

# The Project Control Framework

## Quick reference guide



# The Project Control Framework Quick Reference Guide

“The Project Control Framework (PCF) provides a robust and clearly structured process for the management and delivery of schemes. Our review concluded that the application of the PCF should not delay the progress of well managed schemes, but brings the necessary rigour to ensure the schemes achieve their goals and are delivered on time”.

Highways England Corporate Assurance Report - March 2016

**Contact the PCF Team at [MPPCF@highwaysengland.co.uk](mailto:MPPCF@highwaysengland.co.uk)**

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## Executive summary

The PCF provides a defined lifecycle with a clear start and end point, broken into phases and stages structured around key milestones. Approval to proceed from one stage into the next must be given by the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) and this is assessed at a stage gate assessment review (SGAR) which is typically a two hour meeting. Progress is measured by the successful completion of products (which are all based on legal requirements, standards or recognised best practice) with the focus being on the quality of these documents and the outcomes that they are intended to deliver.

Delivery of the Roads Investment Strategy needs to be appropriately planned and streamlined to meet the basic principles of the governance requirements in the most efficient manner.

## Why is the Project Control Framework important?

- It is a mandatory condition of Highways England's financial delegation from the Department for Transport that we adhere to the PCF.
- It draws together assorted legal requirements, standards and good practice into one easy to follow framework.
- It ensures consistency of message and continuity and consistency between divisions, offices, projects and teams.
- It provides reassurance to the SRO that a project has met the stage requirements and evidence of quality prior to seeking investment authorisation.
- The Highways England PCF is specifically identified as an example of best practice in the UK government's Management of Portfolios training.

## Products

- The framework focuses on what needs to be delivered by a project within each stage of the lifecycle and its deliverables are called products, for example a business case, an economic assessment report and a project management plan are all products.
- Each product has a standard product definition describing its purpose (why we need it and what is it trying to achieve), the content (what should be included within it) and quality criteria (what legislation or guidance it should comply with / what it should look like).
- There are clearly defined roles and responsibilities for product production (who ensures that the document exists), consultation (the key stakeholders that need to be included in its development) and sign off (the person ultimately accountable for the quality of the product and whether it is fit for purpose).
- Product matrices define which products are needed and at what stage(s) of the lifecycle they need to be produced. There are two matrices, one for traditional projects following the full lifecycle and another for single option projects.

- It is mandatory to consider the need for every product, although some may not be applicable depending on the specific requirements of individual projects. Where a product is genuinely not applicable, it is important to record why it is not required (for example a 'Statutory Instrument and Explanatory Memorandum' is not needed on this project as it does not involve variable speed limits) and that this has been agreed with the SRO and PCF Manager.

### What are the products based on?

A frequently repeated criticism of the PCF is that there are too many products but when challenged, users are usually unable to identify any that are genuinely superfluous because they are a requirement of either:

- Legislation - for example the CDM Regulations 2015, the Equality Act 2010, the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 and Planning Act 2008.
- Standards - for example the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB), Interim Advice Notes (IANs), and WebTAG.
- Best practice and / or standard project management techniques - for example Lessons Learnt, Risk Management or Project Scheduling.

## The PCF lifecycle

- All major projects follow a standard lifecycle divided into phases and stages.
- Most projects work their way chronologically through the stages but in some cases (such as with Single Option Projects) it may be appropriate to miss some out depending on project specific circumstances.
- A project can only be in one stage of the lifecycle at any point in time but the framework is designed to be flexible and where justifiable, activities can be brought forward or moved back.
- The stages align with key decision points in the project's development and delivery i.e. the stage start and end points are all based around key milestones. **See figure 1 on page 7.**
- Users sometimes claim to be overlapping stages but as they are aligned to specific events it is not physically possible to do this, this would be like saying that a letter has been received before it has even been posted on the basis that a reply has already been drafted. It would be more accurate to say that work has been started early and at risk on some products or activities more commonly associated with later stages in the process - but this does not constitute commencement of the next stage.

## The PCF phases

- **Options phase** – identifies the preferred road solution to the transport problem. By the end of the phase there is certainty that, for example, the project will involve widening along a specific route.
- **Development phase** – focuses on the design of the preferred solution taking it through the necessary statutory processes up to the point where a decision to commit to invest in building the road solution can be made.
- **Construction phase** – is where the road solution is built, handed over for operation and the project is closed down.

**See figure 2 on page 7**

## Single Option projects

Some projects can fast track their way through the PCF lifecycle, assuming they meet specific criteria.

Single option projects are defined as:

- a) Within the highway boundary and therefore with no requirement for land take or associated statutory processes.
- b) No requirement for an environmental statement.
- c) The route is already fixed i.e. an existing road is being modified.

**NB** Single option projects must meet the three criteria and should not be confused with projects that require land take or an environmental statement but only have one viable option. The projects that are therefore most likely to fall within this category are as follows but each project must be assessed on its individual requirements as (for example) some smart motorways will require land take:

- Online widening
- Controlled or smart motorways (including all lane running)

**See figure 3 on page 8**

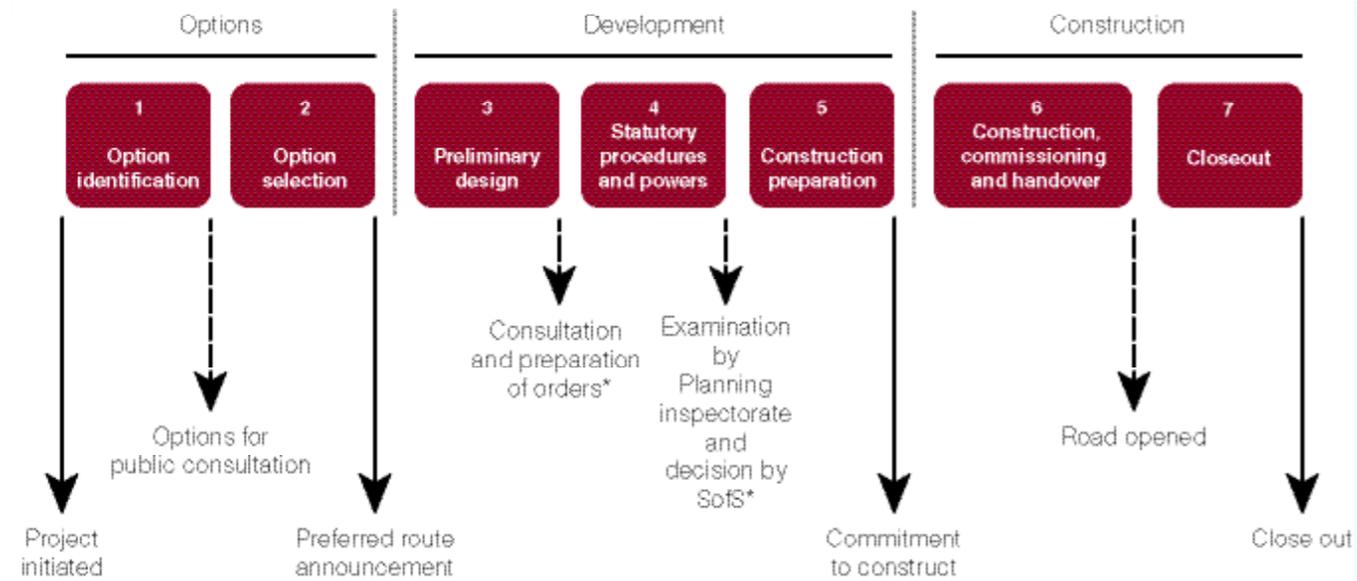
## There is a clear process for moving between stages

At the end of every stage, approval to proceed into the next stage must be given by the SRO. This is done by the award of a green or amber outcome at a stage gate assessment review (SGAR).

The focus of an SGAR is on the quality of the products produced during the stage and whether they have achieved their desired outcomes.

**See figure 4 on page 8**

Figure 1: Key decision points in the Major Projects lifecycle



\* Nationally significant infrastructure projects only. For projects under the threshold, Highways Act 1980 and Public Inquiry processes will apply.

Figure 2: Major Projects lifecycle

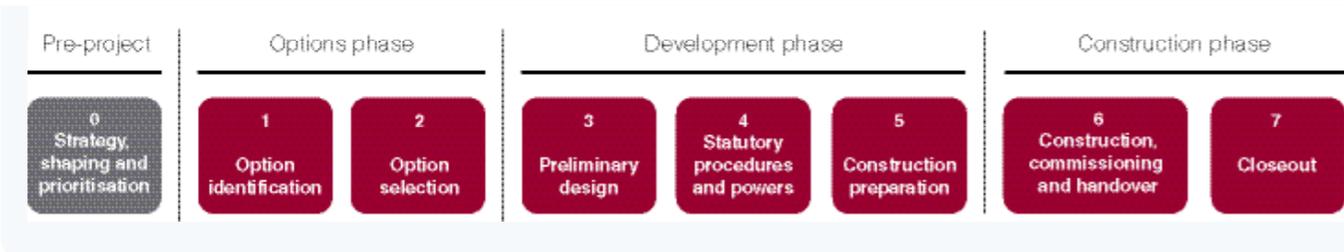


Figure 3: The revised lifecycle for single option projects (assuming no land take or need for an environmental statement)

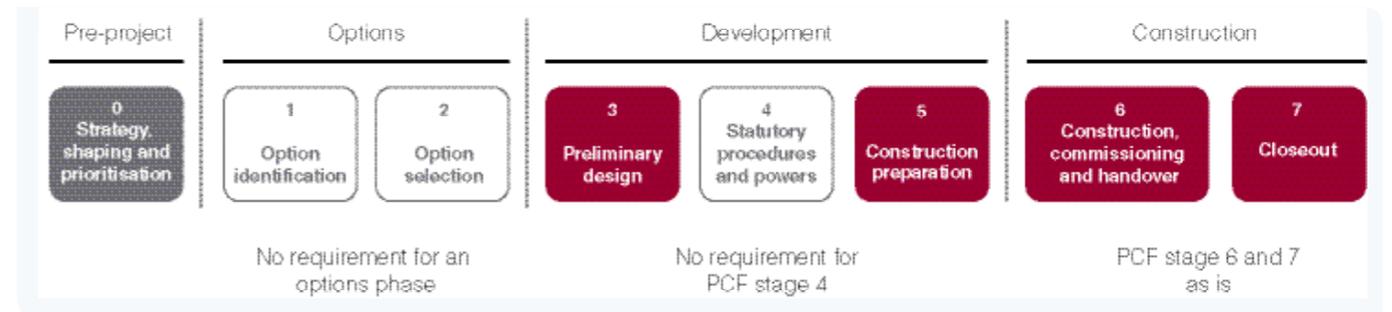
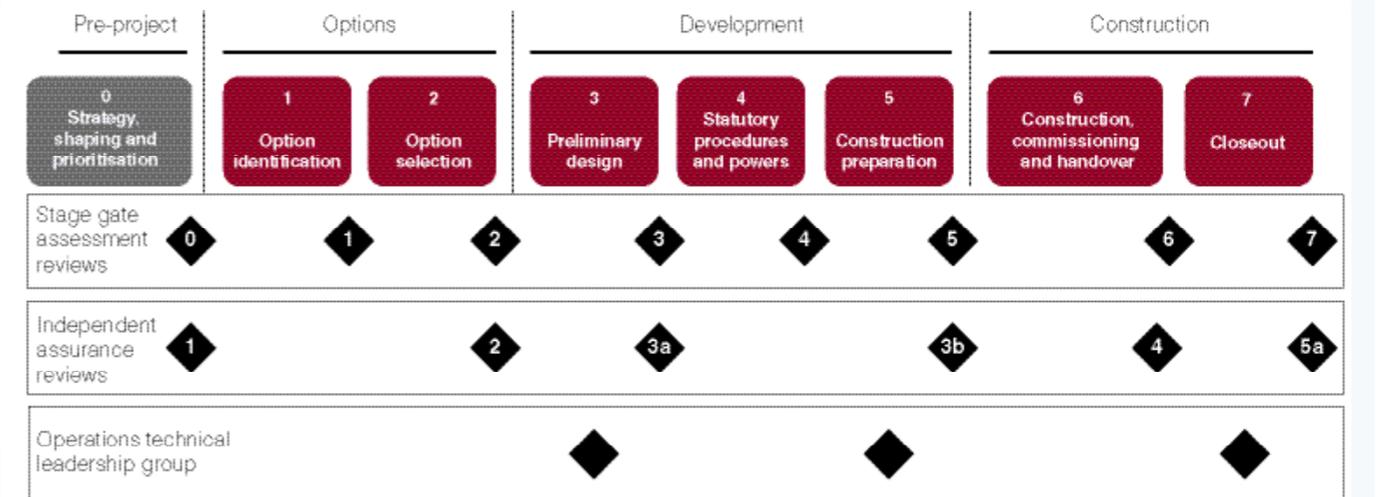


Figure 4: Summary of stage gate assessment reviews, independent assurance reviews and the Operations TLG



## Summary of the stages for 'Traditional' projects

Stage number and name	When should the SGAR take place?	High level overview of the stage
0 - Strategy, shaping and prioritisation	Prior to entry into the RIS and / or Project Control Framework.	Potential transport issues are identified and prioritised. Feasibility studies, initial analysis and appraisal are conducted to assess the viability of transport scheme solutions to the problem, including road network solutions.
1 - Option identification	Prior to non statutory Public Consultation.	<p>Traffic modelling and economic assessment is undertaken on a number of options (i.e. potential road solutions to the transport problem). A robust traffic assessment is needed to tell whether a scheme will work now and in the future, to assess whether the proposed solution will mitigate an identified problem and whether there are any consequential impacts, for example on the environment. Economic appraisal of transport schemes is required in order to assist decision-makers prioritise between schemes and options and ensure that value for public money is achieved.</p> <p>A key output is the Technical Appraisal Report which ensures decisions on which options to consult the public on are supported by robust assessment and data.</p>
2 - Option selection	Prior to the Preferred Route Announcement.	A variety of online and public events are held at which the public are consulted and their views on the potential options are taken into account. Further refinements will be made to the traffic modelling and economic assessment and by the end of the stage, a decision on which option to progress is made and a public announcement is made on this 'preferred route'.
3 - Preliminary design	Prior to submitting the Development Consent Order (DCO) application to the Planning Inspectorate or producing draft orders under the Highways Act 1980.	In order to produce any draft orders required under the Planning Act 2008 (DCO) or the Highways Act 1980, the scheme will need to be designed to the required standard to ascertain and justify the land needed and report on the impacts involved and propose mitigation. Topographical, geotechnical and environmental surveys are undertaken to help develop the design of the selected route. Assessment and design work takes place to develop the results of the surveys into the design in the draft order(s). Projects carry out further public consultation on the proposed design covered by the draft order(s), including the statutory consultation required under the Planning Act 2008. Documents supporting the relevant draft order need to be produced; where a DCO is needed, these are likely to be numerous, for example a Consultation Report. In advance of the draft order submission, the preliminary design will need to be frozen, and all orders, plans, land requirements and assessment work to be in accordance with this design freeze.

Stage number and name	When should the SGAR take place?	High level overview of the stage
4 - Statutory procedures and powers	Once the Secretary of State's decision on the Development Consent Order or draft orders (as appropriate) has been received.	Dependent on the order sought (DCO or Highways Act 1980 orders), the scheme will progress through the relevant planning process, whether examination or potentially a public inquiry (where objections remain in the latter case). This is likely to involve hearings and supplementary submissions to the examination / hearing, the scale of which will be determined by the requirements of the examining authority / inspector(s) and – as such – cannot be covered by PCF products. In the case of a DCO examination, PCF Stage 3 products may need to be updated, e.g. the draft DCO, Book of Reference and the various sets of plans.
5 - Construction preparation	Prior to the issue of the Notice to Proceed.	Orders / development consent are confirmed and high court challenges are responded to (if any). Pre-construction design is completed in line with the results of the legal processes, in sufficient detail to enable the contractor to construct the project. Contracts are awarded and final construction costs are agreed with the contractor. Contractors are instructed to start construction by way of a Notice to Proceed. If compulsory acquisition powers are to be used to get on site, General Vesting Declaration documents / Notices to Treat and Enter will need to be prepared with allowance made for the statutory notice periods before works on site can commence. In the case of a DCO, pre-construction requirements will need to be discharged with the involvement of the relevant consultees defined in the DCO
6 - Construction, commissioning and handover	Approximately three months after road opening to coincide with the production of the as-built documentation. Although not mandatory, many project teams also choose to hold an interim SGAR 6 prior to opening for traffic to ensure that key deliverables such as the safety products are in place and that the consent to implement process has been followed where appropriate.	The project is constructed and (where applicable) technology is tested and commissioned. The road is opened to traffic and handed over to Operations Directorate to operate and maintain.
7 - Closeout	Prior to formal closeout of the project.	The final account is agreed with the contractor. The contractor completes any outstanding works (or re-work), corrects any defects and ensures that any environmental mitigation measures are successful. A review of project delivery / benefits analysis is undertaken and lessons learnt are identified and shared. Any residual actions are identified and a plan for their completion is implemented before formal project close down.

## Summary of the stages for 'Single Option' projects

Stage number and name	When should the SGAR take place?	High level overview of the stage
0 - Strategy, shaping and prioritisation	Prior to entry into the RIS and / or Project Control Framework.	Potential transport issues are identified and prioritised. Feasibility studies, initial analysis and appraisal are conducted to assess the viability of transport scheme solutions to the problem, including road network solutions.
1 – N/A	N/A	N/A
2 – N/A	N/A	N/A
3 - Preliminary design	After Design Fix 3 and / or the initial application of IAN 161/15 Smart Motorways (where applicable)	Fit to design. The operational concept is progressed to a preliminary design (design fixes 1-3 completed). Main activities include collation of existing asset data, commissioning of surveys and environmental assessment and the production of the Outline Business Case.
4 – N/A	N/A	N/A
5 - Construction preparation	Prior to Notice to Proceed.	Fit to Build. The preliminary design is progressed to detailed design. Additional activities to the main design include ensuring consents are in place, public information exhibitions are held and the production of the final business case.
6 - Construction, commissioning and handover	Approximately three months after road opening to coincide with the production of the as-built documentation. Although not mandatory, many project teams also choose to hold an interim SGAR 6 prior to opening for traffic to ensure that key deliverables such as the safety products are in place and that the consent to implement process has been followed where appropriate.	The project is constructed and (where applicable) technology is tested and commissioned. The road is opened to traffic and handed over to Operations Directorate to operate and maintain.
7 - Closeout	Prior to formal closeout of the project.	The final account is agreed with the contractor. The contractor completes any outstanding works (or re-work), corrects any defects and ensures that any environmental mitigation measures are successful. A review of project delivery / benefits analysis is undertaken and lessons learnt are identified and shared. Any residual actions are identified and a plan for their completion is implemented before formal project close down.

If you need help using this or any other Highways England information, please call **0300 123 5000** and we will assist you.

To enquire about the 'Introduction to the PCF' training course or for any questions generally, please get in touch with the PCF Team at [MPPCF@highwaysengland.co.uk](mailto:MPPCF@highwaysengland.co.uk)

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If you have any enquiries about this publication email [info@highwaysengland.co.uk](mailto:info@highwaysengland.co.uk)  
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