

1. Briefing on revised Draft Orders for the A628 Tintwistle – Mottram Bypass (A811/ED)

Proposal

- 1 To provide initial feedback from officers on the revised Environmental Statement for the A57/A628 Mottram -Tintwistle Bypass and A628/A616 Route Restraint Measures, as part of the recently re-published Draft Orders.

2 RECOMMENDATION:

That

1. **Members provide comment on the information presented in this report, so that officers can take them into consideration when formulating the formal response to the proposed scheme.**
2. **Members note that a report will be taken to Authority on 30th March 2007 to request approval for a formal response to the re-published Draft Orders to be submitted to the Highways Agency.**

Policy/Legal Background

- 3 Members will be aware that at the Authority meeting in April 2006 it was resolved to object to the proposed A57/A628 Mottram – Tintwistle Bypass and A628/A616 Route Restraint Measures as it currently stands. Since then, the North West Regional Assembly has moved the funding programmed for the Bypass and Glossop Spur so that, if it were approved, the Bypass would not open until 2015. Due to the delay in funding and the number and significance of objections to the scheme, the Highways Agency has revised the Environmental Statement and re-published the Draft Orders. The deadline for submissions within the new consultation is 30th March 2007, and the Public Inquiry is scheduled to start at the end of June.
- 4 This report sets out officers initial comments on the re-published Draft Orders, and the likely impacts of the proposed scheme on the National Park, so that Members are aware of the new information. In addition, it provides Members with the opportunity to feedback to officers in advance of the response to the Draft Orders being written, and a meeting between Authority officers and Highway Agency representatives on 15th March. A further report will be brought to Authority on 30th March, seeking approval for the Authority's formal response to the Draft Orders.
- 5 The principal aim of the scheme is to provide relief from traffic congestion and HGV traffic to the villages of Tintwistle, Mottram and Hollingworth. The total length of the proposed Bypass is 5.7 km, described as the Main Study Area. Of this, 1.3 km lies within the National Park. The Extended Study Area includes impacts of the proposed scheme across the Dark Peak, which includes the following designations: the South Pennines Special Area of Conservation (SAC), the Special Protection Area (SPA) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). The maps in the Appendix show the location and position of the scheme in relation to the wider geography of the area.
- 6 The Authority has always given an *in principle* support for a scheme that relieves the three villages from traffic congestion, and as such is reflected within the South Pennines Integrated Transport Strategy and inclusion within the Authority's Structure and Local Plan policies. The Authority has consistently applied this *in principle* support for the scheme in all its policy making decisions since the scheme was first proposed. However, in reaching these decisions the Authority has always reserved the right to its own position on a proposed scheme once details of the environmental impacts upon the National Park have been published within the Draft Orders.

Key Issues

7 Changes in the scheme

The Bypass component of the scheme remains the same as the 2006 Orders.

However, due to the significant predicted increase and impact of increased traffic on the A628/A616 trunk road, route restraint measures including signals at junctions, speed limit controls, and pre-emptive accident remedial measures (additional to the selected and limited improvements) have been incorporated into the scheme.

Additional traffic signals and adjustment of the timings of existing traffic signals have been added to the original traffic signals that were proposed in the 2006 Draft Orders. These are proposed to inhibit certain movements during peak hours at the junctions where they are situated, and to provide restraint to discourage vehicle journeys across the A628 within the National Park. The location of the additional traffic signals are illustrated in a map in the appendix of this report.

The pre-emptive accident remedial measures include rumble strips, anti-skid surfacing, speed warnings, improvements to road studs, signing, and road markings. In addition, there will be a rationalisation of existing signs, and redundant signs will be removed.

Further to the above changes, inline with recent Government guidance, speed limits along the A628 have been reviewed. The new Guidance makes reference to speed limits needing to pay attention to special qualities of National Parks. Therefore, as part of the proposed scheme the Highways Agency are proposing a 40 mph limit on the A628 from Tintwistle to Windle Edge, and 50mph between Windle Edge to Flouch on the A628, and 50mph on the A616 from Flouch to Langsett.

In addition to the above physical changes in the proposed scheme, the Highways Agency have clarified aspects of the scheme considered in the assessment, resulting in a slightly altered overall aim of the scheme to 'The scheme would provide relief from congestion *and HGV traffic* flows through the three villages of Mottram, Hollingworth and Tintwistle...', where the writing in italics has been added since the 2006 Draft Orders.

8 The paragraphs below set out initial key issues of the proposed scheme and how they impact upon the National Park.

9 Traffic Figures.

The traffic figures indicate that the Bypass will reduce the traffic flows within the village of Tintwistle by 63% in 2015 and 55% in 2030 compared to the do minimum scenario, hence significantly reducing the current congestion problems. However, figures for the A628 east of Tintwistle are forecast to increase by 34% to 15,800 vehicles in 2015 and by 34% to 16,900 vehicles in 2030 compared to the do minimum scenario. This increase is caused by;

- traffic diverting from adjacent routes within the National Park onto the A628 (hence providing some relief on these routes); as well as
- additional traffic being diverted off the M62 into the National Park.

Due to the complexity of traffic flows it is important to consider the net effect of the scheme on traffic flows across the National Park. This assessment indicates an increase of annual average daily trips of 15% in 2015 (up to 29,200 vehicles) and a 16% increase in 2030 (up to 34,000 vehicles) within the modelled area of the Park. Much of this increase in growth is on the A6024. As well as the number of journeys increasing, the length of journeys will also increase as drivers divert onto the higher capacity Bypass route. It should be noted that all the figures quoted take into account future predicted growths in traffic.

10 It is the impacts of these increased traffic flows that directly impact on the majority of the other key issues as set out below. A summary of the significant traffic figures, along with a comparison of the 2007 figures with the 2006 traffic data, is set out in the Appendix.

11 Landscape

The significant concerns regarding the visual intrusion of the proposed Bypass and associated infrastructure still remain. Officers consider that the proposed Bypass would be a significant intrusion into the National Park and its tranquillity, from various viewpoints in the valley, including the impact of a substantial length of road outside the National Park boundary, above and to the west of Arnfield Reservoir.

The 2007 Draft Orders pose additional concerns to those outlined in the Authority's response to the 2006 Draft Orders. The additional concerns are due to the proposed route restraint measures, which officers feel would serve to exacerbate the visual impact problems already acknowledged. More specifically, there are concerns regarding the extra signage required in connection with the proposed new speed limits, including reminders that speed cameras operate in the area, as well as the proposed additional traffic signals, associated advance warning signs and road markings. In addition, although public safety is acknowledged as an issue, any additional street lights would provide a further obtrusive and polluting feature.

Particularly pertinent is the Highways Agency own assessment that the visual impact of the proposed Bypass cannot be adequately mitigated. This assessment is despite some additional mitigation, subject to agreement with landowners, in the form of additional off-site planting at Townhead Farm, and enhancement of existing hedgerow boundaries outside the required land acquisition area.

12 Ecology

We are still awaiting a number of specialist ecological reports from the Highways Agency, as they are yet to be published. Without these reports, officers cannot make a full assessment of the ecological impacts of the proposed scheme on the National Park. However, the following initial comments are based on information contained within the Environmental Statement.

The Highways Agency has quantified the habitat loss and replacement, however, it appears that no provision has been made to address the Authority's concerns regarding the adequacy of the compensatory measures. This is particularly important in relation to a net loss of Section 3 Moorland, for which there is no mention of compensatory measures within the document received so far. Officers feel that this net loss means the proposed scheme is not sustainable in terms of biodiversity. Linked to this loss in habitat are associated concerns regarding species, in particular invertebrates, as the inadequate compensatory measures would have an adverse impact on them.

Officers feel that the mitigation and compensatory measures for bats has been improved since the 2006 Draft Orders, and are in the process of assessing whether they feel these are now sufficient. In addition, officers are in the process of assessing the impact of the revised air quality data on ecology within the National Park.

13 Access and Recreation

Although traffic flow forecasts are lower than those provided in 2006, the existing amenity for users of paths crossing the A628 east of Tintwistle and A616 east of Flouch is already poor. Therefore, there are concerns that increased traffic flows will still reduce amenity further and possibly deter use of the public rights of way, including the four long distance trails. In addition, there are concerns for the safety of path users, as other than signs, no new safety features are proposed in the extended study area to facilitate road crossings by pedestrians, cyclists or horse riders. Furthermore, the increased traffic flows will reduce the visual amenity of the area for all users.

There is concern that the proposed scheme could conflict with the Authority's duty to promote opportunities for healthy outdoor activity, as it could act as a disincentive for people to use the public rights of way network and access land adjacent to the A57, A628, A6024 and A616 within the National Park due to difficulty in effecting safe crossings of the highway.

14 Plans and Policies

The Highways Agency appears to have considered our concerns regarding a lack of reference to National Park purposes, as the revised Environmental Statement acknowledges that the proposals at times complement our policy and at others conflict with it. In addition, there is a new section of text titled 'Consideration of the Special Nature of the Peak District National Park'. Within this section, it states that the Bypass has been designed to minimise the impact on the National Park by:

- designing it with less capacity than a normal trunk road:
- providing additional mitigation in the form of cuttings and embankments to mitigate the visual intrusion: and
- provision of compensatory nature conservation habitat.

The revised Environmental Statement does not provide any further or updated information regarding thoroughly assessing all alternatives to a Bypass, therefore, Officers are still unable to assess the impact of the scheme on some key policies, including:

- GS1 – Development in the Peak National Park
- T3 – Cross-Park Traffic
- T5 – New Road Schemes
- LT4 – Safeguarding Land for New Road Schemes
- PPS7 – Sustainable Development in Rural Areas

All of these policies require a rigorous examination of all alternatives in advance of major development being permitted in the National Park.

15 Proposed Scheme Alternatives

Officers are still concerned that alternatives to a Bypass have not been comprehensively assessed, as this section of the Environmental Statement remains the same as for the 2006 Draft Orders. The alternatives provided in the Environmental Statement were considered in isolation and should have been considered together as a proposed alternative.

Officers are aware that the Highways Agency is in the process of undertaking a further study into the alternatives to a Bypass. In part, this is being undertaken due to the number of objections relating to the lack of comprehensive alternatives within the Environmental Statement. Officers are currently assessing the proposed scoping document for the study to ensure that it incorporates all alternatives that the Authority would like explored. The results of this study are unlikely to be published until nearer to the Public Inquiry, as they do not form part of the Draft Orders.

16 Sustainability of the Proposed Scheme

The proposed scheme would be operating at capacity in its opening year. There is therefore concern that the route restraint measures could be removed or changed and/or that further measures will need to be put in place to relieve the congestion caused by the Bypass. Any future measures to upgrade the corridor would almost certainly have adverse impacts on the National Park and the designated SAC/SPA/SSSI areas.

17 Air Quality

The Highways Agency has undertaken further air quality monitoring at additional sites both within and outside of the National Park since the 2006 Draft Orders. Officers are still assessing this additional information, and the revised information as a whole, particularly in relation to the impacts air quality could have upon ecology within the National Park.

There are still a number of significant concerns over the standard air quality methodology adopted. Firstly, the methodology used is designed for assessing the impacts on the populations of urban areas; clearly, this is inappropriate for use within a National Park. In addition, the assessments made incorporate predicted improvements in engine and fuel technologies; these are at present unknown and will be developed whether the scheme goes ahead or not. Finally,

the figures are not modelled to 2030 as the traffic figures are, which only enables short term conclusions to be drawn.

18 Noise and Vibration

The Highways Agency has undertaken further noise and vibration monitoring public rights of way in order to assess the impact of the proposed scheme on amenity. Nine of these monitoring locations are situated within the National Park on the following three routes -Trans Pennine Trail, Barnsley Boundary Walk and Pennine Way.

The data provided when the do minimum and do something are compared indicates that there would be a slight increase in noise levels within the National Park on the Pennine Way, no change on the Barnsley Boundary Walk, and a slight decrease is suggested for the Trans Pennine Trail, although officers will be seeking clarification from the Highways Agency regarding the latter forecast. Officers are in the process of assessing whether these forecasts are likely to impact on the biodiversity of the National Park and the ability of people to enjoy the special qualities that the National Park provides.

19 Cultural Heritage

Since the 2006 Draft Orders, information regarding listed buildings and conservation areas within the relevant area of the National Park were supplied to the Highways Agency, and these have been noted in the revised Environmental Statement.

Officers are still concerned that the proposed Bypass would have an adverse effect on the character of the Tintwistle conservation area in the National Park, and that the introduction of screening would change the character and appearance of the conservation area. In addition, the increased traffic flows along the proposed Bypass would have an impact on the conservation area at Tintwistle. Furthermore, officers are still awaiting discussions with the Highways Agency on a number of key issues surrounding the mitigation of archaeological sites that lie within the National Park.

20 Proposed Scheme Objectives

Officers have four main areas of concern regarding the proposed scheme's objectives.

- Officers cannot yet assess whether the proposed scheme has met its objective of minimising the impact of the scheme on the National Park, as officers do not feel that all alternatives to a Bypass have been sufficiently assessed.
- As alternatives to a Bypass have not been sufficiently assessed, it is questionable whether the proposed scheme sufficiently meets the first element of its overall aim which, is to reduce congestion in the villages. Figures indicate that the proposed scheme will only achieve a 7% and 17% reduction in traffic flows through Mottram and Hollingworth respectively by 2030. However, it is acknowledged that the proposed scheme would significantly reduce HGV flows in all three villages, with reductions between 59% and 66% in 2030.
- One reason for the growth in traffic along the A628 is caused by transfer of traffic from the M62 – traffic flows on this road decrease by 1,400 vehicles in 2015 with the proposed scheme, which is a significant volume in relation to total flows on the A628. This runs contrary to the aim of deterring the transfer of traffic from other cross Pennine routes onto the A628 in the National Park.
- South Pennines Integrated Transport Strategy (SPITS) was developed as a package of integrated measures to be implemented at the same time or soon after the development of any proposed scheme. Although the proposed Bypass fits one element of the SPITS strategy, namely improvements to the A57/A628/A616 core trunk road across the National Park, the proposed scheme conflicts with other core elements if as expected they are not implemented. The eight SPITS elements are outlined in the appendix to this report.

21 Geology and Soils

Contamination surveys have been undertaken where the Bypass is situated in cutting or subsurface structures are required. According to the Highways Agency, these indicate that there is no ground or water contamination that is likely to require remedial measures or affect the

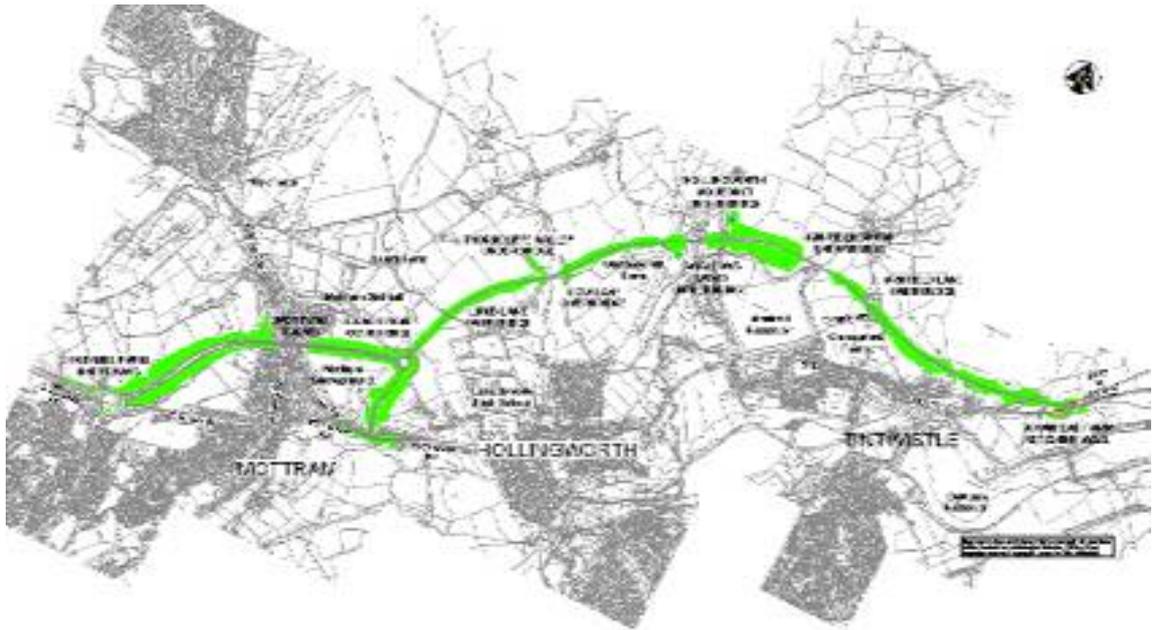
proposed Bypass route. However, it is of concern that no such survey has yet been undertaken at the New Hobson Moor Road junction, which is located within a quarry. There is some concern over the presence of invasive species within the topsoil and the resultant impacts on habitats within the National Park over its re-distribution across the construction site. Officers are in the process of assessing the adequacy of the disposal of these species.

22 Road Safety

Officers are no longer concerned about the adequacy of the data produced by the Highway Agency regarding road safety, as the revised documents have complete and consistent data for this section. Fatal and serious accidents are forecast to decrease along the A57/A628 corridor, however, the number of slight accidents is predicted to increase. The latter increase is mainly due to the increase in traffic.

23 Correspondence from the Public

The proposed scheme has generated considerable interest from local groups and individuals. At the time of writing this report, the Authority has received 273 letters about the scheme since August 2005, the majority of which were received in the consultation period for the 2006 Draft Orders. 94% (257 individuals) of these letters are opposed to the proposed scheme, and 6% (16 individuals) are in support of the proposed scheme. Members should be aware that CPRE has recently issued a press release requesting that people write to the Authority about the proposed Bypass. Most of the letters have come from people living near the A628/A57, although some have come from addresses outside the National Park.



Map 3: Proposed Route Restraint Measures

Signals are now proposed at the following junctions:

- M67 terminal roundabout
- Showground roundabout
- Mottram Moor junction
- A628/B6105 junction
- A628/A6024 junction
- A628/A616 junction at Flouch
- A616/Midhope Cliff Lane junction at Langsett
- A616/Mortimer Road junction at Midhopestones



- 2 The following diagrams provide information on flows of traffic across key roads within the National Park on the basis of flows in 2001 and those predicted in 2015 and 2030 respectively. The 'do minimum' option represents traffic flows in 2015 with no improvements and the 'do something' represents traffic flows if the proposed scheme is implemented.

Figure 1: Flows of traffic across the National Park between 2001 and 2015

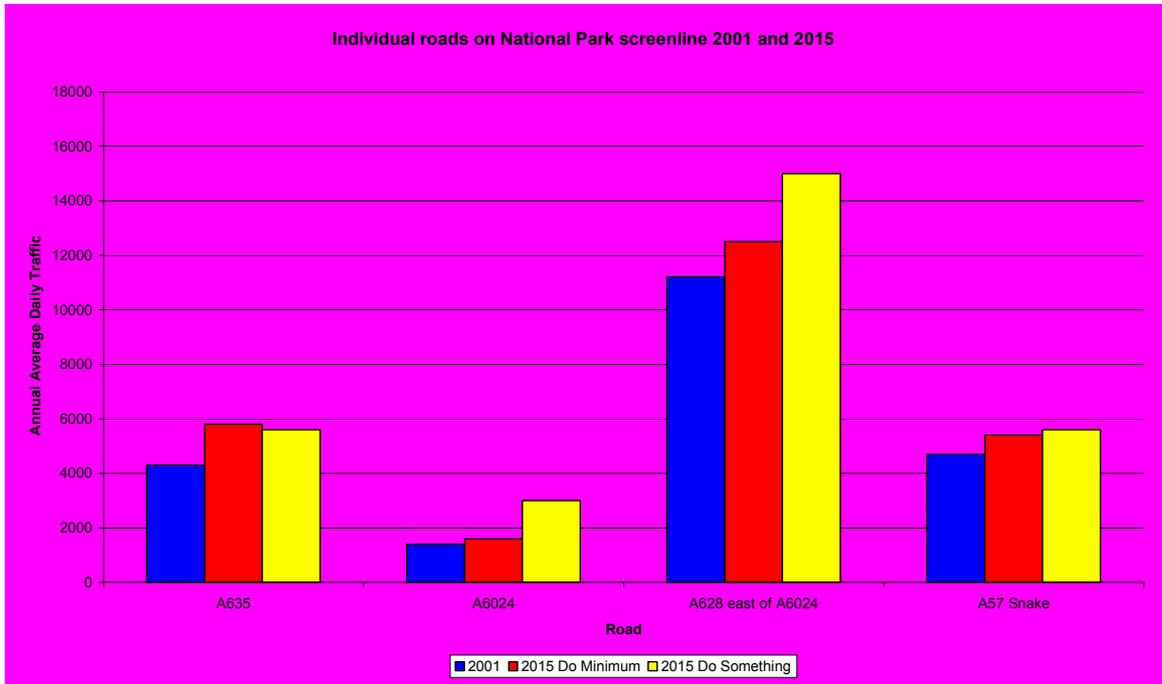
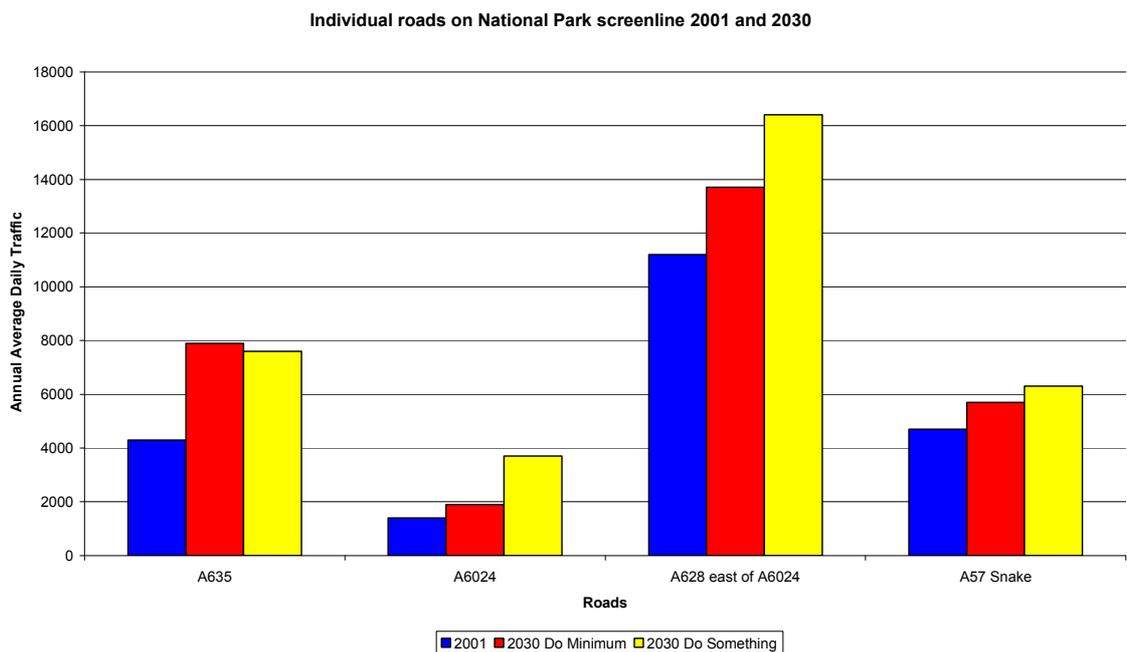
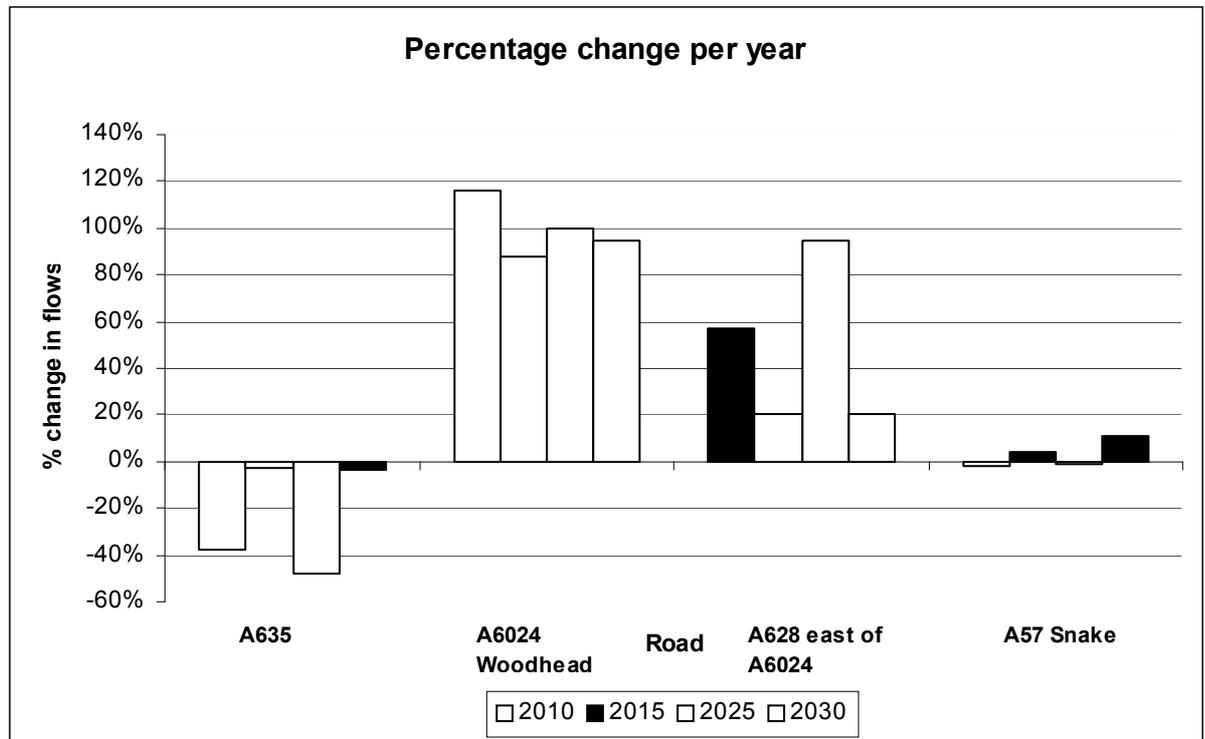


Figure 2: Flows of traffic across the National Park between 2001 and 2030



The following diagram illustrates the difference in percentage of the traffic data from the 2006 and 2007 Draft Orders.

Figure 3: Comparison of traffic flow predictions from 2006 and 2007 data



SPITS Elements

1. Traffic restraint incorporating speed management, safety and traffic reduction measures on all class A and B Trans-Pennine routes, and minor roads where significant diversion of through traffic could occur within the South Pennines area.
2. Managing and influencing the implementation of fiscal demand measures, such as road pricing and parking charges, where they affect traffic movements in the South Pennines area.
3. Creation of a network of 'safe roads' within the South Pennines area offering improved access for non-motorised users.
4. The development of measures to influence travel behaviour in and around the South Pennines area.
5. Improved/reinstated rail routes and services across or around the South Pennines area.
6. Improved long distance bus/coach services within or around the South Pennines area.
7. Improved local bus and rail services including integration, marketing, ticketing and technology.
8. Improvements to the A57/A628/A616 core trunk road across the National Park.

Resources

- 3 There are likely to be financial implications in relation to representation at the Public Inquiry. Full details of this Inquiry, other than it is currently programmed to begin in late June and likely to last two months, will not be made available until after the closing date of representations on 30th March 2007. However, indicative figures for employing appropriate counsel over an eight week Inquiry would be in the region of £57,000, which the Authority has provisionally allocated in the 2007/8 budget.

In addition, the Authority has provisionally allocated some funding in the 2007/8 budget for engaging specialist assistance that may be necessary for the Public Inquiry preparation.

Risk Management

- 4 Assessment of Impacts – the Authority has mitigated against the possibilities of an incorrect assessment of impacts through the establishment of an internal working group consisting of officers from key disciplines required to make an objective assessment of the issues. In addition, officers have been and continue to consult with Natural England and Derbyshire County Council in areas where expertise is limited within the Authority.

Confidentiality – Due to the sensitive nature of the Authority's relations with SPITS partners the Authority has ensured that all key correspondence covering the Authority's response has always been headed as 'confidential'. In addition, the SPITS project officer has not been party to confidential discussions. The project manager has monitored and enforced this throughout.

Human Rights, Equalities, Health & Safety

- 5 There are no significant aspects that relate to this report.

Consultees

- 6 Members of the A628 Internal Working Group, Head of Legal Services and the Chief Executive have been consulted on the report and their comments incorporated.

Enclosures

- 7 None

List of Background Papers (not previously published)

- 8 None

Report Author

- 9 Emily Davies, Transport Policy Manager

Publication date

- 10 1 March 2007