

M4 SMART MOTORWAY PROPOSALS

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform the forum about the M4 Smart Motorway proposals being developed by Highways England, and to invite to forum to discuss and prepare feedback to be sent to Highways England.

2. SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 Highways England is proposing to improve a 32 mile stretch of the M4 motorway between junction 3 (Hayes) and junction 12 (Theale) by making it a smart motorway.
- 2.2 The smart motorway proposal on the M4 will use the latest technology to improve journeys by monitoring traffic flow and setting speed limits accordingly to keep traffic moving smoothly, instead of continually stopping and starting. The proposal also involves converting the hard shoulder permanently to a traffic lane to create extra capacity. Information about road conditions and speed limits will be displayed to drivers on electronic road signs.
- 2.3 The conversion of the hard shoulder into a running lane will be continuous through junctions unless there is an operational reason not to do so. Through junction running arrangements, where the new running lane will continue through junctions, are proposed at junctions 4, 5, 6, 7, 8/9 and 11. It is not proposed to use through junction running arrangements at either end of the scheme at junctions 3 and 12 or at junctions 4b and 10, which are motorway to motorway links.
- 2.4 To enable the provision of a smart motorway along the whole length of the proposed scheme, it will be necessary to widen or replace a number of bridges where there is currently no hard shoulder.
- 2.5 Public Exhibitions were held during the early stages of the scheme's development to provide members of the public and stakeholders and as part of the statutory process for a Development Consent Order a public consultation exercise took place on the M4 Junctions 3 to 12 Smart Motorway Scheme from 10 November 2014 until 21 December 2014. A copy of the public consultation information is included as Appendix A to this report.
- 2.6 Unfortunately the Local Access Forum was not consulted directly about this scheme and was not aware of it until February 2015. The Local Access Forum Fast Response Team sent a joint letter on behalf of the Forum in conjunction with the Mid & West Berks Local Access Forum to the Highways Agency on 17th March 2015. A copy of the letter sent is attached as Appendix B to this report.
- 2.7 A detailed description of the works and a plan showing the location of the bridges that will be changed are included in Appendix C to this report. Detailed drawings will be made available at the meeting
- 2.8 The Forum is invited to consider whether it has any suggestions to make with regard to any opportunities that may exist to improve the public access over the M4 when the bridges are being changed. The forum is invited to submit any comments until 3rd July 2015, in preparation for consideration of the scheme by the Planning Inspectorate.
