

This document is a précis of the Chideock Parish Council response to the recent public consultation conducted by the Department for Transport into their proposed plans for the UK's Strategic Roads. These plans were set out in the document **"Shaping the future of England's Strategic Roads (RIS2)"**. The consultation commenced in December 2017 and closed at the beginning of February 2018. The consultation took the form of a questionnaire with 22 questions.

Please note that the numbering of questions in the RIS2 Initial Report at Section 8 (page 28) is different from the numbering on the Questionnaire Response form. The numbers below refer to the response. Chideock Parish Council's response strictly follows the format of the consultation and is framed within the context of the narrative which sets out the issues and leads into the specific questions to which the Department for Transport invites responses.

It is recommended that the consultation document be read first in order to understand the context of the Department for Transport's approach to RIS2 and future roads investment, and to fully appreciate the contextual references in Chideock Parish Council's responses.

The principal areas commented on by the Parish Council were: -

**"Do you think Highways England's proposals will deliver what users of the SRN want?" (Q4).**

- Yes

**"Do you think Highways England's proposals will deliver what businesses want?" (Q6).**

- Yes.

**"Do you think Highways England's proposals meet the needs of people affected by the presence of the Strategic Road Network?" (Q8).**

- No.

**"If you answered no, what could be done differently?" (Q9.)**

- The A35 is only just marginally fit to even be included in the strategic road network. Schemes to reduce vibration, air and noise pollution are required, such as low emissions zones and average speed cameras.

**"Do you agree with Highways England's proposals for 8 priorities?" (Q10).**

- 7 of the priorities were accepted. However, regarding Designated Funds, regret was expressed that there is no longer a Designated Fund to deal with air pollution on trunk roads, specifically where there is an Air Management Area. Chideock was given as a specific example showing that Highways England and West Dorset District Council had failed to ensure that the legal limits for NO<sub>2</sub> were not breached. It was proposed that performance targets for Highways England should be set and that a specific fund should be made available dedicated to achieving legal limits of NO<sub>2</sub> by 2020.

**"Do you agree with Highways England's assessment of the future needs of the strategic road network?" (Q13/14).**

- No.
- The A35 is not fit for purpose and cannot manage the current traffic flow let alone any further future increase. The Parish Council questions the viability of the A35 Honiton to Dorchester

as part of the Strategic Road Network and would like to have discussion with Highways England about the road's purpose now and in the future past 2026 (when the current maintenance contract expires with Connect). The Parish Council welcomes a future change in direction to support the A31 and the A303 upgrades.

**“How far does the initial report meet 5 government’s aims”. (Q15.)**

- Some of the aims regarding the economy and network capability are met, but the aims of safety, integration and environment are not met.
- The Parish Council calls for Origin / Destination studies, a pilot scheme for a Low Emission Zone, safety barriers at the Village Hall, and monitoring and testing of HGVs.

**“Which roads would you propose are added to or removed from the SRN, and why?” (Q17).**

- It is proposed by the Parish Council that the A35 from Honiton to Dorchester should be removed from the Strategic Road Network as this section of the road has the characteristics of a major or local road and not those of a trunk road. The outcome from the Parish Poll was provided as evidence of support for de-trunking of the road.

**“Is there anything else we need to consider when making decisions about investment in the network? What other factors do you want considered?” (Q18/19).**

- Other factors put forward for consideration were:
  - The Parish Poll did not support a bypass through Chideock Parish as a solution to the air pollution above legal limits.
  - A formal review of the fitness of the A35 Honiton – Dorchester as a strategic road in terms of both condition and function as a strategic connector and through route.
  - The A35’s function as a strategic link between the major ports of Southampton and Plymouth is not borne out by the traffic flows.
  - Access to airports at Bournemouth and Exeter similarly show a regional and local link rather than any strategic function.
  - Between Bournemouth / Poole and Weymouth / Portland and their ports, the flows are to the north, requiring regional / strategic northward connections, with the A35 only providing short sections for north access.

**“Does the analytical approach taken have the right balance between ambition, robustness, and proportionality? What do you suggest we do differently?” (Q20/21).**

- The Parish Council supports Highways England’s analytical approach but wishes for a more formal integration of the major road network into the strategic Highways proposals / discussion. Additionally, integration would support a closer working partnership between Highways England and the local Highways Authorities.

**“Any other comments?” (Q22.)**

- The points made in the response were drawn together along with historical concerns, the failure to secure meaningful alternatives and details of current issues including Air Quality; Noise and Vibration; Community Separation (lack of safe and secure crossings within the village, apart from one light controlled pedestrian crossing); traffic volumes; speed and acceleration up hill, emphasising the call for a Low Emission Zone and Average Speed Cameras.

- A previous Route Management Strategy described the A35 as of only regional and local significance, and the new proposals describing it as a strategic route to access the south west peninsula are a serious cause for concern. The future of the A35 relative to the A303 is an essential pre-requisite to long term planning.
- When de-trunking was considered two decades ago it was supported by Devon County Council but not by Dorset County Council. The current maintenance contract with Connect Balfour Beatty ends in 2026 and consideration should now be given to changes in signage and Satnavs to support re-routing, de-trunking, traffic junctions, and the width of the road. Foot ways are either non-existent or have an adverse slope and are too narrow on, for example, Main Street Chideock. Origin and Destination studies are required.
- Issues arise due to the lack of clarity as to how Highways England perceives the status of the A35 Honiton to Dorchester.
- The Parish Council recognises that there are issues with road haulage flowing from the ports of Poole and Southampton to the west of the country, together with the fact that the A35 is not fit for purpose and that it cannot be expanded without investment in either a by-pass or re-routing traffic to the A37, A303 and A30, and requests that issues be discussed at a high level within Highways England.