

Written Ministerial Statements

Tuesday 1 April 2003

TRANSPORT

Trunk Roads

The Secretary of State for Transport (Mr. Alistair Darling): I am today announcing a range of improvements to the strategic road network that will tackle congestion, improve safety and reduce the impact of traffic noise.

Measures that minimise the effect of traffic on the people who live alongside roads are as important as trying to ensure that people can travel safely and reliably. For this reason we will be installing quieter surfacing on over 60 per cent. of the trunk road network, including all concrete stretches, within the period of the 10 year plan.

I am now able to announce the timetable for the resurfacing of all stretches of concrete roads and that within the next four years we will resurface the 26 stretches affecting the largest number of people. The remaining stretches will be resurfaced between 2007 and 2011.

The early work will benefit some 11,500 properties and cost in the order of £77 million. Details have been placed in the Library, along with copies of the report by TRL Ltd that compares estimated noise levels with actual noise levels.

In the light of the recommendations of the Regional Planning Bodies, the Statutory Environmental Bodies, local authorities and other stakeholders I have asked the Highways Agency to add the following road schemes to the Targeted Programme of Improvements (TPI) at a cost of £637 million:

A14 Ellington-Fen Ditton improvement

A57/A628 Mottram in Longdendale, Hollingworth and Tintwistle bypass

A45/A46 Tollbar End improvement

These schemes will deliver a range of benefits including reductions in congestion and improvements in safety as well as relieving communities of heavy traffic. The improvement of the A14 also demonstrates our commitment to support the Government's plans for accelerated growth in the London-Stansted-Cambridge area, as set out in the Communities Plan.

I have asked the Highways Agency to take forward work on the following schemes with a view to TPI entry in the near future:

A38 Derby Junctions improvement

40/A46 Longbridge roundabout improvement

A55/A483 junction improvement Chester

However, I am not convinced that the proposal for a new motorway in open countryside between M6 junction 19 and the M56 is acceptable. I have also considered alternative improvements of M6 junction 20, but I do not believe that they represent value for money.

I have therefore asked the Highways Agency to work with local stakeholders to identify smaller-scale measures for the A556 in Cheshire.