviews coinciding with the SRN RIS cycle.

Agree that it is essential to update the traffic levels from the 2014 data used in the Rees Jeffreys (RJ) Road Fund Report and suggest that this data is widely published and available to both Parish Councils and their electorate.

Suggest that the data be summarised by Road / Link with maps showing the flows across and within sub-regional areas so that people can be better informed on the traffic levels which affect them and the local economy.

For the Dorset / Devon sub-regional area centred on the A35 / A31, the flows are not clear, and the Parish Council observes that the AADFs decrease steadily westwards from the A31, and significantly west of Bere Regis all the way to Honiton, indicating a series of local sections more characteristic of a sub-regional MRN than a strategic SRN.

The Parish Council suggests that such patterns of variation in traffic flows be taken into the Mapping System and highlighted in the Regional Evidence Base, so that local communities can better understand the functionality of the SRN / MRN in their area, and the comparative traffic volumes of traffic at specific points versus the wider area flows.

Q3. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the qualitative criteria outlined and their application?

The Parish Council agrees with the definition of a Coherent Network, and with the Key Route Network interaction, but would suggest that sub-regional networks across a County or Counties need to be equally defined so that STBs and Regional Groups have a focus to work round.

Agree with connecting Towns / Cities with a population > 50,000 but suggest that connection of economic centres below the population threshold needs an additional criterion whereby the proportion of traffic between the two centres must be > 50% of the total traffic on that section as a whole.

Q4. Have both the quantitative and qualitative criteria proposed in the consultation document identified all sections of road you feel should be included in the MRN?

Please refer to responses (1) – (3) above.

Q5. Have the quantitative or qualitative criteria proposed in the consultation identified sections of road you feel should not be included in the MRN?

Please refer to responses (1) – (3) above.

Q6. Do you agree with the proposal for how the MRN should be reviewed in future years?

Agree with the Joined-up Approach, subject to comments on Indicative Mapping at (2) above. Agree that further work will be required following consultation (see (1) and (2) above) and that the latest traffic data should be used.

In terms of Trunking or De-trunking, the Parish Council suggests the status of the A35 Trunk Road Honiton to Bere Regis, and the A35 County Road Bere Regis to Poole and Bournemouth should be specifically reviewed, bearing in mind that the DBFO Contract for maintenance of the A35 Trunk Road Honiton to Bere Regis will expire in 2026.

Investment Planning.

Q7. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the roles outlined for local, regional and national bodies?

Agree, but it is absolutely essential that, where there is no Regional STB, urgent action is Funded to set up Regional Groups, with strong input from Highways England, also appropriately Funded.

The Parish Council suggests that the South West Regional Group be the Pilot for this Priority Action, with emphasis on the A31 / A35 link from the M27 to the M5.

It is further suggested that, if a Regional Group is not fully operational by 2020, at the commencement of RIS2, Highways England should be tasked with providing an interim Regional Evidence Base and a Network Plan.

Q8. What additional responsibilities, if any, should be included? Please state at which level these roles should be allocated.

The Parish Council suggests that Highways England should be tasked with ensuring the formation of fully operational Regional Groups and should be appropriately funded for this.

Q9. Do you agree with our proposals to agree regional groupings to support the investment planning of the MRN in areas where no sub-national transport bodies (STBs) exist?

Agree that in the absence of a STB, a Regional Group should be set up, especially for the South West, as a matter of urgency.

The Parish Council further suggests that during RIS2 (2020 – 2025) plans should be finalised for the Funding and Creation of STBs to replace the RGs, with all regions having co-ordinated STBs by RIS3 (2025 – 2030).

Q10. Are there any other factors, or evidence, that should be included within the scope of the Regional Evidence Bases?

The Parish Council suggests that patterns of Traffic Flows within sub-regional networks need to be explicitly included so that local communities can appreciate the relationship between local flows and the wider regional and national significance. This data might include “typical” or “average” traffic flows for the type of road, with particular emphasis on rural links compared to sections near or around Towns / Cities. (Please refer to (2) and (3) above.)

Q11. Do you agree with the role that has been outlined for Highways England?

Agree, but the Parish Council suggests there is a real need for Highways England to be Funded for a stronger role in setting up fully functional Regional Groups, starting with the South West. This is particularly important for Dorset in 2019 where new Unitary Authorities are being set up covering Rural Dorset and the Bournemouth / Poole / Christchurch coastal conurbation; and new responsibilities for Weymouth and Portland.

The relationship between ports and airports across these new authority areas, and the flow of commercial traffic north from the ports is a crucial and fundamentally Key Element in the MRN proposed for the Dorset area.

Of special concern are the relationship of the A338 to the A31 / A35, the relationship of the A349 to the A31 / A35, and the relationship of the A354 to the A35 and the A37, as well as the function of the A37 as an Alternative Route to the A35 west from Dorchester.

Eligibility & Investment Assessment

Q12. Do you agree with the cost thresholds outlined?

Agree.

Chideock Parish Council interprets the rule as £20m to £100m contribution with the average expected to be around £45m to £50m.

The Parish Council also welcomes the securing of third party contributions and notes the requirement for local contributions; essential to ensure local commitment.

The Parish Council very much agrees that Funding should be targeted towards significant interventions that will transform important stretches of the network.

The Parish Council would point out that a Parish Poll on 17 August 2017 emphatically supported a Bypass outside the Parish Boundary, by implication rejecting equally emphatically any close Relief Road within the Parish, and implying consideration of an Alternative Route westward such as the A37 / A303. In this context, a clear sense of the local, Regional and National significance of the A35 Trunk Road west of Dorchester is an essential prerequisite together with an in-depth evaluation of its fitness for purpose.

Q13. Do you agree with the eligibility criteria outlined?

Agree, particularly the exclusion of bids for Non-Specific Local Authority wide packages or funding pots to cover non-specific general improvements in a Local Authority Area.

Q14. Do you agree with the investment assessment criteria outlined?

Agree, although not sure what the relative priorities are as reflected in the sequence of objectives within the Table. Clarification is required.

Q15. In addition to the eligibility and investment assessment criteria described what, if any, additional criteria should be included in the proposal? Please be as detailed as possible.

Chideock Parish Council agrees that a significant Objective is to Support the Strategic Road Network, so perhaps the following might be added within the "Support the SRN" box: -

- Improve links to the SRN
- Provide Alternative strategic routes to enhance the SRN
- Provide Sub-Regional Connectivity

Other Considerations

Q16. Is there anything further you would like added to the MRN proposals?

Chideock Parish Council would like to see a stronger commitment from the Sub-national Transport Bodies / Regional Groups, with initial Integration of Plans / Funding for the two networks (SRN and MRN) in RIS2 2020 – 2025 and FULL INTEGRATED PLANS FOR EACH REGION in RIS3 2025 – 2030.

Chideock Parish Council made a considered Response to the RIS2 Consultation, collectively spending around 40-man hours on the Submission. Suggestions for a MRN in the wider Dorset area were included, and the Parish Council appends (Annex 1) the relevant sections of that submission for the information of this MRN Consultation.

Of particular relevance is that the A35 SRN Trunk Road Bere Regis to Honiton is maintained under a DBFO Contract due to expire in 2026. Further relevant facts are the results of the Chideock Parish Poll held on 17 August 2017, particularly the 60% vote for De-trunking the A35, which is also appended (Annex 2).

ANNEX 1.

Extract from Chideock Parish Council's response to the Highways England RIS2 Consultation.

Aims

15. How far does the initial report meet the government's aims of:

	1 - doesn't meet aim2 at all	2	3	4	5	6	7 - completely meets aim
economy?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
network capability?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
safety?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y	<input type="checkbox"/>				
integration?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Y	<input type="checkbox"/>				
environment?	Y	<input type="checkbox"/>					

Which aims could Highways England do more to meet and how?

- For the A35 Honiton – Bere Regis, a series of origin / destination studies for each section between towns (Honiton / Lyme Regis / Bridport / Dorchester / Bere Regis) to verify the actual functions of each section in regard to SRN or MRN.
- For the A35 through Chideock, a study to establish a pilot scheme for a Low Emission Zone between the 30 mph limits, and a proposal for funding and implementation, which the Parish Council would very much like to see by 2020.
- On safety, it has, for example, been impossible to obtain the installation of a safety barrier rail on the footway of the A35 outside the disabled exit from Chideock Village Hall.
- If these sorts of measures cannot be funded, a MRN status should be assigned.

Roads

17. Which roads would you propose are added to or removed from the SRN, and why?

- The A35 Honiton – Bere Regis, or at least the section Honiton – Dorchester, to be removed.
- The A35 does not serve a fully strategic national purpose but has characteristics more akin to a series of sections of major regional or local roads, which would be best managed locally as part of the proposed MRN.
- A Parish Poll recently conducted, on 17 August 2017, in Chideock showed a majority of those voting to be in favour of de-trunking of the A35 to allow more local control of traffic and the noise and air pollution impacts.
- The A35 Honiton – Bere Regis is subject to a DBFO contract which expires in 2026 and would enable a de-trunked MRN road management regime to be implemented in RIS3 2025-2030.

Different balance

21. What do you suggest we do differently?

- Broadly, Chideock Parish Council believes that the balance is generally about right but would like to see a more formal integration of MRN proposals into the overall strategic plan in due course.
- The Parish Council suggests that a MRN of middle tier roads, between the SRN and local roads, has an absolutely essential role to play in delivering regional and local connectivity for the benefit of the local and regional economy and businesses, while giving more local control and participation in setting priorities for operation and management.
- Chideock Parish Council strongly supports the concept of a network of major roads to provide integration between the SRN and local / regional roads for the benefit of the local economy and businesses.
- The Parish Council welcomes this proposal for the opportunity it will bring to draw Highways England into closer practical strategic and operational working, if not partnership, with Local Highway Authorities, for the benefit of local communities in rural areas.

Final comments

22. Any other comments?

- The Parish Council welcomes and endorses the acknowledgement of the connection between the SRN and local roads, and the formal embodiment of their interdependence in the new category of MRN, especially the possibility of commitment of the RIS NRF to invest in the MRN.
- The Parish Council welcomes the possibility of de-trunking acknowledged in the report, particularly in the context of a new category of MRN roads and a possible funding stream, which will ensure that transfer of a road from SRN to MRN is now feasible in a way that was not possible in the 1990s.

ANNEX 2.

Result of the Chideock Parish Poll held on 17 August 2017.

DECLARATION OF RESULT OF PARISH POLL

PARISH OF CHIDEOCK

A Poll of the Local Government Electors of the Parish of Chideock held on 17 August 2017 on the following questions:

1. Do you support the construction of a new A35 trunk road Chideock by-pass which does not pass through any part of the parish of Chideock?
2. Do you support that the A35 from Dorchester to Honiton be de-trunked and therefore designated a scenic route?

I, Jason Vaughan, being the Deputy Returning Officer at this Poll, give notice that the number of votes given was as follows

Question	Yes	No
1. Do you support the construction of a new A35 trunk road Chideock by-pass which does not pass through any part of the parish of Chideock?	155	34
2. Do you support that the A35 from Dorchester to Honiton be de-trunked and therefore designated a scenic route?	104	71

The number of ballot papers rejected was as follows:

(a)	Want of official Mark		
(b)	Voting yes and no to the same question		
(c)	Writing or mark by which voter could be identified		
(d)	Void for uncertainty	10	27

Eligible Electorate: ~~534~~ Number of Ballot Papers Issued: 199 Turnout 37.2%

Dated: 17 August 2017

Jason Vaughan
Deputy Returning Officer

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