

## **Chronology of A417 Missing Link since summer 2014**

This document aims to summarise the activity and progress in identifying a solution for the A417 Missing Link since summer 2014 and the Board's engagement in, contributions to and consultations responses to the process.

### **2014**

June / July: Gloucestershire CC officials and their consultants, WSP Atkins asked Cotswolds Conservation Board to support the Brown / loop scheme (later named Option 12) solution for the A417 Missing Link since it was the only suitable solution.

September: Highways England and WSP Atkins made presentations to Board's Executive Committee.

October: Board site visit to A417 involving Glos CC, WSP Atkins, Amey (GCCs contractors) and Highways Agency (HA).

October: Board wrote to SoS at DfT acknowledging that the A417 Missing Link required a solution, status quo was not acceptable, but rejecting the brown or loop scheme as a suitable solution.

December: Road Improvement Strategy (RIS)1 announced, funds allocated to the A417 for a feasibility/design project.

December: Board submitted three design principles for any A417 scheme to HA (subsequently Highways England).

December HA confirmed that since the brown / loop scheme was the only detailed scheme at the time it had informed a design and build budget of £250m.

### **2015**

April: Board hosted a senior Department Transport (DfT) and Highways England (HE) site visit.

August: Board attended a Value Management Stage 0 Workshop, an HE led workshop in Bristol.

November: Board hosted another DfT and HE site visit.

### **2016**

February: Board staff / member site visit to see the A3 Hindhead green bridge (poor example), hosted by National Trust.

April: Board submitted Core Environmental Design Objectives to HE as requested.

October: Introductory meeting with Mott MacDonald following their appointment as consultants to advise HE.

October: Board attended Stage 1 Value Management 1 Workshop hosted by HE and Mott MacDonald (MM).

October: MM commenced detailed analysis of road corridor options.

October: Discussion commenced with HE and MM to agree scheme Vision, Design Principles, Objectives and Sub Objectives. Board influential in drafting of Vision, Design Principles etc.

November: Inaugural meeting of HE led Steering Group Meeting.

**2017**

February/March: MM identified a shortlist of possible corridor options, reviewed circa 30 alignments, discounted 10 options, 20 options remaining. Option 12 ranked 17 out of 20 and rejected on engineering grounds. Shortlisted options were 3, 6A, 21, 24 & 29 – four tunnels and one surface route (6A updated and later renamed 30).

April: Board attended Stage 1 Value Management Workshop 2 hosted by HE and MM.

May: HE and Strategic Stakeholder Panel members jointly agreed Vision, Design Principle, Objectives and Sub Objectives adopted.

May: MM led opportunities mapping exercise, Board called for far greater analysis of landscape and how to fit any scheme into the landscape, not simply to look to mitigate an engineering led solution.

July: MM commenced detailed landscape analysis to inform options appraisal.

September: Board attended Stage 1 Value Management Workshop 3 hosted by HE and MM.

September: HEs scheme budget doubled from £250m to £500m.

September: HE & MM published Landscape Study report.

October: Board wrote to SoS expressing concern over the analysis of corridor options given agreed landscape led vision.

October: Tunnel options seen to outperform surface route overall, all options giving poor BCR, all options over £500m budget.

November: Response from SoS DfT.

November: HE and DfT meeting agrees to drop shortlisted tunnel options – on cost grounds.

November: HE announces they were dropping all tunnel options and only advancing surface routes.

December: Board wrote to SoS at DfT expressing concern that tunnel options had been dropped; that out of date and limited Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) methodology was informing shortlisting process; that Option 30 was a modification of Option 6, which only ranked 15 out of 20 options.

**2018**

January: HE announced that they would be taking two surface routes forward to the options consultation, advancing Option 30 and the previously dismissed Option 12.

February: Meeting with HE, MM, CPRE and Geoffrey Clifton-Brown to discuss options, shortlisting and upcoming consultation.

February: HE launched options consultation exercise (Option 30 and Option 12).

March: Board responded to HE corridor options consultation raising concerns about the process and that better performing (on both economic and environmental measures) tunnels solutions had not been advanced to consultation; that a surface route previously dismissed on engineering grounds had advanced to consultation; and that analysis was out of date, limited in extent and did not take account of new policies emanating from the Government's own 25 Year Environment Plan.

May: First MM led Landscape, Environment & Heritage (LE&H) Technical Working Group, (Board not invited to first meeting).

June: First Strategic Stakeholder Panel meeting.

June: Board Chairman's interview with Independent Assurance Review Panel.

June: Board's A417 Task & Finish Group undertook site visits along M25, HS1 and A20 to review land bridges. Internal report produced, summarising examples of land bridges and tunnels.

July: LE&H Technical Working Group.

August: Board wrote to HE;

- Requesting detailed information and commenting/questioning if reasonable alternative solutions had been fully explored.
- Commenting on land bridge options.

September: Board wrote to HE;

- Suggesting alternative junctions for how the A436 and A417 joined; both alternative options subsequently accepted by HE and MM as being better from both an economic and environmental perspective than the original proposals; and a series of tunnel options for the A417. Included comparison table of UK road tunnel locations, lengths and traffic volumes.

September: LE&H Technical Working Group.

October: Board's A417 Task & Finish Group meet with HE to discuss August / September letters and process to date.

November: LE&H Technical Working Group Workshop.

December: Walk through on site with HE and MM

## **2019**

January: LE&H Technical Working Group.

January: Board wrote to HE following walk through on site offering further suggestions for the A436 – A417 junction.

January: Board, NT and GWT wrote to SoS Defra expressing concern with A417 proposals and lack of account of 25 Year Environment Plan.

February: Strategic Stakeholder Panel.

March: HE announced Option 30 as preferred route.

March: Board wrote to HE following preferred route announcement.

March: LE&H Technical Working Group. MM produced Design Principles Register, which sought to incorporate the Board's earlier submission on Core Environmental Design Objectives in 2016.

March: Board wrote to HE and MPs after HE's preferred route announcement to highlight landscape and scale of impact of Option 30.

April: Board wrote to HE following the Preferred Route Announcement; highlighting earlier responses in 2018, questioning the lack of address to earlier concerns, the lack of any further consideration of tunnels, the inadequacy of a small green bridge and the lack of net gain.

May: Arup replace MM as consultants advising HE

May: Strategic Stakeholder Panel, introduction to Arup.

May: Administrative error means that Board was consulted late by Planning Inspectorate (PINS) on HE's Scoping Report for Environmental Impact Assessment.

May: Board wrote to HE offering;

- Improvements for Birdlip Village and the Cowley Junction,

- Additional suggestions for the A417 – A436 junction,
- Option 30 Green bridge and bridge structures.

June: Strategic Stakeholder Panel.

June: Board submitted detailed responses (x2) to PINS consultation on Scoping Report. Response included updated suggestions on three tunnel alternatives; updated suggestions for the A436 : A417 junction; the suggestion for replacing te Shab Hill – Birdlip with a Birdlip Bypass and alterations to the Cowley junction; and a table comparing UK road tunnels.

July: LE&H Technical Working Group, largely an introduction for Arup.

July: LE&H Technical Working Group (Board not able to be present).

August: Arup consult Board on LVIA viewpoints.

August: LE&H Technical Working Group.

September: Strategic Stakeholder Panel.

September: HE releases consultation on Option 30 route design, 6 week consultation period, alongside the Preliminary Environmental Information Report, PEIR.

**Positives to date:**

- Jointly agreed Vision, Design Principles, Objectives and Sub Objectives – focussed on a landscape led solution.
- The brown or loop scheme, option 12 was dropped.
- HE has developed one of the Board's suggestions for how to improve how the A436 joins the A417, recognising that it is better from both an economic and environmental perspective that the original proposal by HE/MM.

**Negatives / Outstanding issues:**

- Lack of success in persuading HE to consider any tunnel solutions.
- Lack of success in increasing the scale of any land bridge.
- Lack of success in removing the Shab Hill A417 junction to Birdlip link road and replacing it with a bypass for Birdlip.
- Other partners are too quick to discuss mitigation rather than focus on the most appropriate solution.
- Lack of detailed information from HE, MM and Arup
- Technical working groups focussed on relative minutiae rather than fundamentals of scheme.
- HE being clear on how they have assessed and addressed AONB tests in the National Policy Statement for National Networks, (NSPNN).
- HE process demonstrates numerous meetings and engagement but hides a lack of meaningful discussion and influence by partner organisations on the big picture.

**Future activity:**

- Board to respond to HE consultation (originally due for release on 10th September).
- Board to test HE proposals against NSPNN policy, policies in Government's 25 Year Environment Plan etc
- Board and HE / Arup to agree Statement of Common Ground in advance of HE making Development Consent Order (DCO) submission.
- Any scheme is dependent on future budget announcements and funding allocated via RIS2, due November 2019 but could be delayed.
- HE aim to submit DCO March 2020.