

A5036

Port of Liverpool Access Scheme

Newsletter – Issue 5

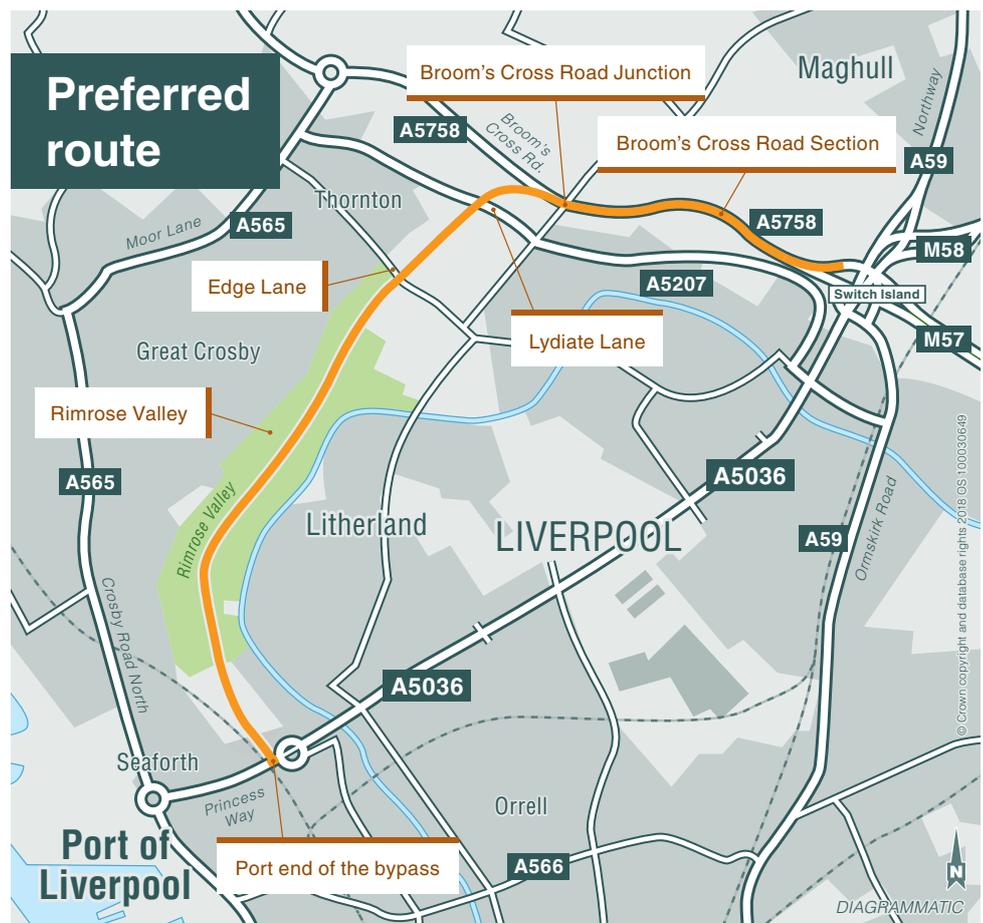
March 2018

Welcome to another edition of our newsletter which is designed to keep you updated on our proposals to improve the A5036 between Switch Island and Princess Way. Our aim is to reduce congestion and make journeys quicker and safer for residents, communities, commuters – for everybody.

Background - preferred route

In September 2017 we announced a new dual carriageway bypass through the Rimrose Valley would be taken forward as what we call the 'preferred route'.

We considered a range of factors before making our decision between two options – a package of improvements to the existing A5036 (option A) or a new bypass (option B). The bypass was chosen, as it is the best solution to cope with the anticipated growth in traffic expected as a result of future housing and business growth in the area. This includes the predicted growth in HGV traffic following the completion of the Liverpool 2 development.



Our commitment is also to alleviate the strain on the current A5036 route and make it safer for both road users and the local community. The bypass offers significant safety advantages because there are fewer road junctions and it also facilitates a safer A5036 for pedestrians and cyclists.

Full details of the preferred route are available on our website or by contacting us direct using the details provided on the back of this newsletter.

Judicial Review

In November 2017, Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council submitted an application to the High Court seeking permission for a review of the decision not to include a tunnel under the Rimrose Valley as part of our preferred route consultation.

We made the decision to defend our position and despite our full response to the High Court, Sefton has been granted permission to bring its challenge forward and a hearing will be listed for later this year. We will continue to defend our position and will continue to develop our designs based on our chosen option, including making a number of environmental assessments within the Rimrose Valley.

Please see the 'frequently asked questions' section of this newsletter, which explains why a tunnel solution will not be progressed.

What happens next?

Within the Rimrose Valley, we will be carrying out various ground investigations throughout 2018, which will complement our earlier environmental assessments. This will all inform the design of the bypass.

- Spring 2018 - Assessments on the water environment, landscape, geology and soils, landscape and archaeology as well as a bat inspection and hibernation check
- Apr-Jul 2018 - Surveys on noise, habitats and water voles
- May-Sep 2018 - Bat emergence surveys

We will endeavour to ensure that the impacts of any surveys are kept to a minimum. We will also work closely with local stakeholders to keep the community fully informed on the progress of the surveys and when they are likely to begin.

Frequently asked questions

In this section of our newsletter we answer some of the questions we are regularly asked about our proposed scheme.

Q: Why are you ignoring calls from the community for a tunnel?

A: Throughout the development of the scheme we have investigated the viability of a tunnel solution. We've looked at both 'bored' and 'cut and cover' options and have concluded that the costs of such an intervention would significantly outweigh the benefits and would therefore represent poor value for money.

As part of our consultation exercise that took place in January 2017 a number of 'discounted options', including the tunnel, were presented. We explained our reasoning for them being discounted at the time – that it would not be a wise use of tax-payers' money.

We have never 'ignored' the tunnel idea but it's not something that simply could ever be delivered within the budget we've been allocated (around £250 million). From the work that we have done we know that a tunnel could cost around £1.5 billion.

We also believe that a tunnel solution would take up to six years to construct as opposed to two-and-a-half years for a bypass. Also, due to the increased working area required during its construction, the community would be prevented from using the majority of the Rimrose Valley until work is complete.

It might also involve the compulsory purchase and demolition of up to 200 homes and businesses, result in large amounts of waste material being transported to landfill and the construction of ventilation shafts and power sub-stations every kilometre through the Rimrose Valley. It would involve high ongoing supervisory, operation and maintenance costs without necessarily providing the 'greener' option people hoped for.

Q: If residents in the South (the Lower Thames Crossing, for example) can have a tunnel, why can't the people of Merseyside? It feels like the north is being short changed again.

A: Each Highways England scheme is different and is developed and progressed according to its unique challenges and objectives. We are obliged to calculate how much economic benefit and congestion relief a scheme will bring compared to the cost. Schemes are scored along this basis and, if they fail to meet the threshold, they are deemed not viable. Highways England cannot deliver a scheme which is seen as 'not viable'

The Lower Thames Crossing is needed because there is insufficient capacity to cater for current and future traffic as the existing Dartford crossing is the only river crossing on the strategic road network to the east of London. Of the proposed 15 miles of construction, approximately two miles will involve a tunnel crossing the Thames estuary. It is only by providing a tunnel or a bridge that the estuary can be crossed. Both options have been through an economic assessment and the bridge solution was discounted on economic grounds, as is the case with a tunnel solution on the A5036, amongst other reasons detailed above.

Q: Why aren't alternatives such as rail or canals being looked at?

A: We have been asked by the Government to look specifically at improving road access to the Port of Liverpool.

Our scheme is not being done in isolation but is part of a much wider set of proposals across Merseyside and the North West. The Liverpool City Region Port Access Steering Group is working with a range of partners, including Network Rail, Department for Transport, Sefton Metropolitan Borough Council, the City Region Combined Authority, Merseytravel and Peel Ports, to develop and deliver transport measures that will improve port access and increase capacity by rail, road and water including:

- Rail capacity on the Bootle branch line into the Port estate to double over the next two-three years
- Signal improvements to enable more freight services from the port to access the West Coast Main Line
- Re-instatement of frequent services running two ways on the Halton Curve
- Direct rail freight container service from the port into the Midlands
- Opening of a new biomass terminal within the port in 2016, to handle up to three million tonnes of wood pellets heading for Drax Power Station at Selby, Yorkshire – that's the equivalent of eliminating 200,000 HGV trips a year
- Increase of container freight on the Manchester Ship Canal to Port Salford, the UK's first 'tri-modal' inland waterway port
- Initial studies to identify former railway lines throughout the UK, that can be restored to unlock economic growth

However, even with these developments, our initial findings indicate that, even with an ambitious transfer onto rail, improvements to the road network will still be necessary. The flexibility which the road network provides for shorter journeys, to areas such as Lancashire and Yorkshire where a lot of the freight is destined for, means that road access to the Port of Liverpool has to be considered within any multi-modal solution (transportation of goods under at least two different means of transport).

Q: Why can't you use the disused railway line as either a rail link or modified road link?

A: Although the North Mersey Branch Line is disused it is not formally closed. Proposals to upgrade this line for passenger services were included in Merseytravel's recent 'Liverpool City Region Long Term Rail' strategy. Sefton Council's Local Plan also refers to safeguarding the disused rail link for long-term future passenger services' use.

Q: Surely, air quality and noise levels will be totally unacceptable?

A: We have carried out an initial assessment of the impact of the bypass on a number of key environmental aspects including air quality and noise on those living and working in the community. The predicted future traffic growth, particularly in heavy goods vehicles, means that all of our assessments have to be based on future traffic forecasts rather than current traffic figures. This allows us to accurately compare the effects of constructing the bypass to a scenario where nothing is done.

Early assessments have concluded that by encouraging traffic to use the new bypass, it would improve the air quality for residents along the bypassed section of the A5036. Residents living immediately next to the Rimrose Valley could experience poorer air quality, however these changes are expected to be small and well below UK and EU air quality limits. Similarly with noise, the bypass would introduce some increase within the relatively quiet Rimrose Valley. Further assessment will be undertaken during the next phase of design to explore this further

During the next phase of design we will be working with stakeholders and the local community to discuss the mitigation measures we need to put in place to reduce any negative environmental impacts, including air quality and noise.

Q: Will the park be safe for pedestrians/children?

A: Yes. The new bypass would be secure and pedestrians would not be able to gain access to the live carriageway. Where the new bypass splits an existing footpath we will be looking to connect pathways to foot and cycle bridges. Surveys are ongoing to help inform our plans and we will be working with stakeholders and the local community to ensure that these are in the most suitable location (as detailed earlier in this newsletter).

Q: How can we object?

A: The scheme is classed as a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) under the Planning Act 2008 therefore planning consent will be sought via a Development Consent Order (DCO).

There will be a statutory public consultation on our detailed design proposal, where comments received can inform and refine the design of the scheme. Once our application has been submitted for planning consent the Planning Inspectorate will appoint an examining inspector to consider our application. At this stage, members of the public will be able to register as an interested party. Once registered, representations will be invited in writing or requests can be made to speak at a public hearing. The planning inspectorate has written a number of advice notes on the planning process for nationally significant infrastructure proposals. These are available at: <https://infrastructure.planninginspectorate.gov.uk/>

Advice Note 8 gives an overview of the planning process for members of the public.

Next steps

We will be looking to further consult with the public in the summer/autumn of 2018 before submitting a planning application for permission to build the road in spring 2019. If approved, we would likely begin work around 12 months later.

How can I get involved?

We will continue to work with local representatives to identify opportunities to improve the overall environment for people in the area – both within the Rimrose Valley and along the current A5036.

We intend to begin hosting focus group sessions for which we will soon be seeking expressions of interest from people who would like to get involved.

We will hold conversations with key stakeholders to ensure we reduce the loss of any habitats during the construction of the new road. We aim to work alongside local community groups, to identify opportunities to enhance the remaining areas of the valley and also any areas along the existing route.

Further information

You can find out more information by visiting our web page at:

<http://roads.highways.gov.uk/projects/a5036-port-of-liverpool-access/>

or by emailing our project team at A5036PortofLiverpool@highwaysengland.co.uk

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