

A69 Bridge End/Styford Junctions Frequently Asked Questions

Background information

- **What is happening?**

We are improving the A69 Styford and Bridge End junctions to cut congestion and journey times for motorists using them and to improve safety.

- **Why is this happening?**

The A69 is an important route between Newcastle and Carlisle that helps connect Scotland and the Tyne and Wear. It provides an arterial link between the north east and north west of England that is heavily used by hauliers and commuters.

However, the A69 between Hexham and Newcastle is a particularly busy section, and there are often delays at peak travel times, particularly at the Bridge End and Styford roundabouts.

In recognition of the importance of this route, in 2016 we carried out the Northern Trans-Pennine Strategic Study which looked at how we could improve the A66 and A69, to increase trans-Pennine connectivity.

As a result of this study, in March 2017 government announced a £220 million package of improvements as part of a congestion relief fund. This included two junction improvements along the A69, one at the A69/A6079 Bridge End roundabout and one at the A69/A68 Styford roundabout

- **What are the details of each scheme?**

We plan to turn the current junctions, which are traditional roundabout arrangements into grade-separated junctions (you'll have to go up or down a slip road to leave the A69). This means that traffic travelling along the A69 between Hexham and Newcastle will no longer have to stop at these junctions, allowing motorists a free-flowing journey.

At Styford junction the A69 will be built over the roundabout and at Bridge End the A69 it will go underneath. Our proposals will incorporate new bridges as well as upgrading the existing roundabouts where required.

- **What are the benefits of the scheme?**

The scheme will reduce congestion and improve journey time reliability and safety.

- **How will the schemes reduce congestion?**

Traffic travelling along the A69 between Hexham and Newcastle will no longer have to stop and use the roundabouts, allowing motorists a free-flowing journey. Traffic will be

lighter at the roundabouts because the Hexham to Newcastle traffic will no longer be using them

- **Why is an overpass being built at Styford and an underpass at Bridge End?**

This is just because of the layout of the land in those areas.

- **Where is the scheme located?**

The roundabouts will be staying in the same place with the A69 going over the junction at Styford and under the junction at Bridge End.

- **How much will it cost?**

Each of the junction improvements represent an investment of £15m which is being funded by the Congestion Relief Fund announced back in March 2017.

- **Would the money be better spent dualling the A69 between Hexham and Carlisle?**

The two junction improvements at Bridge End and Styford represent an investment of £30m. Whilst we have a long term aspiration to dual the A69, which would provide significant benefits, the cost is currently estimated at £1.5 billion excluding inflation. This is 50 times more than the cost of the junction improvements.

The two improvements would however compliment any future proposal to dual the A69 and this was taken into account as part of the proposals. They will also create 18 miles of dual carriageway between Newcastle and Hexham. A decision to dual the entire stretch would be made by Department for Transport (the Government department responsible for the transport network).

- **Why are you dualling the A66 and not the A69?**

The decision was made by Department for Transport as part of the 2016 Autumn Statement. The A66 will be upgraded to a dual carriageway, creating the first new all-dual trans-Pennine link since 1971. It will mean a quicker link between Scotch Corner in North Yorkshire and Penrith, Cumbria.

- **Why wouldn't the provision of peak hour traffic lights at the junctions be sufficient (as at the A69/Western bypass)?**

We have a longer term aspiration to dual the A69. The provision of traffic signals would not fit in with this. The A69/A1 Western Bypass junction is actually grade separated with the A1 passing under the roundabout

Construction

- **When will the work start?**

We plan to start preparing the site for construction in September this year, this includes clearing vegetation and relocating underground services such as water and gas pipes if needed. This means we are ready to start the main construction work in March 2019.

- **What is the duration of the work?**

We aim to complete both schemes during spring 2020. We'll build both junctions at the same time but will start work on the Bridge End junction slightly earlier so that we can minimise waste by using leftover materials to construct Styford.

- **What traffic management will be in place?**

Whilst the junctions are being built we'll have narrow lanes, reduced speed limits and average speed cameras in place. The reduced speeds are for the safety of drivers and the workforce who will be working close to the road. Our estimations show this should only have a small impact on journey times. Free breakdown recovery will be available through the work.

For the first phase of work at Bridge End roundabout there will be temporary closures of the eastbound and westbound sections of the roundabout to construct two new bridges. To carry out this work traffic will be diverted on to a temporary route around the roundabout.

Pedestrian access arrangements during construction are currently being finalised though details will be available well ahead of construction starting (March 2019). Our plans will be published on our website.

- **What hours will you be working?**

The temporary traffic management will be in operation 24 hours a day on all days but the work on site will be carried out through the day.

- **Who is the contractor?**

The schemes are being built using our Construction Works Framework which includes a number of our approved contractors.

- **What will you be doing to make sure the work doesn't affect local businesses? There is Brocksbushes tea rooms on the Styford roundabout.**

As part of our engagement we will be working closely with local businesses in the area to ensure that we keep disruption to a minimum as much as possible. Access to the tea rooms will remain open and unchanged during construction.

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- **Will this cause the same disruption as the A19 Coast Road scheme currently on the ground in North Tyneside?**

We are currently creating the North East's first triple decker roundabout at the Silverlink roundabout where the A19 and the A1058 meet. This scheme since it started in June 2016 has had more compliments about the work than complaints which shows how well that scheme is being received in the area. We are always looking at ways we can minimise disruption for drivers while still maintaining 2 lanes open in each direction.

The ones on the A69 are more straightforward than the improvements we have been carrying out at Silverlink.

Newton & Acomb access

- **Acomb right turn**

Comments were voiced at our Acomb Public Information Event relating to the A69/A6079 Acomb junction. These included issues surrounding:

- Traffic leaving the Bridge End roundabout wishing to turn right into Acomb having to join the A69 and then access the turn from the offside lane
- Right turn vehicle queues and
- An increase in A69 vehicle speeds as a result of free flow under the roundabout

As a result of this we will be looking very carefully at the Bridge End improvement as we progress to a completed design and where possible incorporate measures to accommodate any of the issues raised. All our proposals are subject to road safety audits at various stages of the design by specialists independent of the project to ensure any improvements do not have a detrimental effect.

- **Access between the A69 and Newton village**

Our current proposals include the closure of a number of movements of the A69 gap at the Newton junction. This will remove the right turn out of Newton onto the A69 towards Corbridge and Hexham to the west and the right turn into Newton from the east. The remaining movement will be A69 eastbound turning right southbound toward Stocksfield. These proposals to reduce the number of vehicles crossing the central reservation gap are safety related.

Concerns have been voiced relating to these access arrangements and we are looking very carefully at these issues. At the moment this remains work in progress.

- **Newton single track road**

We are currently in discussions with Northumberland County Council regarding any possible upgrade of the single track road between the Styford roundabout and Newton.

- **Newton bus stops**

The bus stops and layby locations will not be affected by our proposals. The footpath across the central reserve will also remain in the current position. The junction should be safer for pedestrian to cross as traffic movements will be reduced.

Pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders

- **Will access for pedestrians, cyclists and horse riders be affected?**

Where possible we are aiming to keep pedestrian, cycling and horse riding access open during construction. For safety reasons, at certain times we will need to close the route and provide a diversion route as close as possible. We are working with our stakeholders including Northumberland Country Council, Sustrans and the British Horse Society to ensure we provide suitable facilities.

At the Bridge End Roundabout, Hermitage Bridge to the west will remain open. Pedestrian footpaths will be maintained at the current locations but will be wider.

No footpath route is currently provided at the Styford roundabout though we are currently looking at this, the issue having been raised at our Public Information Events.

Environment, plants and wildlife

- **What about wildlife and plants?**

We have carried out carefully planned ecological surveys at both sites to identify if the improvement schemes will affect any protected species or important habitats for plants and wildlife. These included habitat surveys to map plant species in addition to surveys for badgers, otters, water voles, white-clawed crayfish, bats, reptiles, great crested newts and breeding birds. This work was carried out by licensed ecologists,

Our work has taken into consideration populations of badgers, otters, newts and birds within the area as well as insects and plant habitats and we are striving to minimise disturbance.

The animal and plant life identified will be protected by:

-badger and otter passes underneath the road at carefully selected locations to allow animals to cross safely

-careful re-use of topsoil to preserve species rich grassland of value to plants, butterflies and bees

-relocation of great crested newts by licensed ecologists to ensure they are not harmed during construction as well as the creation of a new pond to provide an alternative habitat.

-installation of nest boxes and piling of brash to provide alternative nesting sites for birds during construction

-tree planting to provide replacement nest sites for birds and foraging areas for bats in the longer term.

- **How will the junction improvements affect air quality?**

Our proposals will have only a negligible effect on air quality. Measures will be taken during construction (e.g. Dust suppression) to minimise effects during construction

- **Will any agricultural land be taken for the schemes?**

We are proposing using a site near Styford junction during construction and discussions are ongoing with land owners. This will be returned to agricultural use upon completion. No agricultural land is needed at Bridge End.

- **Will the fault lines at Styford be affected by the scheme?**

We have taken this into account as part of our scheme design. All measures of land stability indicate no hazard/very low risk.

- **Will any contaminated land be affected?**

There are no records of contaminated land or historic pollution records within 1km of both sites. We will carry out detailed site investigations prior to construction.

- **How will the proposals affect local views?**

At Bridge End the A69 currently rises to the existing roundabout. Our new scheme will result in the road being at a lower level and largely screened from local views by the lie of the land and vegetation. We will be planting along the highway boundary to minimise any effect on local views. At Styford we will be providing new screen planting along the highway embankments.

Construction and associated vegetation removal will of course see the most noticeable change to the local landscape and the new planting will need time to establish and mature to achieve its full impact.

- **Noise and vibration**

At Bridge End there are a small number of properties close to the existing roundabout. We predict that 2 properties within 40 metres will actually receive a decrease in noise and vibration levels compared to not undertaking the scheme.

At Styford there are very few properties close to the scheme. Because the A69 is being elevated six properties will receive an increase in traffic noise and vibration with a small number receiving beneficial effects. At no location are the predicted affects sufficient to qualify for statutory noise insulation.

A 'thin' road surface course will be used at both locations. This is low in noise material (about 2db quieter) when compared to traditional hot rolled asphalt.

- **Will there be any effects on nearby watercourses?**

These will be negligible at both sites, both during construction and upon completion. There will be no negative effect on flood risk as a result of the schemes.

At Bridge End there will be a reduced risk of pollution to the River Tyne as a result of highway water run off as a result of scheme design (ie. a beneficial effect).

At Styford the existing roundabout is indicated as a flood zone on Environment Agency mapping but the EA have confirmed this as not accurate. Surface water flood risk would be localised with scheme design reducing the risk of pollution from the highway (ie. a beneficial effect).

Other issues at nearby locations

- **Hexham congestion**

Traffic coming into Hexham on the local road from the Bridge End roundabout will not be addressed as part of our scheme here but we will be working with Northumberland County Council to alleviate congestion on both our and the local road network.

- **Is there anything you can do about noise around the Bardon Mill area?**

We have put down anti-skid surface in this area for the safety of drivers due to the alignment of the road in this area, unfortunately this is slightly noisier than the normal surface we would put in.

- **What are you doing about pedestrian safety at Bardon Mill?**

We are aware of a number of concerns about pedestrians crossing the road between Bardon Mill and Henshaw. This is something we are continuing to monitor.

- **Why did you close the toilet facilities at Hayton layby in Cumbria?**

Following concerns from Cumbria Police in January about anti-social behaviour taking place we decided to close the facilities at the end of March.

- **What are you doing about the Haltwistle junction?**

We have agreed to alter some of the white lines in this area when we next do some resurfacing work which should help with the flow of traffic.

- **Will this scheme conflict with the A1 Scotswood to North Brunton scheme?**

The scheme is due to be completed in spring 2020 which is around the same time (March 2020) the A1 Scotswood to North Brunton scheme is due to start. We are undertaking all advanced work where possible to ensure as much is completed before the start date in March to mitigate any possible delays.

- **Can you improve the Two Mile Cottages junction?**

The A60/B6531 Two Mile Cottages junction continues to be reviewed and studied as an option for future improvement however will not be addressed as part of this scheme.

Further information

- **Where can I find further information/updates?**

You can view additional information about the scheme and sign up for updates at:

www.highwaysengland.co.uk/A69

You can also contact us by:

Phone: 0300 123 5000

Email: A69junctions@highwaysengland.co.uk

Or in writing: Russell Mclean, Project Manager, A69 Junction Improvement, Highways England, Lateral, 8 City Walk, Leeds, LS11 9AT