

A47 Alliance Steering Group

Meeting: 10am on Wednesday 30 April 2014

Venue: Kings Court, Chapel Street, King's Lynn, PE30 1EX

Meeting Note

In attendance:

Lewis Banks	Peterborough City Council
Carolyn Barnes	Suffolk Coastal and Waveney District Councils
Cllr. Ian Bates	Cambridgeshire County Council
Cllr. Ralph Butcher	Fenland District Council
Cllr. Mick Castle	Norfolk County Council
Cllr. Paul Claussen	Breckland District Council
David Cumming	Norfolk County Council
Sandra Eastaugh	Norfolk County Council
Cllr. Mary Evans	Suffolk County Council
Marie Finbow	New Anglia LEP
David Glason	Great Yarmouth Borough Council
Peter Grimm	Suffolk County Council
Cllr. David Harrison	Norfolk County Council
Peter Jermany	Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk
Ellen Jones	Norfolk County Council
Alan Kirkdale	Highways Agency
Tom McCabe	Norfolk County Council
Fiona McDiarmid	Norfolk County Council
Simon Machen	Peterborough City Council
Hamish Melville	Broadland District Council
Paul Moss	Waveney District Council
Wendy Otter	Fenland District Council
Richard Perkins	Suffolk Chamber of Commerce
Cllr. Bruce Provan	Waveney District Council
Mark Reeve	Greater Cambridge Greater Peterborough LEP
Cllr. William Richmond	Norfolk County Council
Michael Selfe	RAC Foundation
Cllr. Vivienne Spikings	Borough Council of King's Lynn & West Norfolk
Eddie Tyrer	Norfolk Chamber of Commerce
Cllr. Brian Walker	Great Yarmouth Borough Council
Fiona Walker	Office of Elizabeth Truss MP
Sally Wilcox	Office of George Freeman MP

Apologies:

John Birchall	Norfolk County Council
Jonathan Cage	Norfolk Chamber of Commerce
Cllr Margaret Dewsbury	Norfolk County Council
Cllr Tim East	South Norfolk District Council
Cllr Tom Fitzpatrick	North Norfolk District Council
Cllr Roger Foulger	Broadland District Council

Cllr Peter Hiller
Cllr Colin Law
Phil Mileham
Cllr Graham Newman
Mark Pendlington
Robert Sturdy
Bob Tuckwell

Peterborough City Council
Waveney District Council
Breckland District Council
Suffolk County Council
New Anglia LEP
MEP
Cambridgeshire County Council

Note: Mr Sturdy is retiring after the forthcoming elections so an alternative MEP representative will need to be invited

1.0 **Last meeting note and matters arising**

The last meeting note was accepted as a true record and all actions have been completed

2.0 **MP engagement**

Local MPs and the A47 Alliance met with Robert Goodwill MP, Roads Minister on 11 February and had a very positive meeting. The Alliance is hopeful for an announcement in the autumn statement – this would be the first time Government have formally responded on our business case.

Sally Wilcox updated the group to say that George Freeman and other local MPs are hopeful for a visit from the Minister on 4 July but that this would be dependent on the outcome of the forthcoming European elections and any potential resulting Cabinet re-shuffle. Local MPs remain focussed on the A47 as a priority.

3.0 **Route Strategy update**

The strategies have been re-branded as 'Route Strategies' – dropping the 'based'. Evidence reports have been published for 18 'routes' with the A47 included in the [East of England Route Strategy](#). The A47 will also be the subject of a feasibility study (covered later) that will provide more detail than the stage 2 route strategies. Alan Kirkdale thanked the group for the various comments made which have been taken on board and amendments made accordingly.

A number of questions were raised including:

Q. What is the ongoing process to see projects through to fruition?

A. The Roads Investment Strategy is scheduled to be published at the end of year and will outline what Government intends to spend on the Strategic Road Network 15/16 to 20/21 in line with the recent proposal to transform HA into a Government Owned Company¹. The remit of this new company is likely to be based on performance/output.

¹ <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/green-light-for-highways-agency-reform-gives-better-deal-for-taxpayers>

Q. How will prioritisation consistency be assured between strategies?

A. Prioritisation will occur on the national scale rather than on a route-by-route basis. The list of possible interventions will be very long but delivery of growth will be important.

There was a discussion on the need to avoid confusing messages around the route between Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft, with a general consensus that the route would be better re-numbered as the A47. From a business perspective renumbering makes sense. Today's announcement that Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft be awarded Assisted Area status further links the towns and supports this position.

4.0 **A47 Feasibility Study – remit and implications**

Alan Kirkdale gave a presentation on the A47 Feasibility Study. The A47 is long compared to other routes with focussed feasibility studies (186km). The draft stage 1 report is now complete and there has been some discussion with officers in each of the highway authorities. A stakeholder meeting is being arranged for the week beginning 19 May. Stage 2 will provide a range of proposals to address problems and Stage 3, which will begin before the end of stage 2 where appropriate and will cover scheme affordability, value for money and deliverability, needs to be completed in order for Ministers to make any decisions in relation to the autumn statement by the end of September. 103km of the route is still single carriageway and the cost of full dualling would be approximately £2bn based on an assumption of delivery between 2020 and 2025 and without the two new river crossings in Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft. Previous evidence and studies are being used to support the work and new evidence is also being gathered.

Key points raised in the following discussion included:

- Ministers would need to be convinced that schemes were deliverable and provided good value for them to be included in the Autumn Statement. This would require schemes to be well-developed. The Blofield to Burlingham scheme has the most detail. Likely current costs would be between £45m and £62m, previous cost to benefit ratio of 5 – offers good value for money. However, even if the scheme was included in the autumn statement, it would not be open until at least 2021 as new public consultation will be required
- There is a need to balance the desirable 'quick wins' in the run up to the General Election and the longer term improvements to be delivered. Need to reinforce the A47 as a 'route' in need for improvement and ask for a commitment to A47 improvements in the autumn statement with appropriate detail to follow.
- The need to have appropriate preparatory work in place to ensure delivery when funding becomes available. Land designation would help with the delivery of improvements to the Acle Straight and preparatory work on route relocation to support the route between Wisbech and Thorney may also be required. Land cannot be protected until a specific scheme is included in a Government programme but we need to tackle the issue to avoid self-fulfilling prophecies on these difficult stretches – can local authority help?
- Flexibility between capital and revenue funding streams would be helpful
- Is A47 likely to be classified as an 'Expressway'? [Action for Roads](#) outlines the definition for expressways but not all of the SRN will be designated – routes in

- the East of England likely to be A14 and A12 south of Ipswich.
- The Feasibility Study Project Board only includes the HA and DfT – it should include the highway authorities. The Reference Group could also be wider to include more stakeholders. **ACTION: AK to feedback to DfT**
- How will the SEP prioritisation work fit in? HA will simply lift this work out once agreed in July.
- Is there any hint of local authorities being asked for contributions? Unsure but local contributions, local authority or developer have helped to get schemes delivered – LAs are already contributing to the A14 improvement

5.0 Economic Benefits Update

Suffolk extension

Paul Moss outlined the key points from the work Waveney District Council commissioned on the wider economic benefits of improving the A12 between Great Yarmouth and Lowestoft: Sizewell, CORE status, enterprise zones and Assisted Area status all offer significant opportunities for growth. The report concluded that improvements would help to deliver an additional 1,800 direct jobs and 550 dwellings.

Future work and development opportunities

The Gateway to Growth focussed on targeted improvements, the full ask of which was around £800m. This 'ask' is perhaps more realistic, we need to re-emphasise our full dualling ask while bearing in mind DfT's nervousness about adding new schemes at this stage. Do we need to look at 'joining up' previous studies and is there anything more we need to do in the run up to the autumn statement? What spatial planning could we put forward to support A47 improvements? Could developers be used to help bring forward schemes?

Discussion included:

- The need to aim for full dualling. The MPs position is that there must be emphasis on the long-term for a fully dualled A47.
- The HA has begun to look at full dualling and the potential journey time savings²: The current travel time between Wansford and Lowestoft is 2 hours 42 minutes. The journey time would be reduced by 55 minutes to 1 hour and 47 minutes on the assumption of grade separated junctions and an average speed of 65 mph. With roundabouts the average speed would be lower – taking an average of say 60 mph the journey time would be reduced to 1 hour and 56 minutes – a saving of 46 minutes. Transport benefits would need to equate to roughly £4bn to make full dualling 'value for money'. This equates to considerable traffic volumes – some sections of the A47 receive relatively modest traffic flows.
- A two stage approach could be beneficial, focus on the short-term ask of the autumn statement but continue to push the case and do preparatory work for other longer term schemes. Resonates with SEP process.
- The need to link with economic development strategy and emphasise that the A47 has been under-invested in for decades
- The need to 'fill the gaps' wherever possible to add to the business case.

² Figures may alter from what was reported at the meeting.

Benefits would also include international inward investment opportunities

6.0 **Communications**

Communications Strategy – approach

The communications strategy was introduced. Focus has been given to a shared and co-ordinated approach to help develop further momentum. Key points included:

- Businesses will have alternative routes to influence Government thinking and these should be utilised.
- There will be potential opportunities for another business supplement in the EDP similar to that already done on the A11

ACTION: feedback comments and local opportunities to Ellen Jones

ellen.jones@norfolk.gov.uk

7.0 **Other updates**

Strategic Economic Plan – NALEP and GCGP

The SEPs were submitted on 31 March; nationally the Local Growth Fund was 3 or 4 times oversubscribed. All LEPs are now entering a negotiation period with Government and have been asked to provide a prioritised list of capital schemes for 15/16 based on fit with SEP objectives, deliverability, additionality and leverage.

New Anglia LEP produced a 6 year transport programme totalling £430m, a proportion of which is being asked of the LGF. A separate ask is being made of strategic road and rail networks.

Local Growth Deals will be agreed by July 2014.

Pinchpoint update

Wansford improvement – A1 southbound offslip to be completed by March 2015
Honingham scheme currently being developed to be completed by end March 2015

8.0 **Any Other Business**

The A14 consultation is currently open and will close on 15 June. It will be the last opportunity to ensure improvements are fit for purpose

9.0 **Date of next meeting**

The next meeting will take place at 2pm on 17 September in Norwich

David Harrison thanked the group for its achievements and stated that this may be his last meeting given Norfolk County Council is moving to a committee structure