Welcome to the winter edition of the A417 Missing Link scheme newsletter.

Project update:
In the autumn we consulted on our latest plans for the A417 Missing Link scheme. We’d like to thank everyone for taking part, providing your views, and the support given for our proposals.

More than 2,100 people visited our public information events to talk to the project team about the A417 Missing Link, and over 900 people gave us formal feedback on the consultation.

We heard a lot of your views during the consultation, covering a range of different topics. Amongst many helpful comments, we received feedback about access and connectivity at the proposed Cowley junction, opportunities to reuse existing road infrastructure, such as the access road at Barrow Wake, and the environmental aspects of the scheme including geology, the landscape and the micro climate in the area.

You also put forward ideas for improving access for walkers, cyclists, horse riders and for everyone who wants to enjoy this part of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

Senior Project Manager Mike Goddard, said: “It was important for us to hear from local residents. We’re looking at your feedback in order to develop a project that will make journeys more reliable, improve safety and reduce air pollution from queuing traffic”
Next steps
We’re now reviewing all your responses to help inform the final design and the development of the scheme. As we continue to develop the design, we’ll continue to discuss any changes made with stakeholders and affected parties such as landholders.

Once we’ve finalised our design, we plan to submit our application for a Development Consent Order (DCO) – the special type of planning permission needed for nationally significant infrastructure projects – to the Planning Inspectorate later this year.

Surveying along the A417
We’re continuing with a programme of surveys and investigations across the area as part of our Environmental Impact Assessment. This work allows us to understand the local natural and historic environment, and assess how we might affect this through our project and how we can design to avoid, reduce or offset any impacts. You may have seen our survey teams out in the local area recently, completing the following works:

Archaeology geophysics: We’re undertaking a programme of magnetometry survey (see image below) to identify archaeological features that are not visible from the surface. This is a non-intrusive method of surveying large areas to detect magnetic variations in the ground, which is particularly good at identifying historic building foundations, infilled ditches, stone hearths and similar structures. There is the potential for archaeology to be present dating from the bronze age, Roman and medieval periods. This could help us increase our understanding of the historic use of nearby heritage sites at Crickley Hill, Peak Camp, Barrow Wake and Emma’s Grove.

Ecology: We’ve been carrying out ecology surveys recently, looking at how, when and where local wildlife lives in the area. This is so that we can include like crossing points and other things to protect these important species. Our work has included searches for basking reptiles, nesting dormice, barn owls, crayfish and a particular focus on bats. We’ve recorded the presence of 11 different bat species in the area, including rare Bechsteins, Barbastelle and Lesser Horseshoe bats. We’ve undertaken searches for active bat roosts and hibernation sites as well as a program of radio-tracking individual bats to establish their flight paths and feeding habits.

Surface and groundwater: We’ve been carrying out weekly monitoring of groundwater levels using boreholes that we are installing across the area. This allows us to understand and model the changing groundwater levels and how these relate to flows in streams and springs in the area.
Pupils take to the road

Students at Birdlip Primary School got a taste of driving along the proposed route of the A417 Missing Link at the end of last year, when our project team took a driving simulator into the classroom. The visit, which was designed to encourage students to think about careers in science, technology, engineering and maths (STEM subjects), was an enormous success, raising awareness of the scheme as a whole, and the things that we consider when we’re planning road scheme improvements.

During the visit the project team shared the latest details on the A417 plans and made sure that the students had the chance to play with the technology that is bringing the route to life.

The visit was the latest in a series of events hosted by Highways England, which has previously seen our project team running a bridge building session and arranging for the Highways England engagement van to attend the school fete.

Class teacher, Laura Davis, said: “This was a wonderful opportunity to study the A417 Missing Link in depth. The children engaged with the interactive simulators to find out exactly where the new road will go and how it will look. The team took the time to answer all the questions fully, in a way that was relevant to the children, the parents and the staff who attended.”
Highways England’s winter campaign

We launched our winter campaign at the end of last year. In rolling this out, we’re taking steps to remind all road users of the actions that can be taken to prepare for the worst that the weather can throw at us all. We’re also reminding motorists how to manage conditions such as snow and ice, heavy rain, high winds, fog and freezing rain. During severe winter weather drivers are urged to follow this advice:

**In snow and ice:** Stick to the main roads where you can and only travel if necessary. Make sure you have a winter kit in your vehicle, including an ice scraper and de-icer, warm clothes, food, water, boots, a fully charged mobile phone, a torch and a shovel for snow.

**In high winds:** Slow down and avoid using exposed sections of road if possible. Lorries, caravans and motorbikes are at particular risk.

**In heavy rain:** Keep well back from the vehicle in front, gradually ease off the accelerator if the steering becomes unresponsive, and slow down if the rain and spray from vehicles makes it difficult to see and be seen.

**In fog:** Switch on your fog lights and don’t use lights on full beam as the fog will reflect the light back. If you really can’t see, consider stopping until it is safe to continue.

**In freezing rain:** Keep your distance and reduce your speed – black ice is difficult to see, so even when conditions seem normal, it can be slippery leading to very dangerous driving conditions.

We’ve also been gearing up for winter by preparing our equipment which includes:

- 535 gritters
- 127 depots based at strategic points across the network
- 25 snow blowers which can remove between 1,200 and 2,500 tonnes of snow per hour
- More than 280,000 tonnes of salt, which can cover 610,000 lane-miles of motorway
Scheme timeline
The timeline below shows the key milestones for the project and the next steps for the scheme. Delivery of the scheme will be subject to confirmation of funding within the second Road Investment Strategy (RIS2), which will be published by April 2020.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>December 2014</td>
<td>Scheme announced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 February – 29 March 2018</td>
<td>Route options consultation</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 2018 to spring 2019</td>
<td>Selection and development of preferred route</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 2019</td>
<td>Preferred route announcement</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 2019</td>
<td>Statutory consultation</td>
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<tr>
<td>2020</td>
<td>DCO application submitted</td>
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For further information about the scheme you can visit our website or contact us using one of the methods below:

- [www.highwaysengland.co.uk/a417-missing-link](http://www.highwaysengland.co.uk/a417-missing-link)
- [A417MissingLink@highwaysengland.co.uk](mailto:A417MissingLink@highwaysengland.co.uk)
- [0300 123 5000](tel:0300 123 5000)
- [@HighwaysSWEST](https://twitter.com/HighwaysSWEST)

If you need help accessing this or any other Highways England information, please call 0300 123 5000 and we will help you.