

A303/A30/A358 Corridor
Feasibility Study
Scope Document

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1. DOCUMENT PURPOSE AND STATUS

- 1.1 This document sets out the scope of the A303/A30/A358 corridor feasibility study. It has been developed by the Department for Transport in conjunction with the Highways Agency and sets out the scope, timing, and management arrangements of the study.

2. INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Following the 2013 Spending Review, the Government announced its plans for the biggest ever upgrade of the strategic national roads network. The HM Treasury document, Investing in Britain's Future (July 2013) set out details of the programmes of infrastructure investment, which included the tripling of annual investment on Highways Agency major roads enhancements from today's levels to over £3bn by 2020/21.
- 2.2 As part of that investment programme, the Government announced that it will identify and fund solutions, initially through feasibility studies to look at problems and identify potential solutions to tackle some of the most notorious and long-standing road hot spots in the country. The locations identified were as follows:
- The A303/A30/A358 corridor
 - The A1 North of Newcastle
 - The A1 Newcastle-Gateshead Western Bypass
 - The A27 Corridor (inc. Arundel and Worthing)
 - Trans-Pennine routes
- 2.3 In addition, the Secretary of State announced on 20th August 2013 that the Department would undertake a further feasibility study on the A47 corridor between Peterborough and Great Yarmouth.
- 2.4 These studies are to be progressed alongside the Highways Agency's Route Based Strategy programme which is considering the current and future performance of the entire network, to inform future investment decisions.

3. BACKGROUND AND STUDY NEED

- 3.1 The A303 corridor provides an important role in connecting the South East and South West regions. It is dualled over much of its length but between the M3 motorway, A358 and A30 there remain several unimproved single carriageway sections which cause congestion, especially during summer weekends.
- 3.2 The A303 also passes through the Stonehenge World Heritage Site and the Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- 3.3 Proposals to complete the dualling of the route were made in the 2002 London to South West and South Wales Multi-Modal Study¹ (SWARMMS). Together with improvements to the A358 between Ilminster and Taunton this could have created a 'second strategic route' (in addition to the M5) into the South West.
- 3.4 However by 2007, with the cancellation of the Amesbury to Berwick Down Scheme (which included Stonehenge) due to increasing costs and the South West Region's conclusion that some schemes could not be funded from the Regional Funding Allocation, the Highways Agency were no longer able to progress the SWARMMS strategy.
- 3.5 The Government recognises the importance of the A303 corridor in terms of its role in providing access to the South West and the role it plays in facilitating the movement of goods and people, and the its contribution to the economic performance of locations along the corridor.
- 3.6 Given the history of progress with investment proposals in the A303 corridor, at the time of the 2010 Spending Review, the Government did not have sufficiently developed business cases for investment proposals to be able to confirm specific investment projects in the A303 corridor.
- 3.7 Given the importance of the A303 corridor Somerset County Council held a summit with other relevant stakeholders in 2012 whose outcome was a commitment by the region for further work on the relative prioritisation of potential interventions and consideration of possible funding avenues. The grouping of local authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships produced an initial analysis and business case for future improvements to the A303 corridor, to reiterate the importance of investment in the corridor, particularly the wider economic benefits to the South West economy.
- 3.8 The Department for Transport and the Highways Agency have worked closely with the South West local authorities on the details of the analysis and business case for potential investment, providing assistance and views on the methodology adopted and views on what further analysis may be necessary.
- 3.9 This recent analysis provides a useful starting point for the feasibility study in terms of the identification of potential investment proposals, along with analysis of the potential levels of costs and benefits from such investment.

¹ Can be accessed online at <http://www.swarmms.org.uk/>

4. STUDY AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Study Aim

4.1 The aim of the study is:

- To identify the opportunities and understand the case for future investment solutions on the A303/A30/A358 corridor that are deliverable, affordable and offer value for money.

Study Objectives

4.2 The specific objectives of the study are to:

- a) Identify and assess the case, deliverability and timing of specific infrastructure investments that address existing and future problems on the A303/A30/A358 corridor
- b) To understand the balance of benefits and impacts from potential individual investment proposals and any additional benefits or impacts from an investment on a corridor basis.
- c) To evidence where possible, the wider economic benefits from the transport investment in the corridor.
- d) To understand the impacts of potential investment in the A303/A30/A358 corridor on the performance of other road transport corridors to the South West region.
- e) Understand the impacts of the proposed investment in the A303/A30/A358 corridor on the resilience of the road transport network.

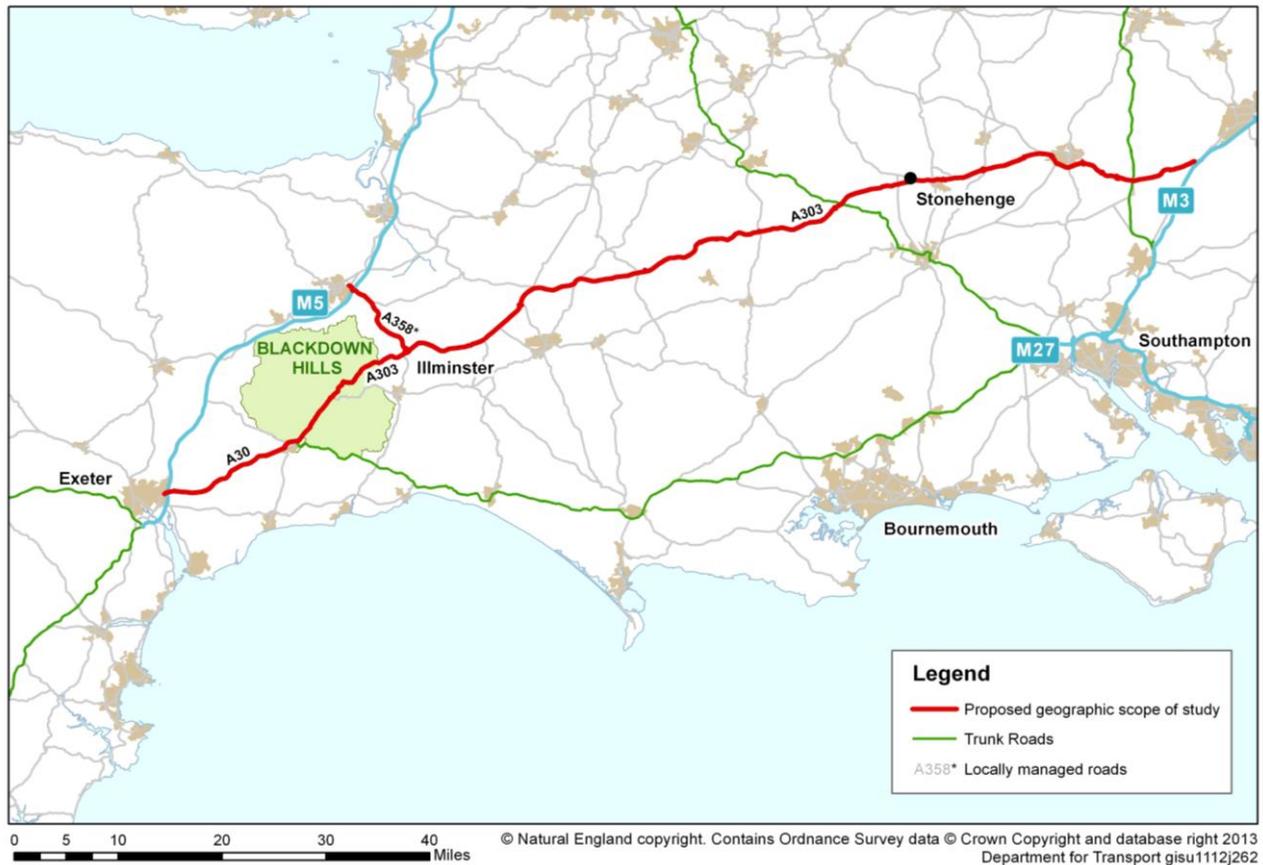
5. GEOGRAPHIC AND MODAL SCOPE

Geographic Scope

5.1 The geographic scope of the study should consider the length of the A303/A30 corridor from the junction between the A303 and M3 in the east to the junction between the A30 and the M5 in the west. The geographic scope of the study would also include the A358 from its junction with the A303 at Ilminster to its junction with the M5.

5.2 The A303 passes through Stonehenge World Heritage Site, and as part of the study we will also need to understand the effects of any proposed work on this landscape of international heritage significance. A map of the proposed geographical scope is included at figure 1.

Figure 1: Proposed geographic scope of A303/A30/A358 corridor study



Modal Scope

- 5.3 The modal scope of the study will be predominantly road-based and would need to understand the details of performance and current investment proposals for the identified parts of the strategic road network, as well as the local authority road network, particularly the A358.
- 5.4 It is not proposed to consider specific issues or proposals in relation to other parts of the motorway or trunk road network in the vicinity, as the case for further investment is being considered as part of the Highways Agency's South West Peninsula Route Based Strategy.

6. QUESTIONS TO BE ADDRESSED

- 6.1 There are a number of questions that need to be addressed as part of the study work, and these are set out below.
1. Given the assessment of current and future performance of the A303/A30/A358 corridor are there specific priority locations/problems that should be addressed?
 2. Are there viable potential solutions to these problems which are deliverable, affordable and offer value for money?
 3. What are the potential timescales for the delivery of identified potential solutions?

4. Are there additional benefits or impacts from combinations of potential solutions over and above those for individual solutions?
5. Is there evidence of the impact of investment in potential solutions on the resilience of the road network?
6. What are the impacts of investment in the A303/A30/A358 corridor on other road transport links/corridors to the South West?
7. Have the potential solutions identified fully considered and optimised the environmental opportunities and mitigation that the potential transport investment could bring?
8. Are there any changes necessary to current responsibilities for the management and operation of the road network in the A303/A30/A358 corridor?
9. Is further work/analysis required for Government to be able to make specific investment decisions, and if so what are the timescales of such work?

6.2 These questions should be addressed by completing the study objectives.

7. STUDY STAGES

7.1 The study will be completed in accordance with WebTAG guidance and in several stages which are set out below.

Stage 1: Review of evidence and identification of problems along the corridor

The study would review any relevant evidence gathered as part of the Highways Agency's phase 1 of the South West Peninsula route based strategy, together with evidence from other relevant study work and analysis, and form a view as to the nature and scale of current and future performance of the A303/A30/A358 route.

The study would also look to set out details of previous historical work and decisions taken in terms of the approach to investment or management of the A303/A30/A358 corridor with the aim of reaching agreement on the historical position in relation to previous investment proposals.

The study would also need to establish both the availability of transport modelling and the need to undertake specific transport modelling to provide the analysis needed to evidence answers to some of the questions to be addressed in the study.

The findings of these pieces of work should be considered by the Project Board and the Reference Group where appropriate.

Stage 2: Work to finalise the range of infrastructure proposals that could address the problems along the corridor

Once the problems along the route have been identified, the study should review previous work, including both the SWARMMS and Somerset's A303 Corridor Improvement Programme and other related study work to identify infrastructure proposals that could address the problems.

This stage should culminate in the production of an Option Assessment Report (step 8, as set out in [Stage 1: Option Development of the Transport Appraisal Process](#)) or the potential equivalents for the rail and local road network.

Stage 3: Work to assess the affordability, value for money and deliverability of prioritised infrastructure proposals

Work should be completed using the Department's transport appraisal guidance to develop or refresh strategic outline business cases for each of the prioritised infrastructure proposals.

Work should also consider the benefits and business cases for each of the transport investment proposals as well as the cumulative or additional benefits and impacts from investment in the corridor as a whole.

Due to the time constraints of the study it may not be possible to develop full strategic outline business cases for each of the prioritised infrastructure proposals.

This stage should also document any additional work necessary for Government to be able to make an investment decision in one/all of the infrastructure proposals. The length of time needed to complete this additional work should also be documented.

8. POTENTIAL OPTIONS TO BE CONSIDERED

8.1 The study will need to consider a range of individual potential investment proposals and potentially combinations of investment propositions. However, the study will look to initially build on work done to date on potential proposals, rather than complete a specific fresh process of identification of investment proposals. The study will therefore take as its starting point the proposals from the work undertaken by the South West local authority grouping:

- A303 Amesbury to Berwick Down (Stonehenge) - 12km of dual carriageway & intersection improvements
- A303 Wylve to Stockton Wood - 3.9km mainly 'on-line' dual carriageway
- A303 Chicklade Bottom to Mere - 12km of part 'on-line', part 'off-line' dual carriageway and associated junction improvements
- A303 Sparkford to Ilchester - 5.5km of part 'on-line', part 'off-line' dual carriageway and associated junction improvements
- A303 Podimore Roundabout - Junction Improvement (grade separated)
- A303 Cartgate Roundabout - Junction Improvement (grade separated)

- A303 South Petherton to Southfields - 10km of 'on-line' dual carriageway
 - A358 Southfields to M5 (Junction 25) - 14km of part 'on-line', part 'off-line' dual carriageway and a series of improvements at intersections
 - A303 Southfields to Honiton - Combination of various (relatively small) sections of improvement over the 23km length
- 8.2 The study will need to draw upon a range of completed or recent related work in term of studies or strategies for the A303/A30/A358 corridor. Below are references to a number of related pieces of work which the study may need to consider. The list is not exhaustive and may be added to in light of discussions/engagement with stakeholders.
- SWARMMS.
 - A303 Corridor Improvement Programme - Outline Economic Case and Proposed Next Steps.
- 8.3 The study would however not rule out consideration of other investment proposals and would need to capture details of potential investment proposals that may emerge from the first phase of the South West Peninsula Route Based Strategy, as well as potential investment proposals on the A358, that are within the study's geographic scope.
- 8.4 In considering potential investment options, the study needs to recognise the advice provided within national planning guidance in relation to development proposed within nationally designated areas. The guidance makes clear that great weight should be given to conserving landscape and scenic beauty in nationally designated areas. National Parks, the Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty. Each of these designated areas has specific statutory purposes which help ensure their continued protection and which the Secretary of State has a statutory duty to have regard to in decisions.²
- 8.5 Agreement on the finalised or prioritised list of investment proposals would need to be agreed as part of the study process.

9. STUDY OUTPUTS AND TIMINGS

- 9.1 The study will need to consider a range of individual potential investment proposals and potentially combinations of investment propositions.

Stage 1: Review of evidence and identification of problems along the corridor

² National Planning Guidance is set out in the National Planning Policy Framework, and the draft National Networks National Policy Statement. The Department's consultation on the National Network National Policy Statement (NNNPS) closed on 26 February 2014 and the Department is currently considering consultation responses and will respond later this year. Should the planning policy adopted in the NNNPS affect the feasibility studies, this will be given due regard within the study work.

A report which summarises the evidence gathered as part of the stage 1 South West Peninsula RBS and other relevant study work and analysis and sets out the problems/issues along the route.

A report which establishes and articulates the need for a second strategic route to the South West in addition to the M4/M5 corridor.

Stage 2: Work to identify the range of infrastructure proposals that could address the problems along the corridor

Produce an Option Assessment report (step 8, as set out in [Stage 1: Option Development of the Transport Appraisal Process](#)), which will be presented to the project board, which sets out the range of proposals that could address the problems along the corridor.

Stage 3: Work to assess the affordability, value for money and deliverability of prioritised infrastructure proposals

Where possible, document the appraisal of a small number of better performing options to strategic business case level (or as detailed and robust an appraisal as can be achieved within the timescales).

To also produce a strategic outline business case for addressing the identified problems on the corridor and determine whether considering the corridor as a whole produces more benefits than considering each proposal in isolation.

To also document the further work necessary to develop proposals to the stage to which Government would be able to take an investment decision if strategic outline business case could not be reached in the time available.

10. GOVERNANCE ARRANGEMENTS

10.1 In order to manage and oversee the work within the study, the following governance and management arrangements have been established.

Study Project Board

10.2 The day to day control of the study will be undertaken by a Project Board, made up of representatives from the Department for Transport and the Highways Agency.

10.3 The Project Board's role is to:

- Ensure agreement to the scope of the study, aims, timings and outputs of the study, and agree any amendments to the study's activities as the study progresses
- Provide day to day control of the study
- Take decisions as necessary throughout the life of the study and decide which decisions should be escalated or made by others
- Monitor progress against plan and review significant risks and issues

10.4 As the study progresses there may be a need to establish specific technical or working groups to take forward defined activities. Decisions on the establishment and membership of such groups would be for the Project Board to consider.

Study Reference Group

10.5 Given the range of stakeholder interest in the study it is proposed to establish a Study Reference Group. The group will meet at the end of each stage of the study.

10.6 The main role of the Reference Group is to ensure stakeholders' views are captured and considered during the study process, particularly at key points in the study's work and at times of the development of key outputs.

10.7 The establishment of the Reference Group would allow stakeholder organisations to be aware and feed into the work of the study and allow representation from other organisations.

10.8 The initial membership of the Reference Group can be found in Annex A. The membership of this group will be kept under review as the study progresses to ensure that it continues to capture stakeholder views throughout the study process.

11. KEY MILESTONES

11.1 This section provides the key milestones for the study. These milestones will be kept under review as the study progresses, and may be subject to amendment if required.

Milestone	Completion date
Establishment of Stakeholder Reference Group and completion of evidence gathering.	End of March 2014
Completion of stage 2 of study - identify the range of infrastructure proposals that could address the problems along the corridor	End of July 2014
Completion of stage 3 of study - work to assess the affordability, value for money and deliverability of prioritised infrastructure proposals	Autumn 2014

ANNEX A: MEMBERSHIP OF THE STUDY REFERENCE GROUP

A.1 The initial membership of the A303 Reference Group is as follows:

Local Highway and Planning Authorities

- Hampshire County Council
- Wiltshire County Council
- Somerset County Council
- Devon County Council
- Dorset County Council

Local Enterprise Partnerships

- Swindon and Wiltshire LEP
- Dorset LEP
- Heart of the South West LEP
- Cornwall and Isles of Scilly LEP
- Solent LEP
- West of England LEP

Statutory bodies

- Natural England
- English Heritage

Other organisations

- National Trust
- International Council on Monuments and Sites
- Campaign to Protect Rural England
- The Wildlife Trusts
- Campaign for Better Transport
- Travel Watch South West
- Somerset Chambers of Commerce
- Devon and Cornwall Business Council
- Blackdown Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Members of Parliament

- David Heath MP