

# DfT Road Network Policy Consultation

January 2011

## Response to Consultation

This document is the response of the Institute of Highway Engineers (IHE) to the above consultation.

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## Introduction

The Government White Paper: *Creating Growth, Cutting Carbon* alluded to the issue of responsibility for road status, and the IHE commented on that document in a letter dated 4 Feb 2011 to the Secretary of State. Since then the greater detail in this consultation document has alleviated many of our concerns.

As we said in February, we remain supportive of the need for authorities to be able to decide the status of roads which they control (subject to maintenance of status for routes crossing authority boundaries). Nevertheless we remain concerned about how some authorities might use this freedom, and the following paragraphs expand upon this and contain a number of detailed comments and suggestions.

## Through traffic v local considerations

Route numbers are used predominately by visitors to an area and those passing through. Local people tend to know the road network and are not dependent upon the route numbers shown on traffic signs, on road maps and in SatNav systems. In responding to the democratic wishes of the electorate, therefore, we are concerned that some councils might overlook or give lower priority to the needs of these strangers and visitors.

In particular, we see pressures developing on councils to downgrade the status of roads for the following reasons:

- To reduce the cost of maintaining them (as route status generally determines the level of maintenance performed, whether or not government grants are affected),
- To avoid the need to electrically illuminate in street lit areas speed limit terminal signs and many warning signs (if an A road is downgraded).
- To permit simpler signing, such as finger posts, to be used or to dispense with directional signing altogether,
- To discourage through traffic or to encourage it to divert through a neighbouring authority.

Were a significant number of routes to be downgraded, this could cause the following problems for strangers to an area and for through traffic:

- Discontinuities in the network, with classified roads ending or changing their status at authority boundaries.
- Road signing being out of date and inconsistent, with some signs showing the old route number, whilst others had been updated. This would be a problem both on the route itself and, for bracketed route numbers, potentially many miles away and in adjacent authorities.
- Discrepancies between information on drivers' road maps and SatNav systems and that on the road itself. This could last for many years until drivers update or replace these aids to navigation.

## Guidance to authorities

We consider that the above risks can be mitigated by issuing appropriate advice to traffic authorities. We recommend that the DfT give formal guidance on route numbering and classification in order to achieve the aims set out in paragraph 1.24 of the consultation. Much of this advice is already in the consultation document. It would also need to cover:

- A reminder to authorities of their network management duty under the Traffic Management Act 2004.
- The need to cost any renumbering proposal, in particular the cost of changing all traffic signs showing the old number, including signs on roads maintained by other authorities. (The option to show the old number crossed through with a red cancellation bar or to place temporary additional signs, should be mentioned.)
- The need to consult with adjacent traffic authorities (including the Highways Agency) for routes crossing into their areas or appearing on their road signs.
- A 12 month timescale for changing all affected road signs.
- Recommended procedures for consultation, in order that local people can raise representations in accordance with paragraph 4.19.

## Detailed points

In **Appendix A** under *Terminology* on page 31, the second item should be: “Primary Route Network (PRN)”, not “Primary Road Network”.

In **Annex A**, in the note under *Greater London* on page 35, add “and London/Central London” after “Heathrow Airport”.

Newark (page 36) is in Nottinghamshire, not Lincolnshire.