

# TRUNK ROADS IN HEREFORDSHIRE

Report By: Director of Environment

## Wards Affected

County wide

## Purpose

To consider the management of Trunk Roads in Herefordshire by the Highways Agency.

## Reasons

In response to concerns from Local Members about safety on the A49 in the Ashton and Wellington areas, the Environment Scrutiny Committee on 8 December 2004 requested the opportunity to discuss the management of Trunk Roads with representatives of the Highways Agency.

## Considerations

1. Trunk Roads and Motorways are managed by the Highways Agency as an operating agency of the Government. In Herefordshire, these roads are:
  - a. M50 Motorway
  - b. A40
  - c. A49
  - d. A465 (Welsh border- Pontrilas to Hereford)
2. Within the national hierarchy of trunk routes, the A465 and A40 (from the Gloucestershire boundary to Over Ross roundabout) are designated as "non-core" routes and are expected to be de-trunked. The section of the A40 is likely to be de-trunked in 2005 or 2006. A decision on the future of the A465 is subject to continuing discussions with the Welsh Assembly Government to agree the future status of this route in Wales. Within the current Local Transport Plan (LTP), the Council has accepted the principle of detrunking these routes, subject to the A465 also being de-trunked in Wales.
3. The Highways Agency has initiated a national programme of trunk road reviews to produce Route Management Strategies (RMS). The RMS for the A49 (Ross-on-Wye to Shrewsbury) was published on 17 December 2004, a copy of which was placed in the Members room library. An RMS for the M50/A40 is currently being developed. The RMS sets out a framework within which the operational management of the route will be developed but does not generally define site-specific actions. The Highways Agency will follow procedures set out in their Programme Objectives Guide to identify and deliver individual projects.
4. During the development of the RMS for the A49, Herefordshire Council stressed that safety was a high priority. Although, trunk roads in Herefordshire represent only 3% of

the total highway network, approximately 23% of all personal injury accidents occur on the trunk roads. As confirmed within the A49 RMS, the accident rate on several sections of the A49 is above the national average for the class of road.

5. The Government has set out national targets for casualty reduction. These targets apply to Herefordshire Council, as local highway authority, and the Highways Agency. There is a national Best Value Performance Indicator (BVPI99) which records progress against the casualty reduction targets.
6. The indicator is based on data from all roads within the county, including trunk roads. There have been significant reductions in the number of Killed and Seriously Injured Casualties (KSIs) on Herefordshire's roads in recent years, at a level well ahead of the national targets. In part, the improvement in road safety is due to the success of targeted programmes of road safety measures by both the Council and Highways Agency.
7. Because the two highway authorities are working across different geographical areas with very different network characteristics, there are some significant differences in the way that the Council and the Highways Agency set priority rankings for delivering road safety programmes. The Highways Agency assesses priorities based on the whole of its operating region (the West Midlands) and not simply across its network within Herefordshire.
8. This difference in approach will become an issue of increasing concern for Herefordshire if the delivery of casualty reduction on the trunk roads in the county fails to keep pace with the local application of the national targets.
9. The 23% of injury accidents that occur on trunk roads count against Herefordshire Council's BVPI 99 target. However, Herefordshire Council has little or no responsibility for this 3% of the highway network. This will also impact on the Council's target for reducing accidents, contained in the second Local Public Service Agreement.
10. Officers of the Council and the Highways Agency have begun discussions to identify options that might be considered if the delivery of casualty reduction schemes on trunk roads in Herefordshire were to be accelerated. There may be an opportunity to promote additional resources for the trunk roads through the second Local Public Service Agreement or the second Local Transport Plan but there is not yet any indication that the Highways Agency itself would consider adjusting its resources to provide greater local emphasis to casualty reduction.
11. Following the discussion about safety on the A49 at the meeting of the Environment Scrutiny Committee on 8 December 2004, the Highways Agency has agreed to make a presentation to the Committee at this meeting. Member's questions arising at and subsequent to that meeting have been forwarded to the Highways Agency for their comment. There will be an opportunity for the members of the Committee to put questions to the representatives from the Agency.

## Financial Implications

If the Council wished, consideration could be given to diverting LTP resources to casualty reduction schemes on trunk roads in the county. This would require corresponding reductions in other LTP programme areas. Failure to meet the LPSA target could adversely affect the potential for performance improvement grant.

## Risks

The Council does not currently include personal injury accidents on trunk roads within its assessment procedure for developing annual road safety programmes. The council is not under a duty to assess those risks on trunk roads but does have powers that would allow consideration to be given to the introduction of schemes to reduce those risks.

## Recommendations

### THAT:

- a) **the Committee consider the information provided by the Highways Agency and note the Route Management Strategy for the A49 and;**
- b) **the Committee consider whether there are any issues they wish to suggest that the Cabinet Member (Highways and Transportation) raises with the Highways Agency and the Department for Transport.**

## Background Papers

- A49 Route Management Strategy (Highways Agency 2004)